

## THE SEASON SPRING 1970

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The weather in Alabama continues cold and rather dry--extended periods of low rainfall broken by short stormy periods of excessive rainfall so that the average is nearly normal. The moisture available to growing plants though is low because man has done too much to hasten runoff. With less forest and swamp and more pavement and channelized streams, we are in a poor condition to take advantage of heavy rainfall when it occurs. With each year some of us realize more and more how precious water really is!

Vegetation was set back by about two weeks by the cold weather. No bigleaf magnolias were in bloom off US 43 near Grove Hill the last week in April, no ripe dewberries on Dauphin then, very few ripe plums at some of the Breeding Survey stops. These are just disappointments--what of the migrating bird who depends on the emerging vegetation to sustain life?

In spite of this, early dates are still being recorded, but few if any of them are examples of actual early migration. Some of them are Dauphin Island records largely independent of local weather; some show our progress in finding and identifying difficult species (Swainson's Warbler, Bell's and Warbling Vireos); and for some the species has likely increased in abundance (Cattle Egret, Barn Swallow).

Migration peaks on or near Dauphin Island were recorded by Mary Gaillard as follows: 22 Mar, hundreds of Parulas (LPA et al.); 23 Mar, big concentration of snipe (LMcK), 30 birds banded (REH, MEM); 26 Mar, many Parulas (MAG), tree-tops filled with small birds (H&KJ); 27 Mar, many hummingbirds, E. Kingbirds, Gnatcatchers, and Prothonotaries, 50 birds banded (REH, MEM); 29 Mar, 50 birds banded (REH); 30 Mar, stormy, many Prothonotaries, birds everywhere, 137 birds of 16 species banded (MEM); 31 Mar, many White-eyed Vireos, 109 birds of 22 species banded (MEM); 3 Apr, many Palm Warblers; 7 Apr, trees moving with migrants (JLD); 11 Apr, large concentration at dusk after storm, many E. Kingbirds, Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks; 12 Apr, 54 birds of 17 species banded (MEM); 20 Apr, late influx of Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, 61 birds of 20 species banded (MEM); 21 Apr, many Catbirds (LRT); 4 May after front, many Com Night-hawks, 50 birds of 14 species banded (MEM). From Mobile County no Yellow-crowned Night Herons, no migrant Empidonaxes, and no Canada Warblers were reported, and only 1-3 of the following: Black-billed Cuckoo, Acadian Flycatcher Nashville, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Cerulean, Bay-breasted, Prairie, and Wilson's Warblers.

High banding counts by Margaret Miller on the following migrants on Dauphin Island indicate their time of peak migration: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 5 on 3 May; Catbird, 13 on 20 Apr, 18 on 21 Apr, and 8 on 3 May; Veery, 6 on 4 May; Red-eyed Vireo, 10 on 30 Mar, 11 on 31 Mar, 8 on 25 Apr, 13 on 4 May; Black-and-white Warbler, 14 on 30 Mar; Prothonotary Warbler, 112 in 4 operations 27 Mar to 4 Apr, 76 of them on 30 Mar!; Worm-eating Warbler, 8 on 30 Mar, and 7 on 31 Mar; Parula Warbler, 16 on 31 Mar; Hooded Warbler, 8 on 31 Mar; Orchard Oriole, 11 on 31 Mar; Painted Bunting, 8 on 20 Apr; Purple Finch, 31 on 12 Mar, 20 on 12 Apr; Chipping Sparrow, 19 on 12 Mar. It is no exaggeration to state that for every bird banded an additional 25-100 uncaught birds were probably in the vicinity!

Below are paired first-reported dates available from Mobile-Dauphin and from Birmingham with a few additional localities as noted. Dauphin Island and Bir-

mingham are less than 250 miles apart (as the migrant flies), a distance that could easily be covered in one night by any normal migrant. The time interval for these 32 species varies from 0 to 29 days and averages 11 days. Obviously some migrants must spend about 10 days on or near the coast awaiting proper weather, vegetational, or internal conditions for continued travel. This may apply more readily to the vanguard of the species in late March and early April as below. Green Heron, 22 Mar (LPA et al.) and 8 Apr (TAI).

Chuck-wills-widow, 4 Apr (REH, MEM) and 15 Apr (RDK).

Chimney Swift, 26 Mar (MAG) and 2 Apr (HHK).

E. Kingbird, 24 Mar (JLD) and 4 Apr (RDK) also 28 Mar, Flomaton (CLK, ties earliest for Lower Coastal Plain).

Wood Thrush, 30 Mar (MEM et al.) and 1 Apr (PAR).

