

1933, A "BLUE JAY YEAR"

By L. L. SNYDER and T. M. SHORTT



ALTHOUGH the Blue Jay [*Cyanocitta cristata*] is regarded as a resident bird in the Toronto area, and also in the general region of the north shore of Lake Ontario, it is known that the species performs a rather dilatory migration. Occasional congregations of Jays in loose flocks during late September and until mid-October are regarded as normal occurrences and it is these straggling groups that mark the southward movement of the species. Along the immediate north shore of Lake Ontario, however, the movement is westward, the species probably avoiding a direct crossing of the open lake by skirting it by way of Niagara or points further west.

The autumn of 1933 was marked by extraordinary numbers of Blue Jays. Records gathered more or less casually from Prince Edward County, near the east end of Lake Ontario, to the valley of the Credit, near the west end of the lake, are consistent in their estimate of large numbers and the direction of the flight. A complete presentation of the records from September 17 to October 13 for the several districts where observations were made is unnecessary but a few which reflect the status of the species during the autumn of 1933 are here recorded.

On Sunday, September 17, 1933, the late John Townson saw "hundreds and hundreds" of

Blue Jays at Carrying Place, Prince Edward County, all moving westward. Mr. Jack Jennings, of Bowmanville, writes under date of October 2, 1933 that "about four hundred Blue Jays flew over in one gigantic scattered flock" at that place a day or so previously. At Toronto, Mr. C. E. Hope observed "eight hundred or more in a loose flock flying west over Cedarvale ravine on September 28, 1933". Many similar observations of Blue Jays were made at Toronto by numerous observers from September 25 to well into October and many inquiries about the species reached the Museum by telephone and letter. Flocks of Blue Jays were also commonly observed in both Peel and Dufferin Counties between September 24 and October 7, 1933.

The past autumn (1934) was not marked by any unusual abundance of Blue Jays. An examination of records of their occurrence at Toronto for several years previous to 1933 does not reveal a flight reaching the proportions of that year. It is obvious that the 1933 autumn migration culminated a peak year in the numbers of Blue Jays.

It is possible that the numerical status of this species, at least in the northern part of its range fluctuates periodically as is the case with several other animal forms in northern latitudes but that the fluctuations are less phenomenal and easily escape record.

A PRELIMINARY LIST OF THE BIRDS OF LINCOLN AND WELLAND COUNTIES

By R. W. SHEPPARD, W. E. HURLBURT and G. H. DICKSON

(Continued from page 102)

Bonasa umbellus umbellus (Linnaeus). EASTERN RUFFED GROUSE. — A variety of Ruffed Grouse, supposedly referable to the typical eastern form, but about which there appears to be some doubt, is still managing to maintain a foothold in some of the denser woodlands of Lincoln County. The survival of this species in Lincoln County may, perhaps, be accounted for by its development of an excessive wariness. This handsome bird is, on that account, seldom observed; but it may occasionally be flushed in certain of the ravines which cross the much-travelled Niagara Falls - Hamilton highway. Some years ago, it was seen near Niagara-on-the-Lake, but we have no recent records from this particular locality.

Perdix perdix perdix (Linnaeus). EUROPEAN PARTRIDGE. — Apparently present in the Vineland district since about 1923, for it was first noticed by Mr. Dickson in that year. Mr. N. H. Culp, of Vineland Station, is in possession of two mounted specimens which are stated to have been shot in the immediate vicinity. Several more recent reports of this bird have been received from the Vineland area and it is believed that it nests, in small numbers, in this locality.

Colinus virginianus virginianus (Linnaeus). EASTERN BOB-WHITE. — As far as can be ascertained this quail is now extinct in the Niagara district. There are two mounted birds in the possession of Mr. N. H. Culp, of Vineland Station, which are stated to have been shot near his farm about the year 1907. We understand

that it was last heard in that district about 14 years ago. This species appears on our earliest list of Niagara Falls birds for the year 1913; but, unfortunately, no notes accompanied the record. The generally clean methods of cultivation used in modern fruit farming and the multiplicity of gunners no doubt account for the apparent fate of these birds within the area under discussion. There have been some recent attempts to re-establish this bird, and a few liberated at Vineland Station in the spring of 1935 were heard calling in that locality early in June.

