

THE FIRST ROUNDUP

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When the archives of the D.V.O.C. were being sorted out about thirty years ago, I photographed several large scrolls containing data from earlier May Runs before the information was discarded. The one for 1933 is the earliest recorded May Run of the D.V.O.C. These interesting records show the absence of many species in 1933 that are common today, as well as the abundance of others that have now become rare.

There were 20 different groups of birders with 50 individuals participating on Mother's Day, May 14, 1933. They covered most of the Philadelphia area; including Germantown, Paoli, Fox Chase, Cynwyd, Darby, Ithan, Crum Creek, Swarthmore, Springfield Dam and Tinicum. They went to Reading, Pennsylvania, Delaware City and Claymont, Delaware; and in New Jersey, to Troy Meadows, Mt. Holly, Brigantine Island and Cape May. This was an extensive May Run area, and they didn't miss much that was around. The total number of species was 189 - a high number for any census in the early 1930's.

Some observers were alone, as was Choate at Bowman's Hill, Pennock at Kennett Square, Irvin at Claymont, Delaware and Sparmaker at Fox Chase. The local lists were quite high - Pumyea and McIlvaine had 83 in Mt. Holly, Sparmaker 77 in Fox Chase, Poole 102 in Reading, Yoder 69 in the Pennypack. Stone and Emlen covered Germantown and Aubry Arboretum and totaled 38 species with a Cape May Warbler as an exclusive. Tatum went alone from Haddonfield to Brigantine and had the only Pectoral Sandpiper and Long-eared Owl to fill his 113 species. Day and Smith covered Bridesburg to Fox Chase, totaling 98 birds including the only Pied-billed Grebe, Common Merganser, and Winter Wren. Worth, all alone, had 50 species in Swarthmore.

They also had in 1933 what is now known as "Gung-Ho" birders. One group including Potter, Livingston, Weyl, McDonald and Gillespie covered Tinicum, Swarthmore, and Delaware City and totaled 125 including 26 warbler species. The top group, however, came in with an incredible count of 167 species, traveling from Troy Meadows to Brigantine. All this, of course, with no Garden State Parkway or Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. These fabulous birders were J. Fletcher Street, Scoville, Pough, and Collins. Among their 12 exclusive birds were Barred Owl, Yellow Rail, Red-breasted Merganser, Merlin and a Mute Swan. Even with the excellent roads of today, the refuges, and the influx of a number of other birds, this total is difficult to approach.

All the lists showed abundant warblers with Magnolia and American Redstart on all but one list; Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Wilson's and Canada

warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats were very common. Eastern Meadowlarks were on all lists. Grasshopper Sparrows were on 13, Vesper Sparrows on 12, and Henslow's Sparrows on three. Two groups had Bald Eagles, 18 had Eastern Phoebes, five had Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 11 had Eastern Bluebirds.

In contrast, a great many of today's regular birds were absent on the 1933 count. There were no Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, no Snowy, American or Cattle Egrets; no Glossy Ibis, Tricolored Herons, Gadwalls or Northern Shovelers; no Royal, Forster's or Gull-billed Terns; no Great Black-backed Gulls, American Oystercatchers, Willets, Chuck-will's-widows, Cerulean or Yellow-throated Warblers; no Brant, Snow or Canada Geese; neither Northern Mockingbirds nor Boat-tailed Grackles were listed. Many others, less common to us, were also missed.

As far as I know, only three of those early "big day" veterans are still alive. Two of them, Philip Livingston and Edward Weyl are Honorary Members of the D.V.O.C. Richard H. Pough, the author of the distinguished Audubon field guides, was a member of the club at least until 1937.

Fortunately, all the data were apparently tabulated by John Gillespie, the instigator of these yearly grueling May Runs in the D.V.O.C. The *Cassinia* of May 18, 1933 reads: "Forty-one members and nine visitors attended. Delaware Valley Roundup was ably presented by the Secretary, Mr. John A. Gillespie."