

GENERAL NOTES

Eared Grebe in Cape May County, New Jersey. On December 29, 1968, R. Mellon and I observed an Eared Grebe at Hereford Inlet, New Jersey. The bird was very close to shore, diving frequently, and we were able to make our way to within twenty feet of it and to obtain photographs (Ed — see cover). At that distance the color of the irides was outstanding, a vivid dark red, distinctly different from the light orange-red iris color of the Horned Grebe, a bird with which the Eared Grebe is closely associated.

There have been a number of sight records of Eared Grebes in New Jersey, and at least one collected specimen. Our observation was the first for a Cape May Christmas Count (Ed — There is an excellent summary of eastern Eared Grebe records by P. A. Buckley in *Audubon Field Notes*, Vol. 22, No. 4, August 1968. Some additional recent New York State records are published in *The Kingbird*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 1969). — Alan Brady, P.O. Box 103, Wycombe, Pa. 18980.

A Chuck-will's-widow Nest at Cape May Point, New Jersey: Although the Chuck-will's-widow has undoubtedly bred in Cape May County for a number of years, a breeding record obtained near Marmora in 1968 by Mr. Joseph Oborzak was apparently the first for the county (and the state).

A nesting record was obtained at Cape May Point in 1969. The Russell S. Fowler Memorial Spring Nature Weekend was conducted by the New Jersey Audubon Society at Cape May and Cape May Point on May 16-18, 1969. While acting as leaders on an early morning bird walk on the 17th at the Point, Thomas Ennis and Evie Dunn of Belfast, Ireland, flushed a Chuck-will's-widow which obligingly settled nearby so that members of the group all had a look. On the afternoon of the 18th the bird was flushed again, and this time Miss Dunn spotted the nest which consisted of one speckled egg lying on leaves in a small clearing. The location was about five feet from a much-travelled path used at times for bird-banding. Three photographs were made on May 18 for the record.

With the help of Ian Sinclair, the third member of the Belfast team, a discreet check was kept on the nest for the next several days. It was believed that the laying of a second egg would give the bird more reason for sitting still for pictures. May 22 was the target date. On that morning, however, the bird was no longer in its place, although it flushed from nearby. No traces of the egg or eggs were found, and the bird was not seen after May 22.

The visiting ornithologists returned to the Ould Sod on May 25 after having spent most of the month in the vicinity of Cape May Point painstakingly checking out the birds. Among other finds and observations were a Great Horned Owl's nest with one young in the woods near the bird-banding lane, a Bobwhite's nest with a dozen eggs also near the bird-banding lane, Woodcock with young, a Sandwich Tern resting on a Point jetty with Common Terns, a Prothonotary Warbler (along Fishing Creek), Wilson's Petrels, and (on a side trip to Ocean City, Maryland) a northbound parade of Sooty Shearwaters.

(Editor's note — Another Chuck-will's-widow nest was found in May, 1969, near Marmora in northern Cape May County by Mr. Joseph Oborzak. Mr. Merrill S. Cottrell photographed the two eggs on May 27 and May 31. The eggs hatched on June 4. The two young and one adult were photographed by Mr. Cottrell on June 7. To my knowledge, the Chuck-will's-widow had not been previously photographed in New Jersey).

— William Bailey, Cape May Point, N.J. 08212

An Electrocuted Great Horned Owl: In early November, 1968, Mrs. Dorothy Hartman of Center Bridge, Pa., spotted the result of an unusual accident at Mechanicsville, Bucks County, Pa.

It is possible to surmise how the accident probably occurred. A Great Horned Owl, after catching a Norway rat, flew up and perched on an uninsulated wire directly over the insulator on a pole. A rainy or damp night would make the pole a conductor. The rat, swinging down from the talons of the owl, touched the pole and completed the circuit, bypassing the insulator. The owl's talons then contracted, locking both owl and rat.

The grasp of the owl was so tight that the bird hung this way for several weeks before it was cut down by a lineman.

