

GENERAL NOTES

An Overlooked New Jersey specimen of Gyrfalcon: Neither Turnbull (1869) nor Stone (1894, 1908, 1937) mentioned the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) as a New Jersey bird, and Fables (1955) mentions only five recent sight records for the state. Inasmuch as sight records of this species are often open to the suspicion of being misidentifications of large female Peregrines (*Falco peregrinus*) or other species, it may be of interest to call attention to a female specimen of Gyrfalcon in the light phase which has been in the collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences for approximately a century. This specimen (ANSP No. 1209) bears on the label only the information "New Jersey — John Cassin," with a further notation "bo't New Jersey Market." It was originally entered in the catalog along with a series of Goshawks (*Astur atricapillus* = *Accipiter gentilis*) and listed as one of that species. The true identity of the specimen was evidently ascertained at a much later date, possibly around 1940, and the correction made in the catalog and on the label in another handwriting.

The only clue to the approximate date of collection of this specimen is the name of Cassin. John Cassin died in 1869, and so the specimen was obviously taken prior to that date. The location of the New Jersey Market remains to be determined — probably either in Camden or Philadelphia. — Earl L. Poole, 509 Sunset Rd., West Reading, Pa.

An Unusual Gull Concentration on the Schuylkill River: As I was driving to work along the West River Drive on December 9, 1964, I noted an unusual concentration of gulls on the Schuylkill River in Fairmont Park between the Falls Bridge and Peter's Island. The following day the mass of birds was further downstream between the Belmont Pumping Station and the Girard Avenue Bridge, and on December 11 they were concentrated between Girard Avenue and Fairmount Dam. So unusual was the gathering that people began calling the Zoo to ask what was causing this phenomenon.

Suspecting that a massive fish-kill had occurred, and that the gulls were following the food supply as it slowly drifted downstream, I made a trip to the river bank on December 11 and found dead and dying small fish at many points between the Zoo and the Falls of the Schuylkill. This was reported to Pennsylvania Fish Warden James Hazen, who later joined the writer on this investigation. The matter was also reported to the Philadelphia Water Department, which told me that the oil was washing off the Expressway and the River Drives and that "there always were gulls along the river in wintertime."

On the following weekend the activity of the gulls slackened, but on December 17 I again noted a concentration of gulls in the vicinity of Strawberry Mansion Bridge and concluded that another cycle of pollution was in progress. By Saturday, December 19, huge numbers of gulls were on the river, and with my field glasses I could see them eating fish. The heaviest concentration was from Strawberry Mansion Bridge to Peter's Island, and the birds were widely and evenly scattered over the river, some hovering over the water, but most resting on the water and picking up fish. Larger and larger fish were becoming involved in the fish-kill, and many were too large for the gulls to lift out of the water. Conditions continued to deteriorate, and by Monday, December 21, the river was littered with dead and dying fish of varying sizes. I collected minnows of the genus *Notropis*, common and blue-gill sunfishes, tessellated darters (*Boleosoma*), and carp up to fifteen inches in length. On December 22 the news story finally broke, admitting the pollution and placing the blame on the Hunting Park Avenue plant of the Budd Company.

At the height of the concentration I estimated that about a thousand gulls were present. I would further estimate that about 60% were Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and 40% Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*). A number of Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*) subsequently appeared. No "white-winged" gulls were observed. On a normal winter day some 35 to 50 gulls, mainly Herrings, can be counted at the Philadelphia Zoo. — Frederick A. Ulmer, Jr., Philadelphia Zoological Gardens, 34th & Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.

Early Hawk Flight at Cape May: Between 10:00 and 11:30 A.M. on the morning of August 15, 1964, I observed a sizeable early hawk flight at Cape May Point. The week previous had been quite cold throughout the East, and it possibly triggered the flight of

150 immature Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*), 15 adult Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), two Sparrow Hawks (*Falco sparverius*), and one Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*). The Broad-wings were soaring on the southwest wind in groups of 15 to 25 birds, while the others were flying lower in a northwesterly direction.

This flight seemed to both William Bailey and me to be quite early, as indeed the recorded hawk flights at Cape May commence about a week later than this date. — Alan Brady, Wycombe, Pennsylvania.

