

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY, 1968

Thomas A. Imhof

Only recently have the 1968 breeding bird survey totals been available. In 1966 we ran 40 of the 41 routes in Alabama, in 1967, 37 routes, and last year only 32 of them. We hope this improves considerably in 1969.

The ranking of the 30 most numerous species counted on the surveys in Alabama for the three years is shown below.

1966	1967	1968
1. Bobwhite	Cardinal	Cardinal
2. Cardinal	Mockingbird	Mockingbird
3. Mockingbird	Com Grackle	Bobwhite
4. House Sparrow	Bobwhite	Com Grackle
5. Com Grackle	House Sparrow	Red-winged Blackbird
6. Com Crow	Red-winged Blackbird	Blue Jay
7. Mourning Dove	Mourning Dove	House Sparrow
8. Blue Jay	Blue Jay	Mourning Dove
9. Red-winged Blackbird	Indigo Bunting	Com Crow
10. Indigo Bunting	Com Crow	Indigo Bunting
11. R-s Towhee	E Meadowlark	R-s Towhee
12. E Meadowlark	Starling	E Meadowlark
13. Starling	R-s Towhee	Purple Martin
14. Yellow-br Chat	Yellow-br Chat	Starling
15. Purple Martin	Purple Martin	Yellow-br Chat
16. Chimney Swift	Chimney Swift	Carolina Wren
17. Wood Thrush	Wood Thrush	Chimney Swift
18. Carolina Wren	Field Sparrow	Orchard Oriole
19. Orchard Oriole	Carolina Wren	Wood Thrush
20. Field Sparrow	Orchard Oriole	Field Sparrow
21. Yellow-b Cuckoo	Tufted Titmouse	Tufted Titmouse
22. White-eyed Vireo	Yellowthroat	Red-bellied Woodp
23. Red-bellied Woodp	Red-bellied Woodp	Yellowthroat
24. E Kingbird	White-eyed Vireo	Fish Crow
25. Yellowthroat	Br-h Cowbird	E Kingbird
26. Tufted Titmouse	E Kingbird	White-eyed Vireo
27. Brown Thrasher	Brown Thrasher	Car Chickadee
28. Robin	Robin	Br-h Cowbird
29. Blue Grosbeak	Car Chickadee	Gr Crested Flyc
30. Car Chickadee	Blue Grosbeak	Brown Thrasher

THE SEASON FALL 1968

Compiler and Editor—Thomas A. Imhof

The following tentative schedule is proposed:

Fall Season (September-October-November) deadline for copy 10 December.

Winter Season (December-January-February) deadline for copy 10 March.

Spring Season (March-April-May) deadline for copy 10 June.

Summer Season (June-July-August) deadline for copy 10 September.

The consolidated report below has the advantage of comparing records of the same species in various parts of the state. Please note that it uses records whose parts are: (1) species properly identified, (2) date, (3) locality, (4) observer, (5) number of birds, and (6) significance. The first four must be present, otherwise we cannot use it. If you have any suggestions or criticisms, by all means please contact the Season Editor. If your part of the state or your records are not included, it is up to you to do something about it.

Fall Report—In Alabama generally it was cool and dry all fall. The coolness was due rather to lack of very high temperatures than to some very low ones. Rainfall was low enough to provide good shorebird habitat for Birmingham observers. Mobile at October's end had less than 50% of its normal annual rainfall—a deficiency of over 30 inches!

Possibly the highlight of this fall was the invasion of the state by birds of the northern coniferous forest that do not come this far south in numbers every year—Red-breasted Nuthatch, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin.

Loon, Ibis—A Com. Loon on Lake Oliver, Chattahoochee R. on 21 Oct. (LAW) is earliest for the Piedmont. The report of two pairs of Glossy Ibises—no white on face—photographed nesting in cactus on an island in Mobile County in June (MWG) is the first known breeding of dark ibises between Louisiana and peninsular Florida. This hiatus also exists in the breeding range of Sandhill Crane, Burrowing Owl, Mottled Duck, Painted Bunting, and others, so it is difficult to see why only the dark ibises have evolved two distinct species, Glossy and White-faced.

