

**BIRDS OF ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY
AND
THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS
1844 - 1976**

(With 1983 Addenda)

by

ROBERT F. DEED
Nyack, New York

2010 Edition, Edited by Alan W. Wells
Reproduced with permission by:
Rockland Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 404
New City, NY 10956

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHOTO CREDITS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

LOONS

[Loon, Common](#)

[Loon, Red-throated](#)

GREBES

[Grebe, Red-necked](#)

[Grebe, Horned](#)

[Grebe, Pied-billed](#)

PELICANS, FRIGATEBIRDS, GANNETS, AND CORMORANTS

[Pelican, White](#)

[Frigatebird, Magnificent](#)

[Gannet, Northern](#)

[Cormorant, Great](#)

[Cormorant, Double-crested](#)

WADING BIRDS

[Heron, Great Blue](#)

[Heron, Green](#)

[Heron, Little Blue](#)

[Egret, Great](#)

[Egret, Snowy](#)

[Egret, Cattle](#)

[Heron, Tricolored](#)

[Night Heron, Black-crowned](#)

[Night Heron, Yellow-crowned](#)

[Bittern, Least](#)

[Bittern, American](#)

[Ibis, Glossy](#)

SWANS, GEESE, AND DUCKS

[Swan, Mute](#)

[Swan, Tundra](#)

[Goose, Canada](#)

[Brant](#)

[Goose, White-fronted](#)

[Goose, Snow](#)

[Mallard](#)

[Duck, American Black](#)

[Gadwall](#)

[Pintail, Northern](#)
[Teal, Green-winged](#)
[Teal, Blue-winged](#)
[Wigeon, European](#)
[Wigeon, American](#)
[Shoveler, Northern](#)
[Duck, Wood](#)
[Redhead](#)
[Duck, Ring-necked](#)
[Canvasback](#)
[Scaup, Greater](#)
[Scaup, Lesser](#)
[Duck, Tufted](#)
[Goldeneye, Common](#)
[Goldeneye, Barrow's](#)
[Bufflehead](#)
[Duck, Long-tailed](#)
[Eider, Common](#)
[Scoter, White-winged](#)
[Scoter, Surf](#)
[Scoter, Black](#)
[Duck, Ruddy](#)
[Merganser, Hooded](#)
[Merganser, Common](#)
[Merganser, Red-breasted](#)

DIURNAL RAPTORS

[Vulture, Turkey](#)
[Vulture, Black](#)
[Kite, Swallow-tailed](#)
[Goshawk, Northern](#)
[Hawk, Sharp-shinned](#)
[Hawk, Cooper's](#)
[Hawk, Red-tailed](#)
[Hawk, Red-shouldered](#)
[Hawk, Broad-winged](#)
[Hawk, Swainson's](#)
[Hawk, Rough-legged](#)
[Eagle, Golden](#)
[Eagle, Bald](#)
[Harrier, Northern](#)
[Osprey](#)
[Gyr Falcon](#)
[Falcon, Peregrine](#)
[Merlin](#)
[Kestrel, American](#)

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

[Grouse, Ruffed](#)
[Bobwhite, Northern](#)

[Pheasant, Ring-necked](#)
[Partridge, Hungarian](#)
[Turkey, Wild](#)

CRANES, RAILS, AND COOTS

[Crane, Sandhill](#)
[Rail, King](#)
[Rail, Clapper](#)
[Rail, Virginia](#)
[Sora](#)
[Moorhen, Common](#)
[Coot, Common](#)

SHOREBIRDS

[Plover, Piping](#)
[Plover, Semipalmated](#)
[Killdeer](#)
[Plover, American Golden](#)
[Plover, Black-bellied](#)
[Stilt, Black-necked](#)
[Turnstone, Ruddy](#)
[Woodcock, American](#)
[Snipe, Wilson's](#)
[Sandpiper, Upland](#)
[Sandpiper, Spotted](#)
[Sandpiper, Solitary](#)
[Willet](#)
[Whimbrel](#)
[Yellowlegs, Greater](#)
[Yellowlegs, Lesser](#)
[Knot, Red](#)
[Sandpiper, Purple](#)
[Sandpiper, Pectoral](#)
[Sandpiper, White-rumped](#)
[Sandpiper, Least](#)
[Dunlin](#)
[Dowitcher, Short-billed](#)
[Dowitcher, Long-billed](#)
[Sandpiper, Stilt](#)
[Sandpiper, Semipalmated](#)
[Sandpiper, Western](#)
[Ruff](#)
[Godwit, Hudsonian](#)
[Sanderling](#)
[Phalarope, Wilson's](#)
[Phalarope, Northern](#)

GULLS, TERNS, AND SKIMMERS

[Gull, Glaucous](#)
[Gull, Iceland](#)

[Gull, Great Black-backed](#)
[Gull, Lesser Black-backed](#)
[Gull, Herring](#)
[Gull, Ring-billed](#)
[Gull, California](#)
[Gull, Laughing](#)
[Gull, Bonaparte's](#)
[Kittiwake, Black-legged](#)
[Tern, Forster's](#)
[Tern, Common](#)
[Tern, Roseate](#)
[Tern, Sooty](#)
[Tern, Least](#)
[Tern, Royal](#)
[Tern, Sandwich](#)
[Tern, Caspian](#)
[Tern, Black](#)

ALCIDS

[Murre, Thick-billed](#)

PIGEONS AND DOVES

[Pigeon, Rock](#)
[Pigeon, Passenger](#)
[Dove, Mourning](#)

PARROTS

[Parakeet, Monk](#)
[Conure, Maroon-bellied](#)

CUCKOOS

[Cuckoo, Yellow-billed](#)
[Cuckoo, Black-billed](#)

BARN OWLS

[Owl, Barn](#)

OWLS

[Owl, Eastern Screech](#)
[Owl, Great Horned](#)
[Owl, Snowy](#)
[Owl, Barred](#)
[Owl, Long-eared](#)
[Owl, Short-eared](#)
[Owl, Saw-whet](#)

GOATSUCKERS AND SWIFTS

[Whip-Poor-Will](#)
[Nighthawk, Common](#)
[Swift, Chimney](#)

HUMMINGBIRDS

[Hummingbird, Ruby-throated](#)

KINGFISHERS

[Kingfisher, Belted](#)

WOODPECKERS

[Flicker, Northern](#)

[Woodpecker, Pileated](#)

[Woodpecker, Red-bellied](#)

[Woodpecker, Red-headed](#)

[Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied](#)

[Woodpecker, Hairy](#)

[Woodpecker, Downy](#)

[Woodpecker, Black-backed](#)

[Woodpecker, Three-toed](#)

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

[Kingbird, Eastern](#)

[Kingbird, Western](#)

[Flycatcher, Great Crested](#)

[Phoebe, Eastern](#)

[Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied](#)

[Flycatcher, Acadian](#)

[Flycatcher, Willow](#)

[Flycatcher, Alder](#)

[Flycatcher, Least](#)

[Wood Pewee, Eastern](#)

[Flycatcher, Olive-sided](#)

LARKS

[Lark, Horned](#)

SWALLOWS

[Swallow, Tree](#)

[Swallow, Bank](#)

[Swallow, Northern Rough-winged](#)

[Swallow, Barn](#)

[Swallow, Cliff](#)

[Martin, Purple](#)

JAYS, CROWS, AND ALLIES

[Jay, Blue](#)

[Magpie, Black-billed](#)

[Raven, Common](#)

[Crow, American](#)

[Crow, Fish](#)

CHICKADEES AND ALLIES

[Chickadee, Black-capped](#)
[Chickadee, Boreal](#)
[Titmouse, Tufted](#)

NUTHATCHES AND CREEPERS

[Nuthatch, White-breasted](#)
[Nuthatch, Red-breasted](#)
[Creeper, Brown](#)

WRENS

[Wren, House](#)
[Wren, Winter](#)
[Wren, Carolina](#)
[Wren, Marsh](#)
[Wren, Sedge](#)

MIMIC THRUSHES

[Mockingbird, Northern](#)
[Catbird, Gray](#)
[Thrasher, Brown](#)

THRUSHES

[Robin, American](#)
[Thrush, Wood](#)
[Thrush, Hermit](#)
[Thrush, Swainson's](#)
[Thrush, Gray-cheeked](#)
[Veery](#)
[Bluebird, Eastern](#)

GNATCATCHERS AND KINGLETS

[Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray](#)
[Kinglet, Golden-crowned](#)
[Kinglet, Ruby-crowned](#)

PIPITS

[Pipit, American](#)

WAXWINGS

[Waxwing, Bohemian](#)
[Waxwing, Cedar](#)

SHRIKES

[Shrike, Northern](#)
[Shrike, Loggerhead](#)

STARLINGS

[Starling, European](#)

VIREOS

[Vireo, White-eyed](#)
[Vireo, Yellow-throated](#)
[Vireo, Blue-headed](#)
[Vireo, Red-eyed](#)
[Vireo, Philadelphia](#)
[Vireo, Warbling](#)

WOOD-WARBLERS

[Warbler, Black-and-White](#)
[Warbler, Prothonotary](#)
[Warbler, Swainson's](#)
[Warbler, Worm-eating](#)
[Warbler, Golden-winged](#)
[Warbler, Blue-winged](#)
[Warbler, Brewster's](#)
[Warbler, Lawrence's](#)
[Warbler, Orange-crowned](#)
[Warbler, Tennessee](#)
[Warbler, Nashville](#)
[Parula, Northern](#)
[Warbler, Yellow](#)
[Warbler, Magnolia](#)
[Warbler, Cape May](#)
[Warbler, Black-throated Blue](#)
[Warbler, Yellow-rumped](#)
[Warbler, Black-throated Green](#)
[Warbler, Cerulean](#)
[Warbler, Blackburnian](#)
[Warbler, Yellow-throated](#)
[Warbler, Chestnut-sided](#)
[Warbler, Bay-breasted](#)
[Warbler, Blackpoll](#)
[Warbler, Pine](#)
[Warbler, Prairie](#)
[Warbler, Palm](#)
[Ovenbird](#)
[Waterthrush, Northern](#)
[Waterthrush, Louisiana](#)
[Warbler, Kentucky](#)
[Warbler, Connecticut](#)
[Warbler, Mourning](#)
[Yellowthroat, Common](#)
[Chat, Yellow-breasted](#)
[Warbler, Hooded](#)
[Warbler, Wilson's](#)
[Warbler, Canada](#)
[Redstart, American](#)

ICTERIDS

[Bobolink](#)

[Meadowlark, Eastern](#)
[Meadowlark, Western](#)
[Blackbird, Yellow-headed](#)
[Blackbird, Red-winged](#)
[Oriole, Orchard](#)
[Oriole, Baltimore](#)
[Blackbird, Rusty](#)
[Grackle, Common](#)
[Cowbird, Brown-headed](#)

TANAGERS, CARDINALS, AND ALLIES

[Tanager, Western](#)
[Tanager, Scarlet](#)
[Tanager, Summer](#)
[Cardinal, Northern](#)
[Grosbeak, Rose-breasted](#)
[Grosbeak, Black-headed](#)
[Grosbeak, Blue](#)
[Bunting, Indigo](#)
[Dickcissel](#)

EMBERIZINE SPARROWS AND ALLIES

[Towhee, Eastern](#)
[Sparrow, Savannah](#)
[Sparrow, Grasshopper](#)
[Sparrow, Henslow's](#)
[Sparrow, Sharp-tailed](#)
[Sparrow, Seaside](#)
[Sparrow, Vesper](#)
[Sparrow, Lark](#)
[Junco, Dark-eyed](#)
[Sparrow, American Tree](#)
[Sparrow, Chipping](#)
[Sparrow, Field](#)
[Sparrow, White-crowned](#)
[Sparrow, White-throated](#)
[Sparrow, Fox](#)
[Sparrow, Lincoln's](#)
[Sparrow, Swamp](#)
[Sparrow, Song](#)
[Bunting, Snow](#)
[Bunting, Lark](#)

FINCHES

[Grosbeak, Evening](#)
[Grosbeak, Pine](#)
[Finch, Purple](#)
[Finch, House](#)
[Redpoll, Common](#)
[Siskin, Pine](#)

[Goldfinch, American](#)
[Crossbill, Red](#)
[Crossbill, White-winged](#)
[Goldfinch, European](#)

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

[Sparrow, House](#)

[RECENT ADDITIONS](#)

[ROCKLAND COUNTY MAP](#)

PHOTO CREDITS

Photographer	Pages
Baker, David	112, 160, 263
Brunner, Peggy	118
Cunningham, Tom	146
Deed, Louise	xi, xiii
Deed, Martha	510
Deed, Robert F.	229
Garber, Michael	216, 527
Hecht, Jack H.	121, 138, 169, 241
Kanon, Andreas	129, 161, 207, 268, 289, 316, 350, 441, 450, 470, 472
Kaufar, Nancy	113
Lampkin, John	462
Stoller, Sheila	234
Wells, Alan	all others
Wells, Della	122

FOREWORD TO 2010 EDITION BY MARTHA DEED



Robert F. Deed, Florida, March 1986

Photo Credit: Louise Deed

When Bob Deed is known to someone as “Dad,” it is not easy to move from family memories to a coherent description of his development as a birder. Childhood memories tell only part of his story – probably the part least known to “Auduboners,” yet consistent with his most precise record-keeping methods and his technical writing. Always, he was a close observer of his natural surroundings. Always, he enjoyed sharing what he saw with a variety of audiences, whether with his own children, fellow members of the Audubon Society, or in technical, ornithological publications.

Each Spring, we waited to hear the first Whip-Poor-Will, usually during supper. What fun to leave the table before we were finished eating one night a year to search South Mountain for this dowdy bird with its brilliant song. Lunar eclipses would find us sitting in our pajamas well beyond our bedtimes on the seawall at the foot of Clinton Avenue to observe the moon. Indeed,

Bob Deed’s love of nature and his close study of birds and the environment appears to have been transmitted to his children and grandchildren (with the help of Louise Deed, aka “Mom” and for many years RAS’s Secretary and/or Publicity chairperson).

Bob spent his working life as a writer, and through his writing it is possible to trace his serious interest in, and study of, birds at least as far back as 1927 when he was 14 years old and the publisher and editor of a neighborhood newspaper, The Dogtown Herald. The Dogtown Herald included an aviation section. “We include birds under the heading of aviation because what are they but fliers – aviators?” he is quoted as saying in the New York Herald Tribune Junior Magazine, October 9, 1927.

Even his earliest writings are laced with the humor one finds many decades later in his stories for the Rockland Audubon Observer.

Notice: The rate of five cents per copy for this so-called paper [The Dogtown Herald] does not hold mostly. The paper will be delivered free to all those who are the publisher's friends. The price is only to add needed dignity to this production. (November 6, 1927)

Deed often credited his start in birding as a teenager to his Nyack High School biology teacher, Miss Vivian Krum. By his early twenties, Bob Deed was birdwatching with Bronx Bird Club members Allan Cruickshank, Roger Tory Peterson, Ludlow Griscom, and John Bull, several of the most well-known ornithologists of the mid-late twentieth century. Deed's methods of recording his observations and collating contemporary Rockland County records with earlier records, were probably influenced by his relationships with these scientific ornithologists from the American Museum of Natural History.

Thus, it is not surprising that as he developed his own birding skills, he greatly enjoyed introducing teenagers to the world of birds. Several of the birders he met as teenagers went on to become experts in their own right: Gene Brown, Tom Dow, and David Hill, among others.

In hindsight, it is remarkable that Bob and Louise Deed included children as young as 5 and 8 in their pursuit of rarely seen birds. A poorly-timed squabble or laugh could have put an end to such a mission, but apparently it didn't. Deed children are dutifully noted on a sighting of a rare Long Eared Owl at Stony Point in January 1950. Both of the children involved actually remember this bird adventure. A photograph of a Pileated Woodpecker, taken from the dining room window of the house in South Nyack, carries the caption: Millie's Pileated Woodpecker. Thus, ever the recordkeeper, he documented the presence of the 8 year-old grandchild who watched the woodpecker with him that day.

Bob Deed became a serious birdwatcher at a time when it was possible to be an amateur scientist and to gain credibility based upon one's actual accomplishments as a bird observer. He dated his serious birdwatching from 1929 when he was 16 years old. By age 23, he had collected Rockland County bird records from DeKay in 1844 onwards and recorded them in a hand-made ledger, so that he could study fluctuations in bird populations as they relate to

climatic and environmental changes.

Bob Deed, along with his younger brothers Donald and Richard (two of his early converts to birdwatching), are acknowledged in Cruickshank's *Birds Around New York City* (American Museum of Natural History, 1942). John Bull cites two of Deed's writing in his *Birds of the New York Area* (Harper and Row, 1964). Robert Arbib, Olin Pettingill, Jr., and Sally Hoyt Spofford from Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology also acknowledge Deed's records in their *Enjoying Birds Around New York City* (Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

Occasional references to these early records were made in the first two editions of *Birds of Rockland County*, which Deed edited with an RAS committee. However, they are recorded in full in the 1979 edition (1844-1976) which was never published in a mass edition, but was made available to local libraries.

While he spent many hours recording field notes, compiling records for *Birds of Rockland County* (1949, 1959, 1968 Addendum, 1980), Bob also wrote frequent articles for *The Journal-News* and the *Rockland Audubon Observer*. The nature stories in the *Journal-News* begin with river rescue stories in 1932 and continue at least until 1971. Deed was a *Journal-News* reporter from his high school graduation in 1931 (following several years as high school correspondent) until 1942. During that time, he included many nature stories in his column "The Traffic Booth" as well as writing articles about the Trailside Museum (June 22, 1937), bird migration (April 17, 1935), and the "rescue" of Eagles from a Hudson iceberg (Feb 9, 1935).

Perhaps his most important scientific presentations were his Linnaean Society presentation, "Notes of the northward movement of certain species of birds into the lower Hudson River Valley," published in 1951, and his Trailside Museum and Zoo Historical Papers "The Changing Face of Nature in the Park 1930-1990" (H-6/90, H-7-90, Z-2/90, Z-3/90). His conclusion to his Trailside paper, Part 2 illustrates his sense of his place in the scientific study of birds and the environment:

My recollections of changes in the Park over these past 60 years are woefully unscientific, what the technical types would scornfully call "anecdotal". I would dearly wish to have made a

more scientific study in the 1930's: calculating the height of trees in various portions of the Park, measuring the water table, censusing the plant life in a quarter-acre square here and there. But if I had been able enough or foresighted enough to have done that, I would have been a prodigy, not a teenager keen on nothing but birds. I hope that someone today will fill those gaps because you can be sure that the dynamics of nature have not yet run their course.

Bob remained involved in birding even after he could no longer go out into the field himself. His systematic field notes run from some time prior to 1934 (age 21) to 1998 (age 84). In the months preceding his death at 88 in early July 2001, he was still a bird researcher and editor. In March, he compiled a list of gulls (with distinguishing marks) seen in the Niagara Gorge for a fellow birder. Through the Spring, he worked on Gene Brown's manuscript, *Birds Over Bear Mountain* (Trailside Museum, 2004). As always, he caught the typos, but did not lose track of the underlying intent of the piece, supporting the intent and clarifying the presentation with questions and discussion.

At home, Bob Deed's objections to "modern technology" were well-known. He considered the electric typewriter an abomination designed to turn his two-fingered pecking system into lines of incomprehensible print. But, I think he would have welcomed the computer with its use of database software and practicality of desktop publishing as advances that could well accelerate the public's knowledge of birds and the signals birds provide, by their presence or absence, of important environmental change. Certainly, he would welcome RAS's dissemination of his 1979 compilation in a form that can now reach any interested birdwatcher's home, rather than being made available only on some shelf in a local library where it might be subject to deaccession.

For Further Reading:

Baker's Dozen plus One (Comparison of the first 13 Christmas Counts). *Rockland Audubon Observer*, January 1961.

The Changing Face of Nature in the Park 1930-1990. *Trailside Museum and Zoo Historical Papers*, H-6/90, H-7-90, Z-2/90, Z-3/90.

Notes of the northward movement of certain species of birds into the lower Hudson River Valley. *Proc. Linnaean Soc. N.Y.*, 1951.

What Good are Open Spaces. *The Journal News*, October 4, 1960. Reprinted in *Rockland Audubon Observer*, November 1960 and adopted as RAS policy statement.

Martha Deed
December 3, 2007



Robert F. Deed, Cape Cod 1975. Photo Credit: Louise Deed.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the avifauna of Rockland County and the bordering Hudson Highlands date back at least a century and a quarter from this writing (1976). Notes on species status in the region can be found in the works of De Kay and Mearns in the 19th Century, in Chapman's studies at the turn of the century, in Eaton's state bird book in 1910-14, in Griscom's 1923 "Birds of the New York City Region," and in Cruickshank's 1942 "Birds Around New York City." Each of these studies reflects the accelerating growth of knowledge about the birdlife of the state and the metropolitan area, thanks partly to the growth in number of active and knowledgeable birders and to improved communication among them. Thus an infinitely more thorough evaluation of species status is that of John Bull, first in the 1964 "Birds of the New York Area" and then in the landmark "Birds of New York State" in 1974. Still, the accumulation of local notes, as in other phases of the "information explosion", in the sciences, contains a wealth of detail that may not fit into these monumental studies but should perhaps be preserved on a regional basis.

I daresay more information on birds in Rockland County has been amassed in the past 25 or 30 years than in all of the region's previous history, which dates back to the Dutch settlement of Tappan in 1640. Especially since World War II, there have been incomparably more observers—and more mobile observers. Sheer ease of transportation is obviously a major factor in ensuring thorough coverage of any area. The typical modern birder doubtless covers more miles in one day afield, than De Kay or Mearns could cover in a month. And the spreading interest in nature, especially birds, has produced many more observers of acceptable competence than ever existed before.

When you consider that the bird students of the 19th Century and early 20th Century had neither wide-ranging and flexible transportation, high-powered binoculars and telescopes, nor bird guides arranged to be helpful in spotting diagnostic field marks, it is obvious that their coverage of any region

must have been spotty. Local records of that era refer to an extremely limited number of observers and collectors: John G. Bell of Sparkill; H. C. De Rham, who I believe was a resident of Garrison, across the Hudson from West Point; and L. W. Brownell of Nyack, who supplied the Rockland County report for Eaton's "Birds of New York."

When I began birding as a teenager in the late 1920s, I knew of only two or three active birders in all of Rockland County, not including Park Naturalist William H. Carr at Bear Mountain, who was already keeping records for the Bear Mountain-Harriman sections of the Palisades Interstate Park. Others were also making studies in the Park during the 1920s and 1930s, including P. M. Silloway, Daniel B. Beard, Kenneth M. Lewis, H. A. Hochbaum, and John C. Orth, who later succeeded Carr as park naturalist and also served as assistant superintendent of the Park until his recent retirement. Through the 1930s and 1940s, many Linnaean Society members devoted some of their field time to Rockland County and the Highlands, including Joseph J. Hickey, Ernst Mayr, John and Richard Kuerzi, Richard Herbert, Lester Walsh, George Komoroski, Howard Van Deuzen, and John Matuszewski.

In 1947, the Rockland Audubon Society was founded by a nucleus of half a dozen active birders. Within ten years, the society could boast at least 15 active and competent birders, and their number peaked at around 25 highly capable observers in the late 1960s. In 1976, the society has about 550 members, but their interests are not so narrowly focused on local birds. Over the years, many of the active birders were able to give the region the midweek coverage that is so important to an accurate picture, especially of birds' arrival and departure dates. And collectively they represented literally a global background of experience, birding on every continent, including Antarctica, as well as on the oceans and in the high Arctic. One can only imagine what De Kay, Mearns, and Eaton would have thought of birdwatching on such a scale.

This post-World War II upsurge of interest in local bird study happened to coincide with a drastic change in Rockland County, demographically and ecologically. Rapid housing development after the war swiftly turned the county from rural to suburban, with dramatic effect on birdlife.

In Colonial days, Rockland County went through the same transformation as all other areas in the East: clearing of forests for farms, lumbering for fuel and construction material, the building of roads and the growth of villages. But, locally, the face of the land was also changed by special circumstances. In the Highlands, where the roughness of the terrain and the thinness and acidity of the soil is discouraged farming except, on a small scale, the forests served primarily as a source of ship masts and timbers of hickory, oak, maple, chestnut, and pine for shipbuilding and house construction. And the discovery of iron ore in the Highlands before the Revolution led to intensive woodcutting and charcoal burning, especially of native chestnuts, to fuel the iron furnaces. To this day, old mining and woodcutting roads remain in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park as convenient access to good birding areas. The consumption of wood in the 18th and 19th Centuries was enormous. In 1846 alone, at the height of the brick-making industry in the Haverstraw-Grassy Point area, the brickyards consumed 10,800 cords of wood. No wonder then that few trees or climax growth remain, even in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, whose second-growth woodland, covering some 42,000 acres, is the only substantial forest left in our region.

Quarrying, too, has had a deep effect on the region's ecology—ultimately for the good. In the low-lying areas along the Hudson shore, sandstone was extensively quarried from 1800 to 1840, supplying the material for many of Manhattan's brownstone houses, for the forts on Governor's Island, for the old Capitol in Albany, and for the north wall of the present New York City Hall, as well as for local houses. This operation left no scars on the land; the holes were soon filled and built upon. But the quarrying of traprock, the

material of the Palisades and the river wall northward through Rockland County, was another story. Starting as early as 1804, when it produced stone for the seawall of Governor's Island and for many Manhattan piers, traprock quarrying boomed in the era of railroad building and, later, highway building. Rockland's traprock quarries provided the riprap for the New York Central Railroad's "water level" route between Yonkers and a point near Albany and for the railroad's West Shore division on the west bank of the Hudson. More recently, they supplied the rock fill for the West Side Highway in Manhattan. But traprock quarrying is conspicuous and defacing, and it represented a highly visible attack on the beauty of the Palisades and the river mountains to the north. The founding of a rock-crushing plant at Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack, was directly responsible for the Palisades Interstate Park's acquisition of the whole mountain shortly after 1900. Similarly, a quarrying operation barely started at Tallman Mountain, Piermont, triggered the Park's acquisition of that area some 40 years ago. The threat of quarry expansion at scenic High Tor, Haverstraw, resulted in the Park's acquisition of that mountain area, too, after World War II. Thus, quarrying led to the preservation of at least three ecologically and scenically valuable areas on the Hudson River's shores.

Meanwhile, the suburbanization of Rockland County was accelerating. With the coming of the railroads a century ago, the county began gaining new residents through its proximity to New York City, hence its attractiveness as a "bedroom" community for commuters. But until after World War II, its growth was steady and unspectacular. From a population of 19,000 in 1850, Rockland grew to 38,000 in 1900 and 74,000 in 1940. Then the 1950 census of 89,000 already showed the beginnings of the postwar tract development boom. The 1960 population was 136,000; in 1970, it was 240,000; a preliminary census in 1975 estimated 253,000.

Farming was the most obvious victim of this growth, and when land began to be valued and taxed as potential development property—at \$10,000 to \$30,000 an acre instead of the prewar \$100 or so—it quickly

became uneconomical to farm. Attrition of farming had begun before World War II, with the 1,000 farms on the 1920 census dropping to 355 in 1940. But the postwar home-building boom was the quick finishing touch. In 1976, only one of the dozen prewar dairy farms remains, and only two of the dozen orchards. As farmland was converted to tract housing, Rockland County has lost most of its resident field birds such as woodcock, grasshopper sparrow, and meadowlark.

The need to serve a mushrooming population, not only locally but in the whole metropolitan area, has cost Rockland County some of its choicest bird habitats. Even the Palisades Interstate Park's flooding of Lake Welch just before the war to create a recreational lake had its direct penalty: the loss of the region's only known breeding colony of half a dozen pairs of short-billed marsh wrens. And since the war, the Hackensack Water Company has flooded two three-mile stretches of the Hackensack Creek swamps to create drinking-water reservoirs: one north of West Nyack and the other straddling the New Jersey border west of Orangeburg. Both swamps had been marvelously secluded environments, traversable only by canoe or paddled boat; they were a nesting place for blue-winged teal, least bittern, Virginia rail, and long-billed marsh wren, as well as commoner birds. Only one portion of the Hackensack swamp remains between the two reservoirs; is less choice than the other segments, and water company patrolmen discourage access.

On the Hudson shore north of Haverstraw, a huge steam-powered electric generating plant stands where marsh birds and the willow flycatcher formerly nested. And the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge to carry the New York Thruway across the river, mostly on a causeway supported by closely spaced piers, has markedly increased the silting along the Grand View and Piermont shores, to the extent that diving ducks no longer winter there in the same numbers as in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, the effect of the bridge piers in slowing the Hudson's flow and thus depositing sediment is perhaps

compensating by steadily building up a shorebird environment of mudflats on the south side of Piermont Pier.

Indeed, it would be difficult to prove that the suburbanization of Rockland County has had a totally malign effect on birdlife. It may be, for example, that the planting of shrubbery around suburban homes provides attractions for birds that open land may lack, and the prevalence of bird feeders at these homes may account for the increasing number of half-hardy birds that linger through the winter. Yet the suspicion remains that some breeding species suffer from the suburbanite's love of cats and garden sprays.

The number of species on the Rockland County-Hudson Highlands bird list has grown both through expanded observation by greater numbers of birders and in real terms through the extension of ranges and the accumulation of casual or accidental occurrences. At the end of 1948, the species list numbered 237, at the end of 1955, it was 272; today it stands at 309, based on the A.O.U. checklist as of 1948 for purposes of comparison (although the species histories that follow are arranged according to the 1973 A.O.U. checklist).

Strictly speaking, only two of the historic studies previously mentioned apply directly to Rockland County and the Hudson Highlands: Mearns's 1878-82 report and Brownell's notes up to 1908, incorporated in Eaton's state book as the Rockland County local list. However, for the sake of a perspective of more than 30 years, I have included extralimital status reports, freely interpreted for local relevance. These include De Kay's statewide study in 1844 as summarized in Eaton, the substance of "Birds of Sing Sing, New York" by Dr. A.K. Fisher of the U. S. Biological Survey as summarized in Chapman's "Handbook" (1898), findings from Chapman's "Handbook" itself and from his "An Annotated List of the Birds Known to Breed Within Fifty Miles of New York City" (1894) and "Birds of the Vicinity of New York City" (1906). I have also drawn upon Griscom's 1923 book on the New York area and Jack

Kuerzi's 1927 Linnaean paper on Bronx County birds, as well as, for a still later era, Cruickshank's 1942 book.

Current status reports as of 1976 adopt the terms of occurrence and abundance that John Bull laid down in his "Birds of New York State." These are:

<i>REPORTED ANNUALLY</i>	
Very Abundant	over 1,000 per day (often in large flocks) <i>per locality</i>
Abundant	200 to 1,000 per day <i>per locality</i>
Very Common	50 to 200 per day <i>per locality</i>
Common	20 to 50 per day <i>per locality</i>
Fairly Common	7 to 20 per day <i>per locality</i>
Uncommon	1 to 6 per day <i>per locality</i>
Rare	1 to 6 per season
<i>NOT REPORTED ANNUALLY</i>	
Very Rare	over 6 records but very infrequent occurrence
Casual	2 to 6 records
Accidental	only 1 record

The trouble in applying these criteria comes in interpreting "per locality," and it does not help much when Bull writes that the term means "precisely that." It is synonymous with "neighborhood," just "what one can see from a given stationary point? Is it a unit of habitat, such as a single marsh or wooded hillside, a lake or a riverfront? Is Rockland County a single locality or a million of them? With the reasoning that a locality is the area that a birder might cover in a day or a half-day afield, I have treated our region as a locality, with a separate rating in some instances for the Highlands and Bear Mountain-Harriman Park. It seems to me that any other treatment would favor gregarious or colonial birds over widely scattered but more numerous species. The robin, for example, would never match in numbers the tree or barn swallow in summer, and the house sparrow would appear far scarcer than the ring-necked duck.

Moreover, treatment of the entire area as a locality is essential in calibrating a birder's typical daily list with Bull's occurrence criteria. For example, the robin is undeniably a common to very common breeder, yet a mid-May list of a single party covering much of Rockland County barely puts it into that

category, and on any less wide-ranging list it might rank as "uncommon" to "fairly common." On the day this is written, a cool, overcast day in July, a one-mile walk through South Nyack happened to net just a single robin—"uncommon" by Bull's standards. Of course, a birder's typical list in mid-May undoubtedly underestimates the number of robins; with the plethora of migrants at that season, the robins, wood thrushes, and blue jays are not counted as precisely as, say, the gnatcatchers, Nashville warblers, and scarlet tanagers. Even so, a careful census of robins in a village, a square mile, or a township would not be likely to produce enough birds on a given day to meet the criterion for "common to very common." And, in the final analysis, occurrence ratings should serve as an index to what a birder may expect in a given area, whatever its size.

Treating Rockland County and the adjacent Highlands as a unit, or in some cases two units, also seems to answer Bull's stated objections to correlating abundance with Christmas, waterfowl, hawk, and "Big Day" counts. Bull writes: ". . . the amount of area covered on these various counts is too variable and is virtually useless for locality maxima, although suitable enough to indicate trends." The area covered on both of the local Christmas Counts is the one thing that has remained constant over the years, and the manpower devoted to covering it has also been approximately the same from year to year (except that Rockland Audubon Society's first pilot-project count in 1947 was 50% undermanned). The single-party May "Big Day" counts over a dozen or more years covered substantially the same routes each year, and the collective "Big Day" counts that Rockland Audubon Society ran for a few years were made by seven or eight parties covering the Christmas Count territory.

Place names have been updated to 1976 (artificial lakes in the Park and Rockland County have eliminated certain older features). And to spare the reader a search back through the list to find an observer's full name, I have used full names in each species treatment rather than only in the first listing in which a name appears.

I have been able to learn nothing about L. W. Brownell except that he apparently lived in Nyack or vicinity and was the only Rockland County observer who responded to a query sent out by the State Museum in 1900 as a step toward accumulating data for Eaton' s work. Although Griscom's 1923 book specifically disclaims Rockland County coverage, he often cites useful observations for the lower Hudson Valley. Both Fisher and Kuerzi cover areas contiguous with Rockland County; Ossining (formerly Sing Sing) is across the Hudson from Rockland Lake Landing, and Kuerzi' s area limits extend to Tarrytown, across the Hudson from Nyack.

If any regional study such as this one is to have value to future generations of bird observers, it must be in its historical perspective, in the broad "demographic"

changes in birdlife. I hope that this admittedly amateur compilation serves that purpose.