Notes on Olive-sided Flycatcher Feeding Habits: In autumn along the Kittatinny Ridge in eastern Pennsylvania we occasionally see Olive-sided Flycatchers (*Nuttallornis mesoleucus*) perched on the tips of dead pines and hemlocks. From these lofty perches the birds repeatedly dart into the air in pursuit of insect prey. Surprisingly, however, there are few, if any, studies recording the durations of these feeding flights. Even Bent's Life Histories fails to supply this information.

This note presents the results of a few observations of the durations of Olive-sided Flycatcher feeding flights. These were made on August 25, 1962, at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Berks County, Pennsylvania, and on September 8, 1963, at Bake Oven Knob, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

Table I

Location	Number of Observations	Flight Time in Seconds		
		Min.	Max.	Mean
Hawk Mountain	14	1.6	7.6	4.86
Bake Oven Knob	5	1.0	3.5	2.46

Observation of these birds also suggests that they establish and defend feeding territories. On August 25, 1962, for example, I wrote in my field journal that "intra-specific strife appeared to develop between two Olive-sided Flycatchers when one bird attempted to land in the same tree already occupied by the other bird. The approaching bird was driven away by the bird already on the perch. It landed on another tree about 200 feet to the east." — Donald S. Heintzelman, 629 Green St., Allentown, Pa.

White Ibis in Berks County: The dry summer of 1964 brought low water levels to Lake Ontelaunce, a few miles north of Reading in Berks County, Pennsylvania. With the low levels came the usual variety of waders which dropped in to feed on the exposed mudflats at the head of the lake. Some birds stayed a few days, others remained for weeks following the retreating water level. Each year that such conditions exist we can expect one or two unusual visitors.

On July 25, 1964, while showing some visitors from abroad around the lake, my wife and I found an immature White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) actively probing in the shallows near the head of the lake. At times its head was completely submerged, as it waded in the deeper water up to its "heels." The striking white underparts, dark brown back, and pale gray neck were set off by the pinkish basal portion of the long curved bill. We were able to watch the bird at leisure and finally got quite close before it flew off a short distance. The white underwings and rump were quite conspicuous in flight.

I notified several people of the record upon my return home, and during the next few days the bird was seen by at least 15 observers — probably many more. It remained within a few hundred yards of the spot where I first located it until August 4, after which it was no longer seen.

Apparently this is the third definite observation of the species in Pennsylvania. Besides Cassin's (1862) comment that it was "a rare straggler on the Delaware River," we have one observation at Springton Reservoir on August 2-5, 1951, by V. A. Debes and John Gillespie (Ed — For an account of this record see *Cassinia*, 1951-1952, p. 24. The date of the record is, however, incorrectly stated therein as 1953) and another at Tinicum Wildlife Preserve on August 1, 1959, by John C. Miller and several other members of the D.V.O.C.

It may be of interest to note that John Bull could find no records of the White Ibis from the "New York City area" for the past 120 years, but he does cite two records from New Jersey (both at Stone Harbor) and one from Connecticut. Stewart and Robbins (1958) knew of no records from Maryland. — Earl E. Poole, 509 Sunset Road, West Reading, Pa.

Herring Gull Nesting Colony in Barnegat Bay: On July 22, 1964, Mr. Steward R. Maines Jr. and I visited a colony of nesting Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) on Clam Island, in Barnegat Bay about two miles west of Barnegat Light. The island comprises many acres and is divided into three main sections by channels. Man's only structure on the island is a hunting shack, on the top of which we found an occupied Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nest.

We estimated about fifty pairs of adult Herring Gulls over the eastern portion of the island. Most of the young birds were on the wing by the time of our visit, but a few still with remnants of downy plumage scurried for cover when we approached too closely. We saw no young in the nests that we found. The adult birds formed an umbrella over us and complained continuously as long as we were on the island. In contrast, some Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) in the vicinity showed no concern at our presence.

Mr. Maines was the person who informed me about the colony. He, in turn, had learned of the colony from Mr. Melvin Bjornberg, a local boatman. After my visit to the island I looked up Mr. Bjornberg, who told me that he had known the bay area intimately for a quarter century or so and that the Herring Gull colony had been there as long as he could remember. He was not prepared to state, however, how many pairs were present in past years, but he thought there had been no great change. Mr. Bjornberg also told me that there was a Laughing Gull colony on another part of Clam Island.

