

GENERAL NOTES

Northern Fulmar at State College, Pennsylvania: On November 16, 1985 at 3:20 p.m., we observed a Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) flying over Beaver Stadium during the playing of the national anthem prior to the Penn State/Notre Dame football game. There was steady rain with low clouds and overcast skies, temperature, 35°F. The stadium lights were on throughout the afternoon. We first saw the Ring-billed Gull-sized bird flying near the scoreboard and flagpole at the south end of the stadium about 100 yards away. We immediately realized that it was not a gull because of its flight characteristics. The bird flew on stiffly held wings with rather shallow, fairly rapid wingbeats, reminding us of a slow, giant Chimney Swift. There were intermittent short periods of gliding on downwardly bowed wings, this flight profile being very obvious when viewed head on. Our seat locations near the top of the stadium enabled us to view the bird head on at just above eye level. I initially thought that the bird could be a shearwater species, but as it gradually flew nearer to our stadium section, its totally white, rounded head and thick, white neck became clearly visible, and we realized the bird was a fulmar. The wings were proportionately narrow and short for the chunky body; the tail was short. The upper surfaces of the wings, back, and rump were medium gray, the belly and underwings white. There were no black markings anywhere on the bird. The bird made sharp 180° banking turns, with a rise at each turn. It approached within 40 yards of our location and circled behind the pressbox and the stadium lights and at this range I was able to distinguish the thick, heavy (tubenose) bill. After managing to "borrow" a pair of 7×35 binoculars, I watched the fulmar for an additional 30 seconds at a distance of 40 to 100 yards as it made a complete circle around the outer edge of the stadium before disappearing into the rain and clouds to the southwest.

Both of us have previously observed Northern Fulmars on five pelagic birding trips during the last two years. During the most recent trip (September, 1985) we observed over one hundred birds of this species in all color phases off the coast of Washington.

Possible explanations for such an extraordinary occurrence in central Pennsylvania include the fact that there had been an easterly upper wind flow for the previous 18 to 24 hours, with freezing rain and snow in northern New Jersey/southern New York and extending throughout the northeastern quarter of Pennsylvania. Measurable snow fell in New Jersey and New York. These weather conditions, combined with the ridge and valley topography in central Pennsylvania, might explain the occurrence of the fulmar in this area. It is now generally accepted that tube-nosed birds are able to use their olfactory system to locate food sources, and possibly it was attracted to the smell of food emanating from the stadium concession stands. Also, Beaver Stadium, a gray, steel structure situated in an open area, somewhat resembles a ship from a distance. Perhaps the lost bird was attracted to the lights or smells or recognized a familiar shape in the distance and approached the stadium to investigate.

Previous reports of inland sightings of Northern Fulmars in the east include Arnprior, Ontario, May 3, 1924; Ottawa River opposite Pointe Fortune, Quebec, November 15, 1928; Medford, Ontario, November 20, 1936; Beauport, Quebec, 1890 (Godfrey, 1966); Oradell, NJ, December 1892; Ramsey, NJ, January 7, 1956 (Bull, 1964). Three records are noted from the south shore of Lake Ontario near Oswego, NY: dead specimens were collected on October 3, 1971 (Bull, 1974) and in the spring of 1979 (*American Birds* 33:768); a live bird was observed during the winter of 1975 (*American Birds* 29:667). On November 12, 1984, a light-phase individual was seen at Woodlawn, Ontario (*American Birds* 39:46). In Bennington, VT, a bird was found in a parking lot on December 4, 1977 (*American Birds* 31:329).

This is the first reported sighting of a Northern Fulmar in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately we were unable to obtain a photograph of the bird, although we inquired about possible videotapes of the pregame ceremonies from two television networks (ABC and TCS) and the Penn State football office. All indicated that no taping was done before the game.

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— John D. and Rebecca L. Peplinski,
4 Beaver Branch Road, Box 364, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA 16865

Buller's Shearwater off Long Beach Island, New Jersey: On October 28, 1984, a DVOG pelagic trip was taken on the *Miss Barnegat Light* out of Barnegat Light, New Jersey. Sixty-two observers were on board.

We were in an area with a large concentration of Greater Shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*), a few Cory's Shearwaters (*Calonectris diomedea*), a dozen or more Manx Shearwaters (*Puffinus puffinus*), and some Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) when a very different shearwater appeared. The bird approached us from the bow, close to the water, and alternately flapping and gliding it flew past the boat toward our spreading fish oil chum. Then it wheeled around and returned forward, disappearing into the haze and mass of other shearwaters. It appeared slightly smaller than a Greater Shearwater. The bird was grayish on the upper surface, with a black cap, gray rump, and a very distinctive diagonal white stripe in the wing. The underparts appeared pure white and the tail fairly long.

At the time we believed the bird to be a Buller's Shearwater (*Puffinus bulleri*), and we hoped that the photos taken would confirm this identification. We were more than gratified to have five excellent photos taken by Michael Danzenbaker and Gerard Dewaghe show in detail all the above characteristics as well as several other markings we had not noticed in the field. The photos show a white shoulder patch on the leading edge of the upper wing and a black horizontal line running from the base of the tail to the trailing edge of the wing, both markings identical to those in the photo of Buller's Shearwater published in the Audubon Society's *Master Guide to Birding* (Vol. 1, 1983, p. 63).

The photographs taken were distributed to a number of professional ornithologists and birders with experience with Buller's in the Pacific, and the responses also confirmed the observation as apparently the first Atlantic Ocean record of Buller's Shearwater.

The sighting was made at approximately 9:00 A.M., 31 miles ESE of Barnegat Light (39° 38' N., 173° 25' W.) in 20 fathoms of 60.6°F. water.

I wrote to Peter Harrison, author of *Seabirds - An Identification Guide*, at his home in England to see what comments he might offer on this most unusual observation. In his reply to me of March 31, 1985, Mr. Harrison speculated on the possibility that Buller's Shearwaters do occasionally wander to southern South America. The present record, he suggests, was simply a bird which wandered a bit "too far" and then migrated north in the "wrong ocean," winding up off the coast of New Jersey rather than the coast of California.

— Alan Brady, P.O. Box 103, Wycombe, PA 18980



BULLER'S SHEARWATER (*Puffinus bulleri*)
31 miles ESE of Barnegat Light, New Jersey, October 28, 1984
Photo by Mike Danzenbaker



BULLER'S SHEARWATER (left) with **GREATER SHEARWATER**
(*Puffinus gravis*) at sea ESE of Barnegat Light, New Jersey, October 28, 1984
Photo by Gerry Dewaghe

Wood Stork in Centre County, Pennsylvania: An immature Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) roosted in the yard of James Dearing, three miles east of Boalsburg, Centre County, September 2-9, 1985. Birders were first aware of the bird when a photograph, identified as an egret, appeared in the *Centre Daily Times* of September 5. On September 6 Dave Pearson tracked down the source of the photograph and verified the bird's presence. Over 100 birders saw the stork during the weekend of the 7th and 8th and many people photographed it. During its stay, the stork spent the night and early afternoon roosting either on the Dearing's lawn or in a small walnut tree in their yard. On one occasion it roosted on their TV antenna. In the morning and late afternoon it was seen feeding in several nearby farm ponds. The stork was last seen the evening of September 9, while it was feeding. It did not return to roost that night. The appearance of this Wood Stork in central Pennsylvania was probably due to the hurricane in Florida which may have disoriented the bird.