Phasianus colchicus torquatus Gmelin. RING-NECKED PHEASANT. — Notwithstanding the fact that it is subjected to heavy shooting, both legal and illegal, the Pheasant manages to hold its own very well. Apart from gunners, heavy snowfalls apparently give the Pheasant the most trouble but, in this connection, the sloping banks of the Niagara River gorge and certain reedy marshes appear to afford them considerable protection during the winter months. Many farmers appear to be well disposed toward these birds and feed them during hard weather; but others are inclined to complain and accuse them of destructiveness among such crops as tomatoes and grapes. It has been reported from the Vineland area that partially albino examples of this bird are occasionally encountered.

Rallus elegans elegans Audubon. KING RAIL. — We have no information regarding the present status of this rail in the counties under discussion; but there is an old record given by Eaton²² of a nest with ten eggs of this species being found at Point Abino in Welland County.

Rallus limicola limicola Vieillot. VIRGINIA RAIL. — Our only record of the occurrence of this bird within the district is that of a specimen picked up dead near Vineland on May 19, 1928.

Porzana carolina (Linnaeus). SORA. — A dead specimen of this rail was found near Jordan Pond on October 14, 1929, and an immature bird, with a broken wing, was brought to one of the authors at Vineland on September 8, 1933. We have no other definite record of the occurrence of this bird within the district; but it is easily overlooked, and we should not be surprised if it turned out to be a reasonably common species in suitable localities within both counties.

Gallinula chloropus cachinnans Bangs. FLORIDA GALLINULE. — A bird of this species was found dead near Jordan Pond on May 13, 1932. We

do not appear to have any other record of the occurrence of this gallinule.

Fulica americana americana Gmelin. AMERICAN COOT. — The Coot occurs on the Jordan marshes in Lincoln County and is not infrequently seen, during the autumn migration season, on the wide expanse of river below the Falls, at Niagara.

Charadrius melodus Ord. PIPING PLOVER. — The exceedingly interesting discovery of a nest of this species at Sherkston in Welland County, on May 17, 1934, has been recorded by the Buffalo Ornithological Society in their mimeographed journal "The Prothonotary" for March, 1935. There are of course some old and well-known breeding grounds of the Piping Plover at Long Point in Norfolk County, some 50 or 60 miles to the west, but until this recent discovery by ornithologists from Buffalo, it was not suspected to occur as a breeding bird at the eastern end of the Niagara Peninsula.

Charadrius semipalmatus Bonaparte. SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER. — A common bird during the autumn migration period. Almost any day, throughout the month of September, small parties of this plover may be seen, mixing with other waders, on the sandy beaches at Niagara-on-the-Lake, in Lincoln County, and at the southern end of the Niagara River, or along the shores of Lake Erie, in Welland County.

Oxyechus vociferus vociferus (Linnaeus). KILLDEER. — A very common summer bird in both counties. This plover generally arrives soon after the middle of March, and usually all have departed before the middle of October, but occasionally odd birds, or small parties, will linger on until late in November.

Pluvialis dominica dominica (Muller). AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER. — One Golden Plover, a very dark bird in almost full summer plumage, was observed at Morgan's Point in Welland County, on September 3, 1932. This particular bird allowed a fairly close approach; while, after being disturbed, it was seen again in close proximity to a Black-bellied Plover, also still in summer plumage, and the striking difference between the two species, when thus seen together, was very apparent.

Squatarola squatarola (Linnaeus). BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER. — Although never seen in large numbers this fine plover is quite common during the autumn migration season. Throughout September and during the first part of October, small parties, consisting of three or four individuals, are quite frequently to be seen along the shores of Lake Erie, in Welland County, or, less commonly, on the mud flats or sandy beaches

22. *Birds N.Y.*, 1: 272, 1910.

at either end of the Niagara River. At the beginning of September, it is not uncommon to see the occasional bird in full or nearly full summer plumage; but, by the end of the month, practically all birds seen are in the light grey winter phase. Laing,²³ at Beamsville, in 1918, observed a flock on August 23rd and one or two odd birds both earlier and later in the same month.