— Alan Brady, P.O. Box 103, Wycombe, Pa. 18980

Notes on the Brewer's Blackbird in Pennsylvania: In view of the increasing frequency with which the Brewer's Blackbird has been reported in the East in recent years, I would like to place on record my own personal observations of this species in Pennsylvania:

- 1) One, possibly two, females with Rusty Blackbirds at Nagy's Pond in Eckville (foot of Hawk Mt.) on September 29, 1954. Birds studied within 25 feet and for more than one-half hour, in the strong light of mid-morning, with 9x glasses.
- 2) A male at Nagy's Pond on October 6, 1955, studied with 12x glasses. Observation shared with Conrad Roland and Alex Nagy.
- 3) Six, mostly males, at Hawk Mountain lookout on October 19, 1955.
- 4) A male at Hawk Mountain lookout on December 2, 1960.
- 5) An adult male, October 27, 1968, resting in a walnut tree near my house at Strawberry Hill Farm, New Ringgold.

Dr. O. K. Stephenson, a reliable and experienced observer, has told me of seeing about 200 Brewer's Blackbirds near New Bloomfield on October 20, 1957.

— Maurice Broun, Strawberry Hill Farm, R.D. 1,
New Ringgold, Pa. 17960

Banding Studies of Icterids at Eldora, New Jersey: Eldora lies in central western Cape May County, N.J., in an area of truck farming and woodland near Delaware Bay. Red-winged Blackbirds are locally considered to be great pests of sweetcorn, while the Cowbird remains unrecognized by most people. Winter populations of both species, especially Cowbirds, are conspicuous, but in addition there are pronounced seasonal migrations.

Most of the birds in the following tabulations were caught in a Government Sparrow Trap, modified so that I could hand-close it by means of a string leading from my study window. Thus there is some degree of selectivity in the results. I would close the trap more frequently when I could see that a bird already banded had entered. This contributes to somewhat higher return rates than would otherwise have been recorded.

Year	Red-winged Blackbirds		
	Total Banded	Male	Female
1966	30	26	4
1967	97	55	42
1968	57	48	9
Total	184	129	55

Returns: Of 42 females banded in 1967, two returned in 1968 and one in 1969.

Of 26 males banded in 1966, seven returned in 1967, one in 1968, and one in 1969. Of 55 males banded in 1967, twelve returned in 1968, and two of these returned again in 1969. Of 48 males banded in 1968, seven returned in 1969.

The single return rate for females was 5.5% and that for males was 21.7%. The single return rate does not include birds that returned in more than one year.

Recoveries: One male was found locally in the year it was banded.

Foreign Retraps: None

Year	Cowbirds			
	Total Banded	Male	Female	Sex Unknown
1966	71	20	14	37
1967	287	72	214	1
1968	76	46	30	—
Total	434	138	258	38

Returns: Of 14 females banded in 1966, one returned in 1968. Of 214 females banded in 1967, five returned in 1968 and one in 1969; of the five returning in 1968, two returned again in 1969. Of 30 females banded in 1968, one returned in 1969.

Of 20 males banded in 1966, three returned in 1967 and one in 1968; of the three returning in 1967, one returned again in 1969. Of 72 males banded in 1967, six returned in 1968 and two in 1969; of the six returning in 1968, three returned again in 1969. Of 46 males banded in 1968, five returned in 1969.

The single return rate for females was 3.1% and that for males was 12.4%.

Recoveries: One female was found locally in the year of banding. A male banded in Eldora in December was found in Mendon, Massachusetts, the following August. A female banded in Eldora in January was found in Bloomfield, New Brunswick, Canada, three months later.

Foreign Retraps: A male trapped in Eldora in May had been banded nearby the previous October by personnel of the New Jersey Department of Health. This was undoubtedly in connection with studies on birds as reservoirs or carriers of eastern equine encephalitis virus, for Eldora is in the thick of such virus activity. Another male, trapped in Eldora in April, 1967, had been banded in December, 1963, near Baton Rouge by the "Louisiana Cooperative Unit", according to the report I received from the Fish and Wildlife Service. A third male, trapped near Auburn by the Alabama Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit in December, 1964, came to Eldora in two non-successive springs — April, 1966, and May, 1968.

Comment: The ratio of male to female returns is four to one in both species. The question remains whether this truly represents the returning rates of birds to the area or only their retrapping ratios. It is possible that males are generally bolder and more aggressive, leading to reckless behavior regarding traps, while females retain the traumatic psychological effects of being manhandled and are consequently more difficult to bait a second time.

