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THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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THE WEATHER
Fall, 1987

September - Temperatures averaged 63.5 degrees, 0.6 degrees below normal. The highest temperature, 82 degrees, was reached on the 10th and the lowest, 41 degrees, on the 26th. Lake Erie water temperature declined from 72 degrees on the 1st to 67 degrees on the 30th. Precipitation was spread over 11 days to total 2.07 inches, 0.85 inches below normal. Sunshine prevailed 45% of the time possible.

October - Temperatures averaged 47.5 degrees, 5.7 degrees below normal. Lake Erie water temperature dropped from 67 degrees on the 1st to 53 degrees on the 31st. Precipitation totaled 3.41 inches, 0.96 inches above normal. Sunshine prevailed 44% of the time possible.

November - Temperatures averaged 46.1 degrees, 4.3 degrees above normal. Lake Erie water temperature declined to 45 degrees on the 30th from 53 degrees on the 1st. Precipitation totaled 1.02 inches, 1.74 inches below normal. Snowfall totaled 1.0 inch and sunshine prevailed 39% of the time possible.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Fall 1987 was no disappointment. Unusual numbers (an invasion, if you will) of Sabine's Gulls in October and Red Phalaropes in late November kept lakefront observers satisfied and 235 White-crowned Sparrows banded at Gordon Park on October 25 kept the banders busy. Common Loon migration was very different as peak numbers appeared much earlier than in past years and after a relatively poor spring warbler migration, this group pleasantly surprised observers. Of course there was the almost obligatory first Cleveland area record - an incredible male Rufous Hummingbird at a feeder in Parma in early November. The Cleveland Bird Calendar not only is a rehashing of a season's birds - it should serve as an inducement to birders to go out and experience the birds of a season; don't read about other observers' sightings - go out and find your own birds and let others read about them!

Common Loon - Early morning overhead movements of Common Loons were rare during the season and did not involve significant numbers of birds. Rather, uncommonly large concentrations of Common Loons were noted on Lake Erie. Peak numbers occurred during the last 15 days of October - unprecedentedly early in CBC records. Equally a fascinating as the earliness of the loon influx, but perhaps just a function of the observers' birding preferences, was that this movement was noted largely west of the Cuyahoga River. Commentary on past loon movements has noted the relatively infrequent reports of migration loons from these areas. This year was certainly different. Significant tallies of loons included --

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>
10/19	Sheffield Lake Park	56
10/19	Huntington Beach	77
10/21	Rocky River Park	175
10/24	Edgewater Park to Rocky River	205
10/26	Huntington Beach	107
10/26	Perkins Beach	61
10/26	Lorain	65

(Observers: Klamm, LePage, Harlan)

Twenty-eight Common Loons passed over East 260th Street in Euclid on November 21. What was significant about this small movement was that all loons observed were flying so high that they were barley visible.

Loons flying so high had never been noted before. Winds were very strong (20 mph+) from the north with a partly cloud sky for observations on the 21st.

Tundra Swan movement was limited to a few observations. 150 in Mentor on November 20 was the largest number reported (Maugans). Sixty-five at Edgewater Park on November 5 (LePage), 41 at Gordon Park on October 23 (Klamm), and 50 in the Cuyahoga Valley on November 20 (Maugans) rounded out a poor swan season.

Waterfowl - "Perhaps the best ever in Cleveland lakefront areas" was the assessment by two veteran observers about the tremendous show put on by Red-breasted Mergansers after mid-October (Klamm). Literally tens of thousands of Red-breasted Mergansers were observed at Lorain, Edgewater Park, Perkins Beach, East 9th Street, Eastlake, and Mentor. Peak day was November 20 when flights consisting of a few hundred individuals to several thousand led to a mind-boggling day count of 145,000 Red-breasted Mergansers, a record total for the Cleveland area (Klamm). 33,000 was the count for November 30 indicating the protracted stay of this species in the region. Past counts of Red-breasted Mergansers from Western Lake Erie have been criticized, but such spectacular numbers as occurred during this past fall in the Cleveland area, as well as previous "impossible" counts from the western basin of Lake Erie, should dispel those who have doubted the immensity of this annual spectacle. At least for November 20 the Cleveland area was part of the show.