Arenaria interpres morinella (Linnaeus). RUDDY TURNSTONE. — Occurs during both spring and autumn migration periods, but perhaps more commonly in the latter season. Six or more were observed by the senior author on the Lake Erie shore west of Port Colborne on May 23, 1933, two or three a few miles east of the same place on August 10th of that year, and several in the same general vicinity on July 31, 1935. Laing²⁴ reports seeing one at Beamsville on August 14, 1918.

Philohela minor (Gmelin). AMERICAN WOODCOCK. — Apparently of somewhat rare occurrence within the boundaries of the territory under discussion; but it has been recently observed in Haldimand County and there is every reason to believe that several were seen, during the summers of 1931 and 1932, in the wild swampy woodlands near Warner in Lincoln County, close to the Haldimand border. G. J. Clout of St. Catharines, tells us that he observed a single bird in the Burgoyne Woods near that city on May 21, 1935.

Capella delicata (Ord.) WILSON'S SNIFE. — This cannot be considered a common bird in the district. We have a record of one seen, in cold, snowy weather, on March 28, 1921, feeding in a ditch, in a rough pasture field about two miles from Niagara Falls, and G. J. Clout has informed us of his more recent observation of 6, apparently a family party, flushed from the side of a slough near Burgoyne Woods, St. Catharines, on June 15, 1935.

Phaeopus hudsonicus (Latham). HUDSONIAN CURLEW. — No personal records, but reported as occurring in numbers up to 100 or more along the Welland County shore of Lake Erie and at Niagara Falls between May 25 and June 5, 1935, by members of the Buffalo Ornithological Society. Laing,²⁵ on the Lake Ontario shore at Beamsville in 1918, records this large wader as passing by in several small flocks between July 31 and September 8.

Bartramia longicauda (Bechstein). UPLAND PLOVER. — Not common, but occurs locally within the area. The senior author saw five, possibly a family party, near Lyon's Creek in Welland County on July 2, 1934, and G. J. Clout has told us of seeing two, probably a pair, between Virgil and McNab, in Lincoln County, on June 2, 1935, and one in the same locality on June 16th. Laing²⁶ saw a few on passage in August, 1918, and states the species bred locally, near Beamsville, at that time.

Actitis macularia (Linnaeus). SPOTTED SANDPIPER. — A common summer bird throughout the district; perhaps more in evidence along the Niagara River and on the shores of Lake Erie than elsewhere.

Tringa solitaria solitaria Wilson. EASTERN SOLITARY SANDPIPER. — Very seldom observed. Occurs sparingly during spring migration.

Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus. (Brewster). WESTERN WILLET. — No personal records, but there is a recent report by the Buffalo Ornithological Society in their mimeographed journal "The Prothonotary", of the occurrence of a bird of this species at Crystal Beach, in Welland County, on August 23, 1935.

Totanus melanoleucus (Gmelin). GREATER YELLOW-LEGS. — This large wader appears to be somewhat uncommon, but odd individuals are occasionally seen along the Niagara River in company with small parties of Lesser Yellow-legs or other waders. All of our records have been obtained during the autumn migration period, and between the dates August 17th and October 30th.

Totanus flavipes (Gmelin). LESSER YELLOW-LEGS. — From the middle of August until about the end of September, small parties of Lesser Yellow-legs are quite frequently to be met among the congregations of other waders which frequent certain favoured spots along the shores of Lake Erie, in Welland County; while, at times, this species is quite plentiful along the banks of the Niagara River, where it occasionally lingers until late in October.

Calidris canutus rufus (Wilson). AMERICAN KNOT. — Small parties of Knots have been observed in Welland County on two or three separate occasions during recent years. A small flock of about half a dozen were seen on the lake shore at Morgan's Point on September 3, 1932, and three others at the same place on September 10th. The smaller party, very grey

23. *Can. Field-Nat.* 34: 22, 1920.