1983 ADDENDA -- 'BIRDS OF ROCKLAND COUNTY' REVISITED

May, 1976 was my cutoff date for bird data in the expanded "Birds of Rockland County, etc." Since then we have added new occurrence dates, new records that modify the status of various rarer species, and even some new species not recorded prior to 1976. In the interest of updating the previous manuscript, here are some of the changes.

REFERENCES

* As cited in other literature

Amos, Anthony F. 1973. The Birds of Piermont. Spring. Special report in Piermont Newsletter. Mimeographed.

Boyajian, Ned. 1971. "Notes on the Summer Birds of the New Jersey Palisades", In Linnaean News-Letter, Dec. Vol. XXV, No. 6.

Bull, John. 1964. Birds of the New York Area. 1964. Harper & Row.

Bull, John. 1970. Supplement to "Birds of the New York Area", Proceedings of the Linnaean Society.

Bull, John. 1974. Birds of New York State. Doubleday/Natural History Press.

Carr, William H. 1940. Birds of Bear Mountain Park and the Hudson Highlands. Mimeographed. Bear Mountain Trailside Museums.

Chapman, Frank M. 1894. An Annotated List of the Birds Known to Breed Within Fifty Miles of New York City.*

Chapman, Frank M. 1898. Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America.*

Chapman, Frank M. 1906. Birds of the Vicinity of New York City. American Museum Journal, 6:81-102.*

Cruickshank, Allan D. 1942. Birds Around New York City. American Museum of Natural History.

Deed, Robert. 1949. Birds of Rockland County, New York. Rockland Audubon Society.

Deed, Robert. 1950. "Birds Near the New Jersey Border", March issue of Bulletin to the Schools, University of the State of New York, Albany.

Deed, Robert. 1951. "Notes on the northward movement of certain species of birds into the Lower Hudson Valley", Proceedings of the Linnaean Society.

Deed, Robert. 1959. Birds of Rockland County and the Hudson Highlands. Rockland Audubon Society.

Deed, Robert. 1968. Supplement to "Birds of Rockland County and the Hudson Highlands". Rockland Audubon Society.

Deed, Robert. 1975-1976. "Rockland County's On-Again, Off-Again Resting Places for Shorebirds". The Linnaean News Letter for December 1975 and January 1976 Vol. XXIX, Nos. 6 & 7.

De Kay, James E. 1844. Zoology of New York, Part 2: Birds. D. Appleton and Wiley & Putnam.*

Eaton, Elon H. 1910-14. Birds of New York. University of the State of New York, Albany.

Fisher, A. K. 1898. * Birds of Sing Sing, New York.

Griscom, Ludlow. 1923. Birds of the New York City Region. American Museum of Natural History.

Herbert, Richard and K. G. Herbert. 1969. "The extirpation of the Hudson River peregrine falcon population," In "Peregrine Falcon Populations", edited by Joseph J. Hickey. University of Wisconsin Press.

Kuerzi, John F. 1927. "A detailed report on the bird life of the Greater Bronx region". Proceedings of the Linnaean Society, Nos. 37 and 38.

Mearns, Edgar A. 1878-82. A List of the Birds of the Hudson Highlands, With Annotations. Bulletin of the Essex Institute.*

Orth, John C. 1960. Vertebrates of the Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks. Mimeographed. Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

Reilly, E.M. and K.C. Parkes. 1959.
Preliminary Annotated Checklist of New
York State Birds. New York State
Museum and Science Service.

Silloway, P.M. 1920. Guide to the Summer
Birds of the Bear Mountain and
Harriman Sections of the Palisades
Interstate Park. Bulletin 11, Vol. IX, New
York State College of Forestry.

COMMON LOON

Gavia immer



Juvenile, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Resident in state.
1878-82	Mearns	Common transient in the Highlands.
1898	Chapman	Common transient visitant, uncommon winter resident.
1898	Fisher	Common transient visitant, March and October.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common transient.
1923	Griscom	Rather rare, September to June, most common in May.
1927	Kuerzi	Fairly common transient and winter visitant; Aug. 16 to June 2.
1940	Carr	Regular spring and fall migrant.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common migrant, uncommon in winter.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon to rare spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant, casual summer and winter visitant.

This species seems to have gained during the past 50 years. It was rare indeed in the late 1920s. In 1935 I made 172 trips afield and had only one record for this species (three birds on May 12); I tallied only two records, in April, during my 139 trips afield in 1936. Since the mid-1950s, it has been possible to find this bird almost at will in the proper season and at the proper places. It frequents both the Hudson River and such lakes as Rockland, De Forest,

and Tiorati, except when the lakes are frozen; most winter records come from the river.

Spring: March. 19, 1962, a dozen flying over South Nyack (Robert F. Deed), to May 20, 1967, one on Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble).

Summer: June 18, 1932, in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park (John C. Orth); July 19, 1933, at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman).

Gaviidae

Fall: September 26, 1960, Lake Tiorati (Orth) to November 17, 1974, Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown).

Winter: December 3 and 11, 1970, on the Hudson at Nyack (Alma Polhemus); December 27, 1934, Bear Mountain-Harriman Park (Daniel B. Beard); December 29, 1956, on the Hudson at Grand View (David O. Hill); January 12, 1958,

on the Hudson at Stony Point (Irving G. Kennedy).

High Count: On April 27, 1958, a total of 35 birds (20 in the largest flock) flying and calling over Blauvelt between 7 and 8 a.m. (Rockland Audubon Society field trip).



Adult, late winter, near breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RED-THROATED LOON

Gavia stellata



Adult, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Comparatively rare.
1878-82	Mearns	Two records, one on November 14, 1876.
1898	Chapman	Common transient, fairly common winter resident.
1898	Fisher	Occasional transient visitant.
1908	Brownell	Rare transient.
1923	Griscom	"Two old records for the Hudson River".
1927	Kuerzi	Unknown except in the Long Island Sound portion of The Bronx.
1940	Carr	Rare, irregular fall migrant, one record.
1942	Cruickshank	"Purely fortuitous" away from the coast; several records for the Hudson.
1960	Orth	Casual very rare transient, one record.
1976	Current status	Very rare migrant, casual winter visitant.

Prior to 1950, our region had only one record: October. 5, 1926, Lake Kanawauke (William H. Carr). Then came the following ten records:

Spring: April 23, 1967, on Hudson at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy); May 31, 1971, same place (The Kingbird, Vol. XXI, No.3).

Fall: October 14, 1956, from a boat in the Hudson off Hook Mountain (David O. Hill);

November 8, 1970, on the Hudson within 150 feet of shore at Hook Mountain (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed); November 26, 1950, on the Hudson at Grand View (Mrs. Stephen Collins); November 27 to December 6, 1970, two on the Hudson at Nyack (Alma Polhemus).

Gaviidae

Winter: December 4, 1954, on the Hudson off Piermont (Hill); December. 27, 1952, on Hudson at Haverstraw (Mr. and Mrs. John C. Orth, John Kenney); December 27, 1970, on Hudson off Grand View (Rockland Audubon Society

Christmas Count); February 2, 1975, on Hudson at Piermont Pier (the Deeds).

[1983 Addendum](#) -- Three new November records (1978, 1979, 1981).



Juvenile, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RED-NECKED GREBE

Podiceps grisegena



Adult, late winter, near breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Rare in winter.
1878-82	Mearns	Transient and winter visitant, abundant at times.
1898	Chapman	Uncommon winter resident and transient.
1898	Fisher	Rare transient visitant, October to December.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon transient.
1923	Griscom	Rare on the Hudson, November 1 to April 15.
1927	Kuerzi	Irregular and rare transient and winter visitant, Oct. 15 to Apr. 28.
1940	Carr	Rare, irregular fall and winter migrant.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common, much less frequently on the Hudson River.
1960	Orth	Sporadic rare spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Formerly a rare migrant; unreported since 1963.

Our region has only eleven records: one in winter, seven in spring, and three in fall. Five of these records, including the only instances of more than a single bird, came in one extraordinary year—1959.

Spring: March 10, 1963, on Hudson at Grand View (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); March 14,

1959, one on the Hudson and one at Stilwell Lake in the Highlands (Edward D. Treacy); March 15, 1959, two on Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); March 18, 1962, on . Hudson off Piermont (Deed); March 21, 1948, one on the Hudson off Grand View in a locally rare direct comparison with a Horned Grebe (Rockland Audubon Society field trip); March 21,

1959, three on Lake De Forest (the Steffenses); May 17, 1959, on Hudson off Grassy Point (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

Fall: October 1, 1937. Swartwout Lake, Congers (Vivian B. Krum, Robert F. Deed); November 2, 1929, on Hudson at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr), November 9, 1959, on Hudson at Hook Mountain (Eugene R. Brown).

Winter: February 16, 1932, on Hudson at Piermont (Deed).

1983 Addendum – Mar. 20 and Apr. 8, Cornwall Bay (Kenneth McDermott); Nov. 12, 1979, four birds, Cornwall Bay (Benton Seguin).



Adult with chicks, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

HORNED GREBE

Podiceps auritus



Adult, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	--
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant transient visitant, occasional winter visitant.
1898	Chapman	Common transient visitant; fairly common winter resident.
1898	Fisher	Common transient visitant.
1908	Brownell	Common transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Common transient, October 15 to May 24.
1927	Kuerzi	Common transient visitant, fairly common winter resident; October 6 to May 23.
1940	Carr	Uncommon migrant.
1942	Cruickshank	Transient and rare winter visitant.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon to rare spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Uncommon migrant and winter visitant, accidental in June.

Even at the year's peak in late March and early April, numbers generally are low compared with those of coastal waters, usually fewer than half a dozen per day on either the Hudson River or the lakes. This grebe winters regularly, mostly on the river. It has been recorded on ten of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts,

though only once on 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (1946-73).

Early fall date: September 23, 1951 (RAS field trip).

Late spring date: April 21, 1960, a bird in breeding plumage on Lake De Forest (Dr.

Marjorie R. Hopper). An extraordinary nearby record is a flock of 80-plus on Orange Lake, near Newburgh, on April 29, 1956 (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber).

Summer: June 14, 1953, on the Hudson at Grassy Point (Dr. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown).

[1983 Addendum](#) -- A new late spring date, May 29, 1979, a bird in breeding plumage at Grassy Point (John Benzinger).

PIED-BILLED GREBE
Podilymbus podiceps



Adult, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Common in late summer and autumn.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant transient visitant, occasional summer resident.
1898	Chapman	Common transient visitant, rare winter resident; breeds.
1898	Fisher	Common transient, occasional summer resident.
1908	Brownell	Common transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Irregular, normally uncommon
1927	Kuerzi	Fairly common transient visitant, March 18 to May 3 and August 18 to November 22.
1940	Carr	Common transient, may breed.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common transient, uncommon summer resident.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant, rare winter visitant; one breeding record.

This species has increased greatly in the past 40 years. In the course of 172 trips afield in 1935, I totaled only five birds; on 139 trips in 1936, only 26 birds. Today it is not difficult in appropriate localities, such as Rockland Lake and Piermont Pier, to find eight or ten birds in one day. Peak numbers seem to be in early April and mid-October. Inasmuch as migrations are

fairly clearly defined, dates can be broken down by season as follows:

Spring: March 14, 1962, Piermont Pier (Edwin Gamble) to May 13, 1968, Lake Tappan (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Eugene R. Brown).

Summer: June 6, 1950 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); July 12, 1961, an adult with six young at Cornwall Bay (Mr. and Mrs. John Dye); July 19, 1947; Bear Mountain-Harriman Park (John C. Orth, Stanley O. Grierson).

Fall: September 3, 1960, Lake De Forest (the Deeds) to December 1, 1948 (Deed).

Winter: Many records ranging from December 14, 1959, at Grassy Point (Dr. Hopper) to January 9, 1965, at Piermont Pier (the Deeds); recorded on 15 of the 29 Rockland Audubon

Society Christmas Counts and on eight of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (1946-73).

[1983 Addendum](#) -- A second breeding record: a female with four or five tiny downy young on June 12, 1981, at a pond in the old brickyards off Gagan Road, West Haverstraw (Robert F. Deed).



Adult, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

PELICANS, GANNETS, FRIGATEBIRDS AND CORMORANTS

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN
Pelicanus erythrorhyncos



Adult, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This bird would seem a most unlikely candidate for our local list, even though De Kay (1844) said it was "formerly numerous" in the lower Hudson Valley but had "entirely disappeared" and Griscom (1923) referred to reports that the species was "apparently of regular occurrence in the Northeast" in Colonial times. One cannot help but wonder if the old reports were based on some kind of misidentification or on a colloquial name for a common local bird. However, on August 11, 1971, John Small, a junior high school student newly interested in birding, came to Al Merritt, an experienced birder in Cornwall,

with an excited description of a White Pelican he had just seen on the Hudson River at Cornwall. Merritt returned to the site with Small, and the bird was still there. It was viewed at leisure on the water and in flight as, at dusk, it flew off down the river. Merritt, familiar with the species in the West, was convinced that it was indeed a White Pelican.

Status: Accidental.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD

Fregata magnificens



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum -- An almost incredible new species, seen at the state line, Tappan, on Apr. 7, 1982, on the heels of a blizzard, with winds

still gusting to 50 mph. Observed and sketched by Lee Bjong, a commercial artist.

NORTHERN GANNET
Morus bassanus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual migrant in this region, with only two local records, one in spring and one in autumn. On May 19, 1957, Frank R. Steffens and Edward D. Treacy saw two birds flying north over Congers Lake on a cold, showery day. On October 2, 1960, members of a Rockland

Audubon Society field trip, including Mr. and Mrs. Steffens, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, and Robert F. Deed, saw one bird flying south over the Blauvelt Section of the Palisades Interstate Park.

GREAT CORMORANT
Phalacrocorax carbo



Adult, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall visitant. With full awareness of identification difficulties, especially with the increase in numbers of Double-crested Cormorants in all plumages and with extended early and fall dates, we count three valid records for this species: November 6, 1935, an immature with two probable *P. auritus* at Piermont Pier (Robert F. Deed); October 19 to November 2, 1969, one on the Hudson at Cornwall (Mrs. Barbara Merritt); October 16, 1974, an immature at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos). The Cornwall bird was shot by a hunter on the

November 2 date but was recovered by Mrs. Merritt, who witnessed the shooting; its skin, identified as that of an immature male, is now in the State Museum in Albany. The 1974 record at Piermont Pier is supported by Amos's familiarity with the species in Europe and by his meticulous, conservative approach to identification.

1983 Addendum – A fourth record: an immature flying at Stony Point on Nov. 9, 1979 (Deed).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Phalacrocorax auritus



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Mearns (1878-82) had only two records for the Highlands, and until the mid-1940s this was a rare migrant and rare summer visitant for our entire region. Now it is a “fairly common” to “common” migrant and summer visitant, with peak numbers in late May and late August.

Extreme dates are: March 10, 1929, at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) to November 6, 1956, at Rockland Lake Landing (Eugene R. Brown).

The year 1949 seems to have brought an irruption into our area. On April 16, John C. Orth and John Kenney noted rather early birds at Piermont; on June 1, Robert F. Deed saw a flock of 14 birds from the Nyack-Tarrytown ferry; on September 22, the all-time high of 95 birds was recorded at Bear Mountain.

Most cormorants are found along the Hudson River, especially near Piermont Pier, but groups of two and three have been seen at Lake De Forest and Lake Tappan, the two Hackensack Creek reservoirs.

GREAT BLUE HERON

Ardea herodias



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Common; breeds.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant transient, occasional summer resident, may breed; April 4-21 and September 20-25.
1898	Chapman	Common transient, local summer resident, April 1 to November 30.
1898	Fisher	Common transient, April 4-18 and August 16 to October 6.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common transient, occasional summer resident.
1923	Griscom	Rare transient.
1927	Kuerzi	Fairly common transient, March 24 to June 9 and July 3 to Dec. 30.
1940	Carr	Regular migrant, casual summer visitor.
1942	Cruickshank	Common transient, uncommon summer resident, very rare winter resident.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon spring and fall transient, one winter record.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant and summer visitant, very rare winter visitant.

The occurrence profile of this species seems to show a sharp dip around 1920, when Griscom was reporting, followed by a considerable increase. In 1935, my 172 trips afield yielded a total of 33 birds; in 1936, my 139 trips totaled 26 birds. These numbers were about equal to those of the green heron; today the green heron is approximately three times as numerous as the

great blue. Our records reflect a steep decline for the present species in the late 1950s, when insecticides became a lethal problem for fish-eating birds. For example, after decades of being able to find great blue herons at will in April and May, several of our most active observers found none at all from April 6 to May 16 in 1958. In the following year, 1959, our

members collectively had only one spring observation to report. Numbers have been recovering only since 1970.

Extreme dates: March 19, 1955 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper Eugene R. Brown) and March 19, 1967, two birds at West Nyack (Bernd Gravenstein) to November 25, 1956, Queensboro Lake (John C. Orth)

Winter: Recorded seven times on 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts and twice on 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. The Bear Mountain dates are remarkable enough to include in the following winter records:

December 12, 1935 (Robert F. Deed); December 17, 1972, in the Suffern area (Bruce Edinger); December 23, 1967, on Bear Mountain count; December 29, 1959, to at least January 8, 1960 near Suffern (John LeMaire); wintered 1956-57 in New City area (Dr. K. Fagan); January 2, 1960, on Bear Mountain count; January 27, 1952, at Lake Lucille, New City (John M. Price); February 25, 1963, at Blauvelt (Dr. Hopper); February 27, 1972, near Spring Valley (Rockland Audubon Society field trip).



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GREEN HERON

Butorides virescens



Adult (breeding plumage)

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Common throughout state, May-October; breeds.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant summer resident, breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common summer resident, April 20 to October 20; breeds.
1898	Fisher	Common summer resident, April 6 to September 26.
1908	Brownell	Common summer resident, breeds.
1923	Griscom	Regular summer resident and transient.
1927	Kuerzi	Common transient, fairly common summer resident.
1940	Carr	Common summer resident breeds.
1942	Cruickshank	Common summer resident.
1960	Orth	Reglar uncommon summer resident, nests.
1976	Current status	Fairly common local breeder; casual in winter.

Although this bird can still be found regularly where habitat permits, it is a notable victim of the suburbanization of Rockland County. A high percentage of the small ponds and streams that it once frequented have vanished into tract housing developments.

Extreme dates: April 17, 1957, Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to November 6, 1954, Piermont (Thomas Dow).

Winter: December 5, 1965, Iona Island (John C. Orth); December 22, 1956, one on Bear Mountain Christmas Count (Orth, John Kenney, Peter Smith).



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

LITTLE BLUE HERON

Egretta [Florida] caerulea



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Rare visitor.
1878-82	Mearns	No mention.
1898	Chapman	Uncommon summer visitant.
1898	Fisher	No mention.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Casual summer visitant, July-September.
1927	Kuerzi	Rare summer visitant, August 1 to September 4.
1940	Carr	Uncommon, irregular visitor, July-September.
1942	Cruickshank	Locally common summer visitant.
1960	Orth	Occasional summer visitant.
1976	Current status	Casual visitant in spring, summer, and fall.

From about 1930 to 1950, this species enjoyed a boom in numbers. As early as 1926 or 1927, I saw a striking photograph, taken by a professional while boating on a section of the Hackensack Creek now flooded by Lake De Forest, in which 36 immature little blues could be counted, posed on the branches of a big fallen tree. But this was exceptional. In 1935 (172 trips afield) I had no little blue heron at all;

in 1936 (139 trips) I had one flock of four birds. Bear Mountain Park had records in 1929, 1930, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937, but mostly of single birds. Bull's "Birds of New York State" cites a maximum of 54 birds at Iona Island on Sept. 6, 1936, a record that I cannot find in the local files but a count that reflects the wide variability in occurrences of this species.

Prior to 1947, when Rockland Audubon Society observations began, dates ranged from June 3, 1929, at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) to Sept. 6, 1936 (the to 54 birds at Iona Island cited by Bull and three birds seen the same day at Black Ash Swamp, Harriman Park, by Donald W. Deed). Since 1947, we have only the following records, only five of which have been made since the mid-1950s:

Spring: Apr. 24, 1949, a bird in pied plumage on an inland reservoir at Stony Point (Rockland Audubon Society field trip); Apr. 27, 1966, an adult--our only record for this plumage at any season--at Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens, Elsa Rubens).

Summer: July 21 and 28, 1974, Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Aug. 1, 1957, Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Aug. 4 and 5, 1962, same place (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, the Deeds). **Fall:** Sept. 5, 1956, Lake De Forest (Morton Isler); Sept. 15, 1972, Hackensack Creek at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. David O. Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Single).

1983 Addendum -- Four additional August records, three in September, one adult at Iona Island on June 26, 1982.



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GREAT EGRET

Aredea [Casmarodius] albus



Adult, non-breeding plumage.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Middle of May to early autumn, may breed.
1878-82	Mearns	Summer visitant four times.
1898	Chapman	Rare summer visitant, August to Sept. 30.
1898	Fisher	Accidental visitant; once, Dec. 14, 1894.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Seven reports up to September, 1921.
1927	Kuerzi	Rare summer visitant.
1940	Carr	Rare summer visitor, August and September.
1942	Cruickshank	Locally common to uncommon summer visitant.
1960	Orth	Irregular uncommon summer visitant, sporadically fairly common.
1976	Current status	Rare summer and fall visitant, sporadically fairly common, four spring records.

Between the rarity of Kuerzi's time and the rarity of today, this species has enjoyed boom years, primarily in the 1940s and 1950s. In those decades, reports were received every year of numbers up to 25 birds, with the peak numbers usually in early August. But 1960 was the last big year, and since 1962 we have had only eight

reports, topped by 12 birds at Piermont Pier on Aug. 10, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

This egret has by far the widest range of dates among the "white herons." The earliest is Mar. 29, 1971, at Rockland Lake (Philp Meisner, the

Park naturalist there), and there are two April dates: Apr. 21, 1973, a bird flying over South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner) and Apr. 29, 1960, one flying over the Suffern area (John LeMaire). We have only one May date, May 15, 1953, Grassy Point (John Kenney), and one June date, June 12, 1949, West Nyack (Rockland Audubon Society field trip). Dates then cease to have much significance until after mid- October. We have two late October records--Oct. 23, 1955, Grassy Point (Dr.

Marjorie R. Hopper) and Oct. 24, 1960, Queensboro Lake (John C. Orth)--and one for November, a bird from Nov. 1 (John M. Price) to Nov. 4, 1956 (Dr. Hopper) at the then-new Lake De Forest.

1983 Addendum -- Many new fall records; a new early spring record, Apr. 15, 1978 at Cornwall Bay (Kenneth McDermott).



Adult, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SNOWY EGRET

Egretta [Leucophoyx] thula



Adult, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Often seen on coast, May-September; breeds?
1878-82	Mearns	No mention.
1898	Chapman	Uncommon to accidental.
1898	Fisher	Accidental visitant.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Relegated to list of "extinct and extirpated", reference to one old record by Dr. Fisher.
1927	Kuerzi	No mention.
1940	Carr	No mention.
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon summer visitant.
1960	Orth	Only one Park record.
1976	Current status	Uncommon to fairly common summer visitant, usually more numerous than the preceding species.

This egret was curiously laggard in rebuilding its numbers from pre-Victorian fancy-hat days. Until 1962, we had only two records for the entire area: one bird seen by Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving on the Hackensack Creek in West Nyack in August 1947, and two seen at Iona Island by

John C. Orth on August 8, 1957. Three records came during the 1960s: August 30, 1962, Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed), August 21, 1963, Lake De Forest (Norton Isler), and May 26, 1967, Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy). Bull also cites a

maximum of seven birds at Cornwall on August 15, 1964.

In the 1970s so far, we have eight records, including a new early spring date of May 2,

1972, at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos), a new maximum of 24 on May 12, 1976 at the Pier (Amos), and a new late date of Oct. 2, 1975, at the Pier (Amos).



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

CATTLE EGERT

Bubulcus [Ardeola] ibis



Adult, breeding plumage.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Throughout the 1960s, this immigrant to the United States was uncommon but regular, though oddly enough only in spring. We have had four records so far in the 1970s, but still none in summer or fall. And as of 1976, its status has dwindled to that of a casual to very rare spring visitant.

The first local bird was discovered on Apr. 30, 1960 in Germonds, a rural area halfway between New City and West Nyack, by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Gamble. Other observers summoned to verify this bird soon found three other cattle egrets, in bright breeding plumage, on a livestock farm near Lake De Forest, two or three miles away. People at the farm said the birds had been there a day or two.

This farm evidently suited at least one of the birds, for it was found there again on May 27, 1961 (Robert F. Deed), May 14, 1964 (Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Deed), May 13, 1965 (same observers), Apr. 16, 1966 (Frank R.

Steffens, Gamble) to May 14, 1966 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed), May 13 and 14, 1967 (Mr. and Mrs. Steffens), May 13, 1968 (Brown, the Deeds), May 13, 1969 (Mrs. Steffens), and Apr. 26, 1970, two birds (Mr. and Mrs. Steffens).

We also have four records from elsewhere in the area: May 1 to at least May 4, 1962, near Suffern (John LeMaire); May 5, 1972, a bird sharing a jetty with gulls at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); May 11 to 16, 1973, Rockland Lake Nature Center (reported in July 1973 "Kingbird"), and May 21, 1976, Piermont Pier (Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Three new records, all in spring. Apr. 13, 1978, a new early date, at Piermont Pier (Dr. Victor Schwartz); May 5, 1977, a flock of 12 off Old Mill Road, Valley Cottage (Allan Heinsohn); May 13, 1981, two at Piermont Pier ballfield (Deed).



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

TRICOLORED HERON

Egretta [Hydranassa] tricolor



Adult, breeding plumage.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual spring and summer visitant only in recent years, with three of our four records coming from the Cornwall area on the northern edge of the Highlands. Three records are for spring: May 7, 1976, Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); May 19, 1969 (Paul Jeheber and Al and Barbara Merritt, as reported in the July 1969 "Kingbird"); May 25, 1975, also at Cornwall Bay

(reported in the July 1975 "Kingbird"). In July and August, 1972, two birds were at Moodna Creek in Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy).

1983 Addendum -- Our area's first September records: Sept. 12, 13 and 19, 1982 at Cornwall Bay (Lewis and Elizabeth Dumont).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

Nycticorax nycticorax



Adult.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Early April to late autumn, breeds.
1878-82	Mearns	Summer resident, a large heronry in the Highlands.
1898	Chapman	Common local summer resident, breeds May 1.
1898	Fisher	Common summer resident, Apr. 6 to Oct. 20.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Uncommon summer resident.
1927	Kuerzi	Common permanent resident.
1940	Carr	Regular transient, uncommon summer resident; breeds.
1942	Cruickshank	Common migrant and nonbreeding summer resident.
1960	Orth	Irregular and rare summer resident in Park.
1976	Current status	Uncommon to rare summer visitant, casual winter visitant.

In the 1940s and 1950s, this species was common every summer, especially in the Hackensack Creek swamps that have since been turned into reservoirs. In late summer, immatures predominated, but no nearby heronry was ever found. Bull's "Birds of New York State" mentions breeding at Piermont.

In late summer this species outnumbered the green heron by a wide margin until the 1960s, when its numbers crashed. Only since 1974 has the bird shown any signs of recovery, and more so at the Piermont marsh than in the Hackensack valley where it formerly abounded. On July 23, 1974, Anthony F. Amos found 12 birds at Piermont at dusk, the highest number reported in recent years.

Dates range from Apr. 9, 1962, Stony Point (John B. Belknap) to Nov. 15, 1951 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). The species has been recorded four times on 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: Dec. 29, 1956, Dec. 28, 1963; Dec. 28, 1974, and Dec. 27, 1975. It has never appeared on any of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts.



Juvenile.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

Nyctanassa violacea



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This has apparently always been a rare bird in the metropolitan area. In 1923 Griscom called it "a casual visitant from the South," mentioning four Long Island specimens cited in Eaton (1910-14) and some sight records for the springs of 1905 and 1912 and the fall of 1922. Cruickshank in 1942 called the bird an uncommon summer visitant in the New York City area. It is still a casual spring and summer visitant to Rockland County, with only six records, five of which range narrowly from July 21 to August 23. In chronological order, they

are: August 23, 1947, the Hackensack Creek at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving); July 21, 1956 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and July 22, 1956 (Robert F. Deed, Robert P. Deed) at Lake De Forest; August 17, 1957, an immature at Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); the last week of July and first week of August, 1962, in the Suffern area (John LeMaire); July 27, 1974, Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); May 8 and 15, 1976, at the Pier, our only spring record (Amos).

LEAST BITTERN
Ixobrychus exilis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Throughout state, breeds; arrives early May.
1878-82	Mearns	One record in the Highlands.
1898	Chapman	Common local summer resident, breeds May 31.
1898	Fisher	Fairly common summer resident, leaves Aug. 10.
1908	Brownell	Rare summer resident.
1923	Griscom	Rare summer resident.
1927	Kuerzi	Rare transient and summer visitant, May 20 to Sept. 26.
1940	Carr	Rare summer resident, breeds at Iona Island and Bockey Swamp.
1942	Cruickshank	Doubtful status; very local.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon summer resident, breeding at Iona Island.
1976	Current status	Uncommon and local summer resident, breeds in at least two localities accidental in winter.

The occurrence profile of this secretive species over the decades may have varied more according to the diligence of the search than to actual changes in numbers. Until 1947 all of the few known records came from the Iona Island marsh or Bockey Swamp, which is now the Park's Lake Menomini. Then on Aug. 23, 1947,

and again on Sept. 1, 1947, Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving found birds on the Hackensack Creek at West Nyack, and subsequent canoe trips of the Rockland Audubon Society in late July and early August annually turned up at least three pairs on the Hackensack north of West Nyack, the sector now covered by Lake De

Forest. On May 10, 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens found a bird at the north end of Congers Lake, and this bird was also seen several times later. On June 14, 1952, the writer found a bird at the Tallman Mountain edge of the Piermont marsh, where birds were also recorded later that year and increasingly in subsequent years.

Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber, and Mr. and Mrs. John Dye found three least bitterns in the marsh at Cornwall Bay on July 29-30, 1962, and breeding there was confirmed in 1971 (reported in the January 1972 "Kingbird.")

At the Piermont marsh, least bitterns began turning up regularly in 1971. On Aug. 28 of that year, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed and Donald

S. Deed found a bird on the Pier, on May 14, 1972, Anthony F. Amos observed one at the same spot. In 1973, Amos made a special study of the birds at the Pier and the nearby marsh, with the following results: May 24, one bird on the Pier; May 27, one in the marsh; June 2, one bird; June 15, one adult and one young; June 16, three adults and five young. In 1974, Amos observed least bitterns all summer, and he also saw two birds in the marsh on Aug. 13, 1975. In May, 1976, Amos observed birds ten times in 29 days of observation.

An aberrant record is Feb. 3, 1952 (John C. Orth) to Mar. 3, 1952 (Joseph Ossman) at the Iona Island marsh--the region's only winter dates.



Juvenile.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

AMERICAN BITTERN
Botaurus lentiginosus



Adult.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to October; breeds.
1878-82	Mearns	Transient visitant, may breed.
1898	Chapman	Uncommon summer resident, breeds May 10.
1898	Fisher	Rare summer resident, Apr. 11 to Oct. 5.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon summer resident.
1923	Griscom	Rare transient visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Fairly common transient, Apr. 5 to May 19 and July 27 to Dec. 26.
1940	Carr	Regular summer resident, breeds.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common transient visitant, uncommon local breeder, very rare in winter.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon summer resident, breeds.
1976	Current status	Rare summer visitant, very rare in winter.

In 1935 and 1936 this species was approximately as numerous as the black-crowned night heron and less than half as common as the great blue or green heron. It remained regular and fairly common in most of our area until about 1958, when repeated aerial sprayings of insecticides took their toll. The species has made an encouraging comeback

since about 1970, though it still cannot be counted upon on a given day in any locality.

Extreme dates: Apr. 1, 1976, at the Lamont Observatory pond (Anthony F. Amos) to Nov. 10, 1975, Piermont marsh (Amos).

Winter records: Twice on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (Dec. 26,

1955, at West Nyack and Dec. 27, 1975, separate birds at Piermont marsh and Rockland Lake); once on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (Dec. 22, 1968, near Iona Island); Dec. 2, 1954, a bird beside busy Route 59 at Monsey (Frank R. Steffen); Jan. 22, 1950, Stony Point (RAS field trip); Mar. 18, 1956 at New City (Steffens); Jan. 3, 1972, at Piermont (Amos); Feb. 22, 1975, Iona Island (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus).

[1983 Addendum](#) -- Half a dozen May records for the Hackensack Creek at Blauvelt and for the West Haverstraw clay pits; a midsummer record at Piermont Pier on July 30, 1982 (Peter Derven), and a mid- winter record at the Pier on Dec. 29, 1979 (Malcolm Gardner, Rolf Carstens). A good recovery for this interesting bird.



Adult.

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GLOSSY IBIS

Plegadis falcinellus



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

In the past 25 years or so, this species has made one of the more dramatic entrances into the New York metropolitan area from the South. It was virtually unknown to earlier generations of birders in the region, even on Long Island where it ultimately established itself in our era. Ludlow Griscom in 1923 wrote of it only: "Accidental visitant from the South. Two old records for Long Island, September 12, 1847 and October 10, 1848. Cruickshank in 1942 used virtually the same words, adding three newer records. But the bird's increasing abundance on Long Island, especially portions of the South Shore nearest the city, made it almost inevitable that it would appear in Rockland County. On May 19, 1968, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed and Donald S. Deed saw four of this species flying low over Piermont Pier.

Since then we have had three records: Apr. 12, 1971, a dozen birds in a small bog adjoining a housing development near Suffern (Mr. and Mrs. John LeMaire), dwindling to five birds on Apr. 13-14 and last seen on Apr. 26; Aug. 2, 1973, an ibis landing on the lawn at Rockland Lake North Park (Donald S. Deed); Aug. 9 through Aug. 13, 1975, one bird at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Status: casual spring and summer visitant.

1983 Addendum -- Our four records have grown to seven: Aug. 1, 1978 at Piermont Pier (the Deeds); Apr. 20, 1980, at the Pier (Derven); Apr. 25, 1982, one flying over the Hudson at Upper Nyack (Eugene R. Brown).

SWANS, GEESE AND DUCKS

MUTE SWAN
Cygnus olor



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This introduced species has enjoyed a population explosion in Rockland County since 1960. In his Bear Mountain-Harriman Park checklist in 1940, William H. Carr did not even mention this species, and John C. Orth 20 years later noted it only as "occasional rare visitant on the Hudson River," with one summer record for Iona Island on July 27, 1958 (Mr. and Mrs. Orth) and a few fall and winter records ranging from Nov. 9, 1952 to Jan. 21, 1954, all at Iona Island.