Waterfowl—Geese arrived early at Wheeler, Canadas on 11 Sept. and Blues and Snows on 2 Oct., near early dates. Arrivals "lagged during October and most of November, though these began to level off in late November" (TZA). At close of period Wheeler was short 10% of the geese present at the same time and place last year (TZA). Due apparently to drought on the Canadian nesting grounds, ducks at Wheeler were 30% off from last year (TZA). At Lake Purdy near Birmingham, a Pintail on 15 Sept. (JNC, HHW, HHK) and an Am. Widgeon on 28 Sept. (JNC, HHK) are earliest for the Mountain Region. Widgeon were particularly numerous at Wheeler (TZA), and at Eufaula Refuge on 19 Oct. it and the Shoveler were the commonest ducks (TAI, DH, et. al.) The Shoveler, however, was considered scarce at Wheeler. A Canvasback at Mobile on 4 Oct. (MWG, JLD, GMM) is by two weeks the earliest for Alabama. Early Lesser Scaup were at Eufaula Refuge on 19 Oct. (TAI, et. al.) and at Mobile on 4 Oct. (MWG, JLD, GMM) earliest for state by 3 days. Many of the waterfowl that used to winter in Mobile Bay are now reported to remain all

season at Noxubee N. W. Refuge, Miss.

Hawks—A Mississippi Kite at Spring Hill on 20 Sept. (MAG) ties the latest date for the state. On Dauphin Island, Cooper's, Red-tailed, and Broadwinged Hawks were noted migrating on 13 Sept. (JLD, MAG); a peak of 100 Sparrow Hawks was counted on 4 Oct. (MAG); and a Krider's Red-tail and a Pigeon Hawk were seen on 5 Nov. (RWS).

Shorebirds—On Sand Island (just south of Dauphin) 25 Snowy Plovers counted on 2 Nov. (TAI&EBM), the highest number for Alabama, is encouraging for a species having difficulty finding quiet beaches. A Com. Snipe on Dauphin Island on 2 Sept. (LT & LA) is except for the Tennessee Valley the earliest for the state. Knots were seen on Dauphin on 11 and 26 Oct. (LMcK, LT). Three species reached Lake Purdy earlier than ever before for Alabama: Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpiper on 10 July (HHW, PAR, RRR) and Least Sandpiper on 6 July (HHW, et. al.) is the first Mt. Region record. Two Marbled Godwits were at Gulf Shores on 27 Oct. (LMcK & LT). On 20 Oct. at Rutherford Lakes, Shelby Co. an immature Red Phalarope was discovered (JNC & HHK). Well over 30 Birmingham observers were treated to the sight of the bird swimming at very close range typical of animals bred in the wilderness, and several excellent color photos were made.

Jaeger, Terns—an injured Parasitic Jaeger was seen on the beach at Panama City, Fla. on 28 Sept. and picked up dead the next day, wings and tail preserved (EGR & RRR). Does the state line prevent this specimen from substantiating Mobile Bay sight records? Forster's Terns were at Lake Purdy on 23 July (EGR & RRR) and 4 on 21 Sept. (EGR et. al.) On the west side of Lake Oliver (Chattahoochee R. Lee Co., Alabama) they were seen in August and October, max. 3 on 21 Oct. (LAW). Com. Terns were recorded there in August and September, max. 30 on 26 Aug. (LAW), and Least Terns in August and October, max. 12 on 25 Aug.—the latest on 11 Oct., also 12 birds, is the latest inland record for Alabama (LAW).

Goatsucker, Hummingbird—A Chuck-wills-widow netted at a ragwood thicket in Birmingham on 13 Sept. is, except for Dauphin records, the latest for the state (TAI & JMI). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Birmingham on 10 Nov. (JF) is exceeded inland only by a 16 Nov. record in 1955.