24. *Idem.*

25. *Idem.*

26. *Idem.*

birds, appeared to be somewhat sluggish or reluctant in fly and allowed a very close approach. Another small group, containing three individuals, was observed on the bank of the Niagara River, near old Fort Erie, on September 16, 1933.

Pisobia melanotos (Vieillot). PECTORAL SANDPIPER. — One or two individuals of this species are occasionally observed, in company with other waders, during the autumn migration season. Three were seen at Morgan's Point, in Welland County, between September 10 and 24, 1932, one on the banks of the Niagara River, south of Fort Erie, on September 16, 1933, and another one in the same location on August 23, 1934. We believe that we saw a small flock of these sandpipers on the sandy beach near the old fort at Niagara-on-the-Lake, in Lincoln County, on October 8, 1932; but, owing to the fact that illegal shooting was going on at the time, and that they were very wild, a close approach and definite identification were impossible.

Pisobia fuscicollis (Vieillot). WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER. — Two were observed, in company with a flock of Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, on the Niagara River mud flats, near old Fort Erie, on August 31, 1933. This appears to be one of the rarer of the small Sandpipers occurring in the Niagara district during the autumn migration period.

Pisobia bairdi (Coues). BAIRD'S SANDPIPER. — A small party of four of these sandpipers was seen and very closely observed at Morgan's Point on September 3, 1932. One was seen on the beach at Port Colborne on May 23, 1933, and one on the Niagara River bank near Fort Erie on September 16, 1933. Although we have only these few definite observations to record, we have reason to believe that this species is apt to occur sparingly but more or less regularly, on the shores of Lake Erie, in Welland County, during the latter part of August and early September.

Pisobia minutilla (Vieillot). LEAST SANDPIPER. — Probably the commonest of the waders on the shores of Lake Erie during the early autumn migration. At this time, practically every concourse of shore birds has its quota of "Peeps" and a large proportion of these is undoubtedly referable to this species.

Pelidna alpina sakhalina (Vieillot). RED-BACKED SANDPIPER. — Apparently of somewhat rare occurrence. A party of six, in full breeding plumage, was observed by the senior author, on the lake shore near Port Colborne, on May 23, 1933, and three in the grey plumage of winter were seen on the beach at Niagara-on-

the-Lake, on October 25, 1934. An individual of this species, with a broken wing, was picked up at Vineland on October 29, 1929, and later sent to the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology for preservation.

Limnodromus griseus griseus (Gmelin). EASTERN DOWITCHER. — Undoubtedly one of the rarer of the waders occurring in this district. Two were observed, in company with a Knot and a Lesser Yellow-legs, on the banks of the Niagara River, near the old Fort Erie, on August 25, 1933. Near the Peace bridge, on September 2, 1933, another Dowitcher, a large dark bird with an astonishingly long bill, was watched for some considerable time, at a very close range, as it diligently probed in the mud in company with a Stilt Sandpiper.

Micropalama himantopus (Bonaparte). STILT SANDPIPER. — Of rare occurrence, or at least very seldom observed. A long-legged Sandpiper, believed to be referable to this species, was seen in company with about half-a-dozen other species of waders, at Morgan's Point in Welland County, on August 27, 1932. Another bird identified beyond any possible doubt, was observed, in close company with a Dowitcher, near the Peace bridge at Fort Erie, on September 2, 1933. The Stilt Sandpiper and the Dowitcher were closely watched, probing in the mud side by side, at a distance of only 6 or 8 paces.

Ereunetes pusillus (Linnaeus). SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER. — "Peeps" of both species are common on the shores of Lake Erie, in Welland County, during the autumn migration; but, whereas the Least Sandpiper is probably the commonest wader during the latter part of August and early September, this slightly larger, semipalmated bird would appear to make a bid for this distinction before the season has advanced very far into the latter month. On September 3, 1932, at Morgan's Point, Welland County, an unusual-looking "Peep" was closely observed through field glasses at a distance of only a few yards; the larger size, longer legs, and longer bill with the suspicion of a downward curve to the tip, made us wonder whether the bird could possibly be a western *E. maurii*. Other unusual looking "Peeps", seen from time to time have inclined us toward the belief that *Ereunetes maurii* may possibly occur on the Great Lakes, during the autumn migration, more frequently than is supposed; but it is, of course, realized that only careful and systematic collecting could settle such a point.

