

The Evening Grosbeak Invasion of 1933-1934

BY NELSON D. W. PUMYEA

THE following data were obtained in answer to a circular sent out to all persons in central western New Jersey who were known to have seen Grosbeaks, to which I have added my personal observations.

Mt. Holly, N. J. Mrs. A. C. Vansciver reports that about 35 Evening Grosbeaks were seen in Medford about December 15, 1933 and remained at least until March 9, 1934, when 29 were observed. They did not mix with other birds but stayed together in one flock. They were observed on several different days usually between 1 and 2 P. M. but an exact record of observations was not kept. The birds frequented maple trees and when on the ground seemed to be eating seeds from flower beds.

Mrs. Emily Irons, observed them first on February 13, 1934 a flock of 40 containing 16 males and 24 females. They were last seen, a single pair, on May 4, 1934. They visited our lawn from four to six times a day nearly every day until May 1, the largest number seen at one time was 52. They frequented maple and hemlock trees and on the ground fed on fallen hemlock cones and old last fall maple seeds. They became very tame and flew up into nearby trees and down again many times. Seemed to like gravel walks and crushed stone walks to feed upon picking up sand and possibly seeds among the gravel.

Nelson D. W. Pumyea, observed them until April 22, 1934 when the flock of 40 was present. They fed on hemlock cones and maple seeds on the trees and maple pods on the ground. They were present in flock until April 1 coming nearly every day but occasionally absent for a day or so. Most seen at one time 63 and most abundant from 7.30-9.30 A. M. and from 1-2.30 P. M., fewer towards night.

Medford, N. J. Mrs. Alfred E. Darnell, saw a flock of 40 or 50, more females than males, on January 22, 1934, where they were seen until February 14, coming to lawns in the town sometimes four or five times a day. They fed on the ground on maple seeds, and possibly on those of the linden. Once after the ground had been covered with snow I saw some of them feeding almost at our back door on a small spot where the grass was uncovered. They dug right into the frozen ground and seemed to be after the roots of the grass. The proportion of the sexes varied from day to day and in the final flock there were more males than females.

New Lisbon. Mrs. Emlen Darlington, first observed the Grosbeaks in the latter part of January to the best of her recollection and during the last two weeks of February about ten birds came regularly to feed on the lawn. They fed under maples and evergreens and the number of males and females varied. The greatest number seen at one time was 12. They were last seen on March 13, 1934.

Browns Mills, N. J. Miss Margarte R. Hathaway. Not more than eight seen at one time. While the first observation was not recorded they remained until March 1, 1934, when a single pair was noted. Then on April 3, a flock of 13 (6 males and 7 females) was seen. They fed on seeds of the maple and ash and cleaned up a tree in an astonishingly short time. On the ground they ate cracked corn and maple seeds and frequented a pile of leaves piled up for compost in which were probably more of the seeds. They came rarely more than once in a day and seemed restless, moving quickly to other feeding grounds.

In 1919 we had flocks of 20 to 34 individuals and they were present in other years of which I have no record. One year they remained for several weeks and frequented a group of spruces and hemlocks near our yard. They were easily followed by the aid of their loud chirps like an exaggerated English Sparrow's call. This year, however, they were singularly quiet and were doubtless present many times when we did not see them.