All Pennsylvania Wood Stork records of which I am aware are as follows:

1. "The late Judge Libbart, in his ornithological report of Lancaster County, says: 'I obtained a fine specimen of this species, shot from a troop of ten by Mr. M. Ely on the Susquehanna, July 1862.' " — Warren (1890).
2. "According to Conway (1940), C. J. Pennock stated that a specimen was taken by Vincent Barnard in Chester County subsequent to his 1861 list." — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
3. "Prof. August Koch, of Williamsport, has one in his collection which was captured a few years ago in Lycoming County." — Warren (1890).
4. "Dr. Walter Van Fleet of Renovo, includes it among the stragglers in his list of species found in Clinton County." — Warren (1890).
5. "Dr. A. C. Treichler, Elizabethtown, has specimens of this bird in his collection which were shot in Lancaster County in the early part of July, 1883, shortly after severe storms." — Warren (1890). "Beck (1924) reported, 'Three were killed on a small run near Elizabethtown in July, 1883.'" — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
6. "Mr. Geo. P. Friant, of Scranton, informs me that a small flock of Wood Ibises, about four or five years ago, were seen in his neighborhood." — Warren (1890).
7. "Beck (1924) reported...four on the Pequea Creek near Refton, July 17, 1896." — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
8. "Frey (1943) mentioned one seen in Wildwood, Dauphin County in 1897 by Dr. Charles Hassler, as quoted by Dr. Harold B. Wood." — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
9. "A mounted specimen taken on November 11, 1921, in Albany Township, Berks County is in the possession of Dr. Stanley Brunner of Krumsville, Berks County. I saw this specimen in the flesh." — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
10. "Mr. Forrest C. Grimm reported three seen 'around a spring just west of Carlisle for about a week prior to June 29, 1955. These were seen by many local bird watchers and several photographs were taken' (J. K. Potter, *in litt.*)." — Poole (unpublished manuscript).
11. & 12. "Robert Compton observed one at Lake Wallenpaupack on May 5, 1972 and made a sketch of it in his notebook. It was subsequently learned that this bird or another was observed near Reading on May 3 and near Rochester, New York, on May 7." — Street (1975).
13. A distant bird seen in flight from Hawk Mountain's south lookout was observed in fall during the late 1970's (exact date unknown). — Harold Axtell (personal communication).
14. An immature bird, three miles east of Boalsburg, Centre County, Pa., September 2-9, 1985, was seen and photographed by many people.

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- Warren, B. H. 1890. *Report on the Birds of Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg.
- Terence Lee Schiefer, 107 Newkirk Avenue, Reading, PA 19607

Little Stints at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey: On July 22, 1985, while studying migrant shorebirds, I identified a breeding plumaged Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) feeding with a large group of other small *Calidrids*. I studied this bird for 30-35 minutes, from 5-30 yards, with a 30x telescope and 12x40 binoculars. Lighting conditions were excellent.

The crown and mantle were brownish with some narrow buff streaking. There were conspicuous buff-white lines between the mantle and scapulars. The ear coverts and lores were cinnamon-orange, and the superciliary was buffy. The nape was pale orange, and this color continued down the sides of the finely streaked breast, where it formed a partial pectoral band. The chin, throat, and rest of the underparts were immaculate white. The scapulars and tertials were prominently dark-centered with pale buff and rufous edgings. The median and greater wing coverts were dark-centered, although not as dark as the scapulars, and had cinnamon-buff edgings. The bill was shorter and narrower basally than in Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*), tapered to a finer point, and appeared very straight. In overall size, it was larger than the Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*) and appeared smaller-bodied than the Semipalmated, with slightly longer tarsi in relation to body size. At close range, no palmations could be seen between the toes.

I searched for this bird again on July 23 but failed to find it. On July 24 H. P. Langridge, Brian Moscatello, and I located another Little Stint at Brigantine Refuge. This bird had the same pattern and morphological features of the bird of July 22 but appeared paler overall. I perceived it to be slightly larger in comparison with Semipalmated, indicating the first bird could have been male, the second female. The second bird was nearly identical in plumage to illustration "b" on Plate 5 of the Viet and Jonsson article on the small *Calidrids* (*American Birds*, 1984, Vol. 38, pp. 853-876). The first bird was slightly brighter on the face, nape, and sides of the breast, and the edgings on the scapulars, wing coverts, and tertails were brighter, as in illustration "a", Plate 5.

The other species that could be confused with a bird in this plumage would be breeding-plumaged Rufous-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*). The white throat and dark-centered cinnamon-buff edged wing coverts would eliminate this species. In Rufous-necked Stints the wing coverts are grayish with no dark center, just a darker shaft and slightly paler edgings, with no cinnamon or buff. Caution must be used in separating adult Little Stint from fresh juvenile-plumaged Least Sandpipers. These usually arrive in this area in early August, but in 1985 I noted the first arrival at Brigantine on July 30. Least in this plumage also show a V-mark on the mantle and can appear to have dark tarsi. However, the upperparts are very uniformly rufous, they are much smaller than Semipalmated, and they have much shorter tarsi.

Moscatello and I have had previous experience with the Little Stint, and we agreed that the overall size and shape was correct for that species. Langridge and Moscatello have had previous experience with the Rufous-necked Stint and agreed that this species appears larger, has a heavier bill, shorter tarsi, and longer wings, giving a totally different impression of shape. These characteristics are also noted by Viet and Jonsson.

The Little Stint was documented as occurring in this area by photograph of a bird at Little Creek, Delaware, in May, 1979 (*American Birds*, 1980, Vol. 34, pp. 850-851). Sightings have been increasing on the east coast, including others in this fall season (1985).

— Robert D. Barber, RD 2, Box 181, Millville, NJ 08332

Large Number of Whimbrel and Late Spring Birding in Centre County, Pa.: On the morning on May 28, 1984 Steve Feldstein, Tod Lenagh, and I were birding at Bald Eagle State Park in Centre County. It had been an unusually wet spring and the fields below the dam breast were flooded, creating ideal shorebird habitat. The intermittent rain that day promised a good shorebird fallout. However, we were astonished to find a flock of 81 Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). This sighting is the second record of this species in Centre County and is apparently the largest number of Whimbrel ever seen in Pennsylvania. The birds were very vocal and would periodically rise en masse and then settle back down into the field. After a half-hour of feeding they flew off to the south. Five minutes later the birds flew overhead again, this time in the expected northward direction. The rain that day produced several other species which are notable in Centre County for late May. They were: 12 Red Knots (second county record), 30 Black-bellied Plover, three Ruddy Turnstones, three Brant, two Gadwall, Semipalmated Plovers, and Semipalmated Sandpipers (all at Bald Eagle State Park) and a Cattle Egret at Fairbrook Swamp, southwest of State College.