The Akron Lakes of Lake Rockwell and Mogadore Reservoir produced their typical good counts of American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, and Hooded Merganser. Mogadore had 800+ Ruddy Ducks on October 30 and 300+ on November 29 while Lake Rockwell hosted 310 American Wigeon on October 15, 300+ Ring-necked Ducks on November 1, 107 Hooded Mergansers on November 15, and 200+ Ring-necked Ducks on November 29 (Rosche). Smaller numbers of Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, and Common Golden-eye also appeared on these lakes in late October and throughout November.

Shorebirds - Clearly the highlight for shorebirding was an invasion of Red Phalaropes in late November. A minimum of 4 Red Phalaropes was present along the Cleveland lakefront at this time. The following table summarizes the season's

reports of this species --

Date	Location	Number
9/13	Sims Park	1
10/6-12	Edgewater Park	1 to 3 (10/6)
10/30	Lorain	1
11/12	Edgewater Park	1
11/22-27	Wildwood Park	1 to 2
11/25-29	Mentor Headlands	1 to 2
11/29	Sims Park	2

(Observers: Rosche, Klamm, LePage, Harlan, Hannikman)

The Wildwood Park, Mentor Headlands, and the (November) Sims Park birds were observed feeding with Bonaparte's Gulls in areas close to shore where wave action had taken leaves and smashed them in to tiny morsels which seemed to attract both the gulls and the phalaropes. Both species fed side by side next to each other - each species picking at the rotting leaves and gently bobbing in the surf. Plumage characteristics of the late November birds indicated the presence of at least 4 birds: the Wildwood/Sims Park birds (most probably the November 29 Sims Park birds were the same birds noted earlier at Wildwood) were both light gray on the back whereas the birds at Mentor Headlands were both juvenals with remnants of rusty juvenile plumage on the nape of the neck and tertials with contrasting gray back feathers with much darker coverts. The individual at Sims Park on September 13 was picked up from shore by telescope as it fed in a feeding flock of Black Terns. The 3 Red Phalaropes observed on October 6 at Edgewater were the most ever at one time in CBC files.

Shorebirding at Gordon Park was relatively uneventful. As had been previously reported, very little water was left inside the impoundment after September 1 so bird numbers were reduced. Highlights at Gordon Park were as follows:

Date	Species	Number
9/6, 9/10, 10/12	Whimbrel	1
9/19	Red Knot	1
9/23	White-rumped Sandpiper	1
9/1 - 10/19	Baird's Sandpiper	1 to 3
9/16, 9/19, 9/21	Stilt Sandpiper	3, 11, 1
9/1 - 9/16	Western Sandpiper	1 to 3

(Observers: Klamm, Harlan, LePage, Hannikman, Rosche)

Maximum numbers for Lesser Golden-Plovers and Black-bellied Plovers at Burke Airport were 22 on October 5 and a paltry 3 on October 19 respectively. 29 Common Snipes at Lake Rockwell was the only shorebird highlight from the Akron area.

Gulls, Terns - Great Black-backed Gulls never have appeared in such good numbers so early before. 14 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted from Mentor Headlands to Sims Park on October 11, On November 21, 30 birds, again along this same route, were tallied. This species was most conspicuous at Eastlake where they easily were noted on the breakwalls. No Glaucous Gulls or Iceland Gulls were reported during November, an interesting contrast to the excellent numbers of Great Black-backed Gull. A second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull was early at Mentor Headlands on September 26 and single adults were regular at both Lorain and Eastlake during November. A first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull at Eastlake on November 8 readily was contrasted with first-winter Herring Gulls and made for an excellent study of this plumage (Rosche).

