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THE MIGRATION AND ABUNDANCE OF BLACKBIRDS, TANAGERS AND FRINGILLIDS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

by

J. Fred Denton

This summary of the dates of occurrence and the relative abundance of blackbirds, tanagers and fringillids in Richmond County, Georgia, has been prepared since Murphey (1937) gave few specific dates for the occurrence of these birds. Furthermore, four additional species have been recorded in the County and the status of several species has changed during the thirty intervening years. It is based mainly on personal records and opinions made during the nearly twenty-five years that I have resided in the County. However, several pertinent records from Murphey's report as well as some made by ornithologists stationed at Ft. Gordon and by members of the Augusta Bird Club are included. All records are of carefully identified birds and many are based on specimens. Some of the more unusual records have appeared in GEORGIA BIRDS or been reported in short notes, seasonal reports or Christmas counts published in THE ORIOLE or AUDUBON FIELD NOTES; they are repeated here for completeness.

To designate the resident status of various species the following abbreviations are used: pr. (permanent resident); sr. (summer resident — regular, spring to fall, breeding); wr. (winter resident — fall to spring, usually regular); and tv. (transient visitant — spring and/or fall).

Bobolink: *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*. t v., common in spring, Apr. 15, '43-May 31, '64 and uncommon in fall, Aug. 30, '44-Sept. 27, '61.

Eastern Meadowlark: *Sturnella magna*. p r., common in summer, abundant in winter.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. One rec-
ord, Sept. 23, 1893 (Murphey, 1937).

Red-winged Blackbird: *Agelaius phoeniceus*. p r., common both summer and winter.

Orchard Oriole: *Icterus spurius*. s r., common, Apr. 11, '54-Sept. 15 (Murphey). L. Johnson observed a bird in female plumage on Mar. 21, 1953.

Baltimore Oriole: *Icterus galbula*. p r., scarce, recorded more frequently in winter; nested in June 1960 (Denton, 1961).

Rusty Blackbird: *Euphagus carolinus*. w r., fairly common, Oct. 24, '42-Mar. 30, '43.

Brewer's Blackbird: *Euphagus cyanocephalus*. Irregular winter visitant, Oct. 18, '66-Mar. 24, '43.

Common Grackle: *Quiscalus quiscula*. p r., common both in city and rural areas.

Brown-headed Cowbird: *Molothrus ater*. p r., uncommon in summer, common rest of year. Eggs of this species have been found in nests of White-eyed Vireo, Hooded Warbler and Indigo Bunting.

Scarlet Tanager: *Piranga olivacea*. t v., uncommon in spring, Apr. 24 (Murphey)-May 19, '44; rare in fall, Oct. 11, '44 and '45.

Summer Tanager: *Piranga rubra*. s r., common, Apr. 3, '45-Oct. 9, '43.

Cardinal: *Richmondia cardinalis*. p r., abundant throughout the county.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. t v., rare in spring, Apr. 24, '55-May 21, '53; no fall records, but has been recorded in fall in Aiken Co., S. C., Sept. 21-Oct. 17 (Norris, 1963).

Blue Grosbeak: *Guiraca caerulea*. s r., common, Apr. 14, '63-Oct. 3, '54.

Indigo Bunting: *Passerina cyanea*. s r., abundant, Apr. 8, '64-Oct. 20, '45.

Painted Bunting: *Passerina ciris*. s r., uncommon in its restricted range, Apr. 12, '59-Oct. 21, '44.

Dickcissel: *Spiza americana*. s r., rare and irregular, Apr. 19, '53-Sept. 9, '45.

Evening Grosbeak: *Hesperiphona vespertina*. Rare and irregular winter visitant, Dec. 2, '65-Apr. 18, '60.

Purple Finch: *Carpodacus purpureus*. w r., uncommon, Dec. 18, '49-Apr. 12, '58.

Pine Siskin: *Spinus pinus*. Irregular and generally rare winter visitant, Feb. 3, '53-Mar. 29, '53.

American Goldfinch: *Spinus tristis*. p r., common in winter, rare in summer, probably breeds. Recorded every month except July; extreme dates of occurrence, June 29, '52 and Aug. 1, '52.

Red Crossbill: *Loxia curvirostra*. One record, a flock of about 12 birds seen by Murphey Jan. 15, 1899 (Murphey, 1937.)

Rufous-sided Towhee: *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*. p r., abundant.

Savannah Sparrow: *Passerculus sandwichensis*. w r., common, Sept. 9, '52-May 10, '58.

Grasshopper Sparrow: *Ammodramus savannarum*. s r., common in suitable habitat, Mar. 22, '45-Oct. 29, '44. Also recorded in winter, Nov. 10, '45 (specimen), Nov. 15, '42, Dec. 3, '44 (specimen) and Jan. 23, '44.

Le Conte's Sparrow: *Passerherbulus caudatus*. No record. However, it has been recorded in adjacent Aiken and Barnwell Counties, S. C., between Jan. 14 and Feb. 25 (Norris, 1963).