I will never forget my own first mute swan in the wild. It was on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of 1934, when the count area included a strip of the Hudson's west bank from Piermont Pier to Alpine, NJ. (a contrivance to add at least the tufted titmouse, and perhaps the Carolina Wren to the list). As darkness fell, we were far out in the Piermont marsh, which was frozen firmly enough for walking, when the swan, with its impressive wingspread, flew ghostlike past us a couple of hundred feet away. Characteristically, of all our party it was Roger

Peterson who first called its name, almost before any of the rest of us had fully grasped the fact that the bird was there.

At that time, and for another 25 years, the mute swan in the feral state was confined to Long Island and, in the Hudson Valley, to the Rhinebeck area and a couple of other places where estate-raised birds had escaped to the wild. One such place was Lake Lucille, on South Mountain Road, New City, where from 1947 to 1959 the one to three birds living wild graced the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count except in three years. Since 1961, the species has not been missed on this Count.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1956 a pair appeared on Congers Lake, where their number rose to five birds in early April, 1958. On Mar. 17, 1959, a pair built a nest only 75 feet from a main highway; they incubated eggs through April and produced seven young by May 19 (Ruth Steffens). In 1960 the Congers Lake pair had six

young, and a pair also nested on nearby Swartwout Lake. Rockland Lake thereafter became the favored one of the group of lakes near Congers, and a Rockland Audubon Society field trip counted 21 birds there on Dec. 11, 1960. On Christmas Counts, an early peak was 39 birds in 1961; the all-time high on the society's 29 Counts was 69 swans in 1964.

The species has been recorded only three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: Jan. 2, 1972, seven; Dec. 30, 1972, one; Dec. 30, 1973, nine.

The highest counts are generally in early December, before the lakes freeze. Examples: 68 swans on the three lakes near Congers on Dec. 1, 1963 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and more than 110 on Rockland Lake alone on Dec. 12, 1964 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). In spring, a typical high count is 71 on May 13, 1965 (Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

Status, 1976: very common resident.



Adult female with cygnets

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

TUNDRA SWAN [WHISTLING SWAN]
Olor columbianus



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall and winter visitant, apparently increasing in the past 15 or 20 years as more southbound migrants veer toward the coast from their inland routes. Mearns noted only one date for the Hudson Highlands, on Oct. 21, 1880; Chapman in 1898 called this swan a rare transient visitant; Griscom in 1923 called it casual, Nov. 5 to Jan. 1. "Bird.-Lore" for May-June, 1932, Vol. 34, No. 3 (page 206) cited three birds on the Hudson at Croton Point, across from Haverstraw, from Mar. 11, 1932 (P. Kessler, John and Richard Kuerzi) to Mar. 29, 1932 (Gillespie). And Cruickshank's 1942 book lists a record off Nyack in the winter of 1939-40 (Lester Walsh).

The Rockland Audubon Society's five records all date from 1958 or later, and three of them are in the Nyack area: Sept. 6, 1958, one swimming close to shore at Hook Mountain but acting wary, perhaps an injured bird (Eugene R. Brown, Joseph Rotoli). Seen again at dusk on Sept. 18, (Katherine Dienemann). Nov. 2 to Nov. 9, 1959, five adults and two immatures at the Hook (Dienemann, Brow, and others). Nov. 14, 1969: eleven birds on Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth). Dec. 10, 1970: one on the Hudson off Nyack (Alma Polhemus). Nov. 2, 1971: a flock of 64 on the Hudson at Cornwall (Al and Barbara Merritt).

CANADA GOOSE

Branta canadensis



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"large flocks in autumn until bays are frozen"
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant
1940	Carr	regular transient, rarely alighting
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient inland
1960	Orth	regular common transient, occasional uncommon winter visitant; mostly observed flying overhead
1976	Current status	very common to very abundant migrant and winter visitant, fairly common breeder

Until 20 years ago, sightings of this bird were noteworthy enough to be reported. In my own 172 field trips within the area in 1935, for example, I saw none; my first Canada goose in Rockland County was on Sept. 20, 1936, and in that year I totaled 88 birds. Prior to 1956, our spring dates ranged from Apr. 4, 1939 (John

Kenney) to May 20, 1950 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed), and we had only three winter dates: Dec. 12, 1948 (Deed), Jan. 27, 1950 (John C. Orth), and Feb. 8, 1950 (Brown). In 1956 we had more reports than in all previous years combined, culminating on Nov. 26 with a flock estimated well up in the thousands, flying

south over the Tappan Zee that it had to rise to clear the causeway of the then-new Tappan Zee Bridge (Maude McC. Brown, Mrs. Jack Anderson). All or part of the same flock had been observed earlier in the day by the Trailside Museum staff at Bear Mountain, with an estimate of “more than 1,000 birds.”

Besides the recently increased numbers of migrants, we have a growing resident—and breeding—population at all the Rockland County lakes (though not the Park lakes in the Highlands) and along the Hudson River. A typical spring count was an exact 425 on Rockland Lake on Mar. 30, 1975 (Eugene R. Brown).

This goose has been recorded on 12 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts and five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. It first appeared on the RAS count in 1964, with 62 birds, and continued with 173 birds in 1965, 81 in 1966, 154 in 1967, 101 in 1968, 122 in 1969, 128 in 1970, 339 in 1971, 359 in 1972, 400 in 1973, 552 in 1974, and 564 in 1975. The Bear Mountain count had one isolated record of 12 birds in 1950, followed by 23 birds in 1965, 71 in 1971, 33 in 1972, and 80 in 1973.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BRANT

Branta bernicla



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"in great numbers on coast," October to December and April-May
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant in April, May, October
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	one shot at Ossining in November, 1920
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient
1940	Carr	no modern records
1942	Cruickshank	practically unknown away from ocean
1960	Orth	a recent regular abundant spring transient and irregular common fall transient
1976	Current status	very abundant spring transient and casual fall transient

Few species have had a more checkered career than this one. Around 1930, the Atlantic flyway population was in dire peril because of the eel grass blight. Although the numbers of brant slowly rebuilt along the coast, no bird of this species is known to have occurred in our area during this century until May 24, 1950, when John C. Orth saw a flock of more than 200 over

Bear Mountain, with one double-crested cormorant among them. Numbers on the Hudson Valley spring migration route quickly soared into the thousands of birds. Some of the high counts: May 20-21, 1955, several thousand each day at Bear Mountain (Orth); May 17, 1958, between 3,000 and 4,000 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy, A.

Deignan); May 17, 1960, more than 5,000 in 15 flocks in the evening at Fort Montgomery (Mr. and Mrs. Orth); May 25, 1960, more than 2,900 in eight flocks in the evening at Fort Montgomery (the Orths) and more than 3,400 in 13 flocks the same evening at Haverstraw (the Steffenses); May 18, 1961, flocks of 500 and 2,000 at evening in the Congers area (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed); May 15, 1966, several thousand over Nyack at 6 p.m. (Deed); May 22, 1967, about 4,500 at Highland Falls (Treacy); May 19, 1968, about 6,100 at Cornwall from 7:15 p.m. to dark (Treacy). Spring dates range from May 11, 1955, a flock of 75 over Nyack (Deed) to May 26, 1973, more than 500 over Nyack in evening (the Deeds).

Obviously the time to see the great migrant flocks is around sunset on a date after mid-May.

In strange contrast, we have only five fall records ranging from Oct. 10 to Oct. 31: Oct. 10, 1960 (Edwin Gamble); Oct. 16, 1959, one brant with a flock of coots on Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens); Oct. 24, 1952 (Orth); Oct. 25, 1969, one with Canada geese at Rockland Lake (RAS field trip); Oct. 31, 1954, flocks of 50 and 150 (Orth).

1983 Addendum -- Our first summer record, an immature at Piermont Pier on Aug. 17, 1980 (Dr. Victor Schwartz); also another but later August record, Aug. 29, 1981 at Iona Island. Our first November records: Nov. 4, 1978, a flock of 40 at Cornwall Bay, and Nov. 25, 1981, one at Piermont Pier (Deed).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Anser albifrons



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental, with a record of four birds, including an adult male, on Hudson River ice

floes at Piermont Pier in February, 1970, carefully studied by Anthony F. Amos.

SNOW GOOSE

Chen caerulescens [hyperborean]



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not very abundant on the coast of this state
1878-82	Mearns	once
1898	Chapman	transient visitant, irregular
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant in April
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	casual; several hundred at Ossining on Apr. 8, 1882
1927	Kuerzi	two specimens, plus one sight record in 1926
1940	Carr	no current records
1942	Cruickshank	few records away from the coast; the blue goose "an extremely rare visitant"
1960	Orth	very rare transient; two recent records
1976	Current status	very common migrant, spring and fall, casual in winter; blue goose a casual migrant

Like the Canada goose and the brant, this species (but not the blue goose, which the A.C.U. in 1973 reduced to the status of a morph of the snow goose) has flourished in our region since the mid-1950s. Our first modern record was on Apr 18, 1954, when Mrs. John M. Price saw a flock of eight flying low over the New City area. Since then the species has been recorded

virtually every year. Flocks tend to be much smaller than those of Canada geese or brant, but one exceptional record was made by the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch on Apr. 7, 1973: between 2,600 and 3,000 birds in 13 flocks. Most flocks, either spring or fall, range between 75 and 250 birds.

Spring: Apr. 5, 1959, about 125 birds, with one blue goose, over Suffern (John LeMaire) to May 27, 1967, a flock of 125 over Nyack in the evening (Robert F. Deed).

Fall: Oct. 4, 1963, about 130 birds high over the Blauvelt area (Mr. and Mrs. Deed) to Dec. 1, 1964, one at Rockland Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) that remained to at least Feb. 6, 1965 (Eugene R. Brown).

Winter: Single birds on three Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts--1957, 1964 (the Rockland Lake bird), and 1965. Also Dec. 5, 1956 at Cornwall (Paul Jeheber); Dec. 28, 1957, an immature going into adult plumage, at the Haverstraw boat basin (Edward D. Treacy, John

C. Orth, John Kenney) and remaining to at least Jan. 12, 1958 (Steffens); Jan. 16, 1966 at Rockland Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus).

Blue Goose: Apr. 5 1959 (LeMaire); Feb. 25, 192 at Jones Point (the Deeds); Apr. 7, 1973 (Hook Mountain Hawk Watch).

1983 Addendum -- Our seventh winter date: Jan. 14, 1979, at Rockland Lake (Edward D. Treacy, Lawrence Holland, Robert F. Deed), and two dates for summer stragglers: June 9, 1980, one with Canada Geese at Vic Schwartz's near Congers and June 14, 1981, one under the Tappan Zee Bridge, Grand View (Peter Derven).



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

MALLARD

Anas platyrhynchos



Adult male, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common on lakes and seacoast
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	irregular transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, October to March
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant
1940	Carr	regular transient, August-May; more numerous in fall; a few winter in the Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common-non transient, uncommon in winter
1960	Orth	common spring and fall transient, uncommon winter visitant, rare permanent resident; may nest at Iona Island
1976	Current status	very common resident

Like the Canada goose, this species has a booming population of resident birds that nest in the wild but are semi-tame. At the Rockland Lake fishing station, for example, both species wander fearlessly among human visitors on the lawn. But the rise in abundance during the past 40 years is real enough. In 1935, I had a total of 12 mallards; in 1936, a total of 14. Nowadays,

except in summer when the birds retire to nest, it is not difficult to count 100 or more in a day at a single point such as Rockland Lake, Piermont Pier, Sparkill Creek, or the reservoirs.

In the course of 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, numbers ranged from 3 to 43 on the first ten counts, hit 100 on the 11th count

(1957), jumped to 322 in 1962 and 552 in 1965, leaped again to 733 in 1971 and set the all-time high of 860 in 1974.

On 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, the mallard has been recorded 21 times, usually from 3 to 25 birds. A count of 61 in 1963 was exceptional until the 1964 count when 64 were recorded.



Adult female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK

Anas rubripes



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very abundant; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, fairly common, resident
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant, fairly common winter visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Mar. 6 to Nov. 13
1908	Brownell	common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	abundant transient, fairly common on Hudson in winter, common summer resident near Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	common transient visitant, Aug 16 to May 15, a few later
1940	Carr	abundant, breeds, observed during every month
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant in winter, common in summer
1960	Orth	fairly common permanent resident, very common transient
1976	Current status	common transient and winter visitant, uncommon breeder

This species, under no suspicion as to its wildness, has been on a course opposite from that of the mallard during the past 40 years. In 1935, I recorded 2,352; in 1936 1,307. Christmas Counts best tell the story of wintering populations:

In the Piermont-Alpine area of the Bronx County Bird Club count, 1934 through 1941, the

numbers for black duck were 100-50-30-55-5-5, and there were no mallards. Very much the same territory on the 1975 Rockland Audubon Society count yielded 11 black ducks, compared with 213 mallards. In the first ten years of the RAS count, black ducks ranged from 41 to 258 while the high for mallards was 43. In the next decade, the black duck had peaks of 353 in 1958, 370 in 1961, and the all-time high of 493

in 1962. The five most recent counts (1971-75) were 107-90-158-53-55.

However, Bear Mountain Christmas Counts show the black duck still generally dominant over the mallard in the Highlands. The black duck has been recorded on all 28 counts from 1946 to 1973, and its numbers have been

exceeded by those of the mallard only twice: in 1971 by 64 to 11 and in 1972 by 25 to 24. Still, the black duck in that area is by no means as abundant in winter as the earliest Bear Mountain counts indicate: 400-plus in 1946, 153 in 1948, and 174 in 1949. On the most recent Bear Mountain count, in 1973, the number was 23.



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GADWALL
Anas strepera



Adult male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rather rare; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	spring and fall transient
1898	Chapman	very rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	casual visitant
1927	Kuerzi	no mention
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to rare transient, purely casual in winter
1960	Orth	sporadic very rare fall transient; no spring records
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, very rare winter visitant

In keeping with its general increase along the Atlantic coast, this duck has increased considerably in numbers during the past 30 years. Our first record for the area in modern times was John C. Orth's observation of a bird at Queensboro Lake, near Bear Mountain, on Oct. 24, 1948. A bird was seen at Piermont on Oct. 9, 1949 (Stephen J. Collins) and two on the Hudson near Haverstraw on Mar. 30, 1952 (Eugene Eisenmann, Mrs. Kathleen Skelton).

Jack Orth also saw two at Iona Island on Oct. 27, 1957.

Spring: Mar. 5, 1975, ten on Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown) to Mar. 30, 1952 (Eisenmann, Skelton).

Fall: Oct. 2, 1975, four at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos) to Nov. 30, 1974, two at

Rockland Lake (Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

Winter: Three times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts and twice on the 28 Bear Mountain counts. Also Dec. 5 to Dec. 19, 1965, three at Iona island (Orth); Dec. 14, 1963, at Rockland Lake (Morton Isler); Dec. 20, 1970, six on Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens); Jan. 1, 1973, four on Rockland Lake (Brown).

We have one summer record: two birds on the Hudson River at South Nyack on July 19, 1971 (Donald S. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Add this once-rare duck to the local breeding birds: a pair with three grown young at Piermont Pier on July 29-30, 1981 (Deed). Also several winter records from Rockland Lake and Stony Pt.



Female, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

NORTHERN PINTAIL

Anas acuta



Adult, male (L) and female (R), breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	abundant on Lake Ontario, less common on coast
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Mar. 15 to Apr. 10 and Sept. 26 to Dec. 4
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	very rare
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Feb. 22 to Apr. 25 and Oct. 24 to Dec. 30
1940	Carr	regular migrant, March-May and September-January
1942	Cruickshank	common transient, especially in spring; uncommon to rare in winter
1960	Orth	irregular rare fall transient, no spring records
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, spring and fall; very rare winter visitant

For some reason, in our region this species has not shared in the growth in abundance of other dabbling ducks, even though it has become very common in nearby areas of Westchester County and northern New Jersey. We have no 20th Century records at all prior to Feb. 24, 1931 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman); my own first local record was on Mar. 4, 1936. The maximum number to date is six at the north end of Lake

De Forest on Apr. 4, 1964, (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

Spring: Mar. 18, 1935 in Bear Mountain Park (H. A. Hochbaum) to May 31, 1958, a pair seen during a canoe trip on the Hackensack on the present site of Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble).

Fall: Oct. 2, 1960, two at Iona Island (John C. Orth) to Nov. 18, 1971, two on Rockland Lake (the Deeds).

Winter: Feb. 24, 1931 (Gilman); Dec. 29, 1939, near Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth Lewis); Jan. 2, 1950 at Grassy Point on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (Orth party); Dec. 26, 1954, two on Congers Lake for the only other time on the RAS Christmas Count (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); Feb. 22, 1960, at north end of Lake De Forest (Gamble); Jan. 3 to at least Jan. 7, 1961, one with tame mallards at Lederle Laboratories, Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens); Jan. 14, 1972, male

and two females at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Jan. 13, 1974, male at Rockland Lake (the Deeds), Dec. 4, 1975 and three more dates in December, at Piermont Pier (Amos), building to a maximum of five birds on Feb. 15, 1976 (Amos).

1983 Addendum -- A new maximum number of 26 at Cornwall Bay on Sept. 28, 1980, and a new early fall date of Sept. 27, 1981 at the Sparkill Creek (the Deeds). In 1981, third time on RAS Christmas Count, seen at Stony Point.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL

Anas crecca



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, breeds on Great Lakes
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	rather uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, April and Sept. 11 to Oct. 28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	no recent records in Hudson Valley
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Mar. 20 to Apr. 21 and Oct. 4 to Nov. 30
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall, on the Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, both spring and fall; very rare winter visitant; casual summer visitant

The occurrence profile for this species in the metropolitan area shows a deep dip around 1920, followed by something of a comeback. Yet the bird is neither regular nor common in our area today. It is generally seen in numbers of two to four; we have two winter records of nine each and one record of 40 birds on Sept. 9, 1967 (Bernd Gravenstein) under the special

circumstance of the fresh draining of the Lake Tappan reservoir site.

Spring: Mar. 11, 1950 at Grassy Point (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) to May 14, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Summer: Aug. 15, 1968, a pair at the new Lake Tappan (James Demes); July 23, 1974, a pair at

Piermont Pier (Amos). These two records—together with that of a pair seen on Aug. 5, 1961, at Warwick, Orange County, outside our territory, by Mr. and Mrs. John Dye—suggest breeding locally or nearby.

Fall: Sept. 7, 1963, five at Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Nov. 30, 1947, near Bear Mountain (John C. Orth, Stanley O. Grierson).

Winter: Dec. 23, 1964 at Lederle Laboratories, Nanuet (Steffens); Jan. 1, 1965, nine at Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown); Jan. 2,

1971, nine at Congers Lake (Gravenstein); Dec. 17, 1972 at Piermont on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (Amos, David O. Hill); Dec. 17, 1975, one at Piermont (Amos). The single 1972 bird is the only record for either the RAS or the Bear Mountain Christmas Count.

1983 Addendum -- Two new winter records: Dec. 18, 1977, five flying over the Hackensack at Blauvelt (Louise, Donald & Bob Deed), and Jan. 14, 1979 at Rockland Lake (Edward Treacy, Lawrence Holland).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLUE-WINGED TEAL

Anas discors



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	abundant on the Hudson in September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common fall transient, Sept. 24 - Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	no recent records in Hudson Valley
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient. Mar. 18 to Apr. 26 and Aug. 29 to Nov. 14
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall, on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	common transient, very rare local summer resident, accidental in winter
1960	Orth	occasional rare fall transient, no spring records
1976	Current status	a rare migrant and breeder after being fairly common 10 and 20 years ago; accidental winter visitant

In the late 1950s and through the 1960s, this species was slightly commoner than the green-winged teal, but we now have no record of it since the spring of 1971. It formerly nested in the portions of the Hackensack Creek that have been flooded by Lakes De Forest and Tappan, and for a few years continued to breed at those lakes and at a nearby pond or two. It may also breed in the Piermont marsh, where an apparent

family group of six was noted on Sept. 2, 1963 by Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed.

This species generally leaves earlier in the fall than the green-winged teal does. Dates range from Mar. 15, 1963 at Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus) to Oct. 19, 1965 at Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble). Our

single winter date is Dec. 29, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis). Breeding records in the past 20 years include: Apr. 13, 1957, a pair with four downy young at Lake De Forest (Dr. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); May 13, 1968, a female with 13 downy young on a small pond near the present Lake Tappan (Eugene R. Brown, the Deeds), plus five other adult birds.

The maximum local count was on Sept. 9, 1967, when Bernd Gravenstein estimated 25 of this species along with 40 green-winged teal at the drained site of Lake Tappan. Both teal were feeding on the freshly exposed vegetation that had been part of a swamp.

1983 Addendum -- Our one winter record grows to three: Dec. 18, 1977, one at Rockland Lake on RAS Christmas Count, and Dec. 19, 1980 one at Piermont Pier (Peter Derven).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

EURASIAN [EUROPEAN] WIGEON
Anas penelope



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant, with a single record on Mar. 11, 1938, on the Hudson River off Dunderberg (William H. Carr).

1983 Addendum -- A second record: Mar. 21, 1982 at Cornwall Bay (Kenneth and Joan McDermott).

AMERICAN WIGEON
Anas americana



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	spring and fall transient, not common; breeds in the state
1878-82	Mearns	common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	irregular transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Mar. 11 to Apr. 12 and Oct. 4 to 28
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare; recent records in spring only
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Feb. 28 to Apr. 21 and Oct. 4 to Nov. 30
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall, on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, occasionally in winter
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common spring and fall transient, rare in winter
1976	Current status	common migrant, irregularly common winter visitant, one breeding record

The baldpate has increased in recent years, and flocks of up to 50 may be seen on appropriate lakes, such as Rockland, during migration. It was a rare bird indeed 40 years ago; in 172 field trips in 1935, I saw a total of five, and in 139 trips in 1936, only one. Contrary to earlier reports, this duck is less often found on the Hudson River than on the lakes, though Piermont Pier is the site of our one positive

breeding record.

Spring: Mar. 4, 1955 at Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 19, 1957 (Dr. Hopper, Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

Summer: July 4, 1974, a male at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); July 21, 1974, a female with

four or five half-grown young swimming in a lagoon at the same place (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

Fall: Aug. 29, 1963, three on Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Oct. 18, 1959 at Congers Lake (Dr. Hopper).

Winter: Seven times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (one bird in 1958, 28 in 1964, 116 in 1965, ten in 1970, four

in 1971, 42 in 1972, 77 in 1973). Four times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (eight in 1948, one in 1949, two in 1956, one in 1967). Also one on Dec. 26, 1964 near West Point on the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Christmas Count (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber).

1983 Addendum -- Three additional winter records at Rockland Lake and Stony Point, topped by a count of 40 at Rockland Lake on Jan. 6, 1980 (Eugene R. Brown).



Adult, female, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

NORTHERN SHOVELER

Anas clypeata



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Until late 1961 the only local record was Nov. 6, 1934, one bird on the Hudson River at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth H. Lewis). Since then we have accumulated 14 records, and this duck now ranks as a rare to uncommon migrant and winter visitant.

Spring: Mar. 9, 1969 at Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown) to Mar. 30, 1968 near Lake Tappan (James Demes).

Fall: Sept. 15, 1968 at Lake Tappan (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to Nov. 28, 1974, ten (the all-time local high) on Rockland Lake (Brown).

Winter: Recorded on four of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (two birds in 1965, one each in 1969 and 1970, four in 1974). Also Dec. 19, 1961 to Feb. 2, 1963 at the Lederle Laboratories power house pond, Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens); Dec. 14, 1963 two on Rockland Lake (Morton Isler); Dec. 16, 1965, two on Rockland Lake (Brown); Jan. 1, 1965, three on Rockland Lake (Wesley Hennessy); Feb. 1, 1967 and several days thereafter, one on the Lederle pond (Steffens).

1983 Addendum -- A new high count of 54 at Rockland Lake on Nov. 27, 1981.



Adult, female, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

WOOD DUCK

Aix sponsa



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer only
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident
1898	Chapman	rare local summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident
1923	Griscom	very rare and local
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient; decreasing as a summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, most common as a breeder in northern New Jersey and northern Rockland County
1960	Orth	fairly common summer resident, nests; occasional in winter
1976	Current status	fairly common to common breeder, abundant in fall, rare in winter

The improving status of this beautiful duck is one of the most satisfying success stories of the past 50 years. Despite the encroachment of suburban development and the destruction of swamps, this bird has adapted well to nesting on small ponds, the shores of recreational lakes, and even the sterile edges of the reservoirs. Throughout 1935, with 172 trips afield, I saw

only one wood duck in the Rockland County area; in 1936, on 139 trips, I saw only 17. During the 1950s and 1960s, it was possible to see twice that number on a half-day canoe trip on the Hackensack in late summer. Today it is probable that an observer can find a pair on any given day, except in winter, and it is possible at certain points in autumn to see a large flock.

Some of the larger counts: July 20, 1956, a female with 20 young, in two sizes from two broods at Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Oct. 23, 1960, a count of 57 at Iona Island (John C. Orth); Oct. 5, 1964, at least 25 at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Nov. 3, 1961, between 50 and 60 at Iona Island (the Steffenses); Oct. 16, 1973, an accurate count of 314 at dusk on a small pond beside the machine shop of the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory at Palisades (Anthony F. Amos); Oct. 1, 1975, the fall maximum of 266 at the same pond (Amos); Nov. 6, 1975, 122 birds, same site and same observer; Feb. 29, 1976, 27

birds, same site and same observer; May 18, 1976, 71 birds, same site and same observer. It would be difficult if not impossible to compartment occurrence by season, but it may be said that this species is marked by an influx about Mar. 10 and is sharply rarer after about Nov. 23. It has been recorded five times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (seven birds in 1947, one each in 1964, 1966, and 1969, and two in 1975) and twice on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (one each in 1948 and 1955).

1983 Addendum -- Five additional winter records in 1978, 1979, and 1980.



Adult, female, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

REDHEAD

Aythya americana



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant, less common than canvasback
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant, common at times
1898	Chapman	regular transient visitant, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Apr. 1 to 14 and Oct. 12 to 28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient on the Hudson
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and winter visitant, Feb. 2 to Apr. 4 and Nov. 1 to Jan. 18
1940	Carr	rare migrant; one record for Lake Tiorati, Apr. 3 and 4, 1939
1942	Cruickshank	rather rarer than in Griscom's time
1960	Orth	casual rare transient, still only one record
1976	Current status	an uncommon migrant and winter visitant 20 years ago but no reliable record at all since 1964

Except for the decade of the 1950s, this duck seems always to have been very rare in our region in modern times, even when the closely related canvasback, ring-necked duck, and scaup were thriving. About half of our 18 records have been in winter, including six appearances on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (ten in 1948, two each in 1949 and 1952,

one in 1954, four in 1955, four in 1956) and one on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (a single bird in 1963). The rest of the records are evenly divided between spring and fall. The earliest fall date is Oct. 26, 1952, four birds at Stony Point (John C. Orth); the latest spring date is Apr. 4, 1939 at Lake Tiorati (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis). Maximum number is ten, on the 1948

RAS Christmas Count.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RING-NECKED DUCK

Aythya collaris



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	transient on coast, winter visitant in the interior
1878-82	Mearns	occasional transient visitant
1898	Chapman	very rare transient
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant, in April
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	very rare everywhere in the area
1927	Kuerzi	very rare transient, Jan. 11 to Apr. 6
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, more numerous in spring
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, very uncommon in winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common transient, occasional in winter
1976	Current status	very common migrant, fairly common winter visitant

Like the redhead but unlike the canvasback and, to a lesser extent, the scaup, this species is found primarily on the lakes, both in Rockland County and in the Park portion of the Highlands. It may have reached a peak of abundance in the mid-1950s, when daily counts were highest, but it remains regular in both spring and fall.

Spring: Mar. 14, 1957, a flock of 95 on Congers

Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 7, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Fall: Oct. 5, 1963 at Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Nov. 25, 1954 at Piermont (Thomas Dow). High counts of 100-plus on Nov. 1, 1957 and 200-plus on Nov. 18, 1956 at Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth).

Winter: On 14 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, including highs of 25 birds in 1953, 26 in 1956, 24 in 1964, 60 in 1965, and 30 in 1975. On the 28 Bear Mountain

Christmas Counts, only a single bird in 1954. A high late-winter count of 125-plus on Congers Lake on Mar. 4, 1955 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

CANVASBACK

Aythya valisineria



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	sparingly on Hudson and coast
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, but increasing
1927	Kuerzi	regular transient visitant, Oct. 23 to Apr. 11; most in February
1940	Carr	regular transient fall and spring; winters
1942	Cruickshank	usually rare, but the Hudson off Croton is a favored spot
1960	Orth	regular common, winter visitant in recent years
1976	Current status	common to very common winter visitant; very abundant in the 1950s

Numbers of this duck have been rising in the past 40 years, though there may have been a dip since 1960. In the course of 139 field trips in 1936, I saw only six birds, but I had seen none in 172 trips afield in the previous year. Since 1960, we have had Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count highs of 115 in 1966, 240 in 1970, 71 in 1971, and 108 in 1974. Other high winter counts include 170 birds off Piermont and Grand View on Jan. 9. 1965 (Mr. and Mrs.

Robert F. Deed), 30 in the same area of the Tappan Zee on Nov. 24, 1966 (the Deeds), and 51 at Piermont Pier on Feb. 9, 1976 (Anthony F. Amos).

These counts are not in the same order of magnitude as those of the 1950s, chiefly in the cove on the south side of Stony Point. High numbers then included 100 at Stony Point on Nov. 17, 1951 (RAS field trip); 500 at the same

place on the Dec. 26, 1953 RAS Christmas Count (John C. Orth party); 250-plus at the same place on the Dec. 26, 1954 Count (Orth party); 400-plus on the Hudson at Palisades on Feb. 10, 1957 (David O. Hill), 1,400 at Stony Point on Dec. 3, 1958 (the Deeds); 1,096, same place, on Dec. 14, 1959 (Eugene R. Brown), 572 in same place on the Dec. 26, 1959 RAS Christmas Count.

This species has been recorded on 23 of the 29 RAS Christmas Counts and on 12 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, including 147 birds in 1954, 176 in 1958, and 610 in 1959.

Canvasbacks are rare before Nov. 1 and after Mar. 25. Extreme dates are Oct. 25, 1969, one bird on Rockland Lake (RAS field trip) and May 2, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Some amazingly high counts: 4,000+ at Cornwall Bay and 2,000 at Iona Island on Nov. 12, 1979; 7,500 at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 20, 1980; 550 at Piermont Pier and 650 at Stony Point on Dec. 10, 1981; 1,200 at Stony Point on Dec. 18, 1981; 4,000 at Piermont Pier on Dec. 31, 1981 (Peter Derven); 5,000+ at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 21, 1982.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GREATER SCAUP

Aythya marila



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	spring and fall visitant
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 22 to Apr. 13 and Oct. 4 to Dec. 3
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	both scaup collectively, common in late March and early November
1927	Kuerzi	common transient and winter visitant, Oct. 17 to Apr. 24; one May 23 record
1940	Carr	regular transient, March-May and October-January
1942	Cruickshank	"one of our most abundant and best known ducks"
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very common to abundant migrant and winter visitant, casual summer visitant

It is ironic that the American Ornithologists' Union, in its 1973 Checklist, retained the separate species status of the two scaup, which are virtually indistinguishable in the field except under extraordinary circumstances, while it combined the very different European and green-winged teal and continued to lump the

quite distinctive grackles into one species. On the theory, unproven but widely held, that the greater scaup is the commoner of the two scaup, we tend to throw all records not otherwise identified into this species. But the matter of positive, no putative, identification needs both more study and more luck in (a)

having sunlight strike the male bird's head just right or (b) having the bird fly and thus display its wing stripe. Even then, mistakes can be made; I have seen a mallard drake in brilliant sunlight swim in one direction showing an iridescent green head, then turn around and swim back showing a deep purple head.

Whichever the species, scaup have been recorded 20 times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, often with only two to six birds but also with some high numbers: 61 in 1954, 99 in 1959, 174 in 1965, 68 in 1966, and 218 in 1975. It has been recorded three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with a high of six in 1957. The maximum one-day count at a single point is 400 at Rockland Lake on Nov. 5, 1966 (RAS field trip). Scaup appear both on the Hudson River and on the lakes,

depending in winter more on ice conditions than any other obvious factor.

The earliest fall date is Sept. 15, 1968, a female at Piermont Pier (RAS field trip), but this may have been a summering vagrant--a female scaup was at the Pier in early summer of 1970 and 1972 and throughout the summer of 1973. The next earliest fall date, perhaps more representative, is Oct. 14, 1956 on the Hudson off Grand View (David O. Hill). The latest spring date is May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). In summer, a possibly injured bird was at Grassy Point on July 22, 1951 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed), and Anthony F. Amos observed a female again at Piermont Pier from June 26, 1973 through the rest of the summer.



Adult, female, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

LESSER SCAUP

Aythya affinis



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common on coast, prefers lesser streams
1878-82	Mearns	common transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 22 to Apr. 13 and Oct. 4 to Dec. 3
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	see above species
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient, Mar. 3 to Apr. 18; July 14; Oct. 18 to Nov. 20
1940	Carr	regular transient, March-May and October-January
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, very uncommon winter visitant, extremely rare summer vagrant
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient; Park lakes
1976	Current status	probably only fairly common migrant, rare to uncommon winter visitant, casual summer visitant

Scaup collectively have increased by 75% to 100% in the past 40 years and—perhaps through closer observation—this species has increased even more than the greater scaup in the past 25 years, judging by the number of reports. As previously mentioned, the status of

the two scaup remains in doubt. Only reports of males are counted for the lesser scaup.

Spring: Mar. 14, 1953 on Rockland Lake (Robert F. Deed) to May 12, 1973 at Cornwall (L. Van Etten, reported in July 1973 “Kingbird”).

Summer: June 1, 1969 at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed), July 6, 1975 at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos), with two pairs later in the summer, a pair on Aug. 6 (Amos), and a female, presumably from this pair, on Aug.10, (the Deeds).

Fall: Sept. 20, 1934 in Bear Mountain Park (William H. Carr, H. A. Hochbaum, Daniel B. Beard) to Oct. 30, 1959, three on Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth).