— C. Brooke Worth, R.D. Delmont,
New Jersey 08314

Common Grackle Killing House Sparrows: As I was watching birds at my feeding station on May 2, 1969, I saw a male Common Grackle fly in, pin a male House Sparrow to the ground with his talons, and repeatedly strike his beak at the bird's head. The House Sparrow was killed in this manner within a few minutes, after which the Grackle pulled most of the feathers off his victim. As he began to eat the sparrow, a few other Grackles tried to join in the feast, but the predator Grackle flew off with the sparrow in his bill.

From the number of House Sparrow feathers which I found at or near my feeder on different occasions I can surmise that this was not just an isolated instance of predatory behavior.

I have not witnessed or heard of such actions before on the part of the Common Grackle.

— John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Ave.,
Prospect Park, Pa. 19074

Surf Scoter in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania: On January 2, 1968, an immature Surf Scoter appeared on the trout rearing ponds at the Fish Hatchery in Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. The specimen was obtained by Mr. Ernest Massini.

When prepared as a study skin, the bird proved to be a male with skull about 40 per cent ossified. The specimen is now cataloged as Number B 1728 in the bird collection of the William Penn Memorial Museum in Harrisburg.

Since Trainer and Miller (*A Checklist of Birds of Lehigh County, Pennsylvania*, 1956, Lehigh Valley Bird Club, 108 North 13th Street, Allentown, Pa.) do not include the Surf Scoter in their list of Lehigh County birds, the species is apparently an addition to the county list.

— Donald S. Heintzelman, Bureau of Research,
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Magnificent Frigate-bird in Delaware: Following an enjoyable early morning birding trip to Shorts Beach and Broadkill Beach, Delaware, on June 22, 1969, Edwin Bloor and I took the 11:00 A.M. ferry out of Lewes. We stationed ourselves up on the bow in hopes of seeing petrels (which we did) and possibly a shearwater (which we did not). About a mile north of the ferry slip we saw a Magnificent Frigate-bird in flight at a moderate elevation

just off the port bow. The bird's identity was immediately obvious because of size, dark coloration, long wings, and long forked tail. The bird circled several times, affording us excellent views, and then leisurely flew back past the stern of the ferry. I have seen many birds of this species on several trips to the Caribbean and have also seen the Magnificent Frigate-bird in Florida.

At the time of our observation the ferry had passed the last jetty that is connected to the mainland. We had not yet reached the northernmost jetty.

The only reference I have been able to find to the prior occurrence of the Frigate-bird in Delaware is a brief newspaper article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of January 31, 1954. Under a dateline of Lewes, Del., Jan. 30, the article reads "A frigate-bird with a seven-foot wing spread, found on the shores of Delaware Bay last Jan. 11 by Mr. and Mrs. Homer B. Ingram, was taken today by automobile on a trip to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she will be set free. Named "The Captain's Lady" here, the bird rode in a large paper carton on the back seat of an automobile driven by Charles C. Ellis, a friend of the Ingrams, who is en route to Florida with his wife. The bird lived up to the reputation of its species here for having voracious appetites. She was fed on scallops at \$1 per pound for several days and then given quantities of fish."

The article does not pinpoint the location where the bird was found, although it was presumably somewhere near Lewes. The article further does not state whether the bird was injured or how it was captured.

This January, 1954, record was cited in *Audubon Field Notes* (Vol. 8, No. 3, pages 237 and 243). A notation in *Cassinia* (Vol. 41, 1954, p. 80) to the effect that this bird had been picked up dead was in error.

There have been several New Jersey sightings of the Magnificent Frigate-bird, the last one apparently being in 1949 by Edward Reimann (*Cassinia*, Vol. 38, 1949-50, p. 31). There are apparently two Maryland records (both from Ocean City), the first in September, 1961, and the second in June, 1966 (Chandler S. Robbins, Willet T. Van Velzen, *Field List of the Birds of Maryland*, Maryland Ornithological Society, March, 1968).