Swainson's Thrush, 22 Mar (LPA et al.--only one earlier state record) and 20 Apr (TAI) also 4 Apr, Marion (RRR et al.).

Veery, 7 Apr (LRT) and 19 Apr (JRB) also 21 Apr, Jacksonville (WJC).

Yellow-throated Vireo, 22 Mar (LPA et al.) and 4 Apr (RJK).

Red-eyed Vireo, 27 Mar (banded, REH, MEM) and 7 Apr (AKB).

Swainson's Warbler, 23 Mar (banded, REH, MEM, earliest for state by 6 days) and 11 Apr (RJK, earliest for Mt. Region by 5 days).

Worm-eating Warbler, 23 Mar (banded, REH, MEM, only one earlier state record) and 11 Apr (REB, RRR) also 11 Apr, Jacksonville (WJC).

Blue-winged Warbler, 29 Mar (banded, REH, earliest for Gulf Coast by 6 days) and 9 Apr (HHK).

Tennessee Warbler, 7 Apr (LRT) and 11 Apr (RDB, HHK).

Parula Warbler, 11 Mar (MAG) and 10 Apr (HHK & PCC) also 4 Apr, Marion (RRR et al.).

Yellow Warbler, 3 Apr (LRT) and 11 Apr (IFS).

Cape May Warbler, 4 Apr (MEM, earliest for Coastal Plain of Ala.) and 10 Apr (HHK & PCC).

Black-throated Green Warbler, 2 Apr (MAG & SCH) and 5 Apr (HHW).

Cerulean Warbler, 4 Apr (AGT) and 11 Apr (RRR).

Yellow-throated Warbler, 22 Mar (LPA et al.) and 28 Mar (HHK).

Blackpoll Warbler, 16 Apr (LRT) and 17 Apr (TAI).

Prairie Warbler, 3 Apr (LRT) and 5 Apr (KTK & HHW).

Ovenbird, 23 Mar (REH, MEM) and 12 Apr (HHW).

Louisiana Waterthrush, 22 Mar (LPA et al.) and 28 Mar (HHW).

Kentucky Warbler, 23 Mar (REH, MEM) and 23 Mar (IFS, earliest for Mt. Region by 12 days).

Hooded Warbler, 22 Mar (LPA et al.) and 11 Apr (6 B.A.S. parties).

Orchard Oriole, 27 Mar (REH, MEM) and 7 Apr (PAR).

Baltimore Oriole, 5 Apr (LPA & LRT) and 10 Apr (TAI) also 5 Apr, Fairhope (VDH) and 25 Apr, Wheeler Refuge (GW).

Scarlet Tanager, 3 Apr (JLD) and 9 Apr (RRR).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak, 7 Apr (LMcK) and 11 Apr, 3 birds (REB, WFC, IFS), earliest ever for inland Alabama.

Blue Grosbeak, 29 Mar (LPA & LRT) and 19 Apr (RRR).

Indigo Bunting, 29 Mar (LPA & LRT) and 13 Apr, 4 places (TAI, IFS).

Birmingham's 6th Annual Spring Bird Count was held very early on 11 April. Although at 124 we were 10 below our usual species count, the 92 individuals per party-hour is exactly average. We listed 6 species of ducks, 7 shorebirds, 3 vireos, 20 warblers, and 17 finches. Warbler species appear to increase with lateness of date: in 1969 (19 Apr) 22 species; 1968 (27 Apr) 28 species.

1967 (6 May) 31 species. In our 6 counts between 11 Apr and 6 May we have recorded 180 species, 157 of them more than once.

**Grebe, Pelicanlike Birds**--The Pied-billed Grebe continues its nesting attempts in southern Baldwin County with a pair at Daphne on 9 May (CLK et al.) and a pair at Fairhope throughout May which gathered weeds (VDH). At least 50 Brown Pelicans roosted on Sand Island the evening of 25 April (TAI), and 25 were counted on Dauphin on 15 May (LRT). A late Double-crested Cormorant was on Dauphin on 26 May (LRT). Gannets were again common off Dauphin, Gulf and Sound, through 26 April (A.O.S.).

**Hérons**--A Cattle Egret at Jacksonville on 2 Apr (WJC) is the earliest of almost a dozen Mt. Region spring records. At Marion on 4 Apr a Snowy Egret (KTK and many) was the earliest ever for the Upper Coastal Plain. The Black-crowned Night Heron, not reported much in recent years, was seen on Dauphin on 23 Mar (REH & MEM).