Winter: Dec. 2, 1951 on Lake Tiorati (Mr. and Mrs. Orth), Dec. 2, 1975 at Piermont Pier (Amos); eight dates at the Pier in January and February, 1976, with a maximum of 24 birds on Feb. 15,1976 (Amos); Jan. 15, 1935 in Bear Mountain Park (Beard, Hochbaum); Feb. 19, 1950 on the Hudson River (Betty Barron, Helene Stansbury).

1983 Addendum -- A pair at Piermont Pier July 26 to Aug. 11, 1978.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

TUFTED DUCK

Aythya fuligula

A recent accidental, discovered on Rockland Lake on Feb. 29, 1976 by Eugene R. Brown and seen that day by others, including Anthony F. Amos, who photographed this male bird

associating with scaup and bufflehead. Seen also at the same place on Mar. 4, 6, and finally 7 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels).

COMMON GOLDENEYE

Bucephala clangula



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant, coast and interior
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	common transient and winter visitant
1908	Brownell	winter visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common winter visitant, Nov. 1 to Apr. 25; May 19
1940	Carr	regular transient in fall, winter, spring
1942	Cruickshank	in winter, "the second most common diving duck"
1960	Orth	regular fairly common winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon winter visitant, declining

Until 20 years ago, this species and the common merganser were the diving ducks most abundant on the Tappan Zee and Haverstraw Bay. My own totals were 402 goldeneyes in 1935 and 765 in 1936 with one-day maximum counts of 100 and 146 respectively. In recent years, an equally active birder would find it hard to count 100 in a season. In 1934 through 1941, the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count included only the portion of the Hudson River

from Piermont Pier south to Alpine, N.J., yet it recorded 30 goldeneyes each in 1934 and 1935, 80 in 1936, three in icebound 1937, 15 in 1940, and 22 in 1941. The Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, started in 1947, takes in most of the Rockland County riverfront (from Tomkins Cove south to the mouth of the Sparkill Creek, just south of Piermont Pier). In its first decade, numbers of goldeneyes compared favorably with the Bronx County Bird Club counts, reaching a

high of 155 birds in 1954. In the 1960s, however, the high was only 57 birds in 1963. The species was missed in 1973 for the first time; the six counts in the 1970s have scored 5-2-1-0-0-7. One encouraging note: On Feb. 9, 1976, Anthony F. Amos found the month's maximum of 51 goldeneyes at Piermont Pier, much the highest count in recent winters.

The earliest fall date is Oct. 30, 1959, when John C. Orth saw several birds on Lake Tiorati. The latest spring date is May 20, 1950 at Congers Lake (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed). Our area also has three slightly earlier records of single birds, a male and two females, for May 13 and 14, weeks after most goldeneyes have gone north.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE

Bucephala islandica

At least a hypothetical accidental visitant, based on one record for Lake Tiorati on Apr. 25, 1954 (Rockland Audubon Society field trip led by Frank R. Steffens) and on Apr. 29, 1954 (John C. Orth). On the former date, what was believed to be an immature male was studied by telescope at close range and was also observed in flight. Park Naturalist Orth also studied skins

at the American Museum of Natural History and expressed confidence in the identification; he included the record in his 1960 checklist of Park birds. Concededly, though, the date and the occurrence on an inland lake do not seem typical of this species, and the record is not included in Bull's "Birds of New York State."

BUFFLEHEAD

Bucephala albeola



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	autumn, winter, and spring
1878-82	Mearns	very common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	rare winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	regular winter visitant, Oct. 22 to Apr. 12
1940	Carr	rare and irregular migrant, April and November records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient and winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, occasional in winter
1976	Current status	common winter visitant

The bufflehead has gained greatly in regularity and in numbers during the past 40 years. In 1935 and 1936, I had respectively four and six birds per year; today, in season, a dozen or two dozen birds can be seen any day on Rockland Lake or at Piermont Pier. It is less common upriver in winter, having been recorded only three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas

Counts—in 1953, 1956, and 1957 (the maximum of 11 birds)—in contrast to 18 times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (maximum of 36 birds in 1965).

The earliest fall date is Oct. 31, 1957, three birds on Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth). The latest spring date is May 19, 1968, a female at Piermont Pier

(Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).
An isolated summer date is June 18, 1973, a
male possibly oiled, near Piermont Pier
(Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- A new maximum count of 90
at Cornwall Bay Nov. 8, 1978.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

LONG-TAILED DUCK [OLDSQUAW]

Clangula hyemalis



Adult, male, winter plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	one of the most common winter visitors
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitor
1898	Chapman	common winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common winter visitor, Dec. 4 to Apr. 6
1908	Brownell	fairly common winter visitor
1923	Griscom	rare winter visitor
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon winter visitor, Oct. 12 to May 15
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	irregular on the Hudson River
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient; one Park record
1976	Current status	rare winter visitor, casual in summer

This is still a rare duck, though the pace of records has been accelerating. In 1935 I had none on 172 field trips; in 1936, four on 139 trips. The species has appeared four times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (1953, 1957, 1963, and 1964, with three birds in 1964) but never on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. We have only

about 15 records, 11 of them since 1956. All are of single birds except on the 1964 RAS Christmas Count.

Dates range from Nov. 4, 1956 at Grassy Point (Edward D. Treacy) to Apr. 20, 1958, a female at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). Summer dates are for females at Piermont Pier

on June 15, 1973 and June 16, 1974, both records by Anthony F. Amos.

1983 Addendum -- At least five new records, with a maximum of 30 birds at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 3, 1981.



Adult, female, winter plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

COMMON EIDER

Somateria mollissima



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum -- A new species: a female on Sept. 26, 1981 at Cornwall Bay, studied at distances as close as 60 feet for two hours by 18

members of Mearns Bird Club (Kenneth McDermott et al.).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER
Melanitta fusca [deglandi]



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in large flocks, October to April
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	occasional on Hudson, Sept. 24 to May 15
1940	Carr	uncommon irregular migrant, May and November records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon but regular on Hudson
1960	Orth	occasional uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, occasionally in good-sized flocks; casual winter visitant

This is by far the least rare of the three scoters in our area, yet in more than 45 years of local birding I have seen it here only three times. Perhaps through more diligent observation, we have amassed 15 records since 1953, in contrast to only four or five previously, but we have had no record in the past five years. In our time, obviously, the species has not been as

abundant as Mearns found it in the Highlands in the 1870s.

High counts, all of migrant flocks on the Hudson Valley flyway: 64 at Cornwall on Nov. 2, 1971 (Al and Barbara Merritt); 30 at Fort Montgomery on May 17, 1960 (John C. and Patricia Orth), and 11 at Bear Mountain on May 23, 1955 (Orth).

Spring: Apr. 21, 1955, eight off Grand View, (David O. Hill) to May 30, 1966, a male at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber).

Fall: Sept. 28, 1948 in Bear Mountain Park (Orth) to Nov. 6, 1956, two at Rockland Lake Landing (Eugene R. Brown).

Winter: Dec. 10, 1967, one bird, to Dec. 17, 1967, six birds, at Cornwall (the Merritts); Dec. 16, 1953 at Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Brown); Dec. 23, 1934 at Piermont Pier on Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count

(Roger T. Peterson, John F. Kuerzi, Robert F. Deed, et al.); Dec. 27, 1969, two near Stony Point, the species' only appearance on the Rockland Audubon Society's 29 Christmas Counts; Feb. 25, 1968, three at Piermont Pier (Bernd Gravenstein); Mar. 12, 1929 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman).

1983 Addendum -- Apparently regular as spring and fall migrant on Cornwall Bay, and an adult male with two immature males also seen at Piermont Pier on Oct. 30, 1981 (Deed).



Two adult females and one adult male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SURF SCOTER

Melanitta perspicillata



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common on coast during the winter
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient and winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Oct. 7-22
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common on the Tappan Zee
1927	Kuerzi	irregular, sometimes occurs in small numbers
1940	Carr	rare migrant, one record
1942	Cruickshank	very rare on Hudson, usually only on the Tappan Zee
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient, two records
1976	Current status	casual migrant, accidental winter visitant

One can hardly understand the Mearns, Fisher, and Griscom appraisals of this bird's status. We still have only three records, one for each season except summer: Oct. 26, 1938 on the Hudson off Dunderberg (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis); Feb. 24, 1931 at Palisades

(Thomas P. Gilman); May 12, 1956, a flock of 60-plus, with seven white-winged, off Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth).

1983 Addendum -- Our fourth record: Cornwall Bay on Oct. 31, 1981.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLACK SCOTER
Melanitta nigra



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	by no means as common as the surf scoter
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common winter resident
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, October
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	unknown at the present time except on the Hudson near Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient on the Hudson
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon on Hudson, mostly on the Tappan Zee
1960	Orth	two recent records
1976	Current status	casual fall migrant

Again, one can hardly picture this species as Mearns saw it in the Highlands nearly a century ago. Our three fall records are: Oct. 4, 1957, a flock of 14 on Lake Skannatati in the Park (John C. Orth); Oct. 17, 1970, a small flock on Lake Tiorati in the Park (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Nov. 10, 1955, one picked up at Iona Island in poor condition (Orth).

1983 Addendum -- Three area records have been expanded by six more from Cornwall Bay, including the first spring dates: seven birds on Apr. 1, 1978 to 20 birds on May 6, 1978. On Nov. 4, 1979, a new maximum count of 300 birds.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RUDDY DUCK

Oxyura jamaicensis



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rather rare on this coast
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 14 to Apr. 6 and Oct. 5-28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	irregular uncommon transient, Oct. 24 to Jan. 27 and Feb. 21 to May 15
1940	Carr	rare migrant, one spring and one fall record
1942	Cruickshank	"away from Long Island usually unknown"
1960	Orth	sporadic rare spring and fall transient; only one spring date
1976	Current status	very abundant migrant and winter visitant on the Tappan Zee, uncommon to fairly common elsewhere; casual in summer

Until 30 years ago, this was a rather rare duck in our area, seen regularly but in small numbers. Then, for some unknown reason, flocks began congregating on the Tappan Zee each October, usually near shore in the vicinity of the Grand View-Piermont line, drifting north and south with the tide. For many years these birds have constituted the bulk of the ruddy duck total on the State Federation's waterfowl counts in mid-

January. For the rest of the area, Carr's and Orth's evaluations for the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park still hold true, and only a smattering of ruddies visit the Rockland County lakes, today primarily Rockland Lake but 20 years ago primarily Congers Lake.

Peak numbers are attained from late November to mid-December and again in late February.

Indicative of the species' growth in abundance, I found only five all year on 172 field trips in 1935 and only four on 139 trips in 1936. On the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts (1934-41), the species was recorded only once: three birds in 1937. High counts in recent years, arranged chronologically, include: 400-plus on Apr. 1, 1955 (Robert F. Deed), 500-plus on Nov. 1, 1955 (Deed), 600-plus on Nov. 28, 1956 (Deed), 500 on Nov. 25, 1959 (Deed), an estimated 2,000 on Dec. 14, 1965 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus), 1,350 in February, 1974 (Anthony F. Amos), 718 on Dec. 17, 1975 (Amos), 884 on Feb. 21, 1976 (Amos).

The ruddy has been recorded on 22 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts. as follows:

Year	Number		Year	Number
1947	30		1964	17
1948	78		1965	475
1949	150		1966	232
1952	200		1967	77
1953	131		1969	1
1954	211		1970	52
1956	321		1971	96
1957	194		1972	18
1959	1		1973	163
1962	6		1974	123
1963	6		1975	406

species has never been recorded on any of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts.

The earliest fall date is Sept. 15, 1968, four at Piermont Pier (RAS field trip), but the first week of October is a more usual arrival time. Ruddies linger later into the spring than most ducks, with a count of 101 at the Pier on May 1, 1976 (Amos) and records through May.

Summer: Aug. 24, 1970, three at the Pier (Donald S. Deed); July 22, 1973, female or immature at the Pier (the Deeds).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

HOODED MERGANSER

Lophodytes cucullatus



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	less common than the other two mergansers
1878-82	Mearns	common winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, in March
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, in March
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and winter visitant, Oct. 24 to Jan. 6 and Feb. 20 to Apr. 6
1940	Carr	regular transient, more common in spring; may winter
1942	Cruickshank	regular but by no means common
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, rare to very rare winter visitant

This merganser, found more often on the lakes than on the Hudson River and more regularly on the Bear Mountain lakes than elsewhere, has not changed much in occurrence in the past 40 years. In 1935, I had one; in 1936, two. Even today a birder cannot be sure of finding one, even in the seasonal peaks of November and late March through April. Numbers in anyone place rarely exceed five, though there is one

exceptional count of 26 on Nov. 17, 1963 for Lakes Nawahunta and Skannatati (John C. Orth). For many years, smallish Nawahunta was the one best place in the area to look for this duck. Only in the last half dozen years have records been made on the open Hudson at Nyack and Piermont Pier.

The species has been recorded only three times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: in 1957 (four birds), 1965 and 1971 (two birds). But it has scored six times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: in 1946, 1956 (four birds), 1957 (two birds), 1962, 1967, and 1968 (two birds).

The earliest fall date is Sept. 21, 1950 at Iona Island marsh (John C. Orth, Peter Smith). The latest spring date is May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). In most years the latest spring date is about Apr. 20.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

COMMON MERGANSER

Mergus merganser



Adult, male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	autumn and winter; breeds in interior of the state
1878-82	Mearns	common winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon winter visitant, Nov. to April
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, Jan. 1 to Mar. 8
1908	Brownell	uncommon winter visitant
1923	Griscom	very common winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common winter visitant, Nov. 1 to May 13
1940	Carr	regular transient, November to May
1942	Cruickshank	common winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular very common winter visitant
1976	Current status	very abundant winter visitant 20 years ago, now only fairly common to common

This species, like the goldeneye, has declined sharply as a typical winter duck of the Hudson River. In 1935, I totaled 236; in 1936, I had 1,247, with flocks of 150, and 275. Today a count of more than 20 at any point is exceptional. However, the species has been missed only once on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: in 1969. It has been

missed four times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: 1955, 1969, 1970, and 1971. High counts: On the RAS Christmas Count, the maximum numbers have been 245 in 1949, 390 in 1953, 265 in 1955, 78 in 1958, 81 in 1960, 67 in 1967, 61 in 1973, and 32 in 1975--a steady downtrend in the peaks. On the Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, high marks were 165 in

1947, 182 in 1950, 189 in 1951, 71 in 1956, 68 in 1965, and no count higher than 15 since 1965. At Piermont Pier alone in the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of 1936, the count was 150. Aside from the Christmas Counts, an RAS field trip on Feb. 27, 1955 saw an estimated 1,000 on the Hudson near Grassy Point, and Bull's "Birds of New York State" refers to a count of 2,300 in the Haverstraw area on Feb. 24, 1952. The peak for the entire winter of 1975-76

at Piermont Pier was 13 birds on Dec. 21, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

The earliest fall date is Nov. 1, 1936 at Piermont (Robert F. Deed), and the latest spring date is May 16, 1976, two at Piermont Pier (Amos).

1983 Addendum -- On June 10-11, 1983, a male and three or four females at the north end of Lake De Forest (Deed et al.). Our first record later than May 16.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

Mergus serrator



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	breeds in interior of state
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, December through April
1908	Brownell	common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare on the Hudson except in the Tappan Zee, where it occurs irregularly
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient and winter visitant, Oct. 15 to May 23
1940	Carr	rare, irregular migrant, winter and spring
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon but regular on Hudson
1960	Orth	occasional rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	rare winter visitant, increasing in recent years

From Mearns to Griscom we see a steep downward curve that may have been correcting itself in the past five or six years. In 1935, I totaled four birds; in 1936, none. The species has been recorded on nine of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: 1947, 1948 (two birds), 1949 (two), 1950 (three), 1959, 1965 (two), 1966 (three), 1970 (five), and 1971. It has

been recorded only once on the 28 Bear Mountain Counts: five birds in 1950.

Since 1950 we have had 13 records, but nine of these records have come since 1965, establishing a degree of regularity. The only daily counts exceeding three birds are: Jan. 2, 1961, a flock of 13 on the Tappan Zee off Grand

View (Edwin Gambe); Mar. 24, 1968, eight at Cornwall (Al and Barbara Merritt); Apr. 1, 1969, six close to the Nyack shore (Alma Polhemus).

The earliest fall date is Oct. 22, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr). The latest spring dates are May 27 and 28, 1974, a female at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

TURKEY VULTURE

Cathartes aura



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Occasional summer visitor to Long Island and the Hudson Valley.
1878-82	Mearns	No mention.
1898	Chapman	Fairly common summer visitant.
1898	Fisher	Accidental visitant.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Very rare visitor, though regular in northwest New Jersey.
1927	Kuerzi	Occasional; records, in June of 1895 and 1924 and July, 1925.
1940	Carr	Summer resident, yearly becoming more common.
1942	Cruickshank	More common each year in the extension of its range northward.
1960	Orth	Fairly common to common summer resident.
1976	Current status	Common summer resident; breeds; accidental in winter.

Of all the southern species that have moved into our area, the vulture may hold the record for establishing itself in the shortest time span. As reflected in the comments of De Kay, Fisher, Griscom, and Kuerzi, it was rare and irregular in occurrence through the 1920s, although P. M. Silloway notes that it was "frequently seen" in

the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park in 1919, but not the year before or the year after.

I saw my first turkey vulture in Rockland County on Mar. 30, 1930 at Blauvelt, about three years after I had started birding seriously; I had one each in 1931 and 1932 but none in 1933. In the

spring of 1934, I saw my first flock, eight at Bear Mountain. That same summer, a worker clearing the right-of-way for the Long Mountain Parkway, near Bear Mountain, found a fledgling that had been routed from its nest by the construction, and brought it to the Trailside Museum on July 19, 1934. The only other breeding record cited by Jack Orth is his own discovery of a nest containing two eggs at West Mountain on May 4, 1955. But other nesting is most probable in the valley extending from West Mountain northward to Long Mountain, the major gathering point for turkey vultures almost since their first appearance in Rockland County.

In 1935, my year's list showed 36 vultures, including a flock of ten over Rockland Lake on Apr. 18. In 1936, my total was 161 birds, more than twice as many as either of the next most numerous raptors, the sparrow hawk and bald eagle. Flocks in 1936 ranged up to 30, on Mar. 26; 21 on Apr. 8, and 19 on Oct. 4.

Thus, in six or seven years, the turkey vulture advanced from zero to relative abundance. And it has remained common, though strangely more

so in the highlands than in lower-lying Rockland County. Edward D. Treacy, who studied their habits in the Highlands for many years, found that they arrive surprisingly early, regularly in the last half of February, and form roosts especially at Orr's Mills, where he found 35 birds on May 15, 1955, 23 birds on Feb. 27, 1956, and 14 birds on Feb. 24, 1957. Other big roosts have been observed at Queensboro Lake, where Orth found 25 birds on Mar. 4, 1956 and where Bull notes 75 birds on Mar. 31, 1964.

The earliest spring date is Feb. 15, 1949 near Bear Mountain (Stanley O. Grierson), and the latest fall date is Nov. 17, 1975 at Piermont (Anthony F. Amos). Treacy has one winter date that is too early to be considered to be a spring arrival: a bird on Jan. 23, 1960 at Queensboro Lake

1983 Addendum -- A remarkable winter occurrence: Jan. 17, 1983 over the Route 303 interchange on Route 59, West Nyack (the Deeds), Jan. 19 in same area (Peter Derven), Jan. 24 (the Deeds).



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLACK VULTURE

Coragyps atratus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Unlike the turkey vulture, this species--perhaps because it starts from a more southerly base--hasn't advanced into our area except as a casual visitant, with one spring and one fall record. This is somewhat surprising because on the fringes of its range. The black vulture has a reputation for aggressively crowding out the turkey vulture. In 1950-51, for example, while living in the Washington, D.C., area, I found the black vulture the dominant species on the west side of Chesapeake Bay due east of the capital, and nowadays it is regular as far north as Dover and Bombay Hook, in Delaware. Scattered occurrences farther north in recent years have tended to be restricted to the coast, such areas as Long Island and, in my own experience, Cape Cod. In contrast, the turkey vulture was

established in northwestern New Jersey long before it expanded its range northward and eastward.

Our only two records: Sept. 28, 1948, one flying over the Trailside Museum at Bear Mountain (John Kenney, Stanley O. Grierson), and Apr. 23, 1976, one with two turkey vultures over Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack (five qualified observers on the Hook Mountain Hawk watch).

1983 Addendum --Three new records to go with our two. Sept. 23, 1977 at White Horse Mt. (near Storm King), by Paul Jeheber; Sept. 4, 1979, one seen on the Hook Mt. Hawk Watch; September 1980, two over White Horse Mt.



Adults

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

KITES, EAGLES, AND HAWKS

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE

Elanoides forficatus



Adult

Photo Credit: David Baker

A casual visitant, with three known records. De Kay in 1844 called this bird an accidental visitant near New York City, Chapman in 1898 mentioned four records in the metropolitan area; Griscom in 1923 called it an accidental visitant that formerly straggled north.

Eaton cites a record on Aug. 22, 1900 at Piermont (G. N. Nicholas). On May 30, 1951, Katherine D. Dienemann saw a bird of this

species over Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack, in the company of two buteos, and several years later wrote to me that she had now seen the birds in western Florida and could confirm the not-very-difficult identification. A third record, reported in the October, 1974 "Kingbird," was a bird flying over Route 9-W at Storm King Mountain on Aug. 3, 1974 (Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lehnies). The bird should be, unmistakable, and I see no reason to question these sight records.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK

Accipiter gentilis



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Nancy Kaufar

1844	De Kay	"Audubon found it breeding at Niagara Falls."
1878-82	Mearns	Transient and winter visitant; one Apr. 28 date.
1898	Chapman	Rare winter visitant.
1898	Fisher	Rare winter visitant, Oct. 10 to Jan. 14.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Only one record.
1927	Kuerzi	Very rare winter visitant.
1940	Carr	Rare, irregular winter visitor; January and February records.
1942	Cruickshank	Rare and irregular winter visitant.
1960	Orth	Occasional very rare transient and winter visitant.
1976	Current status	Uncommon to fairly common fall migrant, rare spring migrant and winter visitant, rare breeder.

Until the establishment of the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch in the fall and, less formally, in the spring by the Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey, we had only eight known records for this hawk. But from 1971 on, the Hawk Watch and independent excursions to Hook

Mountain outside the watch period have given evidence that (1) this bird is by no means as rare as had been supposed, or (2) that intensive observation happened to coincide with a great irruption of goshawks over a period of years. As reported by Eric Single, ever since 1971 the

Hawk Watch, using a stuffed-owl decoy, has brought fall-migrant goshawks so close that the rule was to identify the bird only when the eye stripe was visible.

In the fall of 1971, the Hawk Watch counted only two goshawks, but the watch officially ended in late October whereas most goshawks in subsequent years have passed in November. On Nov. 24, 1971, indeed, Ed and Lana Mills saw a goshawk at the Hook. In 1972, the watch was extended through November, and 112 goshawks were counted, with five on Sept. 30, one to four birds almost every day, and a peak of 15 on Nov. 16. In the fall of 1973, from Sept. 8 through November, the Hawk Watch totaled 87.

Eric Single, local coordinator of the Hawk Watch, suggests that the 1972 record and, to a lesser extent, that of 1973 represented the largest movement of goshawks in the area since the winter of 1936-37. It may then be significant that three of our eight records antedating the Hawk Watch came from 1936-37: one at Queensboro Lake, Bear Mountain Park, on Feb. 16, 1936 (Robert F. Deed); one at Tappan on Dec. 13, 1936 (Deed), and one again at Queensboro Lake on Jan. 5, 1937 (William H. Carr). The only earlier record was of a specimen taken at West Point on Dec. 27, 1880, mentioned by Mr. A. K. Fisher in "Hawks and Owls of the U.S. in Relation to Agriculture" (1893). Later records include Dec. 26, 1959 at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving); Mar. 16, 1963 at Blauvelt (Alma Polhemus), and Oct. 5, 1963 at Lake Nawahunta (John C. Orth).

Spring records are far fewer than fall records. They include sightings at Hook Mountain by Ed and Lana Mills on Apr. 17, 20, 21, and 30, 1971

(July 1971 "Kingbird"). Recent winter records: single birds on the Rockland Audubon Christmas Counts of 1969, 1972, 1971, and 1975; Dec. 17, 1972,- one chasing a broad-winged hawk (!) at Lake Lucille, New City (Joseph Weise); Dec. 6, 1975, an immature surprised at a fresh-killed rabbit on the edge of Piermont marsh (Anthony. F. Amos), probably the same bird as on the RAS Christmas Count on Dec. 27, 1975.

The goshawk has evidently been nesting for years near the junction of the Ramapo-Dunderberg and Arden-Surebridge trails in the highest portion of the Harriman Section of the Park (above 1,100 feet). The July 1975 "Kingbird" contained a report by Robert Shulz of an attack by a goshawk twice at the same point on the R-D trail: on June 14, 1975 and Nov. 12, 1967. On the June date, he suspected nesting nearby. On June 11, 1976, Eugene R. Brown was furiously buzzed by a pair of goshawks in Surebridge Swamp, with excellent views of both birds perched and flying. He could not find a nest, but after hearing the birds' calls he realized that he had also heard a goshawk a few summers earlier in the same locality. At that time he had not seen the bird. Oddly enough, a pair of Cooper's hawks (thoroughly identified by Carr and Deed) nested at the same spot during the 1940s; one occupied nest was about 40 feet directly up over the A-S trail in a chestnut oak.

1983 Addendum --Several breeding records for Sterling Forest, Surebridge Swamp in Harriman Park, Black Rock Forest back of West Point, and Sterling Lake. Winter records for Dec. 30, 1977 on the Palisades Park near the Anthony Wayne area (Kenneth R. Deed); Dec. 19, 1980, a wounded female at West Nyack (Padraic French); Dec. 20, 1981, one north of New City on RAS Christmas Count (Dan Avener).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

Accipiter striatus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Occurs.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common summer resident, rare winter resident.
1898	Fisher	Common resident.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon; breeds.
1923	Griscom	Common transient visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Common transient, a pair or two still breeding locally; rare in winter.
1940	Carr	Rare summer resident, breeds; many transient records.
1942	Cruickshank	Common migrant, rare in winter, breeds in Rockland County
1960	Orth	Regular rare permanent resident, regular common transient.
1976	Current status	Abundant migrant, casual in winter; no recent summer records or evidence of breeding.

Apparently this species bred in the Highlands, perhaps sparingly, until about 20 years ago, and it may have bred in the rest of Rockland County still earlier. Today it is only a migrant, abundant in October and to a lesser degree in April. It has been recorded on only one of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (in 1950) and on

seven of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Counts, none more recently than 1962.

On the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch, the sharpie annually runs second only to the broad-winged in total numbers, with the all-time high for one day on Oct. 1, 1974--386 birds. The watch

recorded 2,095 in 1971, 1,694 in 1972, 1,932 in 1973, 2,524 in 1974, and 6,018 in 1975. This hawk is uncommon in fall before mid-September, and one at Piermont on Nov. 17, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos) was late. The spring flight usually comes after Apr. 12; on Apr. 21, 1971, Ed and Lana Mills counted a spring high of 43 at Hook Mountain (July 1971 "Kingbird"), and Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper saw one at Rockland Lake as late as May 12, 1972.

1983 Addendum – A breeding record, female found incubating on nest in hemlock near Island Pond, Harriman Park, on June 3, 1977 (Robert Speiser, Walter Lehnese et al.); seen twice subsequently. In July, 1977 an immature bird with a broken leg was found on Storm King and taken to the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum. On July 4, 1978, a bird flew over the old Nike base on Tweed Boulevard, back of Piermont (Deed).

COOPER'S HAWK

Accipiter cooperii



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Breeds in mountainous districts.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant summer resident and winter visitant; breeds May 2-10.
1898	Chapman	Rare winter resident, fairly common summer resident; breeds May 1.
1898	Fisher	Fairly common resident.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common summer resident, occasional resident; breeds.
1923	Griscom	Rare transient visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Fairly common transient, rare in winter.
1940	Carr	Regular transient, rare summer resident; breeds.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common migrant, rare in winter, uncommon breeder.
1960	Orth	Irregular rare permanent resident, regular fairly common transient.
1976	Current status	Uncommon to fairly common migrant.

This hawk has not been reported in summer since the 1950s on its former nesting grounds in the Harriman section of the Park. It has appeared on seven of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with a high of three in 1948, but not since 1963. Its fall migration numbers have also shrunk. In contrast to the thousands of sharp-shinned hawks on the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch (which in my own

observation seems to overlook at least some Cooper's hawks), the numbers for Cooper's have been low: 37 in 1971, 43 in 1972, 20 in 1973, 54 in 1974 (with a season's high of eight on Oct. 5), and 52 in 1975.

As noted under "Goshawk", the Cooper's hawk nested in Surebridge Swamp in the 1940s. It may still be breeding in the Highlands, but it

remains decidedly uncommon anywhere in our region most of the year. On my 172 field trips in 1935, I saw 12; on 139 trips in 1936, I saw 14; in the past ten years I have seen the Cooper's hawk locally only twice, both times in fall migrations.

1983 Addendum --Several summer records: Aug. 29, 1977 in backyard of Al Merritt in village of Cornwall; July 12, 1978, one chased by Blue Jays over Seven Lakes Parkway (Robert Speiser); May 13, 1982, found nesting in Black Rock Forest (Kenneth McDermott)



Adult

Photo Credit: Peggy Brunner

RED-TAILED HAWK
Buteo jamaicensis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Resident.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant resident, breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common resident, breeds Apr. 1.
1898	Fisher	Common resident.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common resident, breeds.
1923	Griscom	Common winter visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Common in winter, occasional in summer as it breeds nearby.
1940	Carr	Rare summer resident, breeds; regular winter visitor.
1942	Cruickshank	A fairly common transient, locally not uncommon winter visitant, very rare breeder.
1960	Orth	Casual very rare permanent resident, regular fairly common to common transient.
1976	Current status	Very common migrant, fairly common winter visitant, uncommon breeder.

Until the mid-1950s, we considered this hawk to be normally only a migrant and winter resident. Then it reestablished itself as a breeder in the Highlands. It does seem strange that this hawk has been gaining sharply in numbers just as the red-shoulder was petering

out-strange unless perhaps the red-tail is winning a competition for local dominance in nesting. For the first 30 years of my local birding, the red-tail was always uncommon enough to be a surprise; I saw only five in 1935 and 15 in 1936 (compared respectively

with 12 and 18 peregrine falcons!). Through 1955, we had only three summer records: July 2, 1925 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr); July 7 to Aug. 20, 1934 at Bear Mountain (Daniel B. Beard, H. A. Hochbaum); Aug. 4, 1955 near Piermont (David O. Hill). Then nesting areas were discovered by Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber, and others in the hills behind Highland Falls and West Point, where occupied nests and young have been observed each year since 1959. Summer birds were also seen near Lake Tappan on Aug. 15, 1968 (James Demes) and at Blauvelt through May, 1969 (Eugene Bleiweiss).

Reports of the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch supply an index of recent frequency during fall migrations: 347 in 1971, 452 in 1972, 462 in 1973, 358 to mid-November in 1974, and 526 in 1975. On both of the area's Christmas Counts, the red-tail is now the most regular hawk, and it has recently overtaken the American kestrel (sparrow hawk) as the most numerous. In the old Bronx County Bird Club counts at Piermont, one or two red-tails were counted in 1934, 1935, and 1936 but none in 1937, 1940, or 1941. On the 1975 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, 11 red-tails were found in the same Piermont area, part of a record total of 30 in the count circle. The species has appeared on 23 of the 29 RAS Counts, but usually only one to four birds per count until about ten years ago, when numbers at least doubled. The red-tail has appeared on 25 of the 28 Bear Mountain Counts, with highs of 18 in 1958 and 15 in 1968.

Bull's "Birds of New York State" (page 184) cites a high count of 150 at Bear Mountain on Nov. 6, 1951, and that may still be the area's highest

one-day count. The year's maximum numbers come in late October and in November.

With so many summer and winter residents, it is impossible to single out early and late dates for migrations.



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

Buteo lineatus



Adult Male (L) and Female (R) (*Buteo l. lineatus*)

Photo Credit: Jack H. Hecht

1844	De Kay	Rarely passes through this state.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common resident; breeds Apr. 3.
1898	Fisher	Common resident.
1908	Brownell	Common resident; breeds.
1923	Griscom	Common resident.
1927	Kuerzi	Common transient and winter resident, a few pairs breeding locally.
1940	Carr	Summer resident, breeds; uncommon winter visitor.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common resident.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon permanent resident, nests; regular common transient.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant, increasing; rare winter visitant; apparently no longer a local breeder.

Until the late 1950s, this hawk nested in appropriate woodlands all over Rockland County, as well as in the higher lands of the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park. Then its local population crashed, whether because of the

destruction of habitat by housing development or because of aerial sprayings of DDT and other insecticides. Only now is the red-shoulder showing signs of recovery even as a migrant.

In 1935 I found the red-shoulder second only to the sparrow hawk in year-round abundance; in 1936 its numbers were exceeded in my field records only by the sparrow hawk, bald eagle, and osprey. It has been recorded on 20 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts--without a miss from 1947 through 1963, and with highs of 12 in 1954, 10 in 1950, and 9 in 1957. Since 1963 it has been recorded only three times, but the count of four in 1975 is encouraging. The species has been recorded eight times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, but not at all since 1960. However, the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch shows a reassuring trend: 85 in 1971, 93 in 1972, 146 in 1973, 165 in 1974, and 184 in 1975. Another good sign: a red-shoulder circling over the Blauvelt Section of the Park, a former nesting area, on May 5, 1974 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).



Adult (*Buteo l. elegans*)

Photo Credit: Della M. Wells

BROAD-WINGED HAWK

Buteo platypterus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Rare; several killed in one day in Rockland County.
1878-82	Mearns	Occasional winter visitant; resident; arrives in March, breeds May 8.
1898	Chapman	Rather common resident, breeds, May 5.
1898	Fisher	Fairly common summer resident, Mar. 15 to Oct. 23.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Generally a rare transient.
1927	Kuerzi	Uncommon transient, sometimes abundant in fall.
1940	Carr	Summer resident, breeds; regular migrant, April to November.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common summer resident in the hills of Rockland; fairly common and locally abundant transient; accidental in winter.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon summer resident, nests; regular fairly common spring and abundant fall transient.
1976	Current status	Uncommon summer resident; may nest; fairly common spring and abundant fall migrant; very rare to rare winter visitant.