Limosa haemastica (Linnaeus). HUDSONIAN GODWIT. — The apparent rareness of this large

wader in southern Ontario makes doubly interesting a report by the Buffalo Ornithological Society of the occurrence of the Hudsonian God-

wit at Point Abino in Welland County on May 28, 1934.

(To be continued)

HYDROID DISTRIBUTION IN THE VICINITY OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS

By C. McLEAN FRASER



THE MARINE fauna of the Queen Charlotte island region, apparently a rich one, has received very little attention. Information on the hydroid fauna has been very meagre. Occasional specimens have been collected, usually with no report as to exact location, and a label with "Queen Charlotte islands" on it, does not help very much in such a large area. Thirty species in all had been reported previous to 1935.

During the summer of 1935, the Canadian Hydrographic Service, under the command of Mr. H. D. Parizeau, was engaged in making a survey of the southern and western coasts of these islands. Through the courtesy of the Service, in co-operation with the Biological Board of Canada, an opportunity was afforded to spend two months with the C. G. S. *Wm. J. Stewart*, to make marine biological collections, with a watchful eye for hydroids.

During these two months, June and July, nearly all the shingly beaches, in and around Houston Stewart Channel, the west coast of Moresby Island and Skidegate Channel, were examined for zoological specimens. While numerous species were represented, there were few hydroids among them.

The rocks at the mouths of bays, and those directly exposed to the Pacific, were seldom workable at low spring tides, but still they were visited in three localities under quite favourable conditions. These three were: Danger rocks, near the eastern entrance of Houston Stewart Channel, rocky islets and reefs at the entrance to Flamingo Harbour and at the entrance to Big Bay. In each case, the hydroids were present in great masses but the number of species was not very great, fourteen at Danger rocks being the maximum.

A little dredging in Tasoo Harbour and in Rennell Sound (Graham Island) produced comparatively little. All the large inlets on the west coast of Moresby Island and Graham Island are in the nature of fiords, deep, with steep shores and muddy bottom, but usually with a definite threshold. They are not biologically promising except near the entrance.

Seaward from the main shore, the sea-bottom, like the land surface near by, is extremely rugged, especially in the vicinity of Tasoo Harbour. On that account, weather and sea conditions must be very favourable to make it advisable to try dredging along most of the coast. A couple of attempts did little more than indicate how rich a fauna might be expected.

In the somewhat sheltered waters of Houston Stewart channel, where good dredging ground can be obtained at no great depth, a better picture is presented. In four dredge hauls, made in 15-18 fathoms, near the middle of the channel, about two miles east of Flat rock, at the western entrance of the channel, 47 species of hydroids were obtained.

During August and early September, under the direction of Mr. Parizeau, some dredging was done off Rose Harbour, in Houston Stewart Channel, in Massett Harbour, off Massett Inlet in Dixon Entrance and West of Rose Spit. The material obtained contained a good supply of hydroids.

It may be that since several spots were touched over a wide area, extending from the farthest south, along the west and north coasts, that the hydroid collection from shore and shallow water, is quite representative of the hydroid fauna of these coasts, even if it is very incomplete.

All of the species previously reported from the islands, except three, *Obelia borealis*, *Halicium parvulum* and *Selaginopsis pinnata*, appeared in the collection.

A report on nine of the species obtained, — three new, one with the gonangium new and five new to the Pacific coast of North America, has already been published (Jour. Biol. Board Can. 1 (6), 1936).

The synonymy of almost all of the others has appeared in various papers on west coast hydroids (more particularly in "The Hydroids of the West Coast of North America", Bull. Lab. Nat. Hist., State Univ. of Iowa, 1911, and in "Hydroids of the Vancouver Island Region", Trans. Roy. Soc. Can. (3) 8, Sec. 4, 1914). It seems unnecessary to repeat this, consequently, the discussion is limited to the distribution of all of the species



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