

GENERAL NOTES

Western Tanager near Ambler, Pennsylvania: On 21 December 1974 David Zumeta observed an immature tanager near Ambler, Pennsylvania. On the basis of the presence of wing bars, he identified it as a Western Tanager. Because a small percentage of immature Scarlet Tanagers possess wing bars (Thomas H. Davis, *American Birds*, August 1972, p. 713), further observations seemed indicated. On 24 December I located the bird in the same area. In addition to the two well-defined wing bars, the bird showed the characteristic saddle-backed appearance of the immature Western Tanager. Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964) cites four or five previous observations of this species in Pennsylvania. Thus this record maintains the bird's status as a casual visitor.

—Keith C. Richards, 348 Summit Road,
Media, Pa. 19063

Hawk Migration Behavior at the Susquehanna River: As the 1974 autumn hawk migration season approached, I looked forward to it with great enthusiasm. Circumstances had placed me in a position so that on all days, when I had no business commitment, I could spend about an hour at mid-day observing hawks. It was my intention to position myself on the west shore of the Susquehanna River at the foot of Blue Mountain and observe the hawks as they left the ridge on the east shore and soared across the river.

September 12, my first day in the field, brought with it surprise observations which ultimately changed the nature and purpose of my nearly daily activity. It was a clear, warm day, with the temperature about 80 degrees and a light breeze of about five m.p.h. blowing from the south. It should be stated here that Blue Mountain at this point extends due east and west, and the Susquehanna River through the gap and for several miles in both directions runs due north and south.

When I positioned myself at a good observation point and started to scan the sky for birds of prey, to my surprise none were visible. Although I waited five or ten minutes, still none appeared. During the next half hour I worked my way northward towards Marysville along a road near to and paralleling the river. At each stop I had a clear view and broad sweep of the sky, but I saw no hawks. Did the infamous dull period of mid-day account for the lack of birds? Was it possible that no hawks were flying, even though the date was within the period of normal high count days? Since there was a south wind blowing, was this responsible? Do the hawks break away from Blue Mountain somewhere in the intervening span of 60 or 70 miles between Hawk Mountain and the Susquehanna? Was this to be the pattern for the days to come over the next three months?

Finally I worked my way up into the southern part of Marysville, some two miles north of my starting point, and drove closer to the river. In a wide open space along the river, I could walk to the water's edge. From here I had a clear view of the eastern ridges and an unobstructed view of the sky above the river. With a feeling that this might be a last ditch effort, I raised my binoculars and started to search for soaring hawks. Suddenly there was one—followed by another and another. During the next half hour 70 Broad-winged Hawks streaked past in essentially the same flight path.

While I enjoyed my success in seeing these birds, it was their flight pattern that interested me. I had expected to find them soaring and circling from the end of the eastern ridge to the beginning of the western ridge of Blue Mountain. After all, good hawk observation points were at Sterrett's Gap only twelve miles to the west and at Wagner's Gap, about six or eight miles west of Sterrett's Gap. On this date, however, the birds were streaking on a course nearly straight up river from some point on the eastern ridge to the end of a high ridge just north of Marysville. I could not see the point from which the birds were leaving Blue Mountain. However, subsequent observations lead me to the conclusion that the hawks had "kettled" over the highest point on Blue Mountain, gained great altitude, then peeled off and streaked for the ridge north of Marysville. Later in the fall I saw them doing exactly that. This would carry the birds on a straight path of about four miles along or across no ridges and of course along and over a stretch of about two miles of river. They were

darting for the northern ridge with wings set, not flapping, but constantly losing altitude. Over the river, I suppose, there was an absence or certainly a minimum of thermals. The hawks were attempting to reach the safety of the northern ridge as quickly and as easily as possible in order to continue their effortless migration southward.

It is not my intention here to attempt to chronicle each of my 41 days of observation during the season. However, observation made on this first day raised questions concerning actions of the hawks when they reach an obstacle such as a major river. What happens in their migration route at the Hudson, the Delaware, the Lehigh the Schuylkill, and finally the Susquehanna? Also, is their behavior and flight path different with a south or east wind from that with a west or northwest wind?