Henslow's Sparrow: *Passerherbulus henslowii*. Two records, Apr. 8, '45 (specimen) and Apr. 27, '43. Specimens were killed at the TV tower in Aiken Co., S. C., Oct. 26 and Nov. 1, '57 (Norris, 1963).

Vesper Sparrow: *Pooecetes gramineus*. w r., fairly common, Oct. 20, '56-Apr. 28, '62.

Bachman's Sparrow: *Aimophila aestivalis*. p r., uncommon in summer, rare in winter. Winter records include Dec. 30, '44 (specimen) and Feb. 3, '45.

State-colored Junco: *Junco hyemalis*. w r., common, Oct. 6, '57-Apr. 16, '61.

Tree Sparrow: *Spizella arborea*. Three birds were seen feeding on a lawn in Augusta on Feb. 25, 1921 by Aaron C. Bagge (Burleigh, 1958).

Chipping Sparrow: *Spizella passerina*. p r., fairly common, apparently increasing in recent years.

Field Sparrow: *Spizella pusilla*. p r., common, but less numerous than in former years because of alteration of habitat.

White-crowned Sparrow: *Zonotrichia leucophrys*. w r., scarce, Oct. 29, '66-May 9, '54.

White-throated Sparrow: *Zonotrichia albicollis*. w r., abundant, Oct. 8, '61-May 26, '53.

Fox Sparrow: *Passerella iliaca*. w r., fairly common in suitable habitats, Nov. 13, '49-Mar. 29, '47.

Lincoln's Sparrow: *Melospiza lincolni*. t v., two records, Oct. 22, '44 and Mar. 15, '43. An additional bird was observed on the South Carolina (Aiken Co.) bank of the Savannah River on Nov. 21, 1954 (Norris, 1963).

Song Sparrow: *Melospiza melodia*. w r., abundant, Oct. 4, '42-Apr. 22, '49.

Swamp Sparrow: *Melospiza georgiana*. w r., common, Oct. 10, '43-May 9, '43.

Lapland Longspur: *Calcarius lapponicus*. w r., scarce but regular in occurrence at the Augusta Airport, Dec. 4, '65-Mar. 14, '65.

Snow Bunting: *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One record, a bird collected by Murphey on Nov. 10, 1937 (Burleigh, 1958).

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- Murphey, Eugene E., 1937. Observations on the bird life of the middle Savannah valley, 1890-1937. *Contrib. Charleston (S. C.) Mus.*, No. IX.
- Norris, Robert A., 1963. Birds of the AEC Savannah River plant area. *Contrib. Charleston (S. C.) Mus.*, No. XIV.
- 1510 Pendleton Rd.
Augusta, Georgia 30904

GENERAL NOTES

SIGHT RECORD OF MAGNIFICANT FRIGATE-BIRD — On October 15, 1966, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Freeborn, Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Einhorn, and the writer obtained a clear view of a Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) soaring very high above Georgia route 31 approximately a mile west of Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, north of Darien, Ga.

Because this bird was a little north of its normal range, I was inclined to hesitate about identification. The truth is that there is simply no silhouette with which a Frigate-bird could be confused. Five of us had the bird in view with binoculars for two to three minutes.

Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*; U. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla.) records three specimens taken on the coast of Georgia, all in late spring or summer. He reports other sight records on and around St. Simon's Island (which is close to the locale of our sighting) as late as September 18.

Tomkins (1958. *The Birdlife of the Savannah River Delta*. Occasional Publication No. 4, Georgia Ornithological Society) discusses the available specimens of the Frigate-bird from Georgia and adds: "A couple of other sight records have been reported to me under conditions indicating correct identification." — Louis C. Fink, 688 North Parkwood Road, Decatur, Georgia 30030.

NEW DATE RECORDS FOR FOUR SPECIES AT ATHENS, GA.

— According to Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*; U. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla.), four species observed near Athens this fall represent new dates of occurrence for the state:

- (1) Black-billed cuckoo — 12 November
This bird was observed by the author at Sandy Creek Bottoms, where it was feeding on berries of privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*). Previous late date of occurrence: 21 October at Thomasville.
- (2) Red-breasted nuthatch — 11 September
Heard and seen in a mixed woods one mile south of Athens by the author. Previous first fall date: 24 September, twice at Atlanta.
- (3) Prairie warbler — 27 November
This straggler, an exceedingly well-marked individual, was seen by Richard Peake and the author at Sandy Creek Bottoms. Previous late date: 30 October, at Atlanta.

(4) Blue grosbeak — 23 October

Caught in a mist net by Dr. Carl W. Helms of the Department of Zoology. This bird was roosting in a thick planting of high-bush blueberry (*Vaccinium* sp.) in the Oconee River Bottoms. Previous late date: 20 October, at Macon.

—Elliot J. Tramer, Department of Zoology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30601.