The fact that Barnegat Bay is rarely covered by birders during the spring and summer seasons undoubtedly delayed "discovery" of the Clam Island colony. It would appear quite probable also that the Herring Gulls stay quite close to the island during the nesting season.

As far as I can determine, previously published reports of the Herring Gull's breeding in New Jersey have pertained to individual nests, all located within the last twenty years. — Charles H. Rogers, Princeton Museum of Zoology, Princeton, New Jersey.

A Diurnal Warbler Flight at Cape May: On the afternoon of October 4, 1964, a daylight flight of warblers was observed at Cape May Point. At noon the wind was strong out of the northeast, the rain was fairly heavy, and very few birds were in evidence. As the rain gradually slackened, a number of warblers was noted flying south along the bay shore, coming from the general direction of the magnesite plant, passing over the old Witmer Stone Sanctuary, and continuing on into Cape May Point. The birds were in small groups made up of from three to a dozen individuals. Several hundred birds were observed flying overhead within a half hour period. One cluster of these birds in a low patch of shrubbery on Pearl Avenue consisted of nine species of warblers and a vireo.

By four o'clock that afternoon the Point was "alive" with warblers, a condition certainly more to be expected at daybreak than in the late afternoon.

This heavy flight was also observed along the Higbee's Beach Road by Robert H. Grant, who reported warblers flying towards the Point but at a higher altitude.

A diurnal warbler flight of such large proportions was unique in the experience of both observers. — Alan Brady, Wycombe, Pennsylvania.

Some Observations on Unusual Feeding Behavior: During 1964 I observed three types of bird feeding behavior which were new to me. The behavior patterns may be known to others, but I had not seen them before in fifteen years of observing birds in the environs of my home near West Chester, Pennsylvania. Four species of birds were involved: Hairy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos villosus*), Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), and American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*).

One behavior observation involved both a House Finch and a Goldfinch. On our double dining room window my wife and I have a simple feeding tray, a ten-inch plank which

extends the length of the windows. This is used extensively by a number of species and provides observation opportunities from a distance of two feet. During the last three years the House Finch has been one of the more common birds to use this facility from about the first of December through March. In the winter of 1963-64 the flock numbered about twenty. Early in the winter Goldfinches appear only very occasionally in my back yard, but towards the end of the winter and into early spring they sometimes become regular customers. The House Finches feed almost exclusively upon sunflower seeds, and they are able to pick up a seed of almost any size and crush it open in a matter of a few seconds. The Goldfinches feed upon smaller seeds and grain, and when they do open a sunflower seed, it is a carefully selected one and the opening process involves a considerably longer period of time.

At the time of my observation (April 4, 1964) the House Finch involved was a female which had lingered on for several days after the rest of the flock had departed for the summer. A single Goldfinch had been feeding on the tray for a few moments when the House Finch alighted and began to crack and eat sunflower seeds. The Goldfinch approached the House Finch and removed a sunflower seed kernel protruding from the House Finch's bill. For the next ten minutes or so the Goldfinch benefited almost as much as the House Finch from the latter's seed cracking ability. When not "raiding the larder" directly, the Goldfinch would pick up dropped fragments. The House Finch did not seem to resent this free-loading and made no attempt to chase off the Goldfinch.

The Hairy Woodpecker behavior was first observed on January 11, 1964. The bird, a male, picked up sunflower seeds from the ground and carried them to nearby trees, where they were wedged in a crevice, open, and eaten. This, of course, is a characteristic of the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*). It appeared to be a new skill for this particular bird, and he became more adept as the day went on. He would feed in this way for 10-20 minutes, leave, and then return later for another session. The bird went through the same performance the next day and again the following weekend, but I have not observed this behavior since, although Hairy Woodpeckers have continued to use the suet feeders.