Except for the two Bear Mountain reports of Carr and Orth, the status picture for this hawk is uncommonly mixed and contradictory. But it seems certain that the broad-wing is far more

abundant today than 40 years ago; my records for 172 field trips in 1935 show only 24 birds, and my 139 trips in 1936 totaled only 14. In contrast, the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch

recorded 1,636 broad-wings on Sept. 15, 1974 and 2,079 on the following day. Even the casual birder, not at a special vantage point, could hardly avoid seeing eight or ten broad-wings during the spring migration or 30 to 100 a day at the height of the September flight. Yet Griscom and Kuerzi not long ago found the species rare or uncommon except, as Kuerzi notes, for massive fall flights.

Apparently the broad-wing has long been a breeding bird of this area, at least in the hilly sections. However, Fisher on one side of the Hudson and Brownell on the other did not agree on this status only ten years apart. And Griscom throws out all the earlier evaluations of the species as a resident or a winter visitant, insisting that no winter sight record is valid in the absence of any specimen taken between October and late April. And this stance has been adopted by later keepers of the records. Our area may be exceptional, perhaps because of truly resident birds or perhaps because of lingerers from the enormous fall flights, but we have four well-established winter records aside from five even more gilt-edged records on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts.

With the growing familiarity of observers with this hawk in every plumage on the big migrations, there would be no excuse for misidentification on all of these winter dates. I myself had the experience of receiving skeptically a young observer's report of a broad-wing at the end of December and then of seeing an unmistakable broad-wing three days later and half a dozen miles away--a bird perched 20 feet from my train window, then taking off as the train stopped at a station and flying slowly around both sides of the rear car in which I was riding. Even without binoculars, I had one of the best views of a broad-wing that I have ever enjoyed. I have the feeling that this species, in its status as a winter visitant, is one of those cases where the conservatism of the "authorities" is distorting the status picture as much as overexuberance would do.

On the 1971-75 Hook Mountain Hawk Watches, the broad-wing has far outnumbered other raptors except for a dip below the sharp-shin in 1972. The numbers: 3,295 in 1971, 1,105 in rain-plagued 1972, 7,762 in 1973, 6,308 in 1974, and an amazing 10,585 in 1975.

With so many summer and winter records, the seasons for this hawk tend to blur, yet gaps do exist. We have no record for March, and November is represented by only one date early in the month.

Spring: Apr. 14, 1957 near Blauvelt (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper), with several other arrival dates bunched in the next four days, to May 30, 1960 at Tomkins Cove (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

Summer: Several June dates prior to 1950 for both Blauvelt and the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park (Deed); June 10, 1969 at Hogencamp Mountain in Harriman Park (Eugene R. Brown); June 11, 1964 near the present site of Lake Tappan (the Deeds); June 20, 1971, a pair near Hogencamp Mountain (Rockland Audubon Society field trip led by Eugene Brown); July 1, 1954, a nest with three young on Long Mountain Parkway (John C. Orth); summer of 1961, a pair nesting in Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. John Dye); July 14, 1952 at Lake Kanawauke (Kenneth Chambers); July 29, 1972 at Crow's Nest, back of West Point (the Deeds); Aug. 5, 1971, a pair at Tiorati Brook Road in the Park (the Deeds); Aug. 15, 1968, an immature at Naurausaun (James Demes); Aug. 17, 1876, a specimen for Rockland County noted by Dr. A. K. Fisher, Aug. 24, 1971 in the Hackensack swamp at Blauvelt (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

Fall: Sept. 7, 1963 at Congers (Morton Isler) to Nov. 3, 1934 (William H. Carr, Daniel B. Beard). Daily high counts prior to the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch include, appropriately in ascending order: about 150 over Fort Montgomery on Sept. 9, 1956 (Orth); more than 150 in two hours at New City on Sept. 25, 1959 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); about 250 in half an hour at Bear Mountain on Sept. 21, 1960 (Orth); more than 1,000 over New City in less than an hour on Sept. 18, 1969 (the Steffenses); 3,000 over Hook Mountain on Sept. 19, 1970 and another 2,000 at the Hook and "thousands more" over Rockland Lake on the following day (the Steffenses). In the fall of 1975, the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch recorded peaks of 4,597 on Sept. 15 and 2,822 on Sept. 29.

Winter: On the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, single birds in 1952, 1963, 1965, 1972, and 1975. Also: Dec. 29, 1957 at

Pearl River (Joseph Morlan); Jan. 2, 1958, south of Tappan (Deed); Jan. 11, 1970, movie-filmed at Lake Tappan (Thomas John); Feb. 21, 1962, a bird perched at Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble). Another probable, well described, was near a feeder at Valley Cottage on Feb. 3, 1969 (Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Milligan).

1983 Addendum -- Too many summer dates to mention, with many nests known. A remarkable estimate of 12,000 or 20,000 birds in 35 minutes over Hook Mountain on Sept. 20, 1981, the estimate depending on different estimators. Another good winter record: Feb. 1, 1983 near Nanuet (Donald S. Deed); this bird only half a mile from an apparent 1982 nest site.

SWAINSON'S HAWK
Buteo swainsoni



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

If you take stock in the accuracy of such old records, Bull's reference to an adult collected at Cornwall on Oct. 14, 1892 makes this an accidental visitant to our area. My edition of

Griscom contains evidence (in the "Errata" section) that Griscom decided not to recognize this or some other specimen, since he deleted the species from the list of accidental visitants.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK

Buteo lagopus



Light Morph Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Rare autumn and winter.
1878-82	Mearns	Rare transient visitant.
1898	Chapman	Rare winter resident.
1898	Fisher	Accidental visitant.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Very rare winter visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Uncommon winter visitant.
1940	Carr	Uncommon, irregular winter visitor.
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon migrant, rare in winter.
1960	Orth	Irregular very rare winter visitant.
1976	Current status	Rare migrant and winter visitant.

Although reports have accelerated, especially since 1958, this is still the rarest regularly occurring raptor in our portion of the Hudson Valley--even rarer than the golden eagle and the peregrine, judging by records of the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch for the past five years. It has evidently never been anything but

uncommon, in spite of the watched-for cyclical irruptions in some winters.

Extreme dates are Oct. 12, 1975 (Hook Mountain Hawk Watch) to May 3, 1930 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman). The species has been listed eight times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Christmas Counts, with highs of three

birds in 1961 and 1975 and two birds in 1960. A single bird was also seen at Piermont in the 1935 Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count. On the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, it has been listed twice: two birds in 1960 and one in 1968.

On the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch, none was recorded in 1971, one in 1972, two in 1973, one in 1974, and three in 1975. In the same years, the count for golden eagle was 5-3-7-3-4 and for the peregrine, 4-7-2-2-2.

1983 Addendum -- Half a dozen records in 1981, 1982, and 1983.



Light Morph Adult , Captive

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GOLDEN EAGLE

Aquila chrysaetos



Adult

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	Rare, frequently near the Highlands.
1878-82	Mearns	Occasional; formerly nested on cliffs north of West Point "and it is not impossible that it still does".
1898	Chapman	Rare transient visitant; formerly bred.
1898	Fisher	Accidental visitant.
1908	Brownell	No mention.
1923	Griscom	Casual; "immature birds could not possibly be told from an immature Bald Eagle".
1927	Kuerzi	No mention.
1940	Carr	No mention.
1942	Cruickshank	More regular than formerly.
1960	Orth	Occasional very rare fall transient.
1976	Current status	Casual spring migrant, rare, fall migrant, casual summer and winter visitant.

Despite the regularity of reports from the Hawk Mountain Hawk Watch, this is still a rare bird, though apparently increasing in recent years. Apart from the Hook Mountain watches in spring and fall, we have only eight records:

Spring: At least three times in April at Hook Mountain, with one date of Apr. 6, 1976; May 19, 1935 at Palisades (Robert F. Deed).

Summer: An adult flying close to a hill top at Tomkins Cove on July 4, 1971, identified

confidently by George W. Hadelor, Jr., who had become well acquainted with the bird during summer work in Glacier National Park.

Fall: Hook Mountain Hawk Watch totals were five for 1971, three for 1972, seven for 1973, three for 1974, and four for 1975. A note by Eric Single, local coordinator, in the February 1974 "Rockland Audubon Observer" adds "... not to mention a local golden eagle seen on at least four occasions" during the 1973 fall watch. Other fall records: Nov. 1, 1936 at Bear Mountain (Deed); Oct. 12, 1947 at Bear Mountain (John C. Orth, John Bull, George Komorowski); Nov. 30, 1949, one low over Bear Mountain (Orth, Stanley O. Grierson); Oct. 29, 1955, three circling over Grand View, well described (Ethel Hill, David O. Hill, Thomas Dow); Oct. 17, 1959, near West Point (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber); Nov. 4, 1971, an immature over the Palisades Parkway near Letchworth Village, Thiells (Treacy). Bull also cites a record of an adult collected at Bear Mountain on Dec. 31, 1941 (William H. Carr), our only winter record.

Griscom's dictum about identification of immature golden eagles seems to have been

rejected by later generations of birders who are more familiar with both birds on their native grounds. Indeed, the adult golden is now considered more difficult to distinguish from the immature bald in some plumages. But most of our birders today are familiar with other marks of differentiation, too, such as relative size of head, length of tail, and manner of flight. Birds on recent fall flights seem about equally divided between adults and immatures, in contrast to the bald eagle, whose number of young birds remains discouragingly low in relation to adults.

1983 Addendum -- To our eight records, we added: Jan. 11, 1978, an immature east of Lake Sebago (Walter Lehnies, Richard Miller); Feb. 4, 1978, same area (Robert Speiser); Oct. 25, 1977, three immatures on Hook Mt. Hawk Watch; five immatures and one adult on 1978 Hook Mt. Hawk Watch; Feb. 3, 1980, two adults feeding on deer carcass on frozen Stilwell Lake, Mine Road, and still in area through February; Jan. 25, 1981, adult at Cornwall Bay (Benton Seguin); Oct. 12, 1981, an immature on Hook Mt. Hawk Watch.

BALD EAGLE

Haliaeetus leucocephalus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Sometimes in flocks of 15 to 20 near coast; breeds near New York City.
1878-82	Mearns	Resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Fairly common resident, breeds on Long Island.
1898	Fisher	Common resident.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon.
1923	Griscom	Common winter visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Occasional visitant, chiefly in winter.
1940	Carr	Regular winter visitor, rare transient in summer.
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon transient, rare winter and summer visitant.
1960	Orth	Regular uncommon to fairly common winter visitant, regular uncommon spring and fall transient; recorded every month except June.
1976	Current status	Rare migrant and winter visitant, casual summer visitant.

In both his books, John Bull quotes an eloquent sentence from Mearns, referring to the Hudson River near Cornwall "In early spring when the ice breaks up, I have counted more than twenty-five that were in view at once." With the number reduced by 25% to 50%, the same statement could have been made through 1957 or 1958 by

an observer at Grassy Point or Piermont Pier. Then the eagle became a notable victim of pesticide pollution, including the aerial spraying of Rockland County with DDT at about that time, and its wintering population crashed. It may be recovering. In the past half-dozen years, about one out of five bald eagles seen locally has been an immature, showing

perhaps a favorable reproduction rate; throughout the 1960s, fewer than one in ten bald eagles seen in this area was an immature.

The time of Christmas Counts is not the best time of the year for the bald eagle. As Mearns observed a century ago, the peak comes in late February when the Hudson River ice breaks up and eagles ride the floes to fish or, more likely, bully the gulls out of the fish they find. In 1935, for example, only one bald eagle appeared at Piermont on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count, yet I had 12 for that year. And in both 1934 and 1936, the count was zero at Christmas time, yet I had 78 for my 139 field trips in 1936--second only to the sparrow hawk in abundance among raptors that year. Even so, until the population crash of the mid-1950s, the bald eagle was a fixture on the local Christmas Counts. On the Rockland Audubon Society count it was recorded every year from 1947 through 1955, with counts of seven each in 1948 and 1950 and of eight in 1952. After a blank in 1956, the eagle bounced back to seven birds in 1958, then dipped to one and two in the next two years, zero in 1961, two in 1962, and since then only one each in 1966 and 1971. Thus it has been recorded 16 times on the 29 RAS counts. Experience on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts is similar: only one miss (1949) from 1946 through 1960, with highs of four birds each in 1950 and 1955, and since then only single birds in 1962, 1964, and 1968--a total of 17 appearances in 28 counts.

Over the years, so many summer visitants have been reported that it is difficult to determine the start of a fall migration, especially since that migration has been weak in recent years. The Hook Mountain Hawk Watch had only five bald eagles in 1971 (the same number as golden), one in 1972 (three golden), three in 1973 (seven golden), four in 1974 (three golden), seven in 1975 (four golden). The first bald eagle in the 1975 watch, an immature, was on the early date of Aug. 29. On the basis of pre-crash records, it might be fair to say that most fall migrants date from about Sept. 3 and that spring dates extend to about May 18.

Summer records include former breeding near West Point, noted by John Bull in his books; May 26, 1925 at Palisades, (Thomas P. Gilman); June 2, 1974, a probable second-year bird over the Hudson at Piermont (Anthony F. Amos); most of the summer of 1965, an adult south of Haverstraw (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); July 9 and 10, 1935 at Palisades (Robert F. Deed, Donald W. Deed); Aug. 1, 1969 at Storm King Mountain (Eugene R. Brown); Aug. 12, 1962 over New City (Frank Steffens); Aug. 22, 1969 at Hook Mountain (Ed and Lana Mills); Aug. 24, 1933 at Palisades (Gilman).



Immature

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

NORTHERN HARRIER [MARSH HAWK]

Circus cyaneus



Adult, Female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Constant resident.
1878-82	Mearns	Abundant resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common resident, breeds May 20.
1898	Fisher	Fairly common summer resident, breeds; occasional winter resident.
1908	Brownell	A fairly common summer resident.
1923	Griscom	Uncommon summer resident, common transient.
1927	Kuerzi	Formerly bred, now a fairly common transient, rare in winter.
1940	Carr	Uncommon transient, March to November.
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon resident, a few pairs breed in Rockland County.
1960	Orth	Regular fairly common spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant, rare resident.

In the past 40 or 50 years, this hawk has remained about as constant in numbers as any raptor has. It can still be found in the breeding season at the Piermont marsh and, at times, in the Hackensack Valley and the West Haverstraw-Grassy Point marshes. These could

well be resident birds, since Piermont, Grassy Point, and Iona Island are about the only places the species has turned up on either of the local Christmas Counts. The maximum number for one day at one point may be the count of 23 on

Sept. 15, 1975 by the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch which totaled 26: for the 1975 season.

This hawk has been recorded only nine times in the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with a high of two birds each in 1948, 1949, 1953, and 1974. On the Bear Mountain count, it has been recorded only three times in 28 years--in 1947, 1951, and 1953. On the six

Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts at Piermont, it was recorded only once, in 1937.

Apart from Christmas Counts, we have only one winter record from years past: Jan. 12, 1957 at Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). However, Anthony F. Amos has recently found the Piermont marsh bird regularly--eight times in December, 1975, and twice in February, 1976.



Adult, Female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

OSPREY

Pandion haliaetus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	In every part of the state; breeds.
1878-82	Mearns	Common transient, occasional summer resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Common local summer resident; breeds May 2.
1898	Fisher	Common transient, rare summer resident.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Uncommon transient visitant.
1927	Kuerzi	Very common transient, occasional in summer.
1940	Carr	Regular transient.
1942	Cruickshank	Fairly common transient.
1960	Orth	Fairly common spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Fairly common migrant, casual summer and winter visitant.

Like the bald eagle, this species suffered a crash in the mid-1950s, when every sighting suddenly became significant enough to report. But its numbers never dipped as low as those of the eagle, and its recovery has been stronger. The slump was nonetheless shocking. In my own 172 field trips in 1935, I saw 25 ospreys, and in 139 trips in 1936, I saw 41. During the

1960s, an equally active birder might go two or three years without seeing even one osprey.

Spring: Mar. 28, 1954 at Queensboro Lake (Edward D. Treacy) to June 6, 1960, same lake (John C. Orth, Thomas Lenoir).

Summer: June 12, 1935 at Palisades (Robert F. Deed); June 21, 1975, a bird carrying a large fish at Rockland Lake (Donald S. Deed, Philip Meisner); July 20, 1963 at Lake De Forest (Morton Isler); Aug. 7, 1960, same lake (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Aug. 7, 1963 over Germonds (Edwin Gamble). Bull notes breeding near West Point in the 1870s.

Fall: Aug. 22, 1933 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) to Nov. 3, 1934 over the Hudson off Dunderberg (William H. Carr, Daniel B. Beard).

According to the log of the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch, the main body of fall migrants passes in September and early October. A high one-day count is 25 on Sept. 27, 1975, in a fall when ospreys totaled 180.

Winter: One bird remained through the winter of 1956-57 at Lake De Forest (Jean Kolars); Dec. 26, 1957, a bird flying low over West Nyack on a stormy day (Frances H. Irving). The species has never been recorded on a local Christmas Count.

GYRFALCON
Falco rusticolus



White Morph, Adult (Captive Falconry Bird)

Photo Credit: Jack H. Hecht

On a day of a heavy spring hawk flight, with eight other species represented, I counted a dark-colored gyrfalcon on Apr. 19, 1936 over the Tiorati Brook Road in the Park. Points in favor of this identification include my then complete familiarity with the local peregrine falcons that nested on the Hudson Valley cliffs and the thus significant observation that this bird was much

larger, faster-flying, and more powerful in its wingbeat; also the fact that I had a long look as it crossed the valley and had two crows near enough to it for size comparison. Thus, the status of this species locally ranges from hypothetical to accidental. We have no other record of it.

PEREGRINE FALCON

Falco peregrinus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"Frequently taken", may breed.
1878-82	Mearns	Resident; breeds.
1898	Chapman	Rare summer resident, fairly common transient.
1898	Fisher	Occasional.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon summer resident; breeds.
1923	Griscom	Resident on the Palisades.
1927	Kuerzi	"Fairly common visitor at almost any season".
1940	Carr	Summer resident, breeds at Storm King and Crow' s Nest; also migrant and sometimes winters.
1942	Cruickshank	Permanent resident in a few chosen localities.
1960	Orth	Regular rare permanent resident, regular rare spring and fall transient; nests.
1976	Current status	Formerly uncommon resident and migrant, now only a rare migrant.

The decline and fall of the peregrine falcon in the Hudson Valley has been best documented by Richard and Kathleen Herbert in their chapter of "Peregrine Falcon Populations: Their Biology and Decline," by Joseph J. Hickey (1969,

University of Wisconsin Press). The Herberts' study extended from 1931 until the last of the onetime nine breeding pairs disappeared in 1961. The peak of nine breeding pairs for the present century was in 1947. they found.

In summary of the Herberts' findings for the eight eyries they watched over the years, 1951 was the last year for young at any of these sites, 1957 or 1959 was the last year for a pair, and 1961 was the last year for a single bird. In addition to the effect of pesticides, the peregrines were plagued by falconers and, along the Palisades, by the disturbance of the construction of the Palisades Parkway. Now that the birds are gone, perhaps it need not be a secret that one or two nesting sites were on the Palisades just south of the New York-New Jersey line, one or two were at Hook Mountain, two were on either side of Rockland Lake Landing, one was in the Bear Mountain area (including an abortive nesting in 1958 on the west tower of the Bear Mountain Bridge, where the heating of the steel by summer sun cooked and cracked the eggs), and one or two were on Storm King Mountain at the north end of West Point.

On the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts that included Piermont between 1934 and 1941, two "duck hawks" were counted at Piermont-Alpine in 1934 and 1936, and one in 1940. On the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, one bird was seen in 1952, two in 1953, and one in 1961. On the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, either one or two birds were seen on 12 counts from 1946 through 1957. The regularity of the local birds, only slightly augmented by migrants, is demonstrated by my own totals of 12 birds in 1935 and 18 in

1936, without making a special effort to see them. Since the peregrines began to vanish in the late 1950s, we have kept all records of sightings, and the list is poor indeed--only four occurrences from 1959 through 1969: Oct. 9, 1959, one chasing a marsh hawk at the Piermont marsh (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Sept. 5, 1965, one chasing sandpipers at the north end of Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble); Sept. 16, 1965, one flying over Lederle Laboratories, Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens); May 15, 1969, one over Haverstraw Bay (Mr. and Mrs. Steffens).

The Hook Mountain Hawk Watch has recorded peregrines every year since its inception in 1971: four in that fall season, seven in 1972, and two each in 1973, 1974, and 1975. Anthony F. Amos made an encouraging observation in 1973, when he saw a female at Piermont Pier on May 2, a male near Palisades (some three miles away) on May 4, a male again there on May 20, and a probable female there on May 22.

John Bull's "Birds of New York State" cites an interesting banding record: a nestling banded at "Rockland Lake" (probably Rockland Lake Landing, on the river side of the ridge) on June 11, 1939 and found dead at Jersey City in February, 1943.

1983 Addendum --Some encouraging numbers on the Hook Mt. Hawk Watch: 9 in Fall 1977, a new high of 11 in Fall 1979.

MERLIN

Falco columbarius



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Not uncommon, more numerous in autumn.
1878-82	Mearns	Uncommon transient visitant.
1898	Chapman	Common transient visitant.
1898	Fisher	Fairly common transient visitant, Apr. 1 to May 11 and Aug. 10 to Oct. 15.
1908	Brownell	Uncommon transient visitant.
1923	Griscom	Uncommon spring transient, much rarer in fall.
1927	Kuerzi	Uncommon transient, Apr. 18 to May 17 and Aug. 26 to Oct. 21.
1940	Carr	Rare migrant, records for May and October.
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon transient visitant, casual in winter or summer.
1960	Orth	Regular rare spring and fall transient.
1976	Current status	Rare to uncommon migrant, both spring and fall; casual winter visitant.

This handsome little hawk seems to be increasing, though any sighting remains noteworthy. Our records show only three occurrences during the 1930s, four in the 1940s, six in the 1950s, three in the 1960s, and six from 1970 through at Hook Mountain. Inasmuch as we had more active observers qualified to make a positive identification during the 1950s and

1960s, the recent increase in numbers seems real. Perhaps the entire Eastern population of merlins is expanding.

Spring: The most remarkable early spring--or late winter--date was Mar. 30, 1949 at Queensboro Lake (Bear Mountain Trailside Museum staff). Other dates are Apr. 7, 1973,

one on the spring Hook Mountain Hawk Watch; Apr. 11, 1955 at West Mountain in the Park (John C. Orth); Apr. 17, 1971, two at Hook Mountain (Ed and Lana Mills. reported in the July 1971 "Kingbird"); Apr. 24, 1960 at New City (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Apr. 25, 1960 at South Nyack (Robert F. Deed); May 10, 1952 at Stony Point (the Steffenses); May 13, 1951 at Stony Point (Frank Steffens); May 15, 1974 at South Spring Valley (Rolf Carstens, Malcolm Gardner).

Fall: A specimen from Nyack on Aug. 10, 1889 is mentioned in Dr. A. K. Fisher's "Hawks and Owls of the United States in Relation to Agriculture" (1893). The next earliest date is Aug. 24, 1971, when Mr. and Mrs. Deed and son Donald S. Deed saw a merlin pass low overhead at the Hackensack Swamp in Blauvelt to buzz a broad-winged hawk perched in a small dead tree. Other fall dates: Sept. 15, 1953 at Lake Welch in the Park (John C. Orth, John Kenney);

Sept. 22, 1935 on Tiorati Brook Road in the Park (Deed); Oct. 1, 1964, a bird perched not 50 feet away at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Deed); Oct. 2, 1935 at Palisades (Deed); Oct. 11, 1936 near Queensboro Lake (Deed); Oct. 12, 1947 in Bear Mountain Park (Orth, John Bull, George Komoroski); Oct. 17, 1974, two at Bear Mountain (Mr. and Mrs. Deed); Oct. 19, 1954 at Piermont Pier (David O. Hill, Thomas Dow); Oct. 21, 1947 in Bear Mountain Park (Kenney, Stanley O. Grierson); Oct. 27, 1975, two on the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch; Oct. 29, 1949 at Bear Mountain (Samuel Yeaton). From 1971 through 1975, the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch has recorded respectively 7, 7, 9, 6, and 13 merlins.

Winter: Dec. 27, 1950 at Dunderberg on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (Orth, Kenney); Dec. 28, 1973, one well seen at Tallman Mountain, Piermont, where it had been most of the fall (Anthony F. Amos).

AMERICAN KESTREL

Falco sparverius



Adult Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Common, breeds; a few winter.
1878-82	Mearns	Rare resident, abundant transient visitant.
1898	Chapman	Uncommon resident, abundant transient visitant.
1898	Fisher	Rare resident.
1908	Brownell	Fairly common summer resident.
1923	Griscom	Common resident.
1927	Kuerzi	Common resident, numbers reinforced by migrants in April and October.
1940	Carr	Summer resident, breeds; also many migrants; occasionally winters.
1942	Cruickshank	Common permanent resident.
1960	Orth	Regular fairly common spring and fall transient, recorded several times in winter; very rarely nests in Park
1976	Current status	Uncommon breeder, very common migrant, uncommon winter visitant.

It is tempting to appraise this hawk as a permanent resident whose numbers are swelled by migrants, spring and fall, but we have no evidence that the same birds are here summer and winter. Nonetheless, birds are seen all year round. The species has been one of the most

regular raptors on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, having been missed only once in 29 years--on the fogbound 1951 count. However, numbers have lately been much diminished; the RAS count scored 13 birds in 1953, 14 in 1959, 16 in 1960, and 15 in

1961 but only five in 1971, two in 1972, four in 1973, five in 1974, and ten in 1975. The species has appeared only 11 times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with a high of four in 1961.

The abundance of the species on fall migration can be gauged by the record of the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch: 623 in 1971, 324 in rainy 1972, 354 in 1973, 479 in 1974, and 668 in 1975, when the maximum in one day reached 57 birds on Sept. 27.

With the suburbanization of Rockland County, it seems likely that the number of breeding pairs has been greatly reduced in the past 30 years. And, as Jack Orth notes, breeding in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park has never been anything but very rare. Still, until the last dozen years, nesting pairs were fairly numerous in the vicinities of Suffern, New City, Orangeburg, Blauvelt, and Pearl River. In the Suffern area, Wilbur S. Mount noted that young left the nesting box on June 27, 1960.



Adult Female



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

PARTRIDGES, GROUSE, AND TURKEYS

RUFFED GROUSE

Bonasa umbellus



Adult

Photo Credit: Tom Cunningham

1844	De Kay	resident, breeds in all parts of the state
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	uncommon resident, breeds May 10
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	"still surviving locally at a few points" in New Jersey
1927	Kuerzi	"it is possible that a pair or two still survive"
1940	Carr	permanent resident, not common; breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common in wilder sections of Rockland
1960	Orth	regular fairly common permanent resident; breeds
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common resident

This bird seems hardier than it is given credit for being. Even severe winters appear to have little effect on its numbers, and it can be found not only in the relatively wild Bear Mountain-Harriman Park but also in the Park fragments in Rockland County proper, such as the Hook Mountain, High Tor, and Blauvelt sections. It has been recorded on 22 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society

Christmas Counts, with highs of 12 in 1972 and 11 in 1971, and on 26 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. The Bear Mountain counts provide our only real evidence of the much-publicized cycle of grouse abundance and scarcity, though even that profile of numbers is not perfectly regular. Starting in 1946 with six birds, the Bear Mountain count reached eight in 1949,

missed entirely in 1950, peaked at 26 in 1955, dipped in the next two years to seven and three, rose to a plateau of 13-9-11, and

then reached an all-time peak of 47 in 1961. Since then, the highest counts have been 12 in 1965, 20 in 1968, and 18 in 1969.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT

Phasianus colchicus



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	
1878-82	Mearns	
1898	Chapman	
1898	Fisher	
1908	Brownell	
1923	Griscom	"first noted in the Bronx Region in 1916. uncommon but increasing"
1927	Kuerzi	"increased markedly since its introduction several years ago"
1940	Carr	permanent resident, breeds; entire park
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	rare resident, declining since the mid-1940s

As farmland has yielded to tract development, this once-common introduced bird has dwindled in numbers. Still, it has been recorded on 24 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with highs of eight, six, and seven birds in 1959, 1960, and 1961; counts since 1968 have been limited to single birds. The species has

been recorded on five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas counts, all singles except for three birds in 1961. Nesting pairs and young have been seen on Piermont Pier in the past three years, and breeding may also continue in a few localities of inland Rockland.

Phasianidae



Adult, Male and Female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GRAY [HUNGARIAN] PARTRIDGE

Perdix perdix

An introduced species of uncertain local status. At an unspecified date in the early 1950s, one was reportedly trapped at Lake Kanawauke, in the Park. In mid-November,

1958, a bird was caught in a muskrat trap near Viola (*fide* John LeMaire), and on Apr. 30, 1960 Wilbur S. Mount saw one in a field near Suffern.

WILD TURKEY

Meleagris gallopavo



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

James De Kay, 18441: "I have not met with them in this state, where they were once exceedingly numerous, but as I am well informed, are now found only in the counties of Sullivan, Rockland, Orange, Allegany, and Cattaraugus."

1983 Addendum -- Reported well established along Mine Road, back of West Point, in Summer 1982 (Edward D. Treacy).

NORTHERN BOBWHITE
Colinus virginianus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	breeds in every part of the state
1878-82	Mearns	resident; breeds
1898	Chapman	fairly common resident; breeds May 26
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common resident; breeds
1923	Griscom	even rarer than ruffed grouse
1927	Kuerzi	locally still a fairly common permanent resident
1940	Carr	rare permanent resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	gradually disappearing
1960	Orth	no records since 1935
1976	Current status	very rare resident, with some records perhaps based on escaped pen-raised birds

Old records for Bear Mountain-Harriman Park ranged from Jan. 16 1935 (H. A. Hochbaum) to July 16, 1925 (William H. Carr), and residents of the New City area report local birds prior to 1940. From the late 1930s until 1958, we had no records at all. Then Mr. and Mrs. Irving G. Kennedy saw and heard two birds at their Stony Point

home on Apr. 19, 1958; it was noted, however, that a sportsmen's group was raising birds in pens a mile or so away. On Sept. 23, 1958, Mrs. John A. Slater heard a bobwhite calling on Ridge Road, New City, and from May 14, 1960 through June (Frances H. Irving) a pair were seen at West Nyack--neither site being near any known

quail pens. A pair at Stony Point on May 18, 1961 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deeds, Eugene R. Brown) might have been suspect, but not the ones at Hook Mountain, Haverstraw, on June 17, 1961 (Deed), at Bardonia on July 23, 1961 (Theodore Eiben), or at Valley Cottage on June 2, 1967 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert Milligan). The species' two appearances on RAS Christmas Counts--four birds each in 1968 and 1969--are also considered legitimate. The only

record on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts was a single bird on Dec. 30, 1972.

1984 Addendum -- Calling near Lake Tappan on Aug. 3, 1980 (Peter Derven) and at Buckberg Lake, Tomkins Cove, on June 11, June 20, and July 14, 1982 (Deed). Also heard at Mahwah along the Ramapo River, on the wrong side of the state line from Suffern, in Summer 1982 by John Benzinger.

SANDHILL CRANE
Grus canadensis



Adults

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

One record at Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack, on Apr. 30, 1970, as reported in the "Kingbird" for July, 1970, page 152. Observers Ed and Lana Mills noted all field

marks (verification report filed) as the bird circled four times, as close as 150 yards, in a ten-minute period of observation.

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS

KING RAIL

Rallus elegans

1844	De Kay	--
1878-82	Mearns	--
1898	Chapman	--
1898	Fisher	--
1908	Brownell	--
1923	Griscom	"practically unknown in our area" (of New Jersey)
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient, one winter record
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	very rare summer resident
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient; one record
1976	Current status	rare breeder

Until the mid-1950s we had only two seemingly accidental records: May 19, 1925 at an old reservoir in Orangeburg (Jennie Fox) and Oct. 21, 1949, one found dead at Lake Nawahunta in Bear Mountain Park (Joseph Ossman). Then on Nov. 11, 1956 Thomas Dow flushed one in the Piermont marsh on a Rockland Audubon Society field trip. From May 16 to May 31, 1971, Anthony F. Amos saw birds three times in a wooded patch of the marsh adjacent to Tallman

Mountain, and on June 5, 1971 he found a dead king rail in the yard of his riverfront home in Piermont, a half-mile north of the marsh. On Sept. 11, 1971, Amos and Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed watched a king rail for 20 minutes in the open at Piermont Pier, showing its chestnut wing patches as it charged a female mallard that appeared almost the same size. Amos also saw a king rail at the Pier on May 14, 1976.

CLAPPER RAIL

Rallus longirostris



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very abundant on the coast, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	occasional in fall
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, occasional winter resident
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	rare transient visitant
1923	Griscom	rare to accidental except at Long Beach, L.I.
1927	Kuerzi	formerly a summer resident
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	away from the coast, strictly accidental
1960	Orth	no recent records
1976	Current status	casual breeder, perhaps increasing

Our first local record was of three birds at Grassy Point on Sept. 10, 1953 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). On July 3, 1959, Edwin Gamble, exploring the Piermont marsh by canoe, found an adult with four young. Dr. Hopper saw a clapper rail walking across the River

Road, Grand View, under the Tappan Zee Bridge on Sept. 4, 1963. On May 13, 1972, Robert and Stephen Connor and Eric Single saw two birds at Piermont Pier, where Anthony F. Amos has since seen single birds on Oct. 12, 1975 and May 8, 1976.



Adult

Photo Credit: Dave Baker

VIRGINIA RAIL
Rallus limicola



Adult

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	in freshwater throughout the state
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common local summer resident, rare winter visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, leaves Sept. 29
1908	Brownell	summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	formerly a common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	irregular rare summer resident, occasionally nests at Iona Island
1976	Current status	locally fairly common breeder, uncommon winter resident

This is another of those species recorded virtually all year round (few if any dates in June and August) yet may not be resident as far as specific individual birds are concerned. In summer, it has been regular and fairly common (upward of a half-dozen birds per site) in the Hackensack swamps and the Piermont, West Haverstraw; and Iona Island marshes. It has been recorded

once on the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts (a single bird at Piermont in 1936), four times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society counts, and twice on the 28 Bear Mountain counts. It was known to stay through the winter at Piermont in 1955-56 (five birds--David O. Hill, Thomas Dow, James Bloor) and 1975-76, when Anthony F. Amos had a maximum of three birds on

Dec. 27, 1975. In the Piermont marsh at
dawn on Nov. 30, 1975, Amos had a high

count of 12 birds.