— James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace,
Blackwood, New Jersey 08012

Unusual Number of Pine Siskins banded in Burlington County, New Jersey: Although it was evident in many areas that a heavy Pine Siskin flight was under way by late October, 1968, it was not until late December that small scattered groups began appearing regularly at my own feeding stations at Cedar Run Lake, Medford Township, Burlington County, New Jersey. Friends and neighbors called to report that they too were spotting Pine Siskins among the ever-present flocks of Evening Grosbeaks.

As the numbers of Pine Siskins continued to increase in January, Mrs. Woodford and I commenced banding operations. Ten all-purpose traps of various sizes were used. A mixture of sunflower seeds, chopped raw peanuts, and corn was distributed each day in the trapping area. Feeding boxes were filled each day even though we banded mainly on weekends. We noticed, and so did others, that peanuts were the preferred food.

During the peak number days Pine Siskins were flocking in the tree tops by early morning. Their "zzsp" notes seemed to make the woods alive. It was quite a sight to observe the large numbers of Siskins drop down from the trees like autumn leaves in the wind. A number of photographers attempted to catch these spectacles on film.

Our peak banding day was March 8, when 250 Pine Siskins were banded. We had earlier banded 210 birds on February 15 and 243 birds on February 21. On a number of days trapping had to be discontinued as the banding cages were filled to capacity before we could make another round or handle those birds waiting to be banded. K. Price of Mt. Holly, New Jersey, and A. L. Davis of Centennial Lake, Marlton, New Jersey, assisted Mrs. Woodford and me during the peak days.

We retrapped, of course, many birds which we had previously banded, but we trapped no birds wearing a band other than our own.

Mrs. Woodford followed up on a report that many banded Pine Siskins were appearing at Oakwood Lakes, about four miles from Cedar Run Lake. Using two traps she caught a number of these birds, all of which had been banded at Cedar Run Lake.

The multitude of Siskins attracted several hawks. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen chasing Siskins on several occasions in February. A. L. Davis and I saw one successfully catch its victim. Feathers flew, and the rest of the Siskin flock remained frozen for minutes afterwards.

One of our largest wire enclosures is about 5x7x5 feet. On one occasion a Sharp-shinned Hawk perched on top of the trap, then dropped down and walked around the outside before finally going in through the open door and perching on a wooden bar inside the empty cage. Pine Siskins and other birds were silent and watchful from feeders and branches nearby. The hawk seemed in no hurry to leave as it inspected the interior of the trap which it had only viewed previously from tree tops above. An exit was made via a smaller door, and the hawk remained on a dead oak limb nearby for at least five minutes before flying away.

We banded our first Pine Siskins on January 4. On May 10 eight Siskins were banded, the last of the season. In all, we banded 1853 Pine Siskins in this period of slightly more than four months.

We last observed Pine Siskins in the area about May 22. There was one lone very late individual still present at nearby Braddock's Mill Lake on May 31 (R. Jenkins).

— James B. Woodford, Cedar Run Lake,
Marlton, New Jersey 08053

Great Skua off Avalon, New Jersey: On Friday, June 13, 1969, my daughter, Karen, and I participated on a fishing trip aboard *The Starfish* out of Sea Isle City with Captain Charles Shaeffer and six other fishermen. At about 3:00 o'clock I observed a Great Skua (*Catharacta skua*) off the stern as we were anchored some five miles east of Avalon, Cape May County, New Jersey.

The otherwise sunny day was interspersed with fog and misty haze. The wind which blew stronger after mid-day came from the southwest. During the day several probable Cory's Shearwaters and Wilson's Petrels were spotted in the distance.

While some of the passengers were feeding bits of clam bait to about eight Laughing Gulls which planed into the wind just above the stern of the boat, the Skua suddenly appeared some ten feet above the gulls, wheeled like a soaring buteo, and then flew northward about 500 yards and settled in the water.

The bird, which was noticed as "strange" to everyone (including the captain), was easily identifiable without binoculars. The brownish heavy-set build, white mirror wing patches, short tail, and heavy flight were readily apparent features.

This was my second observation of a Skua. I had seen one in mid-Atlantic in October, 1943, from the deck of the *Aquitania*.

Neither Witmer Stone nor David Fables mentions the Skua in their lists of New Jersey birds, and I know of no recent records. It is possible, therefore, that this is the first record for the state.