**Geese**--About 80 Canada Geese flew over western Dauphin I. after a storm on 19 Apr (JJB), 3 days short of the latest spring migrant for the state. The Blue Goose must lead a rugged life judging by the number of birds which fail to make the 2000 mile flight to the inhospitable tundra. One bird was still at Rosinton, Baldwin Co. on 9 May (CLK et al.) and at least 3 were still present around Jacksonville on 26 May (WJC).

**Ducks**--The first Bahama Duck for Alabama, present since 28 Feb near Magnolia Springs, was last seen there on 3 May (LPA). Shovelers are attracted to Star Lake (Hoover section of B'ham); one was there on 27 Mar (KTK), and a pair photographed there on 22 May (HHK, RJK, RDK) is the 3rd Mt. Region record later than 15 May. Late Redheads were a male on Dauphin on 26 Apr (TAI & JMI) and one at Elberta on 7 and 12 May (PFC), the latter the 4th coastal record later than 1 May. Six Ring-necked Ducks were still present on 20 Apr on East Lake, B'ham (RRR) and at least one still there on 7 Jun (JMI). An Oldsquaw on Dauphin on 27 Mar (REH & MEM) lacks a week of being the latest for the coast. A male Com Scoter seen at very close range on Dauphin on 25 Apr (JMI, RDK, RJK) is the latest for the state by 8 days. Three Ruddy Ducks were still on East Lake, B'ham on 20 Apr (RRR), and one at Wheeler Refuge on 16 May (GW, WAS, JS) gives us a May record for 5 of our 6 Regions.

**Hawks**--The first Mississippi Kites were on Dauphin on 26 Apr (WMW's) and at Spring Hill on 28 Apr (MAG). Swallow-tailed Kites were first noted at Spring Hill on 24 Mar (JLD), on Dauphin on 30 Mar (MEM), and at Leroy, Washington Co., on 26 Apr (JK & MK). Three Red-tailed Hawks were on Dauphin on 18 May (LRT). An adult Bald Eagle was in Green Springs (suburban B'ham) on 13 Apr (AM).

**Rails**--A Yellow Rail crossing an open area ahead of mowers on 2 Apr at Theodore (MAG & SCH) is our only record in 13 years, and although the latest for the state by 6 weeks, is in line with data from neighboring states. Purple Gallinules were noted this May at Corte Pond, Baldwin Co. (VDH) and Buck Pond Covington Co. (CLK et al.). A pair of Am Coots at Corte Pond throughout May (VDH) appeared to be attempting to breed, but as usual no progeny were seen.

**Shorebirds**--The Long-billed Curlew was recorded twice this spring at Bayou La Batre, on 25 Apr (VDH) and 2 on 24 May (LRT and many), latest for the state by 11 days. A White-rumped Sandpiper on 24 Apr on Dauphin (MAG, AP, EBS), tying the earliest state record, started the best spring season for this species. Stilt Sandpipers were also more numerous than ever, and 7 still present on Dauphin on 26 May (LRT) are the latest for the state by 6 days. A Black-necked

**Cuckoos, Nighthawk, Woodpecker**--Early were a Yellow-billed Cuckoo on Dauphin on 2 Apr (MAG & SCH) and a Black-billed Cuckoo at Spring Hill on 21 Apr (MAG). Com Nighthawk was first noted in Birmingham on 14 Apr (GA). Hairy Woodpeckers were noted recently in heavily-populated residential areas in B'ham, on 11 & 17 Apr and 7 Jun (TAI, JMI).

**Flycatchers, Swallow**--The first Gray Kingbird for Dauphin was seen on 20 Apr (JJB) and on 26 Apr one was seen carrying small twigs into a clump of tall young pines on the golf course (TAI & JMI). A W. Kingbird on Dauphin on 20 Apr (TD) and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher same date and place (JJB) are the only reports for these 2 species. On the coast, the first Great Crested Flycatcher was on Dauphin on 5 Apr (LRT); the first Acadian--and only Empidonax of the season--was banded on Dauphin on 12 Apr (MEM); and the first E. Wood Pewee also on Dauphin was on 11 Apr (LRT), all late. On 6 Apr on Dauphin, 6 male Vermilion Flycatchers were seen together (WTS). While only one Cliff Swallow was reported from the coast (MAG), one at Jacksonville on 21 Mar (WJC) is--except for 20 Mar '65 on coast--the earliest ever for the state.