SORA

Porzana carolina



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	appears sparingly, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	rare summer resident, breeds; common fall transient
1898	Fisher	common transient, May and Aug. 19 to Oct. 24
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient, uncommon summer resident; breeds
1923	Griscom	very rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	Uncommon; spring and common fall transient
1940	Carr	regular transient at Iona Island marsh
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, very rare breeder
1960	Orth	no recent Park records
1976	Current status	rare breeder and migrant

Of our 18 records for this species, nine are in spring and only four in autumn, belying its reputation for being commoner in fall. Along with the five summer records, including an immature on the Hackensack Creek on Aug. 28, 1957 (Edwin Gamble), this suggests that many of the spring birds are settling into summer territory. All our records are since

1948 and all are from the Hackensack swamps, Piermont marsh, and Grassy Point. Dates range from May 2, 1954 at Piermont (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) and May 2, 1972 at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos) to Nov. 4, 1951 at Piermont (RAS field trip). Maximum count is five at the Piermont marsh on May 3, 1953 (RAS field trip).

Rallidae

COMMON MOORHEN [COMMON GALLINULE]
Gallinula chloropus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare visitor from the south
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare summer resident, June 5 to Nov. 5
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	now unknown as summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient and decreasing as summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds, Iona Island marsh
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient and even more uncommon summer resident
1960	Orth	occasional very rare fall transient, only one recent record
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder, casual winter visitant

Of our 22 records, one date from the 1930s, five from the 1950s, six from the 1960s, and ten from the first half of the 1970s--an accelerating pace that suggests a real increase in abundance. This bird has been found in more areas than even the Virginia rail. In addition to the Hackensack swamps and the Piermont and Grassy Point-West Haverstraw marshes, sites include Iona Island (one record on Oct. 3, 1954 by John

C. Orth) and Congers and Rockland Lakes. The earliest spring date of Apr. 18, 1937 (Robert F. Deed, Richard N. Deed, William H. Carr) was, in fact, at still another site, the marsh that is now flooded by Lake Welch in the Palisades Interstate Park. The latest fall dates are Nov. 6, 1954 at Piermont (Thomas Dow) and Nov. 11, 1975, also at Piermont (Anthony F. Amos).

The first positive evidence of local breeding was Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper's observation of a female feeding young at the Piermont marsh on May 28, 1953. In 1963 and 1964, while Congers Lake was drained and its weedy bottom was attracting marsh and shore birds, high daily counts of four birds were made by Dr. Hopper and Morton Isler. Recent observations of young birds at Piermont by Tony Amos include July 31, 1973 (one adult, one juvenile) and Aug. 18, 1974 (a well-grown immature).

Two winter, dates: Dec. 18, 1970 at Rockland Lake (Philip Meisner) and Feb. 10, 1972 on the Hackensack Creek at Blauvelt (Emily Paulson).

1983 Addendum -- Apparently breeding in Mount Ivy Swamp (June 9, 1979, Robert Speiser, John Benzinger) and Hackensack Creek south of West Nyack (May 21, 1982, Donald S. Deed, through at least June 1).

AMERICAN COOT
Fulica americana



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found March to November, may breed
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient, local summer resident
1898	Fisher	common transient, Apr. 28 to May 16 and Sept. 22 to Nov. 13
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient
1940	Carr	uncommon transient; Dec. 27, 1939 at Iona Island marsh
1942	Cruickshank	rare in spring, summer, and winter; uncommon in fall
1960	Orth	regular uncommon to common fall transient, occasional in winter, no spring records
1976	Current status	common migrant, very common winter visitant, accidental summer visitant

Perhaps no other water or marsh bird has increased in abundance in the past 30 years so spectacularly as this species. In my own experience, the evaluations of Griscom, Kuerzi, and Carr were quite well founded for their times. Now, however, the coot has moved into a different order of magnitude, especially as a winter resident. It remains

primarily a winter resident of the Rockland County lakes, even when those waters are heavily iced. It is far less common in the Park and the Highlands than in Rockland County proper. Thus it has appeared on only five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (with a high of 33 back in 1948) in contrast to 23 of the 29 Rockland Audubon

Society counts, in which the trend of numbers is illuminating: 2 birds in 1947, 11 in 1948, one in each of the next two years, 12 in 1954, 2 in 1955, 80 in 1956, 7 in 1957, one, in 1958, 9 in 1959, 2 in 1960, 48 in 1964, 50 in 1965, 207 in 1966, 70 in 1967, 34 in 1968, 4 in 1969, 128 in 1970, 198 in 1971, 255 in 1972, 104 in 1973, 152 in 1974, and 113 in 1975. The low spots since 1955 are almost entirely attributable to heavier than normal freezing of lakes.

Spring: Feb. 24, 1952, six apparently early migrants at Haverstraw, where none had been found wintering (RAS field trip) to May 31, 1950 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

Summer: A pair observed through June, 1953 at Congers Lake, apparently breeding (carrying food, for example) but no nest found (Dr. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

Fall: Sept. 17, 1953 at Iona Island (John C. Orth) to Nov. 2, 1958, a flock of 26 at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed). A high autumn count of 90 on Lake De Forest on Oct. 28, 1956 (Dr. Hopper). Many December and January dates.

1983 Addendum -- A second summer record: Aug. 10, 1981 at Piermont Pier (Deed).

PIPING PLOVER

Charadrius melodus



Adult with chick

Photo Credit: Jack H. Hecht

An accidental fall visitant; two birds seen alongside three semipalmated plovers at the north end of Lake

De Forest on Sept. 24 and 26, 1966 by Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper and Alma Polhemus.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER
Charadrius semipalmatus



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	--
1878-82	Mearns	--
1898	Chapman	--
1898	Fisher	--
1908	Brownell	--
1923	Griscom	"apparently the Hudson Valley is a regular migration route for a limited number of individuals"
1927	Kuerzi	regular but uncommon spring transient, fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common fall migrant
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient; one record
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, more records in fall than in spring

Apparently the first record in the area was the one to which Jack Orth alluded, his own observation of a bird at Lake Sebago Beach in the Park on Aug. 6, 1950. But soon the records poured in, starting with three birds on Sept. 15, 16, and 23, 1951 in a

drained pond at Grassy Point (Frances H. Irving, Dorah Herrington, Robert F. Deed, and others). Of our total 24 records, only five have been in spring: May 6 to 15, 1976, three birds at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); May 13, 1972, three at the

Pier (Amos); May 14, 1964, five at the Pier (Eugene R. Brown, Deed); May 14, 1966, one at the Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed); May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Frank R. Steffens). Fall dates range from July 23, 1974, two at the Pier (Amos) and July 31, 1955 at Cornwall Bay (Treacy) to Sept. 26, 1966 at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma :Polhemus). The

maximum daily count so far is six birds at Piermont Pier on Aug. 13, 1966 (the Deeds)

1983 Addendum -- Several new records from Piermont Pier and Lake Tappan, mostly in late July and through August.

KILLDEER

Charadrius vociferus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident, in the interior in summer and on the coast in winter
1878-82	Mearns	rare transient visitant
1898	Chapman	rare summer resident, locally fairly common transient
1898	Fisher	rare fall transient visitant, Sept. 28 to Oct. 25
1908	Brownell	--
1923	Griscom	rare local summer resident, rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, uncommon summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient. increasing as summer resident; breeds sparsely in Rockland County; casual in winter
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon-to fairly common resident, sometimes very common in fall

This bird displays a remarkable sturdiness in the face of human encroachment; even nesting on the periphery of shopping-center parking lots after its preferred farmland has been wiped out. Its numbers have scarcely changed in the past 40 or

45 years, once it survived the era of gunning that made it so rare in the days of Mearns, Chapman, Fisher and Griscom. .Brownell, Rockland County's reporter for the Eaton state bird books of 1910-14, did not even mention its local existence. Yet in the

Charadriidae

mid-1930s I knew of at least four nesting pairs in a small portion of Rockland County, and the killdeer appeared on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count at Piermont marsh in 1935. It is, as Orth's evaluation suggests, less common in the Highlands; only once, on Jan. 2, 1972, has it appeared on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. In contrast, it has been listed on 19 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts,

in numbers up to seven (in 1967), eight (in 1971), nine (in 1973 and 1975), and ten (in 1970).

There are many winter records apart from those on the Christmas Counts. The maximum one-day count of which I am aware is approximately 60 birds in an upland field near the Rockland State Hospital on Oct. 29, 1959 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).



Adult, on nest

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER

Pluvialis dominica



Adult, summer (breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall migrant for which we have only two records: an unspecified date in September, 1953 at Grassy Point Beach (Betty Barron) and Sept. 13, 1963, two on the grounds of Lederle Laboratories near Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens).

There is also reference by Mearns to a bird shot at Cornwall. As scarce as the bird may be in our area, it has sporadically appeared in numbers up to 500 in the Blooming Grove district of Orange County, a dozen miles from our self-imposed limits.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER

Pluvialis squatarola



Juvenile, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant, May and September
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant (on the coast)
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	accidental visitant at Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	rare spring, uncommon but regular fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	"dozens of widely scattered records for the Hudson River"
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant and summer visitant

As Kuerzi suggests, this plover is much more common in fall than in spring; only three of our two dozen records are in May, and by far the most are in August. The species is relatively new to our local list. Our first record was on Aug. 5, 1950 at the basin near the Haverstraw rock crusher (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels). The high one-

day count still is six birds, at Cornwall on Aug. 13, 1955 during Hurricane Connie (Edward D. Treacy). Records have increased in frequency since 1961, especially at Lake De Forest, an otherwise rather sterile reservoir, and at the growing flats on the downriver side of Piermont Pier.

Spring: May 14, 1964, one at the Pier (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed); May 15 to 29, 1976, four at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos); May 24, 1975, one at Cornwall, reported in the July 1975 "Kingbird."

Summer: Most of our records are in August--plus a few in July, 1974--for birds summering at Piermont Pier or moving south early.

Fall: The migration movement appears to start about Aug. 16 (single birds at Piermont Pier, seen by David O. Hill and Mr. and Mrs. Deed). Other dates include: Sept. 5, 1966 at Lake De Forest

(Edwin Gamble), Sept. 10, 1971, a bird in spring plumage at Piermont Pier (Amos); Sept. 15, 1968 at Lake Tappan (Rockland Audubon Society field trip); Sept. 22, 1966 at the north end of Lake De Forest (Dr. Hopper); Oct. 2, 1975, one at the Pier (Amos); Nov. 3, 1961 at Lake De Forest (John M. Price); Nov. 4, 1973 at the Pier (Amos and the Deeds)

1983 Addendum --Many records; new late fall date of Nov. 7, 1980 at Lake Tappan (Deed).



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLACK-NECKED STILT
Himantopus mexicanus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum -- A new species, reported by Philip Meisner, who saw one feeding in tall grass

outside the Rockland Lake Nature Center with Cattle Egrets on May 17, 1973.

SANDPIPERS AND PHALAROPES

RUDDY TURNSTONE
Arenaria interpres



Adult, winter (non-breeding) plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A rare migrant that has been on our local list only since 1955 but seems to be increasing. Our first record was on July 31, 1955, three birds at Cornwall Bay (Edward D. Treacy). On Aug. 13 and 14, 1955, during Hurricane Connie, single birds appeared at Cornwall (Treacy) and at Piermont Pier (Robert F. Deed); the Cornwall bird on the 13th and the Piermont bird on the 14th. Four birds appeared at Lake De Forest on May 19, 1957 (Treacy, Frank R. Steffens), two at Piermont Pier

on Aug. 13, 1966 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed), a flock of 20 at the Pier on May 28, 1973 (Anthony F. Amos), one at the Pier on July 21, 1973 (Amos), and several at the Pier on July 23 to 26, 1974 (Amos)

1983 Addendum --Half a dozen new records, spring and fall.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK
Scolopax [Philohela] minor



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	breeds throughout state
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Feb. 19 to Dec. 2
1908	Brownell	common transient, fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	local summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	still breeds locally in limited numbers, fairly common transient
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds in moist woods throughout the Park
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident, common transient
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant, much more noticeable in spring; may still breed; rare winter visitant

Forty years ago, the woodcock nested all over Rockland County as well as in the adjacent Bear Mountain-Harriman Park. In the lower lands, nests tended to be in neglected farm fields close to patches of woods. No nest has been reported in at least 20 years. On the other hand, the volume of birds passing through in spring, as marked by,

courtship performances, is undiminished. Courtship flights are made from vestigial fields, even adjacent to real estate developments, and especially from clearings in the Blauvelt Section of the Park.

For a bird that depends on areas of soft mud for feeding, the woodcock is surprisingly hardy. It has been recorded on three of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts; one bird in 1965 and three each in 1971 and 1972. As early as Feb. 19 in 1955, John M. Price found a woodcock "bzzt-ing" at his home near New City, and we have several records of full courtship flights in the first half of March. At the other extreme, Robert F. Deed heard a woodcock in full courtship performance in Grand View on the unlikely date of Oct. 9, 1949.

A courting ground usually contains three to five cocks; the number of hen birds in their audience can only be guessed at. But woodcock do migrate in considerable numbers. On May 14, 1963, Frank R. Steffens saw a remarkable flock of 20 to 25 birds landing at dusk near Suffern.

Spring: Mar. 15, 1953, one in courtship (Theodore B. Eiben) and Mar. 15, 1962 at Palisades (Mr. and

Mrs. Archer Stansbury) to May 24, 1963 on Tiorati Brook Road in the Park (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown).

Fall: Oct. 9, 1949 (Deed) to Nov. 23, 1934 in Bear Mountain Park (H. A. Hochbaum).

Winter: In addition to the RAS Christmas Counts, records include: Dec. 3, 1959 at Pearl River (Steffens); Feb. 19, 1955 (Price); Feb. 19, 1976, two at Piermont and also one at a later date in the month (Anthony F. Amos); Feb. 27, 1954 at New City (Price); Feb. 28, 1951 at Pomona (Homer S. Kelsey); Mar. 2, 1961 at Tappan (Nancy McDowell); Mar. 3, 1961 at Palisades (the Stansburys); Mar. 4 to at least Mar. 13, 1975, courtship every morning at Valley Cottage (Lester LeViness); Mar. 4, 1972, two near Suffern (Bruce Edinger); Mar. 3, 1964 near Suffern (John Le Maire); Mar. 10, 1955, full courtship at 11 p.m. (Hopper, Brown); Mar. 13, 1957 at New City (the Steffenses).

WILSON'S [COMMON] SNIPE
Gallinago [Capella] gallinago



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to winter, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient, occasional winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	regular and fairly common spring and fall transient, casual in summer, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	regular transient, April-May and September-October
1942	Cruickshank	common transient; a few winter
1960	Orth	occasional rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	fairly common spring and fall migrant, uncommon winter visitant

We have had to revise our thinking about this bird several times in the past 45 years or so. At one time it was considered quite rare, as it still seems to be in the Highlands. During the 1950s, though, it appeared in increasing numbers, mostly in pastures and farm lands that were soon to be

supplanted by suburbanization. Yet as those habitats were preempted, snipe turned up more and more often at streams and reservoirs. On balance, the snipe is probably commoner today than it has ever been before. And it is even harder than the woodcock; it has been recorded in seven

of the 29 years of Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, and in numbers of up to four birds.

Spring: Mar. 14, 1954, eight birds at New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) to May 27, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Fall: Sept. 28, 1938 near Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to Nov. 30, 1952 at Iona Island (Mr. and Mrs. John C. Orth). On Nov. 27, 1975, Amos had a high count of 12 birds at the Piermont marsh, and he saw snipe on 16 days of that month.

Winter: Records in addition to the RAS Christmas Counts include one at the Piermont marsh on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of Dec. 26, 1937 (Dr. Ernst Mayr, Mr. and Mrs. Charles K.

Nichols, Robert F. Deed, Donald W. Deed, Richard N. Deed); Dec. 19, 1957, several at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); Dec. 29, 1961, same place (the Steffenses); Jan. 1, 1966 at Pomona (Homer S. Kelsey). Jan. 13, 1974 at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Eric Single); Jan. 28, 1976 at the Pier (Amos); Feb. 14, 1960 on Sparkill Creek (Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Cooke); Feb. 22, 1972 near Suffern and seen regularly to Apr. 16, possibly a very early migrant (Bruce Edinger); Mar. 3, 1960, three at New City (Dr. Hopper); Mar. 10, 1955 at New City (Dr. Hopper).

1983 Addendum --Three added winter records, including a bird seen in flight on Jan. 10, 1982 at Rockland Lake North (the Deeds) that might have been a candidate for the bent-beak award--the temperature was down near zero!

UPLAND SANDPIPER
Bartramia longicauda



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Although this bird nests to the north of our area, the destruction of farmlands, especially in the western town of Ramapo, has removed virtually all attractive nesting or resting places. As far as I can determine, the area has never had any breeding records. With only six known records, all since 1951, the species must be regarded as a casual spring and fall migrant, perhaps already or soon to be no more than accidental.

Spring: Apr. 4, 1951 at New City (Betty Barron); Apr. 26, 1961, one on the road at Iona Island (John C. Orth); late April, 1976 and May 13, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. L. Amos).

Fall: Sept. 16, 1969, one at Rockland Lake Park with a flock of 20 to 25 killdeer (Ruth Steffens); Oct. 17, 1953, two at Viola, near Suffern (Horner S. Kelsey and party).

WHIMBREL

Numenius phaeopus



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum--A new species; eight at Cornwall Bay on Aug. 8, 1981 (Vaughan Morrison et al.).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER

Actitis macularia



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	along every stream, April to November
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 19 to October; breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 29 to Oct. 23
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common local summer resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder, fairly common migrant

Few birds, especially in the shorebird category that was so oppressed by gunners in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, can show such consistency and near-unanimity of opinion among status evaluators over a century or more. In recent years, however, the former “common” breeding status has declined to uncommon”, defined by John Bull as one to six birds per day per locality.

This is not a bird that ordinarily appears in flocks, yet on Nov. 6, 1960 Edwin Gamble counted 17 in a flock at Germonds.

Dates for the spotted sandpiper blend indistinguishably from spring migration to summer residence and on to fall migration. Our earliest dates are Apr. 26, 1961 at Iona Island (John C.

Orth) and Apr. 27, 1952 at New City (John M. Price); our latest date is Nov. 23, 1969 at Cornwall (John Getgood).

1983 Addendum--Two remarkable winter records: Dec. 10; 1980, one at Piermont Pier (Dr. Victor Schwartz), and Jan. 5, 1983, one at Iona Island (Edward D. Treacy et al.). Not recorded previously in winter.



Adult, winter non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SOLITARY SANDPIPER

Tringa solitaria



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, Apr. 25 to May 24 and July 6 to Oct. 15
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient, May 1-25 and July
1898	Fisher	common transient, May 3-30, Aug. 27 to Oct. 2
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, occasionally numerous in the fall
1940	Carr	regular transient in May, August, September
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon spring and fall migrant

The historic evaluations of this bird's status are in dramatic contrast to those of the spotted sandpiper. Even the ranges of dates are outmoded. I would suspect that Jack Orth's 1960 statement holds true even today for the Highlands; most of the area's sightings since 1960 seem to have been on Lake De Forest and along the

Hudson, including points such as Piermont Pier at which shorebird conditions are improving rapidly. Numbers rarely exceed four or five birds in a day.

Spring: Apr. 17, 1973 at Piermont Pier (Eric Single) to June 11, 1958, five at Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble).

Fall: Aug. 6, 1934 in Bear Mountain area (H. A. Hochbaum) to the last week of October, 1961, four

near Cornwall (Mrs. John Dye).

WILLET

Catoptrophorus semipalmatus



Adult, *C. s. semipalmatus*, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

So far, an accidental visitant, with only two records: May 8, 1973, four at Piermont Pier, "very noisy and agitated" (Anthony Amos); May 18, 1976 at Pier (Amos). In view of the species' great increase in numbers along the Atlantic coast, these dates will hardly be the last for the Pier and other suitable riverfront localities.

1983 Addendum – A third record for May, 1976 at Cornwall Bay (Al Merritt) and a fourth for Aug. 7, 1981, our first fall or late summer record, one at Piermont Pier with a Lesser Yellowlegs (Deed).



Adult, *C. s. inornatus*, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

GREATER YELLOWLEGS

Tringa melanoleucus



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant, May and August-December
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient, arrives Apr. 20; July 20 to November
1898	Fisher	common transient; June 5, Oct. 28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	still regular but scarce
1927	Kuerzi	regular and common transient
1940	Carr	April and May records only
1942	Cruickshank	common transient
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, spring and fall; rare to uncommon summer visitant

The local status of the two yellowlegs has long been clouded by the presumed difficulties of identification. And, indeed, we have accepted records for the lesser yellowlegs only when the bird called or when direct size comparison was possible. However, relegating all other yellowlegs

to the present species is also unsatisfactory, especially because acceptable records since 1949 have shown that the lesser yellowlegs is much the commoner species in summer and may be at least equally common in spring and fall. Certainly we have many more records for the lesser, though

that may be primarily due to our efforts to build up a body of data for the "less familiar" bird. And certainly both species have been increasing in numbers in the past 15 years, though our flocks are nothing like the size of those on the coast.

Spring: Apr. 18, 1933 (Vivian B. Krum, Robert F. Deed) to May 25, 1954 at Iona Island (John C. Orth).

Summer: July 16, 1935 at Palisades (Deed); Aug. 11, 1935 (Deed); Aug. 11, 1968 at Lake Tappan (Mr. and Mrs. Deed).

Fall: Sept. 7, 1958 at Lake Welch (Orth) to Nov. 25, 1961 at Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble).

1983 Addendum --Our third summer record, July 17, 1980 at Lake Tappan (Deed). On Sept. 18, 1979, with Lake Tappan nearly dry during a drought, an unprecedented concentration there of 77 yellowlegs of both species.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS

Tringa flavipes



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	August, September; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	occasional transient visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant fall transient, rare spring transient
1898	Fisher	common fall transient, Aug. 25 to Oct. 5
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	decreasing even more than the greater yellowlegs
1927	Kuerzi	rare spring transient, common and sometimes abundant fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	rare spring and common fall transient
1960	Orth	occasional rare fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, more fall than spring records; fairly common summer visitant

Until 1949 we had no solid record at all for this species. As noted above, many records for migrations and summer seasons have been amassed since then, some 30 in all. Of these, seven are for spring. and six are for summer. The

highest one-day count is 12 at Piermont Pier on July 14, 1974 (Anthony F. Amos). That count is higher than any listed in our records for the greater yellowlegs.

Spring: Apr. 3, 1957 at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 27, 1948 at Orangeburg (Jennie Fox),

Summer: July 10, 1974, five at Piermont Pier, growing to 12 on July 14 and shrinking to three on July 28 (Amos); July 21, 1973, one at the Pier (Amos); July 26 to 29, 1952 at Lake Kanawauke in the Park (Kenneth Chambers); Aug. 3, 1971 at the

Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

Fall: Aug. 21, 1975, two at Piermont Pier (Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed) and Sept. 4, 1954 at the Pier (David O. Hill, Ethel Hill, James Bloor) to Nov. 1 and 2, 1959 at the Spring Valley Memorial Park (Dr. Hopper, Edwin Gamble).

PURPLE SANDPIPER
Calidris maritima



First winter plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum --A new species: Nov. 1, 1977, a bird on the concrete pierhead of Piermont Pier (Dr.

Victor Schwartz). A most surprising discovery of this primarily coastal bird.

RED KNOT

Calidris canutus rufa



Breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall migrant, recorded only twice. both times in recent years: Oct. 6, 1973, a flock of eight flying over and calling (Hook Mountain Hawk

Watch combined with Linnaean Society field trip); Aug. 16, 1975, one in bright plumage at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER

Calidris melanotos



Fall plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	few in spring; greatest numbers in August and September
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, Sept. 20 to Oct 16
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	now unknown in New York State portion of the region
1927	Kuerzi	rare spring and fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	irregular fall transient
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient
1976	Current status	now a rare migrant, chiefly in fall, after a period of being fairly common in the mid-1960s

Up to 1959 we had only five records for this species; in 1959 alone we had five records, and the numbers increased during the period of reservoir construction on the Hackensack Creek. It is noteworthy that we have had only one record since the Lake Tappan site was drained,

preparatory to cleaning and filling, in 1968. It is also noteworthy that only three of our 23 records have come from the Hudson River shore, two from Piermont Pier and one from Grassy Point. However, it is not surprising, since this sandpiper prefers grassy or muddy wet places; recent

spreading of the mudflats on the south side of Piermont Pier should generate more records there.

Spring: Mar. 27, 1954, an amazingly early date at New City (Betty Barron, Helene Stansbury, Ruth Steffens); May 13, 1951 at Orangeburg (Nancy Sickels); May 14, 1974 at South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner); May 18, 1961 at Piermont Pier (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed).

Summer: Aug. 5, 1962 at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Deed); Aug. 11, 1968 at Lake Tappan (the Deeds); Aug. 14, 1955 at Piermont Pier (Deed).

Fall: Sept. 5, 1966, several at north end of Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble) to Nov. 6, 1959, one at the Spring Valley Memorial Park (Gamble). In late September and early October, 1964, flocks of 12 and 15 at drained Congers Lake (many observers).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER

Calidris fuscicollis



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A very rare migrant, casual in spring. Griscom (1923) noted for the New York State portion of the region only that Fisher had had a September record at Ossining "many years ago," and Kuerzi (1927) called the species a "rare spring, uncommon fall transient." It is admittedly a difficult bird to single out from other "peeps" unless it takes wing or exposes its rump while preening. Yet it seems remarkable that we did not get any record at all until 1957.

In the last half of May, 1976, I found this bird to be co-dominant with the sanderling among shorebirds on the coast of the Carolinas, suggesting that its springtime scarcity in the New York area stems either from its being a very late migrant northward or its taking an inland course that bypasses this region. We have two persuasive spring records: three birds at Lake Tappan on May 4, 1967

(James Demes) and one bird at Piermont Pier on May 6, 1976 (Anthony F. Amos).

The autumn records: Aug. 5, 1962 at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); Aug. 13, 1966, three at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Aug. 21, 1975, two at the Pier (Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed); Aug. 31, 1957 at Lake De Forest (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Sept. 2, 1963, at least three and probably an entire flock of ten at Piermont Pier (the Deeds); last week of October, 1961, near Cornwall (Mrs. John Dye).

1983 Addendum --Several more fall records, up to five birds at Piermont Pier; latest fall date is now Sept. 10, 1979, all three birds at Lake Tappan (Deed).

LEAST SANDPIPER

Calidris minutilla



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident on coast except in breeding season
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, May and July 10-Sept. 1
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, May 9-22, leaves Oct. 3
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	common transient
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	common to very common migrant and summer visitant

Records prior to 1964 are mainly from inland ponds, lakes, and reservoirs, all but two of the dozens of records since 1964 have come from Piermont Pier and its spreading mudflat. High counts of more than 20 at Lake De Forest on Aug. 17, 1957 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) and 100 at Piermont Pier on May 14, 1964 (Eugene R.

Brown, Deed) have been supported in recent years by flocks of 35 to 75 at the Pier.

Dates range from May 11, 1952 at Orangeburg (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels, Deed) to the last "week of October, 1961 near Cornwall (Mrs. John Dye).

DUNLIN

Calidris alpina



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common on coast, April and autumn
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, May and Sept. 1 - November
1898	Fisher	fairly common fall transient, Oct. 3-24
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	now unknown in New York portion of the region
1927	Kuerzi	rare spring and uncommon fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	--
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	uncommon to rare migrant, increasing

Six of our 11 records are in spring and five in fall, usually no more than four or five birds on any day. The species was unrecorded in our area until May 18, 1957 at Piermont Pier (Thomas Dow).

Other spring records: May 3 and 4, 1967 at Lake Tappan (James Demes); May 8, 1960, one near the center of New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R.

Steffens); May 13, 1968, four at the Pier (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed); May 14, 1966, one at the Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed); May 15, 1976, a flock of 13 at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Fall: Aug. 3, 1971, four at Piermont Pier, with three remaining to Sept. 11 (the Deeds); Sept. 15,

1968, four or five at Lake Tappan (Rockland Audubon Society field trip); Sept. 21 and 22, 1966 at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus); Oct. 14, 1975 at the Pier (Amos); Nov. 18, 1973 at the Pier (the Deeds).

1983 Addendum --Four new records for the Pier and Lake Tappan, including a new late date for spring, May 24, 1982, seven birds at the Pier (Peter Derven).



Adult, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

Limnodromus griseus



Fall juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This is another shorebird that has increased sharply in the last 20 years, with no known local record prior to 1956. It must now be classified as a fairly common to common migrant and summer visitant. Of our dozen records, however, only two are of spring migrants: our earliest record, a single bird at Piermont Pier on May 19, 1956 (David O. Hill, James Bloor), and a flock of ten at the Pier on May 15, 1976, (Anthony F. Amos). We have one June record; June 13, 1972, one at the Pier (Amos). Other records range from July 21, 1973, a flock of 25 at the Pier (Amos) to Oct. 20, 1968, three at Lake Tappan (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed). The maximum one-day count is 28 at Lake De Forest on Aug. 10, 1965 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed).

This region's third record for the species was an oddity: a bright-plumaged bird that fell into the yard of Miss Virginia Crawford in the village of Nyack on Oct. 11, 1961 and was later released after it had rested.

Tony Amos notes that most of the flock of 25 dowitchers he saw at Piermont Pier on July 21, 1973, all of them in spring plumage, were probably long-billed. After further observation and study, he confirmed two days later that at least one long-billed dowitcher was present (see below).

1983 Addendum --Several new fall records and one record of this species in spring at Piermont Pier May 19-25, 1980, including a new maximum count of 68 birds on May 24 (Derven).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER
Limnodromus scolopaceus



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

With three or four records in three years, plus one earlier record, this species--apparently increasing on the Atlantic coast--ranks between casual and rare as a summer visitant and fall migrant. The first record, on Oct. 20, 1968, was of a bird carefully studied at the cleared bed of Lake Tappan, in direct comparison with three short-billed dowitchers (Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Deed,

Donald S. Deed); the bird in question was noticeably browner, and its bill appeared 25% longer. For the past three summers, Anthony F. Amos, a scrupulous observer, has had "definite" long-billed dowitchers at Piermont Pier: July 21 and 23, 1973; July 14, 1974, and a bird in especially bright plumage on July 14, 1975.

RUFF

Philomachus pugnax



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1983 Addendum --Another species added to our local list by Vic Schwartz: Aug. 8, 1980, an immature at Lake Tappan with one leg apparently

injured; I also saw the bird later the same day when Vic reported it.

STILT SANDPIPER

Calidris [Micropalama] himantopus



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall migrant, with only two records. On Sept. 12, 1964, Edwin Gamble reported two at the Spring Valley Memorial Park; on the following day he found one of them dead, the victim of a snapping turtle, and turned the remains over to John Bull at the American Museum of Natural History. The only other record was on Sept. 14, 1968 at Lake Tappan (Eugene Bleiweiss); also seen there again on Sept. 18.

1983 Addendum --Five new occurrences for a species previously recorded only twice! One was at Piermont Pier Sept. 26-28, 1978 (the Deeds and Dr. Victor Schwartz); at Lake Tappan Sept. 16-18, 1979 (Vic Schwartz); at Lake Tappan, up to eight birds, Aug. 3, 1980 (Peter Derven) to four birds Aug. 8, one bird at Cornwall Bay on Aug. 15, 1981.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER

Calidris pusilla



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common in May and August, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, May and July 10 - Oct. 1
1898	Fisher	common fall transient, Aug. 14 to Oct. 20
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	occasional transient visitant, August
1927	Kuerzi	regular fairly common spring, abundant fall migrant
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	common transient
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	uncommon spring migrant, abundant summer visitant and fall migrant

Like other shorebirds, this species has recently been increasing sharply at Piermont Pier and its relatively new mudflat. In the interior of Rockland County, it is less numerous than the least sandpiper. The high count for inland Rockland appears to be 12 at the site of Lake Tappan on

Aug. 11, 1968. High counts for Piermont Pier, in chronological order, are 150 on Aug. 14, 1955 after Hurricane Connie (Robert F. Deed); 200-plus on Aug. 16, 1957 (David O. Hill); 210 on June 4, 1973 (Anthony F. Amos); 250-plus on July 21, 1973 (Amos), and 133 on July 22, 1974 (Amos).

Dates range from May 6, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Amos) to Oct. 7, 1965 (Edwin Gamble).

1983 Addendum --A new high of 400+ at Lake Tappan, drained during a drought, from July 28 through Aug. 3, 1980.

WESTERN SANDPIPER

Calidris mauri



Adult, non-breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

According to Ludlow Griscom (1923), "it is certain that only the merest handful of field ornithologists are competent to make a sight record of the Western Sandpiper worthy of serious consideration." He adds that the greater average length of the bill "is not a field character." His point about identification difficulty is well taken, but we have four records that seem to meet all criteria: Aug. 14, 1955, at least two among other peeps at Piermont Pier after Hurricane Connie (Robert F. Deed); Aug. 31, 1957 at Lake De Forest (Edward

D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Aug. 30, 1958, also at Lake De Forest, studied with a 30x telescope at little more than 50 feet (Edwin Gamble); Sept. 21 and 22, 1966 at the north end of Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus). Call this species a casual fall migrant.

1983 Addendum --A new record for Lake Tappan from Sept. 16, 1979 (Vic Schwartz) to Sept. 23, 1979, two birds (Deed).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT
Limosa haemastica



Juvenile, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental fall visitant: a bird at the Haverstraw gravel basin on Sept. 18, 1960, studied through a

telescope while at rest and also in flight (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

SANDERLING
Calidris alba



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	small numbers in May, large flocks in August and November
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, May and July 10 - October
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, June 5 and Sept. 9 to Oct. 5
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	now unknown in New York State portion of the region
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	"I can find no records from the interior"
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	accidental spring migrant, casual fall migrant

Except for the extraordinary status report from Fisher (which Griscom also quotes) and the generalized note by Brownell, we have no evidence of any occurrence prior to Sept. 5, 1958, when Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed saw a bird at Piermont Pier. We have only seven records in all; only two of them in spring and three of them clustered in 1974 as possible evidence of an

increase in occurrence. Other records are: May 15, 1960 at the Haverstraw gravel basin, a bird in winter plumage (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); May 16, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Sept. 22, 1966, one at the north end of Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus); July 23, 1974, nine at Piermont Pier (Amos); July

28, 1974, three at the Pier (Amos, the Deeds);
Aug. 25, 1974, one at the Pier (the Deeds).