During the following week I positioned myself at the foot of Blue Mountain on the eastern shore. On only one day was there a west wind, and on this day four Broad-wings soared and circled directly across the river to Blue Mountain. On three other days the wind was from the south or southwest. Thirty-seven hawks, a Bald Eagle, and a Turkey Vulture were observed during this period, and ten Broad-wings and a Marsh Hawk were seen to leave the ridge and fly due south. On September 17 only three birds were seen, a Broad-winged Hawk, a Kestrel, and a Turkey Vulture. After some circling and apparent indecision all three eventually headed up river towards Marysville and the northern ridge.

On September 20 I discovered a way to drive quickly and easily to the crest of Blue Mountain on the eastern shore and to a spot which is probably the highest point on the ridge for miles—certainly the highest point from there to the river. For the remainder of the season, through December 5, my observations were made from this location. While one does not have the clear view up the ridge which characterizes Bake Oven Knob and Hawk Mountain, there is an open space of some 200 feet which permits fair observation.

Most hawks flew what I would consider typical patterns or courses, directly along the northern side of the ridge, on days when the wind blew from the west or northwest. Some exceptions did occur. On October 7 a Sharp-shinned Hawk left the ridge and flew south. On November 7 three Red-tailed Hawks, the only birds I observed, left the ridge and flew south. On November 8 two Red-tails (of ten hawks of four species observed) left the ridge and soared southward. On November 22 I observed 14 Red-tails. Four of these circled and soared, gained altitude, and headed into the wind towards Marysville and the upper ridge. Four others crossed to the south side of the ridge and then flew south over Harrisburg.

More interesting and perhaps more meaningful observations were made when the wind blew from the south or southwest. My experiences on September 12 have already been detailed. On October 29 six Red-tailed Hawks out of a total of 24 hawks (of four species) left the ridge from its highest point, my post of observation, and sailed directly into the wind to the southwest. The lone Turkey Vulture observed that day followed a similar path. On November 5 a Marsh Hawk left the ridge at my vantage point and flew southward. Eighteen Red-tailed Hawks circled and soared, gained great altitude over my position, and seemed in great confusion. Four eventually soared to the northwest to the northern ridge, and two left the ridge and soared due south. Four others attempted to leave the ridge and soar to the south, but after traveling some distance they evidently experienced unsatisfactory flight conditions and returned to the ridge.

If circumstances permit, I intend continuing my observations and studies in 1975 at and near the Susquehanna Gap of Blue Mountain.

It is evident from my observations at the Susquehanna that the river obstacle causes the hawks to behave in a manner unlike anything I have witnessed at Bake Oven Knob, Hawk Mountain, or Wagner's Gap. Also, a south or southwest wind definitely alters their normal east to west flight pattern at the river.

During my mid-day observations in the fall of 1974 I noted the following: 139 Broad-winged Hawks, 122 Red-tailed Hawks, six Red-shouldered Hawks, 34 Sharp-shinned Hawks, two Cooper's Hawks, four Kestrels, one Peregrine, 28 Marsh Hawks, 12 Ospreys, one adult Bald Eagle, one sub-adult Golden Eagle, and four Turkey Vultures.

—Arthur Bergey, 720 Plymouth Rd.,
York, Pa. 17402

Harris' Sparrow at Audubon, Pennsylvania: On November 3, 1973, an immature Harris' Sparrow appeared with White-throated Sparrows and other birds at our feeding station at Mill Grove, Audubon, Pennsylvania. Thereafter this elusive and quite unpredictable bird was observed on nine further occasions, the last date being April 24, 1974. It was always seen at our ground feeding stations and never for more than a few minutes at a time.

The Harris' Sparrow's plumage in the spring was considerably darker around the head and throat than when first observed some six months earlier.

—Edward W. Graham, Mill Grove,
Audubon, Pa. 19407

Nesting of Virginia Rail in Delaware County: While birding along Crum Creek about one quarter mile north of Crum Creek Reservoir in central Delaware County, Pennsylvania, on 17 July 1974, I discovered the presence of at least one adult Virginia Rail. The bird was heard and seen in a five-acre marsh in which the predominate vegetation was cattail.