The following year, on May 28, 1985 similar rainy conditions prevailed, but it had been a dry spring and the fields were not flooded. Seen that day, however, by members of the State College Bird Club were the following: Common Loon, two Great Egrets, two Red-breasted Mergansers, Ruddy Duck, two Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlin, Red-necked Phalarope, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Tern, and Black Tern (all at Bald Eagle State Park), a Semipalmated Plover on a pond west of State College, and a very late Snow Goose flying over the Scotia Barrens.

It is my experience that most inland birders pack up their binoculars after the peak of warbler migration and do very little birding in late May. This is an unfortunate situation since rainy days at that time of year can produce some very exciting birding.

— Terence Lee Schiefer, 107 Newkirk Avenue, Reading, PA 19607

Bar-tailed Godwit in Cape May County, New Jersey: On September 21, 1985 Christopher Dooley, Stephen Hopkins, Donald Jones, and I observed a nominate race, male (probable) Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica lapponica*) approximately seventy-five yards out in the salt marsh at Nummy Island, just south of Stone Harbor, N.J.

The four of us had stopped along the road across Nummy Island to search for a Marbled Godwit which had been forced off a small nearby island by the incoming tide. While scanning a flock of Black-bellied Plovers, Donald Jones discovered the Bar-tailed Godwit preening with its back towards us. The barred tail was obvious, but verifying that the rump and lower back were white (thus indicating the bird's subspecific race) rather than brown with white subsurface down or semiplume feathers being exposed by the bird's preening took careful observation.

Although the bird was discovered forty-five minutes or so before sunset, lighting conditions were excellent. There was no backlighting effect. Observations were conducted with 15-60x Swift zoom telescopes.

For fifteen minutes we carefully studied all the field marks. Noted while the bird had its back to us were the white tail barred with black, a white rump extending a short way up the back, and the dark-centered mantle feathers edged with light gray. The amount of dark coloration decreased away from the mantle (thus the primaries, secondaries, and tertiaries

were uniformly light gray, with no dark centers). The head and neck were medium to light gray, with an obvious supercilium and a medium to dark gray crown. The bill length was approximately one and a half times the head length. It was upturned, tapered to a fine black tip, and had a pink base. Overall, the bird's size appeared to be about one and a half times that of the accompanying Black-bellied Plovers.

Finally, after approximately fifteen minutes, the bird turned around to expose the very light gray (almost white) underparts and raised its wings to show the white wing lining, somewhat darker primaries, secondaries, and tertials, and a dark leading edge to the wing. At this point we were absolutely certain of the identification as a winter-plumaged *Limosa lapponica lapponica*. We eliminated *L. l. baueri* by the short bill and white rump, lower back, and wing lining. An adult plumage (rather than juvenile) was indicated by the plain light gray primaries, secondaries, and tertials. A male bird was suggested by the very short bill.

Stephen Hopkins took a series of photographs showing all the diagnostic field marks. When he approached too closely and the bird flew, the white wing lining, white rump and lower back (suggesting a dowitcher), and barred tail were all plainly visible. The bird landed behind an island of salt marsh cord grass some 150 yards away. It was quite active for the next fifteen minutes and could occasionally be seen through gaps in the grasses or when poking its head above the grasses. At this time the godwit was also seen by David Sibley and other birders, who remained until the light finally died.

A number of standard field guides were available to us during our observation. Additional information was later provided by *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders* by A. J. Prater, J. H. Marchant, and J. Vuorinen, 1977.

Efforts by other observers to locate the bird the following day and subsequently were to no avail.

This record constitutes the first sighting of Bar-tailed Godwit in Cape May County.

— Richard Mellon, 1305 Big Oak Road, Yardley, PA 19067

Purple Gallinule Rescued at Sea: On August 19, 1985 an adult Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*) was rescued about fifteen miles east of Long Beach Island, Ocean County, N.J., by the captain and mate of the *Doris Mae IV*, a charter fishing boat out of Barnegat Light.

The bird was brought that evening to my Rehabilitation and Research Center in Surf City. It was suffering from hunger and exhaustion but seemed otherwise in good shape. I gave the bird the care and attention it required, and after banding (Fish and Wildlife Service Band No. 674-50006) it was released on August 22 at the freshwater pond along the entrance road into Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge.

In recent years there seem to have been two or three annual reports of this species in the state. The location where this bird was sighted, however, must rank as the most unusual.

This is the third Purple Gallinule to be brought to my center in the last several years. On May 26, 1981, an adult bird was found in a gutter in Ship Bottom suffering impact injury. The bird was released at Brigantine Refuge on May 29. In June of 1984 a weak and thin adult bird was picked up near the Ocean City golf course and after a period of recuperation was released on July 3, also at Brigantine Refuge.

— Betsy Jones, 302 Mattix Run, Absecon, NJ 08201

Juvenile Common Mergansers in Pennsylvania: On August 5 and 6, 1984 I watched 29 Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*), believed to be birds of the year, swimming up the Loyalsock Creek at Montoursville, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. On the 6th, I watched them start from the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and swim

upcreek. They fed mainly along the creek's edge, moving in a very tightly compact group. At one point an immature Little Blue Heron ran toward them and they rushed away as a group.

One of the flock seemed to be an adult female. Her breast seemed whiter than the others and the white spot beneath the eye was much smaller than that of the other birds, but plumage differences were slight. At one time this bird rested on a snag while the others swam. Once, it led the flock while they swam upstream. The behavior of the mergansers seemed to indicate that they were inexperienced birds, dashing here and there as a unit.

I had seen a pair (male and female) of Common Mergansers in this section of the creek as late as April 30, 1984. During the summer I scanned the creek about eight or nine times while I drove my car along the creek for brief visits, but did not see any mergansers until the August 5th sighting.

This was possibly a combination of two broods of mergansers from local nestings.

— Stanley C. Stahl, 610 Chestnut Street, Montoursville, PA 17754

Editor's Note: The Common Merganser apparently is expanding its breeding range in Pennsylvania. See Daniel Brauning's article in this *Cassinia*.

Bridled Terns off New Jersey: On September 2, 1984, I observed a single Bridled Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*), at length, 28 miles east of Hereford Inlet, Cape May County. On July 21, 1985, Patricia Sutton and I saw two adult Bridled Terns 23 miles southeast of Hereford Inlet. These birds were seen at point-blank range as they briefly hovered over the radio antennas of the dive boat *Metusalem*. Both sightings were non-storm related and are among very few non-storm state records. The only previous sighting of Bridled Tern from Cape May County was one seen by David Ward on September 7, 1979, at the South Cape May Meadows following Hurricane David. The two recent sightings suggest that the Bridled Tern, a pelagic wanderer from the tropical Atlantic, may be more common off our shores in late summer than published records indicate.