My third unusual feeding behavior observation concerned Robins hawking like flycatchers. During the summer and fall of 1964 it was my habit to take an hour's walk in the evening into the woods and fields adjacent to my home. This walk carried me through our community swimming pool property, about an acre of partially wooded land. In the grading operations a few years ago the roots of a half dozen mature (50'-80') beech trees had been sufficiently disturbed to cause the tree tops to die out. These bare top branches provided favorite perches for a number of birds. During early September Robins were especially common, but I did not pay much attention to them. On September 18, however, I noticed that the birds were flycatching from these high perches, and this same behavior was observed for about the next two weeks. Their insect prey was large enough to be seen in a 20x scope. I would guess that they were either bees or large flies. August and September were both very dry months, and it is doubtful that many worms came through the hard surface to fall prey to the Robins. Perhaps the birds were satisfying their protein hunger by catching insects. In any case, the behavior was not observed after a heavy rain in early October. — Frank B. Moody, 826 Spruce Ave., West Chester, Pa.

Cabot's Tern at Stone Harbor: On September 26, 1964, Allan Keith, Martin Isler, Robert Connor, Paul O'Brien and I observed a Cabot's Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) on the mud flats along the bay side south of the Stone Harbor (N.J.) heron rookery. The bird was with a group of seven Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*), some Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) and various gulls. With excellent light behind us, we studied this southern visitor for over twenty minutes with four scopes and binoculars. The bird apparently was asleep when we first noticed it. Identification was confirmed when the yellow-tipped black bill was observed while the bird was preening. The gulls and terns flew off before our departure, but the Cabot's Tern was seen again at the same locality on the following day, September 27, by another group of observers. Again it was in company with Royal Terns. Efforts by additional observers to locate the bird after September 27 met with no success.

The presence of this bird may well have been attributable to Hurricane Gladys which passed well off the coast of southern New Jersey three days before our observation.

Fables (*Annotated List of New Jersey Birds*) gives two previous state records, one in Cape May County in 1861 and another at Beach Haven Inlet on September 1, 1954. On this latter date a Cabot's Tern was also noted at Barnegat Light, perhaps the same individual that was seen at Beach Haven. — Charles Lincoln, 392 Highland Ave., Upper Montclair, New Jersey.

American Flamingo at Brigantine: When Edwin Bloor and I arrived at Brigantine Refuge early on the morning of August 23, 1964, we first checked the bulletin board in the little registration building to see what birds had been seen since our last visit. As most visitors to Brigantine are aware, this list sometimes includes birds that strain one's credulity. A Flamingo reported the day before was certainly in this category.

Our own observation of this bird was made about 9:00 in the morning. As Ed and I were walking along the north dike the bird flew in from the north, very low, flew over the west pool, and then dipped up and over the south dike and became lost from view. We drove over to the south dike immediately but could not relocate the bird. To my knowledge, this was the only occasion on which the now-famous Flamingo was seen within the confines of the dikes, and even this was a non-stop visit.

The Brigantine bird was apparently first seen by Mr. Henry P. Megargee, Jr. on the morning of August 22. Mr. Megargee was fishing in a channel on the easterly side of Brigantine Refuge when the Flamingo flew over, in a south to north direction, at a height of about 100 feet. I can well imagine Mr. Megargee's surprise. The bird was seen in the early evening of August 22 from the northeast corner of the dikes by Edwin Daly, Esther Swayer, John Yrizarry, and Robert Clermont. Concerning this observation Mr. Daly wrote to me, in part, as follows: "We observed the bird for about fifteen minutes in all. When first seen the bird was in a channel near Perch Cove at approximately 200 yards distance. It seemed unusual that the bird was swimming in deep water rather than wading. We watched the bird dip its bill into the water a few times, but it did not appear to feed. When the bird took wing, it did so from the water and with more ease than can be shown by some ducks. The bird first headed southward but then swung back in a generally northerly direction. We lost it in the distance while watching it through 20x and 30x spotting scopes. The bird appeared in excellent plumage and well colored."

After August 23 the bird apparently remained in the vicinity of Dog Island, several miles northeast of the Refuge proper. Once this location was ascertained, a number of people went out by boat to see the bird and most were successful. The bird remained in the area until sometime in late November. Efforts were made on at least two occasions by Brigantine Refuge personnel to capture the bird, but these were unsuccessful. The Flamingo could not be located in early December on special searches made for it, nor was it spotted anywhere along the coast by pilots making an aerial survey of waterfowl.

The Brigantine Flamingo was just one of several to turn up in the northeast during the late summer and early fall of 1964. The Somerset (N.J.) *Messenger Gazette* of August 27 carried a story of a Flamingo sighting in Bridgewater Township, which is in north-central New Jersey. While no specific date was given, it was presumably just prior to August 27.

