

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN

The KINGBIRD

Chickadee Migration in Monroe County: As early as September 1, 1961, observers in the area northeast of Rochester noted Black-capped Chickadees in greater than normal numbers, but this was passed off as limited post-nesting wanderings of local birds after a successful nesting season. This theory was upset on Sept. 30 when 25 birds hit the banding nets in Dr. Leubner's backyard in Irondequoit; this almost proved that the chickadee population at this time consisted of something more than wandering local birds.

After due consideration, the observers chose Oklahoma Beach as a vantage point from which to await developments. This area is about a quarter mile east of the Irondequoit Bay outlet into Lake Ontario. Somewhat above the railroad, the slope levels out into suburban lots which are well shrubbed. The upper slopes are rather lightly wooded.

On Friday, October 5, Mrs. Mary Ann Sunderlin and Miss Louise Zeitler counted 503 chickadees between 1:30 and 2:15 p.m. On Saturday Mrs. Sunderlin and Mrs. Thomas McNett counted 1,253 chickadees between 9:30 a.m. and noon. They returned at 1:20 p.m. and counted 6,297 more chickadees in the next 2 ¼ hours.

On October 8 they were joined by Warren Lloyd, Miss Ruth MacRae, Mrs. Ruth Shermer, Joseph McNett, Dr. and Mrs. Neal Moon, Bob Dobson, and Walter Listman. Observers were continually at the point from 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. During this time, 17,166 chickadees were counted and 6,860 more were estimated. On Monday, in little more than four hours of observation, 7,154 birds were counted. On Thursday an estimated 2,000 birds were observed passing this point.

Thus in the three peak days of the flight passing this point 31,870 chickadees were counted, and there must have been many thousands that passed when no observers were present.

In addition to the chickadees, at least 14 Tufted Titmice, 43 White-breasted Nuthatches, and 35 Brown Creepers were observed on the three peak days. A single Boreal Chickadee was carefully studied by Mrs. Shermer.

The combined total of the peak two days of the last great flight in 1954, which was watched from a point about two miles west of Manitou, was estimated at 20,000 birds. That migration followed a west-east direction, the opposite of this year's flight.

Where did they go? This flight seemed to turn inland just east of or over Rochester. At the peak of the flight there was no comparable flight in either direction at Manitou or other nearby points. During this time the maximum estimated count at Manitou was only 75 on Oct. 7, and these birds were moving in the usual west-east direction. Between Oct. 7 and 15 small flocks were observed passing regularly over the heart of Rochester, almost always in a southerly direction. After the flight tapered off, the number of chickadees present locally did not seem greater than usual during a fairly good chickadee year.—Howard S. Miller, 54 Luella St., Rochester 9.