— Clay Sutton, 129 Buck Avenue, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

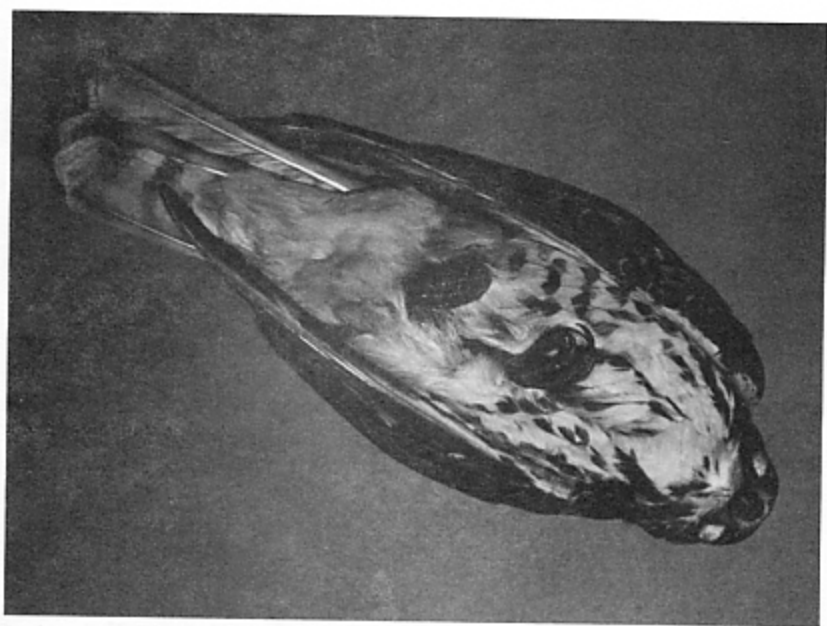
Late Broad-winged Hawk in Northern New Jersey: A Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) was struck by a truck driven by an officer from the Middletown Board of Health near the Earle Ammunition Depot in Lincroft, New Jersey (Monmouth County) on December 2, 1985. The health officer stopped, picked up the bird, and brought it to the Monmouth County S.P.C.A. facility in Eatontown, New Jersey that same day. Mrs. Alice Forshee of the N.J. Audubon Society was contacted by the S.P.C.A., and she picked up the bird that evening.

The following day, Mrs. Forshee brought the bird to me. Initial examination of the bird showed it had suffered a severe concussion with resultant damage to its central nervous system. Despite all efforts to save it, it died the night of December 4.

When I received the bird, its general condition (aside from the injury it had sustained) looked good. It had no feather damage, looked healthy and weighed 430 g. I did not take pictures of the bird while it was alive, fearing further stress would be harmful. The photograph was taken after death. The hawk was an immature (1st year) bird.

A Broad-wing this far north (40° 20' north latitude for Lincroft, New Jersey) at this date is, I believe, worthy of note.

— Leonard J. Soucy, Jr., The Raptor Trust,
1390 White Bridge Road, Millington, NJ 07946



**BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) in New Jersey
in early December, 1985**

Photo by Leonard J. Soucy, Jr.

Snowy Owl Wintering in Camden, New Jersey: During the second week of December, 1984, an adult female or immature Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) was discovered on the grounds of the South Jersey Port Corporation in Camden. The owl was first seen by Joseph A. Balzano, Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Facilities there. On that occasion the bird was perched atop a pile of pig iron, and Mr. Balzano was able to approach in his car to within twenty feet of the bird. The slight noise of the opening of the car window caused the bird to fly.

About ten days later Mr. Edward Montgomery of National Park, Gloucester County, visited Mr. Balzano, and the subject of the earlier owl sighting came up. Mr. Montgomery expressed interest, and the two men were able to relocate the bird. Mr. Montgomery subsequently phoned a close friend, Edward Komchak of Mt. Royal, and he, in turn, saw the bird on December 24. Two days later Mr. Komchak phoned the Rancocas Nature Center, and the word was then out to the general birding community on the Snowy Owl's presence. To digress a bit, Mr. Edward Montgomery is well known, perhaps indirectly, to many local birders. It is his property at the north end of Grove Avenue in National Park that has for years harbored wintering Long-eared Owls. (The construction of additional homes in the pine groves there has made the area less desirable than it had formerly been as a roosting site, and no owls were reported there during the winter of 1984-1985.)

Over the course of the next two months the Snowy Owl could often easily be seen from the Dr. Ulysses S. Wiggins Riverfront Park located just north of the port facilities. Especially during the latter part of its stay the owl seemed to spend its days in an overgrown field adjacent to the park. The last sighting of the Snowy Owl was on or about March 20, 1985.

Mr. Balzano informed me that at any given time there were some 6,000 tons of corn gluten feed pellets stored at the port facility for shipment to England and Ireland as cattle feed. The presence of feed in such quantities attracts large numbers of Rock Doves, and

one building on the port facility grounds is aptly nicknamed "Pigeon Palace." There is a standing joke among the dock workers that the pigeons have it so good that they think they have died and gone to heaven. This abundance of feed also attracts a large number of rats, an increasingly serious problem. So, with an ample rat supply – and pigeons, too, if need be – there was plenty of food for the Snowy Owl.

Camden's Snowy Owl was just one of several to be seen in New Jersey during the winter of 1984-1985. All other records, however, were coastal. There were very late fall or early winter reports from Holgate, Brigantine Island, Ocean City, and Cape May Point. In addition, at least two were present for an extended period at Bayonne.

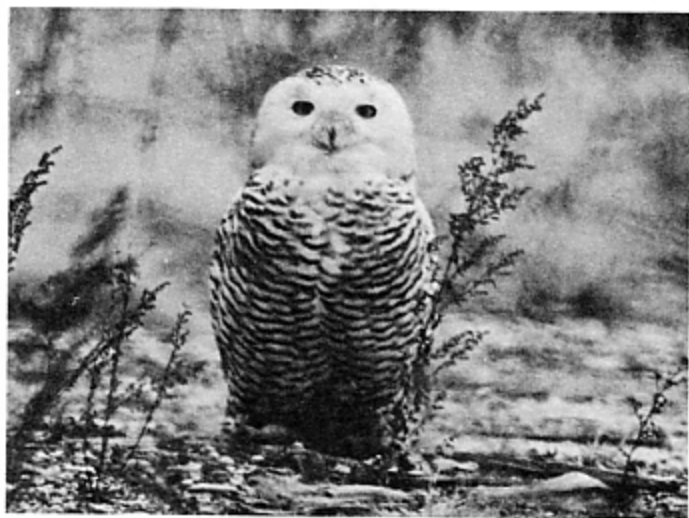
The present record is apparently the first in the southwestern part of the state since late January or early February, 1975, when one was present for one day only at a Medford nursery (Ron Kegel, pers. comm.; report unpublished). From January 12 to February 5, 1967, a Snowy Owl was present at the small airport along Route 322 at Bridgeport, Gloucester County (*Cassinia*, 1966-1967, p. 24). One had earlier been seen at Westville, Gloucester County, on January 12-13, 1965 (*Cassinia*, 1965-1966, p. 38). During the last fifteen years or so single Snowy Owls have been sighted during several years at Philadelphia's International Airport.