Flycatchers, Swallow—Though rather scarce this fall, Western Kingbirds were seen on Dauphin Island on 10, 14 (2), and 19 (3) Sept. and 4 & 5 Oct. (vide, MAG). A Scissor-tail at Basin, Coffee Co. on 30 Sept. (RRR & EGR) is only the third inland fall record—other two in 1964. Netters continue to improve our knowledge of Empidonax movements. A Trail's on Dauphin on 19 Aug. (MEM) is earliest for state by 6 days; two Yellowbellieds in Birmingham on 7 Sept. (TAI & JMI) are by 2 days earliest for the Mt. Region. At Lake Purdy on 6 Oct., 4 Purple Martins (JNC) are, except for the coast, the latest for state by two days.

Jay, Titmouse, Nuthatch, Wren—Blue Jays flooded the state this fall with a count of 788 on the Birmingham fall count on 12 Oct. being the largest number ever recorded in Alabama. Migrating flocks of Blue Jays were evident nearly throughout the state from mid-September into November. Tufted Titmice also showed signs of migration around Birmingham; a flock of 17 moving south on 5 Oct.; flock of 9 on 10 Oct.; and 9 banded all from two nets at the same time on 8 Nov. (TAI & JMI). Red-breasted Nuthatches were first noted in Birmingham on 26 Sept. (HCM), and on the 12 Oct. Fall Count 27 were listed. They first reached Dauphin Island on 11 Oct. (LMcK) and were "all over the island" by 30 Oct. (LA & LT). A Winter Wren in Birmingham on 9 Oct. (HHW) ties the earliest for the Mt. Region.

Mockingbird, Kinglet, Pipit, Vireo—Evidence of Mockingbird abundance is in the record 375 birds on the Birmingham Fall Count on Oct. 12 and the 47 birds netted around Joe-pye weed in Birmingham August to October (TAI & JMI). A Golden-crowned Kinglet on Dauphin Island on 19 Oct. (banded by MEM) ties the earliest for the coast. A Water Pipit in Birmingham on 9 Oct. (HHK & MLB) is earliest for the Mt. Region. A Philadelphia Vireo repeating in nets on 20 Oct. (MLB) ties the latest for the Mt. Region.

On Dauphin Island on 5 Oct., 22 species of warblers and 4 of vireos were recorded (MWG, MAG, et. al.) while in Birmingham on 12 Oct., 19 warblers and 5 vireos were listed (Fall Count).

Warblers—A Blue-winged on 12 Oct. in Birmingham (WFC) is, except for Dauphin records, the latest for the state by 4 days. A Brewster's on Dauphin on 12 Sept. (TH) is further evidence that the bird is regular in fall in Alabama—has now been recorded on coast in '58, '63, '64, & '68. A Nashville banded on Dauphin on 7 Sept. (MEM) is the earliest for Alabama by 7 days. In fall, the Black-throated Blue Warbler occurs annually only in the Mt. Region and the Gulf Coast. This year one was banded on Dauphin on 6 Oct. (MEM) and one seen on the Birmingham Fall Count on 12 Oct. (JS). A Prairie Warbler banded in Birmingham on 18 Oct. (MLB) is, except for coastal records, the latest for the state. The elusive, skulking, difficult-to-identify Mourning Warbler is gradually being established as a regular fall migrant in Alabama. Last fall, three were netted in the state (one taken specimen, another photographed). This fall, one was on Dauphin on 7 Sept. (Banded—MEM) and two were in Birmingham: 15 Sept., a TV tower casualty (MLB); 4 Oct. seen (HHK & JNC). A Wilson's banded on 12 Oct. in Birmingham (MLB) is, except for Dauphin records, the latest for the state by 3 days. An Am. Redstart on 8 Nov. on Dauphin Island (MAG) is, excepting a December Birmingham record, the latest for the state by one day.