I returned to the area on 22 and 23 July. On 22 July I saw one adult and one immature Virginia Rail. The plumage of the immature bird was that of a juvenile, but a few remnants of down and feather sheaths were present.

By using the individual call of the adult bird which was recorded on the spot, I was able to roughly determine the territory which the bird was defending. The area seemed to be about three of the five acres and was located in the wettest part of the marsh.

On 23 July I located two adult and two immature Virginia Rails. The presence of the immature birds is presumptive evidence of nesting, for these birds are not known as wanderers during the breeding season.

—Keith C. Richards, 348 Summit Road,
Media, Pa. 19063

Say's Phoebe in Pennsylvania: A Say's Phoebe was seen near Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania, from April 1 to April 5, 1975. It was first observed by Barbara Lake and Alex Nagy on the afternoon of April 1. It was seen off and on for the next several days by other observers and on April 5 by Katherine Brethwaite, Barbara Haas, and me. To my knowledge there were no reports of the bird after April 5.

When observed by me, the bird was sitting on a tombstone in a small cemetery located in rolling farm land. It was a very windy day, and the bird seldom flew very high above the ground. On several occasions it left its perch, hovered close to the ground, and landed in a new location. We observed the bird for ten minutes from distances of fifty to a hundred feet. The bird was in excellent plumage, with the rusty belly and long dark tail quite evident.

Earl Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964) cites two previous sightings of the Say's Phoebe in Pennsylvania. Both were winter records.

—Franklin C. Haas, East Forge Road, Route 36,
Media, Pa. 19063

Short Pelagic Trips from Atlantic City in 1974: A series of eleven monthly pelagic trips were planned in 1974 aboard the 50' *Mayflower II* skippered by Captain William Tildsley. Three of these trips were cancelled because of adverse weather conditions and two others for lack of passengers. Trips were made in April, May, July, August, September, and October.

These trips departed from Gardner's Basin, Atlantic City, N.J., about 7:00 A.M. and returned about 4:00 or 5:00 P.M. The maximum distance from land reached was about 25 miles. Within this limited range there did not appear to be any natural attractions for concentrations of pelagic birds, but the trips were not without some interest. The highlight of these trips was undoubtedly the Audubon's Shearwater sighted on August 25. The bird flew past the boat at fairly close range but did not tarry. On May 19 six Sooty Shearwaters were observed, and on the July 28 trip 43 Cory's Shearwaters and three Greater Shearwaters were seen. The high count of Wilson's Storm-Petrels was the 418 sighted on the latter date.

Obviously, the fall migration produced the greatest number of total species as a number of terrestrial birds were sighted. Perhaps the most astounding of these was the two Common Gallinules seen on September 15. The first bird observed in flight high overhead was a puzzler until soon afterwards another was flushed from the water in close proximity to the boat. Also on September 15 there were frequent occurrences of jaegers in fantastic aerial pursuit of stray warblers. In sharp contrast was the almost total lack of birds on May 19. This was at the height of the spring migration on land, but the trip was only salvaged by the sighting of the six Sooty Shearwaters.

—James Akers, 209 S. 30th Street,
Brigantine, N.J. 08203

Carolina Wrens Breeding in Lehigh County: On 26 August 1974 I discovered a Carolina Wren's nest along the Lehigh River a half mile north of Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. The nest was located 2½ feet above the ground in the top of a rotting stump. It contained one nestling and one unhatched egg. On 30 August 1974 I observed two other adult Carolina Wrens gathering insects for a just-fledged young below the South Lookout at Bake Oven Knob, Lehigh County.

Although this species has occurred previously in Lehigh County during the breeding season, I could find no other actual nesting records. Trainer (*A Checklist of Birds of Lehigh County, Pa.*, Allentown, Lehigh Valley Bird Club, 1956:4) records the species as an irregular resident in the county. These two records document that Carolina Wrens now breed in Lehigh County as far north as the Kittatinny Ridge.