The strong northerly winds of October 3 blew in the big gull story - an unprecedented number of sightings of Sabine's Gulls during October. Individuals, all juvenals, were noted as follows: Mentor Headlands October 3 and 4 and 10 and 11, Edgewater Park October 3, and Sims Park October 3 and 25 (Rosche, Hannikman, LePage). It is interesting to note the chronology of the October 3 sightings: the Mentor bird was observed from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and was thought to have departed to the west, at 3:13 p.m. a bird flew past Sims Park, and about 3:55 p.m. the Edgewater Park sighting was made. At least 2 birds were noted on October 3 - the Mentor bird and the Sims Park/Edgewater Park bird. In all likelihood the Mentor bird of October 10 and 11 was the same bird noted the week before. The season's third Sabine's Gull was the fly-by past Sims Park on October 25, also a day of strong northerly winds. Since 4-6 Sabine's Gulls were observed at nearby Huron and Vermillion on the morning of October 3, one must ask where did these gulls come from and where could they be going. A look at the world distribution map and main migration routes of Sabine's Gull the second edition of P.J. Grant's Gulls: A Guide to Identification may provide a clue to answering these questions. This map shows the (fall) migration route of the population of Sabine's Gull that breeds in the Canadian Arctic to be in a generally southeastward direction from the Northwest Territories across Hudson Bay into either the Hudson Strait and on into the Atlantic Ocean, then southeast to the wintering grounds of southwest Africa; or directly across Quebec to the Gulf of St. Lawrence then southeastward

onto the Atlantic Ocean to winter off Africa. Some juvenal birds must turn southwest when they get to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and then proceed west along the St. Lawrence River and in to the Great Lake Region. This would account for the 2 Sims Park Sabine's Gulls and the Edgewater Park individual heading in the direction from east to west. What then happens to the Sabine's Gulls that reach the Great Lakes is anybody's guess. Sightings far in the interior of the United States are well-known (e. g., in Colorado, Oklahoma, etc.), perhaps our birds get to these areas. Maybe some make it back eastward along the St. Lawrence River and back out in to the Atlantic Ocean. Some undoubtedly do not make it out of the Great Lakes and pay the ultimate price for straying off course. Since Sabine's Gull was last recorded in the Cleveland area in 1982, one bird would have been noteworthy' a minimum of three in a period of 22 days certainly must be characterized as a major event.

Forster's Terns continued to be present in early September on the tires at Lorain with 121 birds the peak count on the 3rd (Klamm). Between September 9 and October 10 there was only one report of Forster's Terns from Lorain, 63 birds on the 18th. On October 10, 50 birds were observed at Lorain. It would seem that the lack of reports from Lorain during the one month period from September 9 to October 10, rather than a lack of Forster's Terns, would account for this apparent temporary exit of this species from the area. Reports of Common Terns also showed this same type of occurrence - numbers in early September (up to 40), very few reports from September 13 to October 11, and then a resurgence of reports in mid-October through early November. Common Terns, however, are known for increases in numbers in mid-October where Forster's Terns has just begun to become numerous enough in the fall to warrant status as a regular fall migrant. Much still needs to be learned about the status of this species at this time of year.

Snowy Owl - The season's first report of this species was confirmed from Mentor Headlands on November 4 (LePage). What may have been the same bird later turned up at Burke Airport where it spent most of November. Carefully studying plumage characteristics of the Snowy Owls noted during November led observers to believe that 3 individuals had occurred during the month.

Common Nighthawk - There was an early September influx of Common Nighthawks into the area. 850 were counted in Lakewood on September 5 (Klamm) with direction of movement to the east northeast. Perhaps some of these birds passed

Gordon Park that same evening as between 700 and 800 Common Nighthawks were noted there (Hannikman). Last sizable movement was noted when 70 birds were over Wilson Mills Road and Brigham Road at 5:50 p.m. on September 7 (Klaus).

Warblers - After a less than exciting spring migration, fall warblers were a pleasant surprise. Typical of recent fall migrations, there was a steady stream of warblers with peak periods in mid and late September. In mid-October Yellow-rumped Warblers were everywhere along the Cleveland lakefront with 100+ at Gordon Park on October 18, 70+ at Willowick Park on October 17, and 97 at various locations on October 19. These birds moved rapidly through the area as meager numbers were reported in late October. Final report for this species was of 2 birds on November 7. Connecticut Warblers, always a much-sought after species, were observed in Hudson on September 15, Donald Gray Gardens on September 16, and Gordon Park on September 30 (Henderson, LePage). One species that rebounded after a poor spring locally was the Cape May Warbler. Numbers were good through September after a spring in which only 8 individuals were noted by contributors.