1983 Addendum --Three new records to go with
our previous seven: July 25 and Aug. 22, 1977;
Aug. 13, 1979; Aug. 8, 1981, eleven birds. All
these records are from Cornwall Bay, as reported
in "The Kingbird," the State Federation magazine.

RED-NECKED (NORTHERN) PHALAROPE
Phalaropus lobatus



Adult Female, breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual migrant, with only five records, four of them in the Bear Mountain Park area and equally divided between spring and fall. Spring: May 13, 1975, two females at Lake Welch (John C. Orth); May 31, 1940 on the Hudson near Bear Mountain

(Orth). Fall: Aug. 22, 1937 in a marsh that is now covered by Lake Askoti (Orth); Sept. 28, 1948 on the Hudson near Bear Mountain (Orth); Oct. 27, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Berna Weissman).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE

Phalaropus tricolor



Fall juvenile

Photo Credit: Michael Garber

1983 Addendum -- A new species, discovered at Lake Tappan on Sept. 15; 1979 the day after Tropical Storm Frederic, four birds (Deed); one

bird remained on Sept. 16 (Vic Schwartz) and was last seen on Sept. 20 (Deed).

GLAUCOUS GULL
Larus hyperboreus



First winter juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual winter visitant, once lingering into April. We have six records: Dec. 26, 1959, an immature at Grassy Point on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (John C. Orth, John Kenney); Jan. 10, 1956 at Piermont Pier (Thomas Dow); Jan. 31, 1954 in Haverstraw Bay (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, David O. Hill), Mar. 3, 1935 off Dunderberg (H. A. Hochbaum); Mar. 12, 1961 at Piermont Pier (Joseph Morlan, Julian Scala) and Mar. 15, same bird (Dr. Hopper); Apr. 3, 1973, a bird in second-year

plumage at the Rockland Lake South golf course (Walter Friton).

1983 Addendum -- We have nearly doubled our number of records since 1976: Dec. 18, 1977 at the Haverstraw dump on the RAS Christmas Count; Mar. 30, 1980 at Stony Point (Edward D. Treacy); Feb. 8, 1981 at the Haverstraw dump with an Iceland Gull (Michael Pavda party); Dec. 26, 1981, a second-year bird at Rockland Lake (Peter and Ellen Derven); Feb. 1 and Feb. 14, 1982 at Haverstraw dump.

ICELAND GULL
Larus glaucooides



First cycle Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Also a casual visitant, with six records, mostly in early spring. These records: Dec. 24, 1967 at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy); Dec. 26, 1964 at West Point on the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club's Christmas Count (Treacy, Paul Jeheber); Mar. 21, 1971, a bird in first-year plumage at Rockland Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Apr. 2 and 7, 1961, a second-year bird at Iona Island and the Bear Mountain boat dock (John C. Orth); Apr. 2, 1969, a second-year bird flying over Lake Tappan (Eugene Bleiweiss), perhaps the same bird that Bleiweiss had photographed in first-year plumage the previous year over Woodcliff Lake, N.J., a few miles to the south; Apr. 3, 1972

at Haverstraw (Robert Connor, Stephen Connor).

1983 Addendum -- Also doubled its previous half-dozen records: Dec. 30, 1978 in the Torne Valley on Fyke Nature Assn. Christmas Count; Sept. 26, 1978, a second-year bird at Cornwall Bay; Nov. 24, 1978, first-year and second-year birds at Cornwall Bay; Jan. 28, 1980 and also Jan. 30, second-year bird at Grassy Point (the Deeds); Jan. 29 to Feb. 8, 1981 at Haverstraw dump (Michael Pavda et al.); Dec. 31, 1981, a first-year plumage and a Kumlien's form at the Haverstraw dump (Edward D. Treacy).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Larus marinus



Courting adults

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in winter, Long Island to the Great Lakes
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	fairly common and regular winter resident
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	regular but scarce winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon winter visitant on the Hudson
1940	Carr	casual winter visitor on the Hudson, November to March
1942	Cruickshank	"even during mid-winter, one cannot expect to find over four individuals in a day along the Hudson"
1960	Orth	regular uncommon winter visitant, scatter summer records
1976	Current status	very common winter visitant, abundant summer visitant, increasingly sharply in recent years

Few if any other species have changed their local status with such dramatic suddenness as this one. Until 20 years ago, this gull was strictly a wintering bird, arriving: early as Aug. 22, 1954, four at Piermont Pier (Robert F. Deed) and leaving by Apr. 27, 1952, one at Iona Island

(John C. Orth). Then new late spring dates began to be set: May 19, 1956 and May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). A count of nine at Grassy Point on May 16, 1958 (Eugene R. Brown, Deed) was considered remarkable for so late in the season.

And a count of 70 to 80 at Piermont Pier on Sept. 5, 1960 (the Deeds) was taken as a sign of a buildup in the usual winter population. However, a count of 50 at the Pier on Aug. 13, 1966 (the Deeds) was unprecedented for that time of year. On July 21, 1974, the Deeds counted 200-plus at the Pier (compared with 20 herring gulls), and on June 28, 1975 Anthony F. Amos made a careful count of 507, a number that dipped to 280 on July 14 (Amos) and rose again to 350 on Aug. 21 (Louise S. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

The dimensions of this population explosion may be measured by the fact that in my 172 trips afield in 1935 I had a total of 133 birds, all between Nov. 3 and early February, and in 139 trips in 1936 only 85 birds, ranging from Oct. 25 to Apr. 12. In that era, wintering birds were regular but not numerous. The species was recorded at Piermont on six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts from 1934 through 1941,

in numbers from one bird in 1941 to 23 in 1936 and 20 in 1934. It has been recorded on all 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with a high of 13 (in 1954) in the first ten counts, a high of 23 (in 1963) in the next ten counts, and a rapid rise since then: 40 in 1967, 7 in 1968, 28 in 1969, 22 in 1970, 17 in 1971, 81 in 1973, 68 in 1974, and 78 in 1975. The species has been missed in five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts from 1946 through 1973, and the high count is only 11 on Dec. 30, 1973. As Orth's 1960 checklist notes, this gull is less common on the Hudson north of Jones Point.

Until the last ten years, an observer could not expect to see a great black-backed gull in the interior of Rockland County; it congregated primarily at such Hudson River points as Piermont, Nyack, West Haverstraw, and Grassy Point. Now, however, it is often seen on the Hackensack reservoirs, on Rockland Lake, and at the Clarkstown dump in West Nyack.



First winter juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Larus fuscus



Adult (winter, non-breeding plumage)

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Possibly an accidental winter visitant. According to John C. Orth (1960): "A small Black-Backed Gull was observed on several occasions at Iona Island and Annsville Creek during Feb. 1948 (John Kenney, Stanley O. Grierson, John C. Orth). Might very well have been this species."

[1983 Addendum](#) – Finally confirmed for our list. On Oct. 6, 1978, found and photographed by

Anthony Lauro on Rockland Lake North Park parking lot while on a visit from Long Island to look for the California Gull. Adult at Rockland Lake on Jan. 14, 1979 (Edward D. Treacy, Lawrence Holland) and on Jan. 16 (Deed). An adult on the ice of central Lake De Forest on Jan. 10, 1980 (Deed). Another at Grassy Point on Dec. 28, 1981 (the Dervens).



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

AMERICAN HERRING GULL

Larus [argentatus] smithsonianus



Adults

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A common summer visitant and very abundant winter visitant on the lakes as well as on the Hudson. Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts since 1947 show an increase in number of wintering birds. Totals in the early counts

ranged from 100 to 650; a count of 1,110 in 1958 broke new ground, and new highs of 1,674 (in 1967), 1,940 (in 1971), and 1,969 (in 1973) led toward the all-time record of 3,557 on the 1975 count.



First winter juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RING-BILLED GULL
Larus delawarensis



Summer adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitor
1878-82	Mearns	abundant winter visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient, uncommon winter visitant
1898	Fisher	occasional transient visitant
1908	Brownell	uncommon transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon from the Hudson in recent years; "few species are harder to identify positively"
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, occasionally wintering
1940	Carr	winter visitor and spring transient, September to March
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, rare in winter and summer
1960	Orth	regular common spring and fall transient, regular uncommon winter visitant, scattered summer records
1976	Current status	very common to abundant winter visitant except in the Highlands, where it is uncommon; common to very common migrant and summer visitant

This is a problem species, though more from a lack of interest in surveying gulls than from Griscom's somewhat exaggerated warning. Most of our local observers can distinguish most ring-

billed gulls from herring gulls most of the time. But one wonders about earlier records, even without the wide disparity between Mearns and Fisher. If, for example, Kuerzi and Cruickshank

are taken at face value, this species has squarely reversed its status in the past 50 years; as recently as 1948, I myself regarded the ring-billed gull as a year-round resident that was rarer in winter. Now it is decidedly commoner in winter than in any other season. One recent high count was 837 birds on Feb. 15, 1976 at the county sewer outfall south of Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

In ten May "Big Days" from 1948 to 1961, this gull ranged in number from 0 to 100 and in ratio to the herring gull of 1-to-6 to 5-to-1. On the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, it has been missed in two years (1947 and fog-

bound 1951); in the first ten counts, the high was 14, but in the next ten counts it was 254 (1960). A buildup began in 1970 with a jump to 159 from only 17 the year before; the Count shows 250 in 1971, 848 in 1972, 920 in 1973, 1,134 in 1974, and 995 in 1975. Of the 1975 total, 700 were tallied in the Count district that includes Piermont; by contrast the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts at Piermont scored only 2 in 1934, none in 1935, 25 in 1936, 2 in 1937, and none in 1940 or 1941. Also in contrast is the record of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, on which this gull has been listed only 16 times, with a maximum of 14 in 1973.



First winter juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

CALIFORNIA GULL
Larus californicus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum – A new species and probably our most renowned bird; for four winters people came thousands of miles to see it at the Rockland Lake Fishing Station. Found on Oct. 4, 1978 by Berna Weissman of Dobbs Ferry during her recess from the Hook Mt. Hawkwatch; observed through Dec. 17, 1978. Found again on Oct. 27, 1979 by Vic Schwartz and on Oct. 3,

1979 by Berna Weissman, seen in fine spring plumage on Mar. 26, 1980 by Padraic French, and again through Mar. 30, our latest spring date. Found on its earliest date, Sept. 12, 1980 by Peter Derven. First found in 1981 on Oct. 20 by Berna Weissman, her third "first sighting of the season"; last seen on Feb. 12, 1982 (the Deeds).



The "Rockland Lake" California Gull

Photo Credit: Robert F. Deed

LAUGHING GULL
Larus atricilla



Breeding Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	coast and Great Lakes; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter (!) visitant
1898	Chapman	summer resident, formerly common
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	recently common in fall in Haverstraw Bay
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common spring and abundant fall transient, increasing
1940	Carr	uncommon, August and February records on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common spring and abundant fall transient, some in summer at Piermont
1960	Orth	regular common spring and fall transient, regular fairly common summer visitant, two winter records
1976	Current status	abundant summer and fall visitant, common spring visitant, casual winter visitant

Like other gulls, this species has been increasing rapidly in the past half-dozen years, especially at Piermont Pier with its expanding mudflat and its outfall of the Rockland County trunk sewer. On May "Big Days" from 1948

through 1961, the maximum was 45 birds on May 16, 1958; springtime numbers lately have run at least twice that figure. Numbers of summering birds have also grown; on Aug. 4, 1935, a count of about 400 (Robert F. Deed)

was probably an all-time one-day peak up to then, whereas on Aug. 15, 1973 Eric Single made a careful count of 720 at Piermont Pier. Another high count recently at the Pier was 450 on Aug. 11, 1974 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed).

An early spring arrival at the Pier was five birds on Mar. 29, 1969 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed). Late fall dates are Nov. 18, 1973, six at the Pier (the Deeds), and Nov. 20, 1954, one at

Grassy Point (Rockland Audubon Society field trip).

Winter: a flock of 28 on the 1969 RAS Christmas Count; one off Bear Mountain on Jan. 2, 1960 on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (John C. Orth, John Kenney, Thomas Dow); Jan. 13, 1974, two at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Eric Single); Feb. 11, 1938 off West Point (William H. Carr).



Nonbreeding Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BONAPARTE'S GULL

Larus philadelphia



Nonbreeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	one of our most common species, statewide
1878-82	Mearns	summer visitant three times
1898	Chapman	regular transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, April and October
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare on the lower Hudson
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, rare in winter
1940	Carr	rare, October records only
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon on migrations, casual at any other season
1960	Orth	sporadic rare fall transient, one record
1976	Current status	uncommon spring and casual summer visitant, recently very common to abundant fall and winter visitant

We can expect this gull soon to live down its status as only a casual summer visitant; of the four August records, three came in 1975. We have only two May records and none in June or July. The most remarkable recent increase has been in late fall and winter birds; until four years ago, the peaks of numbers were considered to

be in mid-April and late October, and we had no winter records at all.

Spring: Apr. 5, 1948 (Robert F. Deed) and Apr. 5, 1969 at Cornwall Bay (Edward D. Treacy) to May 21, 1967, four at Cornwall since Apr. 22 (Al and Barbara Merritt). A freakish high count of 89

birds at Cornwall on Apr. 7, 1957 maximum spring counts usually run to about 30 birds.

Summer: Aug. 7, 1975, an adult at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Aug. 16 and 23, 1975, one immature each time (Amos).

Fall: Sept. 14, 1969 at Cornwall Bay (Treacy) to Nov. 30, 1975, a count of 280 at Piermont Pier (Amos).

Winter: Dec. 17, 1972, four at Grassy Point on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count; 110 birds at Piermont on the 1974 RAS Count; 358 at Piermont Pier and two at Haverstraw on the 1975 RAS Count; Dec. 27, 1973, 30 at Piermont Pier (Amos); Jan. 12, 1972, a count of 25 at the Pier (Amos declining to 19 on Jan. 14; Jan. 28, 1976, a count of 44 at the Pier (Amos).

1983 Addendum -- New records in April, May, August, December.



Breeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE

Rissa tridactyla



Breeding adults

Photo Credit: Sheila Stoller

1983 Addendum -- A new species, remarkable away from the Oceanfront: Dec. 5-6, 1981, an immature at Cornwall Bay.

FORSTER'S TERN

Sterna forsteri



Breeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual storm-driven fall vagrant. Mearns (1878-82) mentions one record, on Nov. 15, 1874, for the Hudson Highlands. Kuerzi (1927) notes "satisfactory observations" ranging from Aug. 17 to Sept. 23. In Haverstraw Bay off Croton Point, one was identified on Oct. 14, 1928 by Roger Tory Peterson, Richard Herbert, and John F. Kuerzi.

We have two records that are more recent: Sept. 24, 1957, three or four birds at Piermont Pier, studied through a telescope at 100 yards (Edwin Gamble), and Aug. 28, 1971, three or four at the Pier on the morning when tropical storm Doria was breaking up; these birds seen both flying

and at apparently exhausted rest on a rock jetty (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Our two records were augmented by a notable influx in the fall of 1979: 25 birds at Cornwall Bay on Oct. 24 (Kenneth McDermott); a flock of varying numbers at Piermont Pier from Oct. 25 (Peter Derven) to Nov. 11, ten birds (Robert Boardman, Deed), with a peak number of about 46 on Oct. 31. One bird was at Stony Point on Oct. 30 (Deed) and one at the Pier was in summer plumage on that same date.



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

COMMON TERN
Sterna hirundo



Breeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	great numbers on coast and inland lakes; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	common transient and summer resident
1898	Fisher	occasional transient visitant
1908	Brownell	rare transient visitant
1923	Griscom	scarce on the Hudson River
1927	Kuerzi	rare spring and fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	rare, August and September records only, on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring, common fall transient
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common summer visitant on the Hudson River, rare inland; one spring record
1976	Current status	very rare spring visitant, common to very common summer and fall visitant

Even at their late-summer peak, numbers for this species vary sharply from year to year, and no marked trend is evident. The high spring count is 23 at Cornwall on May 16, 1967 (Al Merritt); other high counts show little pattern--50-plus at Piermont Pier on Sept. 7, 1959 (Mr.

and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); a similar number at the Pier on Aug. 13, 1966 (the Deeds); 72 at Bear Mountain on Oct. 2, 1960 (John C. Orth); at least 65 at Piermont Pier on Aug. 28, 1971 as tropical storm Doria was breaking up (Mr. and

Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed); 55 at the Pier on July 26, 1974 (Anthony F. Amos).

1957 at Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

Spring: Apr. 28, 1968 at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy); May 12, 1976, two at Piermont Pier (Amos); May 14, 1960 at Minisceongo Creek, Grassy Point (Mr. and Mrs. Deed); May 15, 1948 at Lake Welch, the only Bear Mountain Park spring record (Eugene R. Brown, Deed); May 15, 1966 at Cornwall (Mr. and Mrs. John Dye); May 16, 1967, a flock of 23 at Cornwall (Al Merritt); May 18, 1957 (Thomas Dow); May 28,

Summer and Fall: From July 21, 1956, three at Lake De Forest (the Steffenses) to Oct. 2, 1960, Jack Orth's flock of 72 at Bear Mountain. To illustrate the variability of summer occurrence, Amos's count of 55 at Piermont Pier on July 26, 1974 was followed in the summer of 1975 by the appearance of only a single bird on Aug. 10, 1975 (the Deeds).

ROSEATE TERN
Sterna dougallii

An accidental storm-driven vagrant, with only a single record: one or, probably, two birds at Piermont Pier on Aug. 28, 1971, the morning

that tropical storm Doria broke up, seen in flight and at rest (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

SOOTY TERN
Sterna fuscata



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual summer and fall visitant, usually storm-driven. Three records, including one 1878 specimen. John C. Orth in his 1960 checklist quotes Edgar A. Mearns: "On September 14, 1878, I saw one of these beautiful birds near West Point. ...A beautiful specimen was presented to me... It was killed by flying against the boathouse on Constitution Island on the day

previous..." On Aug. 14, 1955, with the winds of Hurricane Connie still blowing at 30 to 40 mph from the south, Edward D. Treacy saw a sooty tern over the Hudson at West Point and studied it through a 25x telescope for several minutes. On July 26, 1974, an adult at Piermont Pier was carefully studied by Anthony F. Amos, who is acquainted with the species in the West Indies.

LEAST TERN

Sterna albifrons



Breeding adult

Photo Credit: Jack H. Hecht

Until 1973 we had only records related to Hurricane Connie; then in the summers of 1973 through 1975, this tern established itself at Piermont Pier as an irregularly rare to very common summer visitant.

During Hurricane Connie on Aug. 13, 1955, John C. Orth saw this tern both at Lake Sebago and on the Hudson River off Bear Mountain; on Aug. 14, 1955, he saw one again at Bear Mountain, and there were several other records: Edward D. Treacy and Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens saw 13 or 14 at West Point and two at Cornwall; the Steffenses saw several others at Stony Point, including one young bird being fed, and Robert F. Deed saw six or seven more at Piermont Pier. On Aug. 16, 1955, Treacy counted four at Cornwall.

The next appearance had nothing to do with a hurricane: four least terns at Piermont Pier on July 20, 1973 (Anthony F. Amos), and seven at the Pier on July 29 (Amos). On July 14, 1974, Amos found a dozen least terns at the Pier, and the number grew to 66 on July 26 and a season's peak of 72 on July 28, including three birds dyed yellow on their underparts as the result of a study at a tern colony near Stratford, Conn. Our list of records was completed when Amos found three birds at the Pier on July 13, 1975.

1983 Addendum -- One more record, Aug. 22, 1977 at Cornwall Bay.

ROYAL TERN

Thalasseus maximus



Nonbreeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual summer visitant, with only two records. On Aug. 14, 1955, on the heels of Hurricane Connie, Robert F. Deed identified an immature bird perched at Piermont Pier, the forehead was clear white, the bill lacked a reddish cast, and all markings checked out at only 150 feet away except that the tail appeared to be less than wingtip length. This record, it should be noted,

was not accepted by John Bull for either his New York City or New York State book. But on June 18 or 24, 1960 (reports conflict), Frances H. Irving found an ailing royal tern at Lake De Forest that soon died; its skin is in the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum. On June 25, 1960, Mrs. Irving sighted four other royal terns at Lake De Forest.

SANDWICH TERN

Thalasseus sandvicensis



Nonbreeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A storm-driven accidental; Aug. 28, 1971, the morning when tropical storm Doria subsided after sweeping up the Atlantic coast from the Carolinas, two birds at Piermont Pier, resting on

a rock jetty. Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed and Donald S. Deed noted the white foreheads and the black bills tipped with yellow for 20% of the bill length.

CASPIAN TERN

Hydroprogne caspia



Nonbreeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental spring visitant and very rare summer and fall visitant that may be increasing in frequency of occurrence. The single spring record is of two birds at Moodna Creek, Cornwall, on Apr. 28, 1956 (Edward L. Treacy). Other records: July 7, 1972 at Cornwall (Treacy); July 31, 1973 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Aug. 9, 1974 at Cornwall Bay (Paul Jeheber, reported in the October, 1974 "Kingbird"); Aug. 29, 1936 at Piermont Pier

(Robert F. Deed); Sept. 6, 1969 at Cornwall (Treacy); Sept. 7, 1959, four at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Three new records: June 1, 1977, three birds at Cornwall Bay (Al Merritt); Sept. 27, 1978, two at Piermont Pier (the Deeds); Aug. 1, 1981, two also at Piermont (Peter Derven).

BLACK TERN
Chlidonias niger



Breeding adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual migrant and summer storm vagrant. Mearns cites one date of Sept. 13, 1878 for the Hudson Highlands, and John C. Orth (1960) also quotes Mearns: "The late Frederick S. Osborn shot three of these terns in the autumn of 1874 near Garrison's, on the Hudson... They were shot from a flock of about 50 birds." Fisher (1898) calls the species an accidental visitant in the Ossining area in September, perhaps with the Mearns record in mind, and Brownell (1908) calls it a rare transient visitant in the Nyack area. Our first modern records were the product of Hurricane Connie: one at West Point on Aug.

14, 1955 (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and one at Cornwall on Aug. 16, 1955 (Treacy). On May 5, 1961, Edwin Gamble, exploring the Piermont Marsh by canoe, found a black tern, and in mid-May, 1975, Eugene R. Brown and Malcolm Gardner also saw one in the Piermont marsh. Our remaining record is for Sept. 14, 1963 at Minnisceongo Creek, Grassy Point (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus).

1983 Addendum -- One new record, two birds at Cornwall Bay Aug. 17, 1981.

THICK-BILLED MURRE

Uria lomvia

An accidental visitant, with one record for Dec. 3, 1950 at Grassy Point following a Nov. 25 southeast gale (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). On

Dec 25, 1928, John and Richard Kuerzi had seen a bird of this species on the Croton Point side of Haverstraw Bay.

ROCK PIGEON [ROCK DOVE]
Columba livia



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Feral birds nest along Hook Mountain and the Palisades.

PASSENGER PIGEON
Ectopistes migratorius



Taxidermic mounts, Trailside Museums

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Extinct. In the time of Mearns (1878-82), "a permanent resident; a few breed, and a few occur in winter." John Bull's books mention that the last specimen from Rockland

County was taken on Sept. 18, 1889, and that the Highlands were the southernmost breeding area in the state.

MOURNING DOVE

Zenaidura macroura



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to September; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, breeds; occasional in winter
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, occasional winter resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, occasional resident
1908	Brownell	uncommon summer resident
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, uncommon summer resident, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	local summer resident; breeds
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to common summer resident, very unusual in winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, irregular rare summer resident, one winter record
1976	Current status	common breeder; very common to abundant winter resident

This species has increased greatly in 40 years. My own 172 field trips in 1935 yielded only 16 mourning doves, and 139 trips in 1936, only 13. A similar number of field trips nowadays could hardly fail to turn up 300 or 400. On July 14, 1958, Edwin Gamble saw one flock of 100 at

New City; in January, 1961, Marcel Jasinski in Pomona had as many as 145 doves at his feeding area at one time. This species was not recorded on any of the six Bronx County bird Club Christmas Counts from 1934 to 1941 that included the Piermont area, but it has been

missed only once on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (in 1947, the first year). The high counts include 750 in 1974, 586 in 1973, 474 in 1963, and 432 in 1965. The species has appeared eight times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with a high of

12 in 1962. Mourning doves seem to favor villages for their nesting but the remnants of farmland for their winter quarters; however, they come readily to feeders in the villages, too, in winter.

MONK PARAKEET

Myiopsitta monachus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A brief irruption of this exotic may now have passed. In 1973, birds appeared in two local areas: on May 4 between Blauvelt and Pearl River (Emily Paulson) and on Aug. 16, three birds in the village of Piermont (Eric Single), growing to a count of four on Aug. 19. Only one report since then, however: a single bird at Piermont Pier being harassed by grackles on July 6, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Two more records for this exotic, which had seemed to disappear after 1975: On Apr. 14, 1982, Mrs. Charles C. Windisch of Route 9-W, Piermont, reported having had three or four parakeets for a week or more. On July 28, 1982, Peter and Ellen Derven found a parakeet eating mulberries far out on Piermont Pier; last seen on July 31 (the Deeds).

MAROON-BELLIED PARAKEET [CONURE]

Pyrrhura frontalis

1983 Addendum -- Doubtless an escape but fun to look at, especially on an RAS Christmas Count. Peter Derven and Chuck Harten found five birds feeding on wild grapes along the old

Erie right of way south of the Grand View depot. On Dec. 22 and 25, a neighbor, S. Hazard Gillespie, had respectively one and five in his yard.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

Coccyzus americanus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not very common; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident; breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, regular uncommon summer resident; nests
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant and breeder

Both cuckoos are rather variable in numbers from year to year. I cannot recall a time when either could be classed as common. In 1935 I recorded only seven of this species, and in 1936 only eight. The highest one-day counts in our records are six on May 18, 1961 (Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) and six in

two hours on May 17, 1964 at Orangeburg and Blauvelt (Deed).

Dates range from Apr. 23, 1966 at Blauvelt (the Deeds) to Oct. 27, 1954 (David O. Hill, James Bloor).

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO

Coccyzus erythrophthalmus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to autumn; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, Apr. 26 to Sept. 25
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	common summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident, slightly fewer than the above
1927	Kuerzi	somewhat less numerous than the yellow-billed
1940	Carr	regular summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common to uncommon summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, regular uncommon summer resident; nests
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant and breeder, slightly less numerous than the yellow-billed

This species, like the preceding one, usually occurs at the rate of only two or three per day even at the best of times. It appeared on seven of ten May "Big Day" counts of individual parties from 1948 to 1961, and only once exceeded a

single bird: three birds on May 15, 1949. Dates range from May 1, 1955 (Frances H. Irving) to Oct. 4, 1936 at Queensboro Lake in the Park (Robert F. Deed).

BARN OWL

Tyto alba

1844	De Kay	may be expected in this state
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	rare resident, breeds Apr. 20
1898	Fisher	accident visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare resident
1927	Kuerzi	indications that it is still a resident locally
1940	Carr	rare transient in Park, resident 20 miles south
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon permanent resident
1960	Orth	reference only to Carr statement
1976	Current status	probably extirpated; formerly a rare resident

In the 1930s, to my knowledge, barn owls nested in two places: a barn (since razed) south of West Nyack, and the steeple of an unused church in Grassy Point village. Two records for Bear Mountain Park: Apr. 30, 1933 (Kenneth M. Lewis) and July 15, 1948 (John Kenney, George Tamsen). A record also on the Dec. 28, 1963 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (John LeMaire) when a bird flew across the road at dusk near Suffern. From 1963 through 1969, Eugene Bleiweiss reports, barn owls nested in an old silo on the Rockland State Hospital grounds; he filmed the family of owls. However, the site seems to have been abandoned, and there are few suitable sites remaining in Rockland County.



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SCREECH OWL

Otus asio



Adult, gray phase

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found in the state
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident
1940	Carr	uncommon permanent resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon resident

Few birds show such uniformity among status appraisals over the years, and with good reason. This owl seems to have adapted well to having man as a neighbor; indeed, it is commoner in village streets than in woodlands. However, its numbers never are large. A single bird was recorded on the Bronx County Bird Club

Christmas Count of 1935 at Piermont; it has been listed on 15 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with highs of five in 1961 and four in 1973; it has appeared on only two of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, single birds in 1962 and 1970.

GREAT HORNED OWL

Bubo virginianus

1844	De Kay	found in the state
1878-82	Mearns	resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	rare resident, breeds Feb. 28
1898	Fisher	fairly common resident
1908	Brownell	uncommon resident
1923	Griscom	rare resident
1927	Kuerzi	formerly bred, still fairly frequent in winter
1940	Carr	rare permanent resident, breeds in park interior
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular rare permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	rare resident: perhaps increasing; breeds

In many areas, notably the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, this owl seems to be displacing the once-commoner barred owl. Judging by reports of sightings and vocalizations, it has increased its numbers since about 1959. Forty years ago, it could be regularly heard, and sometimes seen, only in the Island Pond area of the Park interior, between Lake Tiorati and Arden, but it is now widely spread through the Park from the Hudson River to the Ramapos. In lower-lying Rockland County, it is found regularly on the back slope of High Tor, in the Blauvelt Section of the Park, and at the north end of the Palisades at the New Jersey state line.

Nesting starts early--in late February, sometimes with snow still on the ground and the trees--and lasts a long time. We know of two nests observed over an extended period. One was just over the state line in Alpine, N.J., on a ledge 30 feet below the top of the 400-foot-high Palisades; on Mar. 25, 1933 it contained two young birds in down (Vivian B. Krum, Robert F. Deed). The other nest, high in hemlocks about 200 feet from the main entrance of the Stony Point Battlefield Museum, was found on Feb. 24, 1966 by Ruth Steffens and Claire Mertz, with the adult pair already incubating; two young were finally observed flying from the nest about May 6 (Edwin Gamble).

This species was recorded on two of the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts at

Piermont; one bird in 1940 and three in 1941. It has appeared on only five of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts but on ten of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. One odd observation: On Dec. 10, 1959, a great horned owl was electrocuted by high-tension wires in Pearl River while hunting on a clear day (Frank R. Steffens).



Adult

Photo Credit: Dave Baker

SNOWY OWL

Nyctea scandiaca



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not an uncommon visitor in severe winters
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter visitant, Jan. 20, 1877
1898	Chapman	irregularly common winter visitant
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	rare winter visitant
1923	Griscom	rare and irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	rare and irregular winter visitant
1940	Carr	rare, irregular winter visitor
1942	Cruickshank	rare irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	sporadic very rare winter visitor
1976	Current status	very rare winter visitant

The opinion concerning this species seems to be unanimous. Our area does not appear to have enjoyed the numbers of these owls that appear cyclically in coastal regions. We have only nine records, ranging from an early date of Nov. 10, 1951 in Harriman Park near Tuxedo (Mrs. John Y. Dater) to a late date of Apr. 9, 1965 at Piermont Pier (Richard Weindling, Dr.

Marjorie R. Hopper). Birds sometimes linger in one place for days: at Lake Welch on Jan. 2 and 3, 1954 (Frank Steffens, Irving G. Kennedy, Betty Barron); at Viola on Feb. 1 to 18, 1964 (Emily Paulson, Dr. Hopper, Alma Polhemus); and at Sterling Forest Lake on Jan. 11 to 17, 1974 (Lee H. Deed). Of our nine records, six

have come from the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park or the adjacent Ramapos.

1983 Addendum -- Two new records: Feb. 4, 1981 on Palisades Parkway at West Nyack; Jan. 8, 1983 found at end of Piermont Pier by Mary Boyes and also enjoyed by others.

BARRED OWL

Strix varia



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common
1878-82	Mearns	resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common resident, breeds Mar. 12
1898	Fisher	rare resident
1908	Brownell	uncommon resident
1923	Griscom	probably still surviving in northern Westchester
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common permanent resident
1940	Carr	uncommon permanent resident, breeds, park interior
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	rare resident, decreasing

The decline of this species may best be illustrated by the fact that it has appeared eight times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, but not since 1963, and on nine of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, but only once since 1968. In all areas, its place has largely been preempted by the great horned owl. Note Griscom's comment on this point: "In

the coastal plain, or the wilder country inhabited by the Great Horned Owl, it is rare or absent." Griscom (1923) also notes that the barred owl "forms a well-known partnership with the Red-Shouldered hawk in the alluvial woodlands of our area." By coincidence or not, the decline of the barred owl throughout our area has paralleled the disappearance of the red-

shouldered hawk. However, this owl can occasionally still be found in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park or in the swamps of the Hackensack Creek.

LONG-EARED OWL

Asio otus

1844	De Kay	in remote woods in winter
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	uncommon resident, breeds Apr. 1
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	rare resident
1923	Griscom	common winter visitant, mostly after a February storm
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon but regular winter resident
1940	Carr	status undetermined; one record, Oct. 28, 1939
1942	Cruikshank	uncommon winter visitant
1960	Orth	casual very rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	very rare winter visitant

It is hard to imagine this owl as an abundant resident of the Highlands, as Mearns reported it, yet Dr. A. K. Fisher wrote in an 1893 book of two specimens taken at West Point on Apr. 9 and June 23, 1880--we have had no modern records for summer or for so late in the spring. Our dates range from Oct. 28, 1939, when one was shot by hunters near Highland Falls and was brought to the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum (William H. Carr), to Mar. 11, 1971 at New City (Anne Epple, as reported in the May, 1971 "Kingbird").

Our only other records are a bird seen at Stony Point Park by many observers from Jan. 2, 1950 (John C. Orth party) to Jan. 15, 1950 (the Deed family); one near the New City home of John M. Price on Dec. 4, 1956; one near New City on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count of Dec. 26, 1965 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) in a grove where at least three other birds were later found; and a bird at Piermont Pier on Feb. 16, 1976 (Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Two new records: Body of one shot by a hunter was found in early spring of 1979 near Cedar Pond, in Sterling Forest (Peter Lisa, Jr.) and was preserved for museum; Jan. 16, 1982, Peter and Ellen Derven found a live one in grove by Tallman Mt. swimming pool.