**Nuthatch, Creeper, Catbird**--Last reported Red-breasted Nuthatches were on 26 Mar at Flomaton (CLK & AFW) latest for Lower Coastal Plain; 26 Apr on Dauphin (one banded, MEM); 4 May at Scottsboro (BGW), latest for the Tennessee Valley; and 9 May in B'ham (KTK & HHK), latest for state by 4 days. The last Brown Creeper for B'ham was on 7 Apr (HBT). The first Catbird for B'ham was on 15 Apr (NGB).

**Thrushes, Kinglet**--Transient brown thrushes (excludes Hermit and Wood) were reported scarce throughout, especially the Gray-cheeked--very few reports on the coast (MAG) and 10 heard migrating over B'ham shortly after midnight on 20 Apr (TAI). The Golden-crowned Kinglet lingered late; 28 Mar, several at Flomaton (CLK et al.), latest for Lower Coastal Plain; 4 Apr, 2 in Bear Swamp, Autauga Co. (HMS et al.); 11 Apr 3 at B'ham (MHP & MFP), except for 1947, latest for Mt. Region.

**Vireos**--A Bell's Vireo in B'ham on 10 Apr (HHK & KTK) is the earliest of 4 spring records for Alabama. A Philadelphia Vireo was in B'ham on 3 May (RJK & JRL). The Warbling Vireo made a good showing; one on Dauphin on 2 Apr (MAG) is the earliest for state by 5 days; 10 of them on 4 May on Dauphin (MAG) is the largest number recorded anywhere in Alabama; and one on 8 May at Wheeler Refuge (EC) is the 3rd local record.

**Warblers**--A Golden-winged Warbler on Dauphin on 29 Mar (REH) is earliest for state by 9 days. On Dauphin on 20 Apr was reported the only Nashville Warbler for the season (MEM) and the second ever and earlier spring Black-throated Gray Warbler (MEM). A Chestnut-sided Warbler on 12 Apr on Dauphin (MEM) ties the earliest for the coast. A singing male Mourning Warbler on the Braziel tract, Bankhead Forest, Lawrence Co. on 23 May (TAI & JMI) continues the annual occurrence of this species in Alabama. A male Wilson's Warbler on Dauphin on 24 Apr (MAG) is the earliest of only 4 spring records south of B'ham. Although no Canada Warbler was reported for the coast this spring, one in B'ham on 18 Apr (JRB) is the earliest by 6 days for the Mt. Region.

**Blackbird**--At Lakeland Farm near Marion 100 Brewer's Blackbirds on 4 Apr (B.A.S.) are except for the coast the latest for the state.

**Finches**--Three Dickcissels in a yard in Mt. Brook, B'ham on 11 Apr (IFS et al.) appear to have wintered locally. In Baldwin County at least 3 pair (10 adults) have succeeded in raising young near Foley and Magnolia Springs (PFC).

The Evening Grosbeak got as far as Jackson this winter 3 Feb to 20 Apr, photographed (WH), and was last seen in B'ham on 8 May (AF) 4 days earlier than last year's record. Although Purple Finches were numerous--113 on B'ham Spring Count 11 Apr (B.A.S.) and 84 banded this March and April (MEM)--the species was last recorded just before setting record extremes. Even more numerous was the Pine Siskin, last seen on the coast on 22 Apr, Dauphin Is. (LRT) and in B'ham on 9 May (TAI); 143 recorded on 11 Apr (B.A.S.). Last reported Red Crossbills were 2 in Mt. Brook, B'ham on 18 Apr (HBT). A Henslow's Sparrow during a lull on rainy 17 Apr was adept at staying hidden in a grassy field, but when flushed into a tree perched in plain sight (TAI). A Lark Sparrow on Dauphin on 25 Apr (A.O.S.) is only the second spring record for the coast. Two Lincoln's Sparrows banded on 20 Apr on Dauphin (MEM) are the latest for the coast by 7 days.