Sparrows - More than 400 sparrows, 235 of which were White-crowned Sparrows with the bulk of the rest being White-throated Sparrows, were banded at Gordon Park on October 25 (Talkington, Bacik). The banders did not get their nets up until late in the morning; otherwise, the total would have been much higher. The dense undergrowth was packed with sparrows - just walking through the weeds to get birds in to the nets would result in tens of birds flushing up in the nets. 12 Vesper Sparrows on October 22 at Gordon Park were a good showing for this species.

Yearly Summary - In the Bird Calendar year now ended (December 1, 1986 to November 30, 1987, a total of 277 species was observed in the Cleveland region. Highlights included Ohio's first Brambling and the region's first Rufous Hummingbird; Tri-colored Heron, Snowy Egret, King Eider, Least Tern, Western Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, and Clay-colored Sparrow. The summary for the year 1985-1986 must be reduced by one with the retraction of the record for Pacific Loon, Thus, 285 species were recorded in 1985-1986.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-throated Loon - One remained in the Mentor Headlands/Fairport Harbor area for 2 days, November 3 and 4 (Rosche, LePage).

Eared Grebe - Single birds were at Mentor Headlands November 22 and 29 (Rosche, Harlan).

Brant - 3 were on the old coal dock at Lorain on November 21 (Harlan, LePage).

King Eider - A female was at Lorain on the very early date of October 25 (Klamm).

Bald Eagle - 3 individuals occurred at Lake Rockwell--adults on October 30 and November 26 and an immature on November 27 (Rosche).

Peregrine Falcon - A single bird was observed at Mentor Headlands on October 4 (Hannikman).

Sanderling - A crippled individual lingered at Mentor Headlands until the very late date of November 29 (Kellerman).

Purple Sandpiper - 2 frequented the moss-covered rocks of the breakwall at Mentor Headlands on November 28 and 29 (Hannikman). The birds were very tame and allowed approach within 10 feet. Since 2 birds were present together, vocalizations between the birds were frequent and allowed observers to get familiar with this species' call notes.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - Only recorded at Gordon Park were 1 to 4 birds from September 1 to 7, 2 on September 17, and 1 on September 26 (many observers).

Long-billed Dowitcher - The fall's only sighting was of a juvenal at Gordon Park on September 27 (Hannikman).

Northern Saw-whet Owl - One was banded late in the afternoon on October 26 at Gordon Park (Talkington). The bird was less than 2 feet off the ground when found.

Common Nighthawk - A lone dawdler remained at Gordon Park from October 18 to 26 (Hannikman, Talkington). The October 26 date was the second latest fall date ever for this species.

Whip-poor-will - A new late fall date of occurrence was established when one was observed at Donald Gray Gardens on October 22 (Klamm).

Rufous Hummingbird - The Cleveland area's first, and Ohio's third, Rufous Hummingbird graced a feeder in Parma from November 5 to 10 (Choen et al.). The bird was an adult male and most frequently was observed at a hummingbird feeder. All Ohio records (fortunately) have been adult males and have been well-documented by numerous observers.

Western Kingbird - One was briefly observed near the breakwall at Mentor Headlands early on September 20 (Hannikman).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow - The first October records of this species in CBC files occurred when one was observed with Tree Swallows along the road to the Coast Guard Station at Mentor Headlands on the third and fourth (Rosche).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - Never recorded locally in the month of November before, an individual with a burr in its wing was observed at Mentor Headlands on November 3 (Rosche). The same bird was first found on November 1 (Gustafson, Peterjohn).

Hermit Thrush - Most unusual was a late bird on the grounds of the National City Bank Building in downtown Cleveland in late November until the 30th (Klaus).

Northern Shrike - One was noted at the Ravenna Arsenal on November 29 (Rosche).