WINTERING SORAS IN THE ATLANTA AREA — Between October 23, 1966, and January 22, 1967, Soras were heard and seen on four occasions along the Chattahoochee River west of Roswell Road near the Chattahoochee Camp School. Dates and observers were: (1) Oct. 23 — Vaughan Morrison, Verne and Joscelyn Hill, C. M. Einhorn; (2) Jan. 2 — Verne and Joscelyn Hill; (3) Jan. 21 — Peg and C. M. Einhorn; (4) Jan. 22 — Vaughan Morrison, Verne and Joscelyn Hill, Mrs. J. C. Oliver, Mr. and Mrs. Phil Forbes, Peg and C. M. Einhorn. Several Soras were recorded on each occasion.

Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*; U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla.) describes the Sora as an uncommon transient throughout Georgia and of local occurrence during the winter months at Augusta, in the Okefenokee Swamp, and on the coast. Griffin and Parks (1955. *Occurrence Extremes of Birds of the Atlanta Region*) list the Sora as a rare transient. It includes references to a sighting on September 15, 1956, and one spring record in March and three fall records in September and November from 1897 through 1908. — C. M. Einhorn, 1340 Holly Lane, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30329.

BLUE JAYS RECORDED ON SAPELO ISLAND, GA. — In his paper *Absence of the Blue Jay on Some of Georgia's Coastal Islands* (1965. *The Oriole*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, June, 1965) Ivan R. Tomkins noted that Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) had not at the time that he wrote been recorded on Sapelo. During the annual Christmas Count there on Dec. 31, 1966, Blue Jays were seen and heard by 10 different observers in eight widely scattered locations: (1) Anne and R. E. Hamilton, Ron Pulliam — two heard at south end of "Root Patch", 14 seen in hedgerow along border of "Root Patch", three seen in the settlement at Hog Hammock, one each seen at two different locations on the road between the Marine Institute Laboratories and "Chocolate"; (2) Louis Schweitzer and Tom Rial — two seen east of the greenhouses, two seen on the road between the greenhouses and the beach; (3) Ron Pulliam, Wilson and Virginia Baker — one heard in the Duck Pond area; (4) William Dopson and Leslie Daven-

port — one seen along the road north of the greenhouses. These observations establish beyond doubt that Blue Jays do occur on Sapelo, at least occasionally. — L. B. Davenport, Jr., Biology Department, Armstrong State College, Savannah, Georgia 31406.

RECENT LITERATURE

BIRDS IN OUR LIVES, edited by Alfred Stefferud and A. L. Nelson, U. S. Department of the Interior; Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1966. 561 pp., 80 wash drawings, 372 photos. \$9.00.

This is the second book in a series of popular books on fish and wildlife resources being produced under the sponsorship of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The first, *Waterfowl Tomorrow*, appeared in 1964.

Birds in Our Lives is written to appeal to a very broad spectrum of readers. Its principal objective is to enable readers to achieve a greater appreciation of and a deeper insight into the myriad ways in which birds affect humans and their civilization. It contains 54 chapters written by 61 authors and arranged in nine sections, each of which is devoted to a particular aspect of the relationships between birds and people. These cover such things as birds in literature and art, in sport and recreation, as part of the ecological complex of nature, in science and agriculture, as their survival is affected by man, as they may interfere with human activity, and their prospects for co-existence with humans. Throughout the book, accent is placed upon man's responsibility to maintain a reasonable environment for other organisms as well as himself and upon the benefits which accrue to him from investigating and striving to solve problems of bird life and learning to appreciate it.

The book is well organized, generally well written, and contains a wealth of information for scientist and layman alike.—L. B. Davenport, Jr.

A LIFETIME WITH THE BIRDS, AN ORNITHOLOGICAL LOG-BOOK, 1966, by Earle R. Greene, Edwards Brothers, Inc., 2500 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Mich., 404 pages, many black and white illustrations, \$6.00.

Earle R. Greene, a charter member of the G. O. S., has written an excellent account of his lifetime interest in and enjoyment of living birds. He is one of the few ornithologists who has identified 600 or more full

species of birds in North America within the area covered by the 1957 edition of the A. O. U. checklist.

While reading Greene's book this reviewer found himself reliving pleasant days with the Atlanta Bird Club and the founding of the Georgia Ornithological Society, of which Greene was a founder and one of its early presidents.

He takes us to the first meeting of the Georgia Naturalists' Club and describes some of the most interesting trips made by that group which later became the Georgia Society of Naturalists.

Earle Greene also writes about his early days as manager of the Lake Mattamuskeet Wildlife Refuge and the other wildlife areas he managed later; namely, the Okefenokee, Key West, and Great White Heron Wildlife Refuges.

A Lifetime With the Birds tells of visits with fellow ornithologists and of trips to see rare and unusual birds, often giving such helpful information as the names of places where he stayed on these journeys.

Here is a book written by an excellent ornithologist who has spent a long and useful life devoted to the enjoyment, study, protection, and conservation of birds. — Lucien Harris, Jr.

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FOOTNOTES—Avoid footnotes by incorporating such material in the text.

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