Oriole, Finches—A female oriole (probably Baltimore) visited a Montgomery feeder around Thanksgiving (vide RWS). The Rose-breasted Grosbeak, abundant this fall, peaked at 82 in Birmingham on 12 Oct. (Fall Count). One 16 Nov. three Indigo Buntings were still present in Birmingham (TAI, JMI, HHK, JNC). One of three, a very fat immature female, was banded on 22 Nov. and was last seen, band prominent on 27 Nov. at the same place (TAI & JMI). So far, the timetable for the Evening Grosbeak invasion reads like this: 10 Nov., Wheeler Refuge, 5 birds (MLB & HHK); mid-Nov. Blount Springs, small flock (JC); 20 Nov., Mountain Brook, Birmingham, 8 (DC); 25 Nov., Montgomery, first local record (RL vide RWS); and 10 Dec. widespread in Jefferson County. Will they reach Mobile this time? Purple Finches are common; 6 of them reached Mobile on 13 Nov. (JLD). A Pine Siskin banded on Dauphin Island on 26 Oct. (RB) ties a Mt. Region record for the earliest for the state; 25 were in Birmingham on 15 Nov. (HHK). A Bachman's Sparrow banded on Dauphin Island on 25 Oct. (RB) is as far as known the first record for the island. A Slate-colored Junco in a TV tower parking lot in Birmingham on 28 Sept. (MLB) ties the earliest record for the state. The White-crowned Sparrow seems reasonably common: 5 or 6 reported from Mobile County 30 Oct. to 14 Nov. (MAG); and 5 (2 banded) from one field in Birmingham in November (TAI, JMI). A Lincoln's Sparrow banded on 6 Oct. on Dauphin Island (MEM) is the earliest for the coastal plain by 2 days.

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THE SEASON WINTER 1969

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The main event of this winter season was the invasion of northern finches. Read the details below under Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Junco, and Fox Sparrow.

Almost universal in the state were a drought from June 1 to December 1, normal or near normal rainfall in January and February, and temperatures for over a year now averaging well below normal but with very few really cold days. The year 1968 in Birmingham at average 60.7 degrees was the second coldest of record. Our two coastal counties finished the year with barely half of normal rain, and water levels were as much as 2 feet below normal. Near Birmingham heavy December rains brought a smaller deficit much closer to normal, but still we had pipits and snipe instead of Horned Grebes and Buffleheads. Throughout the state low water levels were blamed for the scarcity of water birds.

For Christmas Count records—used as little as possible below—see Mr. Reid's excellent account in this issue.

Loons, Grebes—Common Loons were about normal at Lake Oliver on the Chattahoochee R. except that none were noted 2 Dec. to 2 Feb. (LAW). A few were noted at Wheeler Refuge (TZA), but only one was in Birmingham—25 and 26 Jan. (JRB et. al.) Mary Gaillard reports them not as numerous as usual on the coast. A maximum of 10 Horned Grebes were at Lake Oliver on 3 Dec. (LAW), but otherwise the species was scarce inland. Eared Grebes were noted for the 7th straight winter in the state as follows: Dauphin Island, 24 Nov. (MEM & MLR), earliest fall date; and twice at Chickasaw, 22 Dec. (REH, RWH & ERT) and 2 March (LPA & ERT).

Pelicanlike Birds—Brown Pelicans were reported three times—one on the Bon Secour Christmas Count, 21 Dec. (PFC) and at Dauphin Island on 14 Jan. and 20 Feb., no numbers (MAG et. al.). A maximum of 50 Gannets were off Dauphin Island on 20 Feb. (JLD & MAG) and in early February our only winter Magnificent Frigate-bird was spotted there (EBM).

Hérons, Ibises—A Green Heron on Dog R., Mobile, noted 11 times from 8 Jan. to 7 March (LMcK) is the 4th time in the last 12 years that the species has wintered on the coast. A Cattle Egret on Dauphin Island on 29 Dec. (fide MAG) is one of very few winter records for the state. Hundreds of Common Egrets were noted on 10 Dec. on Cochrane

Causeway (LMcK) and at Chickasaw on 2 March (ERT & LPA). A Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Marion Fish Hatchery on 25 Jan. and 1 Feb. (RRR and many others) is the 3rd inland winter record. A satisfactory photograph has been submitted for an adult Glossy Ibis present at Eufaula Refuge 1-16 Feb. (LAW, GS, SP, EC), the first inland winter record. A small flock of White Ibis on Dauphin Island on 19 Jan. (BMB) means the species has now been recorded on the coast in every month of the year.