On several occasions birding visitors to Dr. Ulysses S. Wiggins Riverfront Park observed a Peregrine Falcon, undoubtedly attracted by the ample pigeon supply. A small group of Northern Bobwhite, a species not often associated with downtown Camden, managed to survive the winter in the same overgrown field to which the Snowy Owl seemed partial. Some 400 Ruddy Ducks and 400 Lesser Scaup could be seen in the little cove along the river, at least until the deep freeze of late January.

A number of observers saw Camden's Snowy Owl on the same day that they saw Medford Township's wintering Summer Tanager (see below in this section). Recording these two birds on the same day must represent an ornithological "first" in New Jersey.

I want to express my appreciation to Mr. Balzano of the South Jersey Port Corporation for supplying data on that facility's operation. I also thank Edward Manners and Brian Moscatello for reviewing this note.

— James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace, Turnersville, NJ 08012



SNOWY OWL (*Nyctea scandiaca*) – Camden, New Jersey, January 10, 1985

Photo by Alan Brady

Some Observations on Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Villanova, Pennsylvania: For several years we have been fortunate to observe Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) in our Villanova yard from mid-May through mid-September. The male arrives first in the spring, with the female coming within about a week.

While I have found no nest on our property, the pair has obviously nested nearby as I have seen the female fly in with one or two young to feed on red flowers or to hawk for insects. I have watched the birds bathe during light misty early morning rains and also in late afternoons in a very fine spray from our garden hose.

I recall specifically seeing the male perched on a twig in our apple tree late on July 22, 1984, twisting his small body to and fro so that his gorget would flash brilliant red in the twilight sun. Five days later I saw the male in his courting pendulum flight, swinging back and forth in an arc in front of our spruce tree. As he flew faster, the arc became smaller and smaller. Sitting in a small opening on a branch the female seemed frozen to a twig. Then, in a flash, they dropped to the ground, under the bird bath, where copulation took place. After three seconds the birds flew up into the air and away.

— Catherine O. Brethwaite, 533 Atterbury Road, Villanova, PA 19085

Pileated Woodpeckers Return to Southern New Jersey: One of the (many) highlights of our recent Barred Owl/Red-shouldered Hawk survey (see elsewhere in this issue of *Cassinia*) was the discovery of Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*) in Cape May and Atlantic Counties. On March 11, 1985, a male Pileated Woodpecker came in to a Barred Owl imitation deep in Timber-Beaver Swamp, Cape May County. On March 16 (buoyed by Pat's success at Timber-Beaver) we called in a Pileated Woodpecker at the Corbin City Wildlife Management Area in Atlantic County using a combination of taped Pileated Woodpecker calls and Barred Owl calls.

This bird had first been heard on December 15, 1984, while we were scouting for the Marmora Christmas Bird Count, but we did not see the bird until March 16. Exploration there has revealed much Pileated activity, excavations and workings over at least a three-square-mile area, and evidence that the area has been occupied by Pileateds for some time. Circumstantial evidence suggests that two are present, yet they haven't actually been seen together. The bird (or birds) was still present (one heard) on the 1985 Marmora Christmas Bird Count, on December 29, 1985.

The Pileated Woodpecker was an uncommon but regular breeder on the New Jersey coastal plain in the late 1800's, even breeding on the barrier islands in Cape May County. It was extirpated seemingly by the early 1900's, and the only subsequent records have been of wandering or dispersing birds (probably from northern New Jersey populations). Known published records are shown below. It is hoped that the number of recent records indicates that the Pileated Woodpecker has returned to southern New Jersey as a breeding bird, perhaps in response to changing forest conditions that include many dead trees (due to gypsy moth damage) and some large tracts slowly becoming "old growth" forest again.

KNOWN NEW JERSEY COASTAL PLAIN PILEATED WOODPECKER RECORDS

11/08/1878	Five Mile Beach (Wildwood) - William Abbott
12/31/1879	Five Mile Beach (Wildwood) - William Abbott
06/04/1883	West Creek, Cumberland County - nest with 5 young - Mark L. Wilde and J. Harris Reed
June, 1885	Seven Mile Beach (Stone Harbor/Avalon) - Schick & Parker
03/25/1908	Egg Harbor River, May's Landing - George Morris
05/10/1959	Cape May Point - Joseph Cadbury
early spring	
1960's	Port Republic - Gil Cavileer
05/24/1970	Estell Manor - Harry Goldstein
12/12/1973	Navesink - P. William Smith, et al.

04/23/1976	Tuckahoe - John Danzenbaker
10/22/1977	Rancocas State Park (present for some time) - m.obs.
03/12/1978	Vincentown - Ken Tischner
fall 1981	Port Republic - fide Pete Plage
05/15/1982	Cape May Point State Park - Pete Dunne & David Sibley
05/16/1982	Goshen (Buck Avenue) - Clay & Patricia Sutton
04/29/1984	Parvin State Park - Urner Ornithological Club
03/11/1985	Timber - Beaver Swamp - Patricia Sutton
12/15/1985 to	
12/29/1985	Corbin City WMA - Clay & Patricia Sutton

— Clay & Patricia Sutton, 129 Buck Avenue,
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

Common Raven at Cape May: On October 13, 1984, during 40+ knot northeast winds (that represented the aftermath of Hurricane Josephine), Frank Nicoletti, Carol McIntyre, Jack and Jesse Connor, and I watched a Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) over Cape May Point. It made one tour of the Point and then headed northeast into the gale force headwinds. It rode the gale with remarkable insouciance, in fact never flapping once! This was the first Raven to be seen at Cape May in almost 50 years, the last one being seen by James Tanner, Robert Allen, and Roger Tory Peterson on October 25, 1936. The Raven once bred in the vast cedar swamps of the New Jersey coast, but had apparently been extirpated by the mid-1930's. Recent records from the inland Appalachian ridges suggest that the Raven may be slowly reoccupying some of its former range.

— Clay Sutton, 129 Buck Avenue, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

Northern Wheatear in Centre County, Pennsylvania: On September 17, 1985, while birding at Bald Eagle State Park, I discovered a bird which was unfamiliar to me. It was about the size of a Song Sparrow and was foraging in a grassy gravel parking lot by the lake's edge. The most distinctive feature of the bird was the white rump and tail which had a broad, dark band extending across the tip and along the central tail feathers forming an inverted "T". The head had a dark stripe through the eye with a light stripe just above it. The entire upperparts were brown including the wings which did not have any conspicuous markings. The underparts were cinnamon buff except for the undertail coverts which were white. Its bill was dark, thin and warbler-like. The legs were also dark and seemed long for a bird of its size. The posture of the bird was rather erect.