Observers (Local reporters in capitals)--Alabama Ornithological Society, Lois P. Archer, Gussie Arnett, THOMAS Z. ATKESON, J. Russell Bailey, Naomi G. Banks, Andrew K. Bates, Raymond D. Bates, Birmingham Audubon Society, Jimmy J. Brown, Robert E. Burks, WILLIAM J. CALVERT, FAIRLY CHANDLER, Perry C. Covington, Walter F. Coxe, Earl Cunningham, Thase Daniel, J. L. Dorn, S. J., Ann Fish, MARY A. GAILLARD, William Hamrick, Sybil C. Hanks, R. E. (Tuck) Hayward, VERDA D. HORNE, John M. Imhof, Thomas A. Imhof, Harry and Kathleen Johnstone, Helen H. Kittinger, RICKY J. KITTINGER, Ronnie D. Kittinger, James Key, Mary Key, CURTIS L. KINGSBERY, Kenneth T. Knight, John R. Lester, Louise McKinstry, Ann Miller, MARGARET E. MILLER, Alice Patterson, Morton H. Perry, M. F. Prather, Robert R. Reid, Pat A. Riley, Jessee Short, W. A. Short, W. Temple Siebels, Eugene B. Sledge, Idalene F. Snead, Henry M. Stevenson, Alice G. Tait, Helen B. Thigpen, Lib R. Toenes, A. Fred Wilke, Wiley M. Wilkinson, George Williams, BETTY G. WORLEY, Harriett H. Wright.

1036 Pike Road  
Birmingham, Ala. 35218

## AOS MEETINGS

### Livingston and Epps Alabama

#### Site of Fall 1970 Meeting

OCTOBER 23--24--25  
Meeting Begins Friday 23  
with Boat trip and supper  
on the Beautiful Tombigbee.

Boat trip and Dinner on Board \$2.50  
Reservations Must be Received Oct. 15 or before.

Livingston Inn Motel headquarters  
Camping area at Epps, site of Fort  
Tombebee...Built by Bienville - 1705

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## THE 1969 ALABAMA CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Seven Christmas counts were again conducted in Alabama in 1969 and, although there were two changes from 1968, there again was at least one from each majorecological region in the state--Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (WWR) in the Tennessee Valley, Birmingham (Bhm) and Jacksonville (Jvl) in the Mountain Region, Auburn (Aub) in the Piedmont, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (EWR) in the Coastal Plain, and Mobile (Mob) and Dauphin Island-Bellingrath Gardens (DI) on the Gulf Coast.

This was the first Christmas count conducted at Eufaula Refuge and, as testimony to development of the wildlife management program there, state records in abundance were recorded for Wood Ducks (1,500) and Common Goldeneyes (1,000) and, with the exception of records at Wheeler Refuge in previous years, for Mallards (16,000), Black Ducks (3,000), Ring-necked Ducks (1,500), Great Blue Herons (448) and Hooded Mergansers (100). In addition, inland records for the coastal plain were set for Pintails (2,500), Green-winged Teals (2,000), Am. Widgeons (1,500), Gadwalls (700) and Shovelers (500). The count also included the first known winter records in the lower coastal plain for Snow Goose, Bonaparte's Gull and Caspian Tern as well as lower coastal plain records in abundance for Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Marsh Hawks, Least Sandpipers, Ring-billed Gulls, and Savannah and Vesper Sparrows (the latter also a state record) plus the large number of 4,000 Coots. The feeding program at the refuge probably accounted for the over 2,000 Mourning Doves and the state count record of 60 Ground Doves. The Mourning Dove was also attracted by golf courses and suburban feeders, as evidenced by a count record in abundance for the Mountain Region set at Birmingham, and the Ground Dove appeared in good winter numbers on the Dauphin Island count.

Wheeler Refuge had its share of notable observations with an immature Bald Eagle and the first record of a Barnacle Goose for Alabama. This goose, which is in the same genus as the Canadas, derives its name from the old Norse belief that it grew from barnacle shells adhering to old, water-soaked logs and other pieces of wood found in the sea. Later its true breeding grounds were located in Eastern Greenland and islands in the Artic Ocean, usually on inaccessible cliffs. It winters in Scotland and other places in Northern Europe and is reported as a rare winter visitor to North America. (See Kortright, Francis W., *The Ducks Geese and Swans of North America* (1942), pp. 110-112; Austin, Oliver L., Jr., *Birds of the World* (1961), pp. 66-67; Hanzak, J., *The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Birds* (1967), p. 106.) At Wheeler it was observed in a large flock of Canada Geese in Limestone Bay through telescopes by five members of one of the field parties. It was approximately 2/3rds the size of the Canadas and showed the full white face with dark neck and breast.

The Bald Eagle was one of two and possibly three immatures reported at Wheeler during December, 1969, and January, 1970. There were definitely two because two were seen simultaneously on several occasions. Thomas Z. Atkeson, Jr., manager of the refuge, reported that Bald Eagles nested there through 1947 but have not been known to do so since then. For years they were reasonably common during cold weather periods, but numbers began dwindling noticeably after 1960 so that in recent years there have only been two or three, usually