Waterfowl—At Wheeler Refuge the Canada-Blue-Snow Goose peak this winter was 39,000, peak last winter 48,000, all-time peak 60,000 in 1963 (TZA). As for ducks at Wheeler, this winter's peak was 60,000 compared to 38,000 last winter. The Black Duck, Widgeon, and Shoveler were responsible for this increase while other duck species were down (TZA). Three Blue-winged Teal at East Lake, Birmingham on 8 March (RRR) are earliest for the Mountain Region by a week. Except for Wood Ducks in the Coastal Plain, the Ring-necked Duck appeared to be the only half-way common duck in much of Alabama, certainly around Birmingham and Marion. A male Greater Scaup was identified on 18 Jan. on Cochrane Causeway (REH & ERT); a few of these birds occur here and in Bon Secour Bay, but most of them prefer Mississippi Sound. On both sides of Mobile Bay ducks were reported extremely poor, even Red-breasted Mergansers (PFC, MAG).

Hawks—Bald Eagles were reported from Wheeler Refuge on 14 Dec. (adult fide TZA) and 16 Jan. (imm. fide TZA); from Birmingham on 16 Feb. (JNC); and from Eufaula Refuge about 10 Feb. (GS). A Golden Eagle captured near Evergreen in October 1968 is now a pet in Montgomery (RWS). Winter hawk movement is not confined to eagles; on the windy 28 Dec. in Birmingham several Red-tails, a Rough-legged, and 3 Marsh appeared to be in migration (TAI, JMI, WFC).

Shorebirds—In Birmingham 7 Am Woodcock were flushed on 28 Dec. (JNC, TAI, et. al.) and 5 were seen and heard, 3 of them in courtship flight, on 28 Feb. (TAI & JMI). A Lesser Yellowlegs was at Eufaula Refuge on 19 Jan. (LAW & EC). Least Sandpipers wintered at Wheeler (TZA) and Eufaula (LAW) Refuges, Birmingham (B.A.S.) and Marion (A.O.S.) Am Avocets, wintering at Cochrane Causeway for about 15 consecutive years now, peaked at 40 on 22 Dec. and 8 Jan. (JLD, LMcK, and many others).

Gulls—At Lake Oliver on the Chattahoochee R. 1-4 Herring Gulls were present daily; Ring-billed Gulls, 10-20 daily, maxima 67 on 28 Dec. and 125 on 2 March (LAW). Three adult and one immature Laughing Gulls, present at Lake Oliver 1-6 Dec. (LAW) constitute the only inland winter record. On the coast, these birds were noted with black heads on 20 Feb. (MAG & JLD). Bonaparte's Gulls were on Lake Harding, 15 miles north of Phenix City, 3-4 daily through 28 Dec. and a maxima of 25 on 9 Dec. (LAW).

Homed Lark, Purple Martin—A flock of over 250 Horned Larks delighted many A.O.S. members on 1 Feb. at Lakeland Farms near Marion. This open-country species appears to be doing well. The Purple Martin's annual race to beat the Starling to its nest boxes without dying from lack of insect food in cold weather was earlier than usual this year: 17 Jan. 4 or 5 and 19 Jan. a flock, both on Dauphin Island (BMB); 1 Feb., Marion (A.O.S.); 14 Feb., Chelsea, Shelby Co., 3 males (fide WFC); 17 Feb., Munford, Talladega Co., 1 found dead (JBC); 21 Feb., Montgomery (RWS); 22 Feb., Fayette County (DCH); Seale (RG); and 4 March, Wheeler Refuge (TZA).

Nuthatch, Wren, Thrushes, Waxwing—Although nowhere reported as numerous, the Red-breasted Nuthatch was widespread all the way to the coast with one bird even in The Tennessee Valley where natural pines are scarce—Hartselle at a feeder on 4 March