There were at least two Flamingos in Massachusetts, as indicated by overlapping dates at different localities. The first one to appear showed up at Nantucket in mid-August. The bird remained there for about two weeks. On August 23 one was seen at Lenox Reservoir, Lenox, Massachusetts, and it was present also the following day, but not thereafter. On August 25 a Flamingo (the Lenox bird ?) appeared at Niantic, Connecticut, where it remained until September 14. On September 16 one appeared at Plum Island, Massachusetts, where it remained until October 24. This was, I believe, the last New England date.

There were at least three additional Flamingo sightings. On October 17 one was sighted flying over the waters of Barnegat Bay, N.J., by Stephen Harty and William Russell, who were at Barnegat Light at the time. I would strongly suspect that this was not the Brigantine bird. In November one was seen along the central Hudson River in New York State, first at Catskill, then at Stockport, finally at Coxackie. This particular bird was caught by two boys and taken to the Delmar Game Farm near Albany. There was a sighting at Pea Island, North Carolina, on December 14 by Charles Steirly.

It is hard to pinpoint the total number of individuals involved in these sightings, but there were at least three (two birds in different parts of Massachusetts at the same time that the Brigantine bird was present).

It is impossible to state with certainty from whence these Flamingos came. The October, 1964, issue of *Safari*, the publication of the Toledo (Ohio) Zoo, reports that two of their Flamingos "took off for the Maumee Islands and parts unknown." However, no dates are furnished, but it can be surmised from other portions of the article that this was a late summer occurrence. The Toledo Zoo has, incidentally, laid claim to the Flamingo which was taken to the Delmar Game Farm. This escape might account for two of the birds, but certainly not all unless the number that "took off" was misstated.

The Brigantine Flamingo was not, strangely enough, the first to be sighted in New Jersey. On May 29, 1941, Robert Newman observed a Flamingo in the marshes off the Tuckerton Road. Dr. Newman has written to me that he considered this bird an escape and although it could fly he recalled having the impression that the wings had at one time been clipped. Just two weeks earlier, on May 15, 1941, a Flamingo had been seen at Delaware City, Delaware, by Joseph Cadbury and subsequently by other observers. This bird appeared in excellent plumage and showed no outward effects of having been in captivity.

I am indebted to Mr. David Cutler, Mr. Edwin Daly, Mrs. Ruth Emery, Dr. Robert Newman, Mr. Walton Sabin, Mr. Frederick A. Ulmer, Jr. and Mr. Henry Whitley for much of the information contained in this note. — James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace, Blackwood, New Jersey.

Two New Delaware Breeding Records: For the past two or three years there has been considerable movement of herons between the Delaware City, Delaware, area and Pea Patch Island, located in the Delaware River. Although no trace of a heronry could be detected from the mainland, it was almost a foregone conclusion that a heronry existed on the island.

On July 11, 1964, David Cutler and I were finally able to visit this island, which includes an historic site known as the "Fort Delaware State Park." During Civil War days a large prison fort was located on the southern part of the island, and thousands of Confederate soldiers and officers were imprisoned there. The fort remains in excellent condition.

On our first attempts to cross overland to the presumed heronry area we were confronted by marshes and a dense impenetrable underbrush. Carefully evaluating the situation we decided that the only logical solution was to traverse the rocky eastern border at low tide. Apparently our modus operandi was correct, for in approximately one-half hour we reached an area with sufficiently large trees to support a heronry. Penetrating this thick underbrush we found ourselves in an area saturated with heron nests. Our estimates of birds present were as follows: Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), 25 with nests and young; Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), 100 with nests and young; Common Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), 400 with nests and young; Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), 100 with nests and young; Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), 25 with nests and young; Snowy Egret (*Leucophox hula*), 15.

Motion pictures were taken of both Cattle Egret and Glossy Ibis nestlings. Neither of these species had been previously known to nest in Delaware.

An actual count of nests in the heronry was impossible at the time because of the dense foliage. Late in October the area was visited again and found to contain approximately 700 nests. — Herbert S. Cutler, 1711 Newbold Lane, Philadelphia 18, Pa.