—Richard E. Wiltraut, 54 Pershing Blvd.,
Whitehall, Pa. 18052

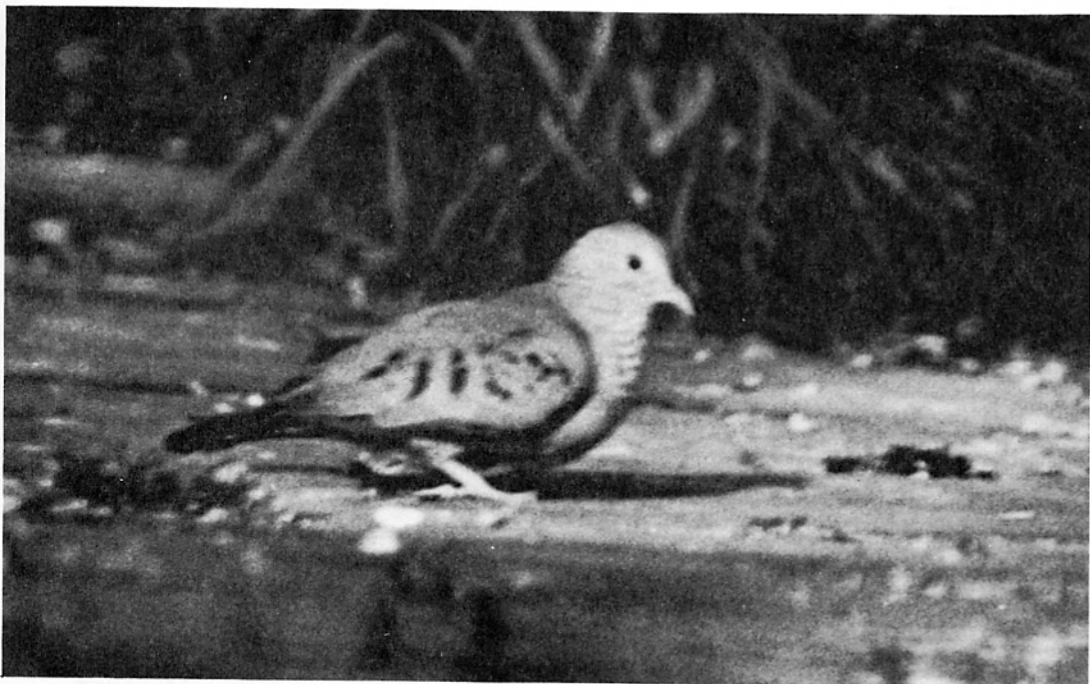
Fulvous Tree Duck in Pennsylvania: On March 16, 1975, the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club conducted its first organized field trip to the relatively new state refuge at Middle Creek, located just south of Kleinfeltersville. The refuge itself straddles the line between Lebanon and Lancaster Counties. The weather was partly cloudy and cold, with temperatures hovering around the freezing mark.

Some 23 species of waterfowl were observed, including one Fulvous Tree Duck which could be studied at leisure through scopes. Insofar as I can determine, this is the first record for this species in Pennsylvania.

—Harry Todd, 925 Collenbrook Avenue,
Drexel Hill, Pa. 19026

Ground Dove in Bucks County: On December 14, 1974, a Ground Dove (*Columbina passerina*) appeared at the feeding station of Mrs. G. P. Cole, Sunnyside Lane, Cardell's Corners, Pennsylvania. This location is near Newtown in Bucks County. The bird was observed almost daily through April 25, 1975.

During the course of its long stay the bird was seen by many observers who visited the Cole residence.



Ground Dove near Newtown, Pa.
Photographed by Alan Brady on Jan. 19, 1975

The bird frequently roosted under a hedge in the back yard, coming out several times each day to feed. On occasion it would feed in a small plowed area near the house as well.

Many other species were attracted to Mrs. Cole's extensive feeder system, but the Ground Dove did not appear to travel with other birds.

There is apparently no prior record of the Ground Dove in the Delaware Valley region.

—Donald Sparks, Dolington Rd.,
Newtown, Pa. 18940