Warbling Vireo - A bird observed at the Firestone Metropark in Akron on October 31 extended the late fall date for this species by 16 days (Pierce).

Tennessee Warbler - An adult male was very late at Mentor Headlands on November 1 (Gustafson, Peterjohn).

Yellow Warbler - The first November record in CBC files was an individual at Mentor Headlands on November 1 (Gustafson, Peterjohn) Only an impossibly lost and late bird on December 7, 1983 has been found on a later date.

Dickcissel - One was found at Gordon Park on September 14 (Harlan, LePage), and possibly this individual was later noted at Donald Gray Gardens (Harlan) on September 19.

Clay-colored Sparrow - One was reported from Gordon Park on October 23 (Harlan).

Grasshopper Sparrow - A late migrant was at Gordon Park on October 22 (LePage).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow - Gordon Park birds were singles on September 19 and October 18 and two banded on September 27 (many observers).

Bobolink - A new late fall date, as well as the first local November sighting of this species, was established when one was observed at Mentor Headlands on November 1 (Gustafson, Peterjohn). From 1 to 3 birds remained at Gordon Park during October, well past the usual fall dates for this species.

Yellow-headed Blackbird - 1 to 3 birds, male and females, remained at Gordon Park from September 16 to 25 (Klamm).

FIELD NOTES

OUR UNEXPECTED VISITOR The last of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds had said "Farewell" the second week of September, but my husband had been too busy to take down the feeder which hung suspended from the house soffit, fully in my vision from the kitchen window. It was November 5 already, and at 7:30 a.m. as I was preparing breakfast I glanced upwards to see a little Rufous Hummingbird at the feeder. I watched as he satisfied his needs and then made himself comfortable on the branch of a nearby Mock Orange bush. With his back turned towards me he looked just like another autumn leaf!

Having recovered from my surprise, I quickly selected the Field Guide from our book case and was further surprised to read that he was completely out of his normal range. I called to my husband to come and watch. We both enjoyed his visits as he flew around, fed, and then sat preening himself on the bush, in the morning sunlight.

I decided that we should share "our bird" with others so I called a local television station -- very little interest was shown there. The weekend went by and on Monday morning I called the Audubon Society office and spoke with Lois Wallin. She and her husband came out to our house in the afternoon and verified the identity of the little bird after which they made the information available to the birders near and far.

That evening we received several calls including one from John Pogacnik who lives in Oak Harbor - 20 miles east of Toledo and who said he would like to come out early Tuesday morning as he had missed the two earlier sightings of Rufous Hummingbird in Ohio and did not want to miss this one! He arrived at 8 a.m. approximately - other people soon arrived. Everyone, I believe, was so engrossed, enthused, and enchanted by this little bird! We met with Terry Higgins, Howard Besser, Jim Heflich, Larry Rosche and Judy Tisdale. I do not remember the names of everyone who came, but my husband and I felt very happy that we had taken the steps to share this bird with so many. The Rufous Hummingbird came regularly to the feeder every fifteen minutes and made his last appearance at 5:10 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10.

Some birders came to the following day and we felt very sad to tell people such as Kathy Mock from Akron who had foregone her lunch in order to leave work early and hurry to Parmaview lane, that the bird had departed. The disappointed birders all made the same comment - sorry that had missed him, but glad to think that he was on his way, hopefully to a warmer climate!

As for us, we felt a real thrill to have "hosted" this very special bird and met such a wonderful group of people because of it. We are thinking of leaving the hummingbird feeder up next year through the first week of November - just in case! MURIEL A. COHEN

AN INVITATION: The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month except July and August at The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio 44106. Visitors are always welcome.

The Kirtland Bird Club sponsors a **WEEKLY RARE BIRD ALERT** at (216) 289-2473. Sightings of species rare in the region as well as other interesting migration and seasonal observations should be called in to the tape on Sunday afternoon as the tape is updated each Monday. In the case of extreme rarities, Rufous Hummingbird, Western Kingbird, Kirtland's Warbler, the tape should be called the day of the observation.

Inquiries and correspondence regarding subscriptions to the Cleveland Bird Calendar should be addressed to:

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