The bird's behavior was as distinctive as its plumage. It would frequently fly up from the parking lot and land on a cement barrier, which was several inches high, and then fly back onto the gravel. It was constantly flicking its tail upwards. All this movement gave the bird a hyperactive appearance. The bird was very tame, and I observed it in good lighting from distances as close as five yards. I watched the bird for 15 minutes during which time I took field notes and then examined my field guides confirming the bird as a Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). The bird then flew off. My wife, who is not a birder, was with me at the time and agreed that the bird we saw matched the description in the field guides. The bird was searched for the next day but could not be found.

The only previous record of Northern Wheatear in Pennsylvania is of a specimen collected October 6, 1919, in Lansdale, Montgomery County (Poole, *Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964). The date of my sighting is consistent with other Wheatear records in the northeast, most of which are between early September and mid-October. Although most Wheatear records are coastal, there have been recent inland records from Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, and Ontario (*American Birds*, 1981-85).

— Tom Grow, 622 East Howard Street, Bellfonte, PA 16823

Mountain Bluebird in Pennsylvania: On December 16, 1984, I discovered a male Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) in a flock of nine Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) at Beltzville Lake, Carbon County, Pennsylvania during the Wild Creek-Little Gap Christmas Bird Count. Gordon Yoder, who was part of the count team, also observed the bird and obtained several photographs. The bird remained in the area for at least three weeks. This was the second confirmed record of the species in Pennsylvania (a male was observed and photographed at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lebanon County, in March, 1974).

The bird was usually found in a large field bordering the lake, and tended to frequent a large oak in the middle of the field and the wires along Beltzville Drive next to the field. It was almost always found in the company of Eastern Bluebirds, which numbered from nine to 20 or more individuals. The bird subsisted mainly on the large supply of berries in the area, mostly staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), and pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*). During mild spells, the bird supplemented its diet with insects; it was often seen hovering over the field like a miniature Rough-legged Hawk. It occasionally displayed aggressive behavior toward its eastern cousins, chasing them from feeding areas. Usually, however, they seemed to tolerate each other's company. The Mountain Bluebird was usually silent. However I heard it call in flight on one occasion and noted little, if any, difference from the call of the Eastern Bluebird.

The bird remained until at least January 10, 1985. On March 19, 1985, Steve Boyce and I found the bird again near the same area, this time in full breeding plumage. Boyce located it again three days later; it then, apparently, disappeared. Bluebird nesting boxes in the area were carefully monitored in April and May to see whether the bird mated with a female Eastern Bluebird, but without success. A male Mountain Bluebird was found paired with a female Eastern at a nest box near Port Stanley, Ontario, in May, 1985 (*American Birds* 39:161).

Surprisingly, Yoder and I found a male Mountain Bluebird at the exact same location on December 22, 1985, presumably the same individual! The bird was recorded again on the Wild Creek-Little Gap Christmas Count and was still present in early January, 1986. (See cover photograph.)

— Richard E. Wiltraut, 54 Pershing Boulevard, Whitehall, PA 18052

Swainson's Warbler at Cape May Point: On October 5, 1985, James Carr of Pennsauken, New Jersey, and I trapped and banded a Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) at Cape May Point, New Jersey. The bird was caught in mid-morning, shortly after we had set up our nets in the banding lanes in the woods along Sea Grove Avenue. Color photographs of the hand-held bird were taken prior to its release.

There are two prior banding records in the state. One banded at Linwood, Atlantic County, by William Savell on May 23, 1968, is believed to be the first state record for Swainson's Warbler (*Audubon Field Notes*, August 1968, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 513). The bird was also photographed, and a copy is in the Rare Birds Photo File maintained at New Jersey Audubon's Scherman-Hoffman Sanctuary. A brief account of this record was published by Mr. Savell in *EBBA News* (31:159), and photographs were included. Another Swainson's Warbler was banded at Island Beach State Park, Ocean County, on May 17, 1979, by Frederick Lesser (*American Birds*, September 1979, Vol. 33, No. 5, p. 757). Pictures taken of this bird unfortunately did not turn out. There is a sight record of a Swainson's Warbler at Higbee's Beach, Cape May County, on May 12, 1981 (*American Birds*, September 1981, Vol. 35, No. 5, p. 807).

The present record is thus apparently New Jersey's first in the fall season.

Incomplete ossification detected by skulling indicated that the bird was a young of the year. Was this bird possibly from some unknown breeding area north of Cape May or was it

just an erratic fall vagrant? Was the passage of Hurricane Gloria on September 27 a factor in its presence?

I extend my appreciation to Richard Kane, Frederick Lesser, and Jeffrey Spendelow for data provided in preparation of this note.

— Charles C. Pease, RR 3, Carranza Road, Vincentown, NJ 08088



SWAINSON'S WARBLER (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)
banded at Cape May Point, New Jersey, October 5, 1985

Photo by James Carr

Brewster's Warbler at Higbee's Beach, Cape May County, New Jersey: On several mornings in late August and early September, 1984, while birding in the general area of Higbee's Beach parking lot, I observed a group of *Vermivora* warblers. The group consisted of two or three Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), one Blue-winged Warbler (*V. pinus*), and a quite beautifully marked Brewster's Warbler (*V. pinus* x *V. chrysoptera*). Plumage characteristics of the latter bird included whitish wing bars, whitish underparts, and a very narrow black eyeline.

A male Golden-winged Warbler usually led the other birds, and occasionally other migrating fall warblers would join the group in foraging near the parking area.

I first saw this little grouping on August 30, 1984. I did not see them after September 5, by which time they had presumably departed to continue their southward migration.

— Catherine O. Brethwaite, 533 Atterbury Road, Villanova, PA 19085

Lawrence's Warbler in Berwyn, Pennsylvania: The rare hybrid of the Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora pinus* x *V. chrysoptera*) was seen in and near our bird bath on September 6, 1985. The bird, possibly an adult male, had a bright yellow forehead and forepart of the crown which shaded into yellow-olive on the nape and back. A black patch extended from the back of the bill through, behind and below the eye. Plumage between the face patch and the bib was bright yellow. The edges of a black bib on the neck, as well as the face patch, were sharply defined. The wings were blue-gray with two prominent white stripes which almost shaded into each other. The only difference from most bird guide paintings of Lawrence's Warbler was in the under parts. Except for small yellow-tinged areas under the corners of the black bib and in front of the wings, the underparts were white, like the underparts of the Golden-winged Warbler.

An autumn "wave" of a few common warbler species had been flying southward along the edge of the mixed hardwood forest in our backyard. The only individual to leave the forest for the bird bath was the Lawrence's Warbler. After bathing briskly, it flew up to an overhanging limb in our Redbud tree, affording excellent binocular views at a distance of only forty feet.

Each year Blue-winged Warblers occasionally migrate along the edge of our forest, usually during the spring. We have not previously recorded other warbler hybrids or the Golden-winged Warbler.