— Edward J. Reimann, 2145 Old Welsh Road,
Abington, Pa. 19001

A Winter Robin Roost in Philadelphia: On February 5, 1969, on my way home from work after getting off the Reading line at the Wyndmoor Station at 5:31 P.M., I counted 88 Robins in a six-minute walk to my house. The next week, on February 13, I walked a little more slowly and counted 316 from 5:31 to 5:45. At this point it became clear that the birds were flying to an evening roost, since they were all flying due north in loose groups just before dark. On February 14 I stayed out longer until the birds had stopped going over and was amazed to count approximately 1047 Robins between 5:31 and 5:55. The next day, a Saturday, I was able to start counting earlier, at 5:08, and the total climbed to 2241, 99% of which had passed over by 5:45. On Sunday, February 16, my wife, Liz, and I followed the Robins by car

and after half an hour of zigzagging located the roost in the large shade trees of the old Stotesbury Estate near Wyndmoor, east of Paper Mill Road, south of Cheltenham Ave., and just northwest of the city limits. On March 1, from 5:00 to 6:05 P.M., I counted 3057 incoming Robins at this spot (from 8709 Patton St.). The four five-minute intervals from 5:30 to 5:50 had the heaviest traffic, each having over 400 birds and averaging 545. Three to four inches of snow fell that night. No later counts were made, but from the diminishing numbers of birds passing overhead in late March it appeared that the roost broke up toward the end of the month.

For so common and familiar a bird the Robin continues to be surprising and unpredictable, especially in winter. Cruickshank (*Birds around New York City*, N.Y., American Museum of Natural History, 1942, p. 340) writes of Robins in the New York City area: "Since flocks often winter to the north of us it is not unusual to have definite invasions after severe weather in January and February. These invasions are often thought to be early arrivals from the south. . . The winter population is very irregular and unpredictable." In his later book on birds of the same region (*Birds of the New York Area*, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1964, p. 335-6) John Bull states: "It is difficult to ascertain, however, whether Robins present in flocks in late January, and particularly in February, are birds that over-wintered, or represent newly arrived individuals from more southern areas." A check of back issues of *Cassinia* fails to reveal any large winter roosts of Robins in the Philadelphia area, although they often occur in large numbers near the shore. Robins usually arrive in numbers about the middle of March.

— Henry T. Armistead, 39 Benezet Street,
Philadelphia, Pa. 19118

Albino Black-crowned Night Heron at Brigantine. On September 21, 1968, Mr. Dale Coggeshall, Refuge Manager, and I observed a completely albino Black-crowned Night Heron at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. All feathers were white, the bill, legs, and feet yellow, and the eyes red. We first observed the bird in flight, in company with a normally colored immature, over the experimental pool at the western end of the west pool. The two birds landed along the edge of the pool, and we were afforded more prolonged views. The albino's identity was readily apparent in flight. The bird's broad wings, stocky body, and its close association with another night heron were conclusive.

I know of no prior or subsequent sightings of the albino. Because of the number of white herons present at Brigantine at the time, it could be easily overlooked if one were not aware of its presence or if it were seen only from a distance.

I have no knowledge on the incidence of albinism in night herons. However, C. Chandler Ross makes no mention of this species in his article on "Albinism Among North American Birds" (*Cassinia*, Vol. 47, 1963).

— James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace,
Blackwood, N.J. 08012

A Summering White-throated Sparrow in Gloucester County, New Jersey: After the spring migration of 1969 a White-throated Sparrow remained in the yard of Mr. Wynfield Glass in Pitman, Gloucester County, New Jersey. The bird did not appear injured in any way. It was last seen in Pitman on June 15, a day of severe thunderstorms, and on the following day presumably this same bird appeared in the yard of Mr. and Mrs. Irmel Brown in Glassboro. This new location was only several blocks away from the Pitman location.

The bird remained in Glassboro for the remainder of the summer. Underbrush along a back fence on the Browns' property provided ideal cover. The bird stopped singing in early July but was seen almost daily in the yard. No special food was put out, but a ground level water tray was provided.

A summer record for the White-throated Sparrow this far south along the coastal plain is not unique, but I believe a summering record is. Several summer records in Maryland and the District of Columbia are cited by Stewart and Robbins (*Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, 1958).

— James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace,
Blackwood, N.J. 08012