— T. Doman Roberts, 430 Cassatt Road, Berwyn, PA 19312

A Possible Sutton's Warbler in Pennsylvania: The first specimens of the rare Sutton's Warbler, a hybrid of the Northern Parula (*Parula americana*) and Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), were collected in West Virginia's eastern panhandle. In 1982 I found a possible hybrid in Pennsylvania only 60 miles northeast of the location of the original sightings.

On April 27, 1982, as I was birding near Fuller Lake in Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Cumberland County, I heard a song which I instantly recognized as that of a Northern Parula. As I had not seen a Northern Parula yet that spring, I looked for the bird and soon found it in a White Pine along the western shore of the lake. To my astonishment, the bird singing the Northern Parula song was in Yellow-throated Warbler plumage. The song consisted of several phrases in ascending pitch and a lower terminal note, quite typical of Northern Parulas.

I made a number of return visits to the area through the remainder of the spring and into summer. The following is a chronological account of pertinent observations:

May 20: I located a bird singing Yellow-throated Warbler songs in a White Pine on a hillside east of Fuller Lake. Suddenly the bird started to sing a Parula-type song and ended with notes typical of those of the ending of the Yellow-throated song - a song with elements of both species. Then the bird sang two Parula-type songs and flew away.

June 7: I heard Yellow-throated Warbler songs at a swamp east of Fuller Lake. The bird slowly came towards me, and it finally sang one Parula-type song and flew off.

June 11: On a hill east of the lake I heard a bird sing three or four Parula-type songs. The bird then flew to another pine tree and commenced singing Yellow-throated songs. The bird was too high in the trees to be seen well.

July 1: In the vicinity of the water tower I heard a bird singing both Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler song types, and it would occasionally sing combination songs of both types. Another bird in the area sang only Yellow-throated Warbler songs but on occasion inserted variations I had not heard before (I was familiar with Yellow-throated Warbler vocalizations from a few individuals in Georgia, Florida, and southeastern Pennsylvania).

I did record several songs during the period, but I was not successful in obtaining good examples of combination songs.

My early efforts to have other observers visit the park were in vain, but several birders from the Delaware Valley did come after I contacted the Birding Hotline there. They were successful in locating the bird that sang both song types, but the song season was ending and this limited chances for further study.

The plumage of the bird singing both song types appeared to be typical Yellow-throated. If there were any differences, they were not detectable at the distances from which I observed the bird. The bird remains a mystery.

— Stanley C. Stahl, 610 Chestnut Street, Montoursville, PA 17754

Spring Record of a Singing Connecticut Warbler in Pennsylvania: On May 27, 1984 I found a singing Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) in a floodplain forest about 200 feet north of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River at Montoursville in Lycoming County. The bird was heard and then seen in a small Box Elder tree (*Acer negundo*) at a height of approximately three to seven feet. The bird was actively singing at 7:30 a.m. when I found it. I recorded several minutes of its song and sent the tape to The Library of Natural Sounds at the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University.

Another *Oporornis*, Mourning Warbler, (*Oporornis philadelphia*), was singing about 200 feet from the Connecticut Warbler in a shrubby area the same morning. One or two Mourning Warblers had been in the same area as early as May 20.

Earl L. Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds, An Annotated List*, 1964) considered the Connecticut Warbler a "very rare transient in spring," and Merrill Wood (*Birds of Pennsylvania*, 1979) called it a "casual migrant from late April to early June." In Poole's unpublished manuscript he mentions only 14 sight records during spring in eastern Pennsylvania from April 25 to May 24. Several spring birds have been recorded from western Pennsylvania later than May 24.

— Stanley C. Stahl, 610 Chestnut Street, Montoursville, PA 17754

Wintering Summer Tanager in Burlington County, New Jersey: On December 13, 1984, I noticed a rather unusual bird in one of my feeding areas near the lake at Cedar Run Refuge, Medford Township. The bird was moving through some dry oak leaves that had collected under a rather dense laurel thicket. As it flew away, it appeared to be mostly olive green in coloration, with bright yellow under the wings. I was unable to specifically identify the bird on that occasion. Fortunately the bird reappeared the following morning, and I then identified it as a Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). I was glad to have this verified several days later by Jeffrey Spindel, a neighbor and professional ornithologist from the Patuxent Research Center. Tinges of red on various parts of the plumage indicated that the bird was an immature male.

The bird remained at my feeders for over four months, being last seen on April 20, 1985. During this long period it was well photographed and seen by literally hundreds of observers, many of whom visited our Refuge specifically to see this unusual winter visitor.

Although the tanager was frequently seen picking up bits of suet from under hanging feeders, the feeder by my desk window became his favorite. Here he often appeared before daybreak to eat an assortment of food that I hoped would be a correct diet. Chopped fresh fruit, a honey and water mixture poured over crumbled bread, and slivers of beef suet became his daily rations. Here too the tanager would often simply sit, enjoying the warmth of the winter sunshine.

Although the bird's basic diet was not changed, it was augmented from time to time. Friends brought choice treats such as frozen raspberries to add to the honey-soaked bread. Another welcome gift was 200 mealy worms that were kept in a cornmeal mixture for as long as I needed them. Both the visiting tanager and resident chickadees enjoyed the worms. I finally noticed that the tanager would eat small bits of sunflower kernels, and I began to include ground seeds and hard-boiled egg yolk that were very popular. During

freezing weather I always kept two plates of food ready, with a warm plate on hand to replace the hardened and congealed one. The tanager eventually became quite aggressive at the feeder, driving off many of the common winter birds.

I noticed an interesting feeder behavior in late March. During a warm spell honey bees, still rather lethargic, appeared at the feeding dish. The tanager stopped eating honey and ate the bees instead.

On February 20, 1985, the bird was netted and banded by Howard Spendelow (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Band No. 1291-36600). The bird's weight was 26.4 grams. A detailed description of the bird's plumage at that time follows. Bill: straw yellow. Back: yellowish-green, with a few small red feathers on the upper portion. Upper tail coverts: rusty red. Tail: mostly brown, with rusty red on inner remiges. Undertail and around vent: yellowish. Crown: yellowish-green with a few tiny red feathers. Primaries: a deep olive, edged with yellowish-green. The coverts gave a vague impression of rusty red, definitely a contrast with the primaries. The overall body was yellowish, with a few red feathers on the upper belly. There were also tiny red feathers below the right eye, on the upper left side of the throat, and on the lower left flank. The bird was retagged on March 6, at which time its weight was 26.5 grams. On this date definitely more red feathers were showing on the upper back. Edging on the fifth primary of the right wing was turning red. There was nothing comparable to this on the left wing.

To my knowledge, this Summer Tanager winter record constitutes the first in the northeast. The normal winter range of the Summer Tanager extends from Mexico to Brazil, although a few winter regularly also in southern California.

In recent years the Summer Tanager has been increasing as a breeding bird in New Jersey. A nest was located near Springtown, Cumberland County, in 1955, and since 1975 nestings have been reported in the Dividing Creek section of Cumberland County. More recently breeding pairs have been discovered in Lebanon State Forest, and a 1983 nesting in Middlesex County is the northernmost yet reported in the state.



SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) wintering in New Jersey, January 10, 1985.
Photo by Alan Brady

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— Elizabeth Woodford, Cedar Run Refuge,
RR 21, 6 Sawmill Road, Medford, NJ 08055

(Author's late note: To my great delight and amazement this Summer Tanager reappeared at my feeders on November 3, 1985, our first sighting since April 20. The bird was in full adult male red plumage and was identifiable as the same individual by the presence of the leg band. As of this writing, March 20, 1986, the bird is still a regular feeder visitor.—E.W.)

Recent Spring Records of Dickcissels in Southwestern New Jersey: During the late spring and early summer of 1984 I participated in a grassland bird survey conducted by the New Jersey Audubon Society for the N.J. Endangered Species Program. On each of four dates I made brief early morning stops at twenty pre-selected farmland locations in southern Gloucester and northern Salem Counties, listening specifically for Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Dickcissels, Vesper Sparrows, and Savannah Sparrows. Of all the birds on this list the Dickcissel was certainly the one I least expected to encounter (with perhaps the Vesper Sparrow running a close second).

May 23 was the date of my first survey trip, and on this occasion I discovered two singing male Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) in an alfalfa field several miles southeast of Swedesboro, Gloucester County. On the following morning, when I was able to spend more time there, I returned with Alan Brady and ascertained that two pairs of Dickcissels were present. One pair was observed mating. Over the course of the next several days one male was seen consistently as it sang from the telephone wires. It seemed a virtual certainty that the location would be a breeding site, and I was quite excited about this possibility inasmuch as there had apparently been no definitive breeding record in the state for about ten years (see "Comeback of the Dickcissel", Richard Kane, *Records of New Jersey Birds*, May 1975). Unfortunately the field was cut on or about May 26, and although two males and a female were seen May 28 there were no reports thereafter.

On June 5 I took my second grassland bird survey, and on this occasion I was surprised to see a singing male Dickcissel at a field stop about two miles east of Woodstown, Salem County. This location was a little over three miles from the first. I heard the bird again four days later and on June 17, in company with William Tannery, saw two distant birds along a fence bordering an overgrown field. One bird was a male. The other we saw only briefly and could not identify as to sex. Following granting of permission from the landowner to more thoroughly explore the property, Dr. Jerry Haag and I saw four birds on June 20, including two definite males and one definite female. Although the overgrown field was mowed on or about June 21, Dr. Haag found three birds still present early on June 23. I could not locate the birds later that day, and my searches after that date were also unsuccessful.

It seems quite probable that the birds seen near Woodstown were the same ones as had been earlier seen near Swedesboro. The number of individuals reported (four) was the same at both locations, and there were apparently no Dickcissels present at the Woodstown

site on May 23, the date on which I made my first survey and had discovered the birds near Swedesboro.

On June 9 I toured a number of side roads in Salem County hoping to find additional Dickcissels. I had no luck.

On the morning of June 4 Edward Boyd discovered a pair of Dickcissels in a field at Sicklerville, Camden County. The field was mowed that afternoon, and the birds were not seen again.

In the spring of 1985 I again visited the Swedesboro and Woodstown locations as well as other potential sites in the area, but I could locate no Dickcissels. However, Robert Barber informs me that he discovered a singing male in Stow Creek Township, Cumberland County, on May 20. This bird remained until June 4. The habitat, an unmowed and ungrazed cow pasture, was not disturbed, and perhaps this bird departed because of inability to find a mate. On June 22, 1982, Barber had discovered a singing male in Greenwich Township, Cumberland County. This bird was not present two days later, and the field had been plowed.

— James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace, Turnersville, NJ 08012



DICKCISSEL (*Spiza americana*) near Swedesboro, New Jersey, May 24, 1984.

Photo by Alan Brady

Clay-colored Sparrow in Delaware County, Pennsylvania: While birding on December 29, 1985, I discovered an adult Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) in a field near the intersection of Knowlton and Linville Roads, Middletown Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The bird was with a small mixed flock of Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) and White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*).

I immediately alerted Frank and Barbara Haas, who verified my identification later that day. The bird was subsequently seen by many observers, and it was heard singing on at least one occasion. I last saw the bird on February 9, 1986, and to my knowledge there were no reports thereafter.

There are few early records of the Clay-colored Sparrow in Pennsylvania. Poole (unpublished manuscript on Pennsylvania birds) lists just three reports, these being Philadelphia sightings in October 1945, February 1946, and March 1946. Wood (*Birds of Pennsylvania*, 1979) cites ten records statewide.

This species has been reported more frequently in recent years, especially in the western counties. Stull, Stull, and McWilliams (*Birds of Erie County*, 1985) show eight records in the months of May, July, and September. A Clay-colored Sparrow was seen at Yellow Creek State Park, Indiana County, in June 1985, and the ongoing Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project has established this species as a probable breeder in Erie, Butler, and Indiana Counties. *American Birds* (39:1985:168) provides one recent winter report — a single bird at a Charlton, Pa., feeder on December 29, 1984.

The Clay-colored Sparrow is still very rare in the eastern counties of Pennsylvania. The only other recent eastern record is for Beltzville State Park, Carbon County, in May 1985. This sighting apparently represents the first record of the Clay-colored Sparrow in Delaware County.

I wish to thank Frank and Barbara Haas for providing much of the above documentation.

— Walter A. Thurber, 4 Fairfax Village, Media, PA 19063-2042

A Northern Oriole Entangled in Fishing Line: On May 20, 1977, while canoeing down the Wading River in Burlington County, New Jersey, I found an adult male Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) which had become entangled in a section of nylon fishing line that was attached to a limb of a small tree overhanging the bank of the river. This oriole was approximately four meters above the surface of the water and had three strands of fishing line tightly looped around its right leg. I was attracted to the bird by its bright colors and erratic struggling movements, when I was approximately 80 meters upstream.

After removing the bird from the tree, I cut the fishing line from its leg and released it. Although the line had cut into the bird's leg, apparently as a result of its struggling, the bird appeared uninjured. After a brief period of resting on the ground, it flew along the opposite bank of the river for approximately 100 meters, then disappeared into the forest.

Since this species breeds during May, this bird apparently became entangled in the fishing line while it was attempting to remove it from the branch to be used in the construction of its nest. This view is supported by the fact that this species commonly uses string, horsehair, bits of cloth and other suitable material in the construction of its nest (Bent, 1958; Forbush and May, 1939). A similar occurrence of this nature was reported by Hunn (1926) who found a male "Baltimore" Oriole strangled by a small cord that was firmly woven into its nest structure.

Discarded pieces of fishing line are often found along many heavily fished water courses and other available areas. It is possible, therefore, that pieces of line are commonly used by several species of birds in the construction of their nests and apparently are potential traps to birds that are attracted to them.

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— John D. Groves, Reptile Department,
Philadelphia Zoological Garden, Philadelphia, PA 19104