Adult

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

SHORT-EARED OWL

Asio flammeus

1844	De Kay	found in all parts of the state
1878-82	Mearns	occasional transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	occasional
1908	Brownell	winter visitant
1923	Griscom	rare winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient and winter resident
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	transient and winter visitant
1960	Orth	no recent records
1976	Current status	casual migrant and winter visitant

This owl may be increasing in occurrence, though we would expect it to be primarily a bird of coastal marshes and dunes. Our first record was a bird perched close to the road at Grassy Point on Feb. 18, 1962 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed), but we have had five records since early 1970: one flying beside the main highway in the Popolopen Valley, Bear Mountain, on Apr. 4, 1970 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); one at Piermont Pier on Jan. 17, 1972 (Anthony F. Amos); another at the Pier on Jan. 13, 1974 (Mr. and Mrs. Eric Single); one at Iona Island on Sept. 29, 1974 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels); and another bird at Piermont Pier on Feb. 15 and 21, 1976 (Amos).



Adult, winter

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

SAW-WHET OWL
Aegolius acadicus



Photo Credits: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found in this state
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	fairly common winter resident
1898	Fisher	rare winter visitant, Oct. 28 to Jan. 13
1908	Brownell	rare winter visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	regular though rather uncommon winter visitant
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	occasional very rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	very rare winter visitant, accidental in summer

This tiny owl is more often seen than heard, and found more often dead or injured than in perfect health. We have 18 records, most recently in 1971. and many of these records have come in clusters that indicate big flight years: three different birds in January, 1955; four in 1960,

including our one summer record; two each in 1963 and 1966.

The summer record is that of an injured bird found at West Nyack on June 11, 1960 (Frances H. Irving); the bird soon died. Other dates range from Oct. 30, 1965, when a bird that had been

injured in New City was brought to the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum, to Feb. 23, 1960, when Eugene R. Brown saw a bird perched beside a village street in upper Nyack.

Our earliest record was Jan. 21, 1947 at Bear Mountain (Harold Hahn, John C. Orth). On Dec. 6, 1948, Jack Orth and John Kenney found a bird at Stony Point Park, and on Nov. 24, 1952, Peter Smith saw one at Bear Mountain. Then came the irruption of 1955: one bird found dead at Dunderberg on Jan. 11 (Orth), one alive at a picnic area west of West Mountain on Jan. 21 (Orth), and one found dead on the Palisades Parkway in the same general area on Jan. 31 (Kenney). This owl was recorded on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count on Dec. 21, 1957 at Lake Kanawauke (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Irving G. Kennedy). The four records in 1960 include the upper Nyack bird on Feb. 23 and the summer bird at West Nyack, plus an

injured bird found in Pomona on Nov. 5, dying on Nov. 16 (Steffens) and a live specimen in Germonds on Dec. 28 (Edwin Gamble). In 1963 a saw-whet perched on the Steffenses' porch railing in New City on the evening of New Year's Day, and on Nov. 17 a Rockland Audubon Society Field trip found one at Storm King Mountain. In 1966 the Steffenses saw another bird at their home on Nov. 13, and Mrs. Steffens on Nov. 27 found a dead bird that had been run over by a car near Lake De Forest. Another saw-whet was recorded on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count on Dec. 23, 1967 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels), and Anthony F. Amos saw one in Palisades on Dec. 16, 1971.

1983 Addendum -- One feeding on chipmunk at Green Mt., west of Island Pond in the Harriman Section, on Dec. 16, 1977 (Robert Speiser); one found injured near Cornwall Bay on Feb. 5, 1982.

WHIP-POOR-WILL

Caprimulgus vociferus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	arrives end of April, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds: Apr. 22 to Sept. 30
1898	Chapman	common local summer resident, Apr. 20 to Oct. 20
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 19 to Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	rare summer resident, breeds: arrives Apr. 30
1923	Griscom	locally common summer resident, rare transient
1927	Kuerzi	decreased markedly in recent years; decidedly uncommon
1940	Carr	common summer resident, breeds; May to October
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder in Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular rare summer resident
1976	Current status	rare migrant, casual summer visitant and breeder

As with most of the owls, it is hard to be certain about the status of this bird. which is largely identified by voice, but my impression is that its numbers have been greatly reduced in the past 20 years. From the early 1930s through about 1957, a typically active observer could expect to record at least half a dozen birds each spring; today he or she would be lucky to hear one bird each spring.

In one respect, though, the whip-poor-will remains most consistent: Its spring arrival date, year after year, falls within a three-day period, Apr. 19 through 21. We do have one aberrant early spring date of Apr. 3, 1963, a calling bird at New City (Julius Breier, *fide* Frank R. Steffens). The next earliest date is Apr. 19, 1941 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); a probable late date for

spring transients is May 25, 1923, also at Palisades (Fox).

Three summer records: June 11, 1957, a bird calling on the hill behind South Nyack (Robert F. Deed), mid-June, 1975, an adult and a nest containing two eggs on Camp Hill Road, Mount

Ivy (Dennis Murphy); July 9 to 12, 1952 at Lake Kanawauke (Kenneth Chambers). Fall records are few, since the migrating birds are likely to be silent, but we know of two: Sept. 1, 1936 at The Timp, near Bear Mountain (Donald W. Deed) and Sept. 26, 1958 at Pomona (Homer S. Kelsey).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK

Chordeiles minor



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	same status as the whip-poor-will
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds, Apr. 14 to Oct. 3
1898	Chapman	locally common summer resident, May 1 to Oct. 20
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 9 to Oct. 11
1908	Brownell	uncommon summer resident
1923	Griscom	rare spring and common fall transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident, abundant fall migrant
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds; common migrant
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon summer resident in Rockland County, fairly common spring and common to abundant fall transient
1960	Orth	regular common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon spring migrant, fairly common to abundant fall migrant

In my earliest birding, in the late 1920s, this bird still nested locally on graveled roofs of village buildings and on golf courses. It no longer does. We have only three old summer records: June 2, 1925 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman); June 13, 1926 at Palisades (Gilman); July 15, 1930 at Lake Kanawauke (John C. Orth).

Spring: Apr. 18, 1928 at Palisades (Jennie Fox) to May 31, 1930 at Lake Stahahe (Orth). Numbers in spring rarely exceed five in a day.

Fall: Aug. 13, 1957 at New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) to Oct. 1, 1937. (Vivian B. Krum, Robert F. Deed). High counts include a

flock of more than 75 over the Tappan Zee on Aug. 23, 1948 (Deed); big flights at Fort Montgomery on Aug. 27-28-29, 1956 (Orth);

Aug. 26-27, 1959, more than 500 each evening near Suffern (John LeMaire).

CHIMNEY SWIFT
Chaetura pelagica



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	arrives end of April, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, Apr. 6 to .Sept. 30
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, Apr. 20 to Oct. 10
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 19 to Oct. 23
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, arrives Apr. 20
1923	Griscom	common summer resident, Apr. 19 to Oct. 23
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, Apr. 12 to Oct. 26
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, breeds
1976	Current status	common to very common breeder

This is one bird that has adapted well to the suburbanization of Rockland County; in fact, it seems to prefer the villages to the less settled countryside. It is also remarkably regular in its spring arrival and fall departure dates. Our earliest spring date is Apr. 22, 1958 (Edward D. Treacy), and the Apr. 23 date has been recorded twice, in 1952 by Homer S. Kelsey and

in 1960 by Eugene R. Brown. The latest date at Bear Mountain is Oct. 16, 1959, several birds seen by John C. Orth; the late fall date for the area as a whole is Oct. 18, 1936 (Robert F. Deed).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

Archilochus colubris



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to October, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 2 to Sept. 29
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, May 1 to Sept. 30
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 30 to Oct. 3
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, rare breeder

I doubt that the status of this species has changed as much as the above summary might suggest; the difference for 1976 status comes largely from a strict reading of the criteria of abundance as set forth by John Bull. Dates range from Apr. 19, 1975 at Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth) to Oct. 17, 1955 (Thomas Dow). From July 22, 1960, a partial albino--buffy above, white below, no metallic tinge to any

feathers-- stayed at the Bardonia home of Robert A. Meylan for several days, once fighting off an attack by a normal male bird.

1983 Addendum -- Only three records since 1976 for this once-common bird: July 4, 1979 in our yard (Louise S. Deed); Sept. 10, 1980, three over Hook Mt. during Hawk Watch; May

31,1982, maximum of three birds on Mine Road, back of West Point.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BELTED KINGFISHER

Megaceryle alcyon



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident nearly the whole year; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, occasional winter visitant
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly common summer resident, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds; common transient; a few winter
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common breeder; a few winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, irregular rare permanent resident
1976	Current status	uncommon resident and breeder

We know strangely little about this presumably familiar bird. As noted, most evaluations of its status in the past have stressed its summer residence and its transience. Yet I cannot find any evidence of seasonal fluctuation in numbers that would indicate migration, such as the

fluctuation, say, in numbers of flickers. Our winter counts equal if not exceed our May "Big Day" counts and other late spring and summer records. So the bird appears no commoner in migration or in summer than it is in winter.

The species was counted on two of the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont area (1937 and 1941), on 26 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (a high of 13 birds on Dec. 27, 1975), and on 22 of

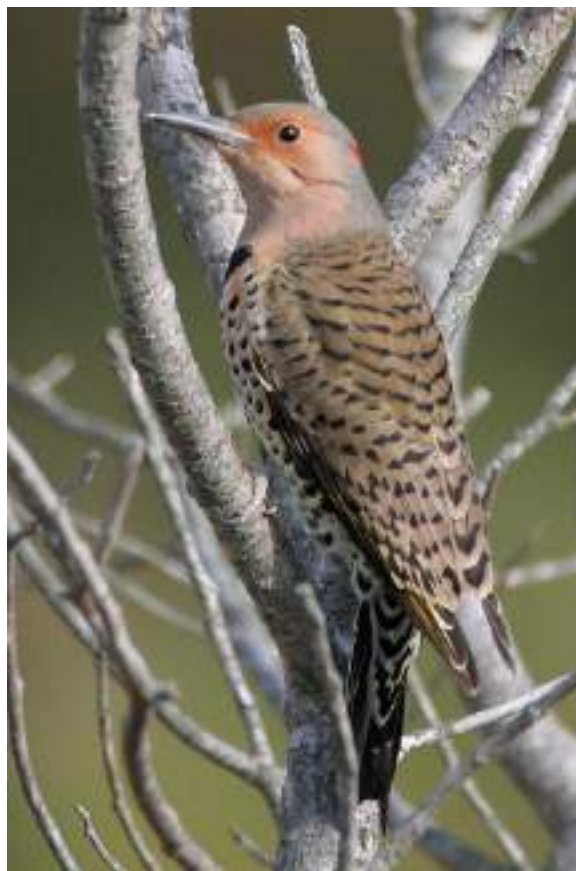
the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. It is found with equal frequency along the Hudson shore, the reservoirs, and the inland streams, but generally less frequently in the Highlands than in Rockland County proper.

NORTHERN [COMMON] FLICKER

Colaptes auratus

1844	De Kay	summer resident: a few remain during the year
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, irregular winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, occasional resident
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, occasional resident
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident, rare in winter
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, frequently wintering
1940	Carr	common summer resident, abundant migrant
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident and transient visitant, uncommon to rare in winter
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, regular rare permanent resident
1976	Current status	fairly common to common resident, abundant migrant

After a low period, both summer and winter, during the 1960s, this species seems to be back to its former abundance, except in the Highlands, where the pileated woodpecker is much commoner as a year-round resident. The flicker has been missed only once on 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (in 1970); numbers have ranged up to 28 in 1974 and 27 on the 1952 Count. However, it has been recorded on only ten of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, and not at all since 1961. In fall migrations, and to a lesser extent in spring, daily numbers often exceed 200 or 250 birds. A good count for a single party in May is 12 to 15 flickers.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

PILATED WOODPECKER

Dryocopus pileatus

1844	De Kay	particularly abundant in uncleared forest; almost unknown in the Atlantic district
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	accidental visitant
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	"...fifty years ago was virtually extinct in . . . the Hudson Valley," but some evidence of a tendency to reestablish itself in former sites
1927	Kuerzi	no mention
1940	Carr	permanent resident, becoming more common; breeds in the park interior
1942	Cruikshank	fairly common breeder in the highlands of Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular uncommon permanent resident; nests
1976	Current status	uncommon resident and breeder

As Ludlow Griscom predicted, this spectacular bird has "become reconciled to some contact with civilization." While today's local birder still gets a thrill out of seeing a pileated, it is hard for him or her to imagine how rare the bird was a half-century ago. I had birded actively for seven or eight years before I saw my first, in 1935 on the road between Lakes Welch and Kanawauke in the Park. Yet less than 20 years later I was able to see three or four on a good winter day in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park.

There is some evidence that numbers in the Park may have peaked in the 1950s. On the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, the pileated was missed only twice, in 1946 and 1972, but the high numbers were eight in 1953 and seven in 1952; the count has not reached five since 1962. In Rockland County the bird may also have suffered from the destruction of its habitats; the creation of the Lake Tappan reservoir, for example, destroyed one known nesting area. Yet the bird persists in remnant woodland amazingly close to the more mature housing developments, and it, of course, thrives in the protected areas of the Palisades Interstate Park's Blauvelt and High Tor sections, and also along the Palisades south of Tallman Mountain.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER

Melanerpes [Centurus] carolinus



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This southern woodpecker is now suddenly an uncommon but regular resident. We had only two records prior to 1963: May 12, 1926 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) and Nov. 26, 1957 at the feeder of Dr. and Mrs. Adolph Meyer in New City, remaining for several days. However, Ludlow Griscom notes that "in Giraud's day (J. P. Giraud, Jr., 'The Birds of Long Island,' 1844) this handsome and noisy woodpecker was apparently a 'not very abundant' resident on Long Island, but has long since deserted this region, and is now an accidental visitant from the South."

The bird's spread into the lower lands of Rockland County has been fairly steady since 1963, though there is a gap in records from 1965 through 1967. In 1968 it was reported from three localities; in 1969, from four; in 1970, from only one; in 1971, from four; in 1972, from five; in 1973 from six. On the Dec. 27, 1975 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, four birds were reported from three localities. Many pairs have been seen, with reports from all months except July, and it is inconceivable that the species is not breeding, though no nests have been found.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER
Melanerpes erythrocephalus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to September, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	rare transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common local summer resident, fairly common transient visitant; Sept. 1 to Nov. 3
1898	Fisher	rare resident, common fall transient, Aug. 27 to Oct. 12
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient, frequently wintering and usually breeding locally in some numbers
1940	Carr	rare transient in Arden area of park
1942	Cruickshank	"absolutely unpredictable"; has nested in Rockland County in the last ten years
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient
1976	Current status	very rare visitant in all seasons but mostly in the fall

This erratic woodpecker was one of the first of the family that became familiar to me in the mid-1920s on bird walks with W. DeWitt Miller and the Englewood Bird Club on the Phelps estate in

Englewood. I have also seen it several times in Orange County, to the north of our region, but I have never seen a non-migratory bird in Rockland County. Among our 18 records for the

species, there have been birds twice that remained for months at a time, but there has been no proof of nesting.

We have three rather old records: May 25, 1928 Palisades (Jennie Fox); May 8, 1929 at Arden (William H. Carr); Apr. 28, 1938 at Arden (Carr). In the fall of 1949, Fritz Papin reported a probable migrant at Tomkins Cove, and on Nov. 9, 1950 a Mr. Burngard reported one at Hillburn. A Rockland Audubon Society field trip to the top of Bear Mountain on Sept. 21, 1952 recorded a migrating bird.

On Oct. 13, 1956, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens found an immature at Lake De Forest; four days later they saw it storing acorns in holes in telephone poles; on Nov. 23, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper found the bird about a mile to the north, where it was seen repeatedly during December, January, and February. On Apr. 28, 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Cooke found a pair at this site, and the birds were seen until May 13, 1957 (Ruth Steffens).

The next reports were Oct. 24, 1960, an immature near Suffern (Helen Roca-Garcia); Dec. 31, 1961, also in the Suffern area (Edwina Bruggeman); May 12, 1962, a male at Tappan (Dr. Hopper); May 23, 1962, a male at Arden (John LeMaire); Oct. 27, 1966, a male at Lederle Laboratories near Nanuet (Frank Steffens); June 15, 1968, a male near New City (the Steffenses); Oct. 29, 1968, an immature at Dr. Hopper's feeder in Upper Nyack; about Nov. 15, 1969, an immature at Viola (*fide* Frank Steffens). On Mar. 6, 1971, Ruth Steffens saw a male south of Spring Valley that neighbors assured her had been present since the previous summer. Finally, a group of some 100 observers on the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch saw a red-headed woodpecker fly over on Sept. 16, 1973.

1983 Addendum -- On July 9, 1978 a male at Piermont Pier (Dr. Victor Schwartz), our first record in five years. On Nov. 14, 1979 an immature at home of Robert and Mary Boyes, Pearl River; seen through early February, beginning to show red on its head when it was found dead by Mary Boyes.



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

Sphyrapicus varius

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, rare winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, occasional winter visitant
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon spring, common fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common spring transient; common and sometimes abundant fall transient; casual in winter
1940	Carr	uncommon transient, may winter
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring and common fall transient, some winter records
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, irregular rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, very rare winter visitant

This species is markedly less common today than, say, 20 years ago. It has been recorded on 12 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, but the peak number was a mere four birds in 1958. It has been recorded only five times in the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, all single birds and the most recent in 1952. Our experience does not support the earlier belief that the bird was commoner in fall than in spring; indeed, our highest count of all was 10 to 12 birds on Apr. 11, 1970 on an RAS field trip near Lake Tiorati, led by Eugene R. Brown.

We have one isolated summer record: a bird found dead at Dunderberg on July 2, 1949 (John Kenney). The earliest fall date is Sept. 24, 1951 (Brown); the latest spring date is May 9, 1954 (Thomas Dow). Winter records are too numerous to mention, and also impossible to separate from spring and fall migration dates.



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

HAIRY WOODPECKER

Picoides villosus [*Dendrocopos villosus*]

1844	De Kay	constant residen
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident
1898	Chapman	fairly common resident
1898	Fisher	rare resident
1908	Brownell	uncommon winter visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common permanent resident
1940	Carr	common permanent resident
1942	Cruikshank	fairly common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common permanent resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common resident

Based on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts over 29 years, this woodpecker is from 10% to 25% as common as the downy, with perhaps a closer relationship in the Highlands. It has been counted in all 29 years of the RAS Count and in 26 of the 28 years of the Bear Mountain Christmas Count. Yet it was missed on four of ten May "Big Day" counts between 1948 and 1961, so it is not a "sure" bird. The high counts on the RAS Christmas Count were 58 in 1961 and 55 in 1954, yet three out of ten parties missed it entirely on the 1954 Count. In the 1975 RAS Count, there were 18 hairies to 113 downies; the year before, 31 hairies to 129 downies.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

DOWNY WOODPECKER

Picoides pubescens [*Dendrocopos pubescens*]

1844	De Kay	resident
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident
1898	Chapman	very common resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident
1940	Carr	common permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular common permanent resident
1976	Current status	fairly common to common resident

Although this bird is familiar to everyone, in actual numbers seen in a day's birding it more closely fits John Bull's criterion for "fairly common" than that for "common." On ten May "Big Day" trips by a single party (1948 to 1961), numbers ranged from one to ten; in fact, the bird was missed entirely on May 11, 1952. Granted that attention on such trips is more likely to be focused on warblers, the average count of only three or four downies is modest indeed. The species has been recorded on all 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with highs of 233 in 1972, 176 in 1959, and 173 in 1962. However, counts have also been as low as 51 in 1964 and 64 in 1969. An average would be around 125 on the RAS Count. The downy has been recorded on 27 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (missed in 1946, the first year), with highs of 48 in 1959 and 42 in 1957. The most recent Bear Mountain Counts, through 1973, have averaged in the low 20s.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BLACK-BACKED [THREE-TOED] WOODPECKER

Picoides arcticus

A casual winter visitant, with only four records for our area: Jan. 1, 1930 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman), Mar. 17, 1948 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); Dec. 28, 1957 in Blauvelt Section of the Park on a Rockland Audubon Society Christmas

Count, found feeding on dead red pines in a blow-down plantation at old camp Bluefield (David O. Hill, Thomas Dow); Mar. 8, 1959 at Fort Montgomery (Mr. and Mrs. John C. Orth).

[NORTHERN] THREE-TOED WOODPECKER
Picoides tridactylus

Also a casual visitant, with only two records:
Apr. 20, 1926 at Orangeburg (Jennie Fox,
Thomas P. Gilman) to Apr. 22, 1926, same bird,

same place (Gilman), and Dec. 7, 1950 at New
City Park (Estelle Walter).

EASTERN KINGBIRD

Tyrannus tyrannus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common summer resident
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 1 to September
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 29 to Sept. 10
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, May 1 to Oct. 25
1923	Griscom	common summer resident, leaves in August
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder

In recent years, the kingbird has been the commonest of the flycatchers locally. As a bird primarily of open country, it escaped the deadliest effects of the aerial spraying of DDT in the summer of 1957, which wiped out 75% to 90% of the woodland flycatchers, especially the phoebe

and wood pewee. Still, except when one encounters a family of kingbirds in late summer or early fall, a count of ten in a day's birding must be considered good, and a count of five would be more typical.

The kingbird arrives quite regularly around May 5 or 7, and most leave by late September. Our dates range from May 1, 1932 (Robert F. Deed) to Oct.

12, 1951 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). The date of Oct. 25 cited by Brownell would be a still later departure.

WESTERN KINGBIRD
Tyrannus verticalis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental winter visitant, with one record at the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum from Dec. 6 to Dec. 26, 1953 (John C. Orth, John Kenney).

1983 Addendum -- Our number of records is doubled by a sighting in Nyack on Nov. 7, 1976 by W. Wilkens (reported in "American Birds").

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER

Myiarchus crinitus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare in our state
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, abundant summer; May 3 to Sept. 24
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, May 1 -to Sept. 30
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 7 to Sept. 12
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, arrives May 3
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder

This bird has recovered better than some from the 1957 gypsy moth spraying, but it is still only about two-thirds as numerous as before the spraying. A May "Big Day" count of six in 1957 dipped to three in each of the next four years. The earliest spring date is Apr. 28, 1957, two birds in Blauvelt

(Rockland Audubon Society field trip) and Apr. 28, 1961 in Sterling Forest Gardens (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed). An exceptionally late fall date is Oct. 12, 1970 in Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed); the previous latest date had been Sept. 22, 1962 (Edwin Gamble).

EASTERN PHOEBE

Sayornis phoebe



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, last of March to October or November
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Mar. 2 to Oct. 26
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, Mar. 10 to Oct. 31
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Mar. 14 to Oct. 29
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, Mar. 25 to Oct. 30
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, two winter records
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder, casual winter visitant

This species appears to have been the prime victim of the gypsy moth aerial spraying of all Rockland County woodlands in the summer of 1957. From counts of six to eight by single parties on May "Big Days" through 1957, numbers dipped to one to four birds on similar counts from 1958 through 1961, despite much more diligent search.

Phoebes vanished totally from such traditional habitats as the Blauvelt Section of the Park, the Hackensack swamps, and the various lake shores; when it was found at all from 1958 to about 1965, it was likely to be in areas that had been marginal habitat; the edges of villages, the Hudson River shore, the deep woods in the Highlands.

Tyrannidae

In their concern over the possible effects of the DDT spraying, Rockland Audubon Society members made a special effort to census phoebes in the spring of 1958. Three fairly early arrivals were seen: Mar. 17, Apr. 4, and Apr. 5. But my own experience seemed typical: From Apr. 5 to May 16, including two dawn-to-dusk field trips and several shorter trips, I saw not a single phoebe. By all accounts, the springs of 1959 and 1960 were even more dramatically devoid of phoebes; we had just three birds reported each year by our dozens of birdwatching members. However, a solid recovery has been evident since 1969 or 1970, and it should now be possible to find four or five phoebes on a spring day.

The earliest spring date is Mar. 10, 1924 at Palisades (Jennie Fox), Mar. 10, 1955 (Louise S. Deed, David O. Hill), and Mar. 10, 1956, two birds (Eugene R. Brown). Phoebes more typically arrive about Mar. 20. On Mar. 26, 1952, Eugene Brown counted more than 40 individuals--by far our largest count for this species. The latest fall date is Nov. 5, 1935 (Robert F. Deed).

We have half a dozen winter records: Dec. 27, 1952 (Ruth Steffens, Estelle Walter); Dec. 29, 1956 near Suffern (Homer S. Kelsey); Dec. 30, 1967 in the Mount Ivy swamp (Kelsey); Feb. 6, 1969 in the West Nyack swamp (Bernd Gravenstein); Dec. 27, 1969 in Blauvelt (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed), Dec. 11, 1972 near Suffern (Bruce Edinger).

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER

Empidonax flaviventris

1844	De Kay	one specimen from Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, May 9-31 and Sept. 28
1898	Chapman	fairly common fall transient. also in spring
1898	Fisher	common transient, May 17 to June 4 and Aug. 8 to Sept. 20
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon spring, fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant; May, June, and August records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring transient, uncommon to fairly common fall transient
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, casual summer visitant and possibly breeding in Park interior

This has not been a common migrant, spring or fall, in the past 50 years, but it has been noticeably declining for at least half that time. We have only ten records since 1937, including one "probable" in winter: Dec. 10, 1960 at Cornwall (Mr. and Mrs. John Dye). The possibility of localized breeding in this area is raised by Eugene R. Brown's exploration of the higher portions of the Harriman Section of the Park after the spring migration season. While this flycatcher is doubtless a late-May migrant, it is noteworthy that on June 15, 1970 Brown found a singing bird on Hogencamp Mountain (elevation about 1,300 feet) and on June 20, 1971 led a Rockland Audubon Society field trip that found two singing birds in the same locality.

Spring: May 6, 1927 at Palisades (Jennie Fox) to June 2, 1937 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr). We also have two May 9 dates, but most spring records are for the last half of May.

Fall: Aug. 15, 1968 at Nauraushaun (James Demes) to Sept. 17, 1954 (Thomas Dow) and Sept 17, 1959 at Upper Nyack (Brown).

1983 Addendum -- Five new records: May 22-23, 1978 at Gilchrest Road, Congers (Donald S. and Robert F. Deed); Aug. 27, 1980, Mine Road; Aug. 29, 1980, Cornwall; May 18, 1981, singing at Bulsontown (Deed); June 11, 1981, dull-plumaged male singing on Low Tor (the Deeds).

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER
Empidonax virescens



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	appears early in May, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, May 10 to Sept. 10
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 10 to Aug. 27
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	practically extirpated
1927	Kuerzi	formerly a common summer resident; a few bred as recently as 1925
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	rare transient
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, casual in fall; casual summer visitant

With all *Empidonax* flycatchers except the yellow-bellied, our records are restricted to voice identifications, and this may account for the paucity of fall records. Of our region's dozen records, only five are since 1950, and the reports

that the species was a common or fairly common summer resident at the turn of the century seem fantastic to today's birder. Another anomaly is the fact that this bird of more southerly woodlands has been found in June in our area only in the

highlands and the highest portions of Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, our slice of Canadian Zone flora and fauna. However, the one known modern attempt to nest was at the low altitude of Lake De Forest, Valley Cottage.

This nesting attempt ended in failure. On May 17, 1957, Eugene R. Brown and Robert F. Deed found a pair of Acadian flycatchers on the east shore of Lake De Forest. Two days later a nest under construction was discovered there, almost over the highway. On May 24 the nest appeared to be finished. Unfortunately, a heavy rainstorm a day or two later washed the nest out of the tree, and the birds left the area.

Spring: May 6, 1930 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) to June 1, 1969 at Mine Road, back of West Point (Eugene Bleiweiss et al.).

Summer: Brownell in Eaton, Vol. 2, page 195, cites breeding at Nyack. On June 11, 1974, Eugene Brown found three Acadians at Surebridge Swamp in Harriman Park, and on June 18 he found another at a different point in the same general area.

Fall: Sept. 1, 1935 (Deed); Sept. 10, 1951 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- New records too numerous to list, including definite nesting reports at Sterling Lake on June 4, 1978 (Robert Speiser) and newborn nestlings on June 29 (Speiser, John Benzinger); at Pine Swamp, Harriman Section, on June 18, 1980 with at least two eggs in nest (Speiser).

WILLOW FLYCATCHER and ALDER FLYCATCHER
Empidonax trailli and *Empidonax alnorum*



Adult, Willow Flycatcher

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Until the American Ornithologists' Union in 1973 officially separated the "Alder" or "Traill's" Flycatcher into these two species, all birds of the two song patterns were lumped together, and the old records were kept accordingly.

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient, occasional resident
1898	Chapman	rare transient, local summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient, rare summer resident
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, May 19-31 and Aug. 29
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon and local summer resident
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common local summer resident in Rockland County
1960	Orth	"presumably a transient but status not defininately known because of the difficulty of accurate field identification. One definite record 9/14/57, Fort Montgomery (JCO)."
1976	Current status	Willow (<i>fitz-bew</i> type): uncommon migrant and breeder Alder (<i>fee-bee'-o</i> type): casual breeder only recently

John Bull's state bird book mentions breeding by the alder flycatcher in the Highlands, but the only other records we have for this new "*fee-bee'-o*" species are the result of Anthony F. Amos's day-by-day studies of the Piermont marsh and adjacent Tallman Mountain. In the past three years, Amos has found both species apparently nesting at the marsh: on June 10 and 11, 1973 a pair of alders at the inland edge of the marsh; on June 1, 1974, one pair of alders in the Piermont village dump and another pair in a small clump of low willows near the mouth of Sparkill Creek (the outer edge of the marsh); on June 28, 1975, a pair of willow flycatchers near a small tree in the marsh itself.

In my own nearly 50 years of birding in Rockland County, I have never found a "*fee-bee'-o*" type here, nor have most of the active birders I know. On the other hand, the "*fitz-bew*" type has been locally common, especially on the marshy Hudson shore north of Haverstraw, a site destroyed since 1972 by the construction of a huge power plant. Even in good years and the best of habitats, counts of willow flycatchers have rarely exceeded three or four per day. Besides the site north of Haverstraw, birds have been recorded at Blauvelt, West Nyack, Palisades, Suffern, Stony Point, Congers, New City (where two pairs nested as recently as 1963), and Iona Island.

The earliest spring date for the willow flycatcher is May 7, 1960 near Grassy Point (Robert Connor, Morton Isler). Fall dates are totally absent, for want of voice identification, and the latest summer date we have is July 30, 1949, north of Haverstraw (Eugene R. Brown, Robert Holzapfel, Robert F. Deed). In the summer of 1972, two pairs nested at the old Zackman Farm, near Suffern (Bruce Edinger).

1983 Addendum -- Willow (*fitz-bew*) Flycatcher-- Has become downright common in several localities: Piermont Pier, Haverstraw brickyards, Letchworthworth Village area, Congers, even the interior of the county at South Monsey.

Alder (*fee-bee'-o*) Flycatcher-- Far less numerous but hanging on at a few sites, including the former brickyards, Piermont Pier, Iona Island, the valley west of Long Mt. in Harriman Park, South Monsey. Only sign of nesting was a female carrying food into a clump of cottonwoods on the Piermont Pier road on July 26, 1978 (Deed).



Adult, Alder Flycatcher

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

LEAST FLYCATCHER
Empidonax minimus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	---
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, Apr. 26 to Oct. 8
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Apr. 25 to Aug. 26
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, May 12 to Oct. 1
1923	Griscom	common summer resident, steadily decreasing
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder

The decline of the least flycatcher in this century appears to have less to do with aerial spraying of insecticides than with what Ludlow Griscom pointed out in his 1923 book: "It will apparently not tolerate more civilized conditions." Indeed, in the May "Big Day" counts of 1958, 1959, and 1960--after the countywide aerial spraying of DDT--the tallies of 11, 6, and 8 birds respectively exceeded

the pre-spraying counts. However, today a "Big Day" count of six to eight birds would be considered very good.

Dates range from Apr. 20, 1954 (Homer S. Kelsey) to Oct. 9, 1963, near the present Lake Tappan (Robert F. Deed).

EASTERN WOOD PEWEE

Contopus virens



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	appears in the middle of May, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 11 to Sept. 21
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, May 10 to Sept. 30
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 10 to Oct. 2
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, May 15 to Sept. 25
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, one December specimen
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder, perhaps recovering in recent years

After the infamous DDT spraying in the summer of 1957, the pewee was missing entirely in mid-May in two of the next four years, and only isolated birds were reported each year until about 1971. Today a count after mid-May might run to three or four birds. Our dates range from May 6, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to Oct. 15, 1954

(Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper), but birds generally arrive about May 15 and are not often detected after Labor Day.

1983 Addendum -- A very early date of Apr. 29, 1983 at Tallman Mt.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER

Nuttallornis borealis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"doubtless breeds in the state but have never met one"
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, May 9-29 and Aug. 27 to Sept. 18
1898	Chapman	transient visitant, fairly common in fall
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, May 20 and Aug. 15 to Sept. 16
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient visitant, more in fall
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon but regular spring and fall transient
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant; May, June, September records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	rare migrant, accidental summer visitant

More than half of our two dozen modern records have been in spring, when the olive-sided flycatcher is among the latest migrants. On June 20, 1971, a Rockland Audubon Society field trip led by Eugene R. Brown found a singing bird near

Hogencamp Mountain, in the highest portion of Harriman Park. This date is too isolated from other spring migration dates to represent anything but an attempt at summer residence. However, Gene

Brown's exploration of the area since then has not turned up another olive-sided.

Numbers in fall migration are higher than in spring; when one bird is found in late August or early September, there often are others. In 1969, Edward D. Treacy and John Getgood found olive-sideds at Weyant's Pond, back of West Point, on Aug. 27, 29, and 30, with two birds on the 30th. On Sept. 7, 1936, Vivian B. Krum and Robert F. Deed had the maximum local count of four birds in a day, two at Pine Swamp and two at Queensboro Lake, both areas in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park.

Spring: May 11, 1963 at Fort Montgomery (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus) to June 2, 1938 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis).

Fall: Aug. 27, 1969 (Treacy, Getgood) to Oct. 9, 1954 at Stony Point (Mr. and Mrs. Irving G. Kennedy). The previous late date had been the four birds on Sept. 7, 1936, and we have three other records for Sept. 4 and 5.

1983 Addendum -- Half a dozen new records since 1976.

HORNED LARK *Eremophila alpestris*



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant, numerous at times
1878-82	Mearns	local and occasional
1898	Chapman	common winter resident on Long Island
1898	Fisher	occasional winter visitant
1908	Brownell	uncommon winter visitant
1923	Griscom	based on Fisher, casual winter visitant at Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	regular common fall transient, less common in winter and spring; "Prairie" probably a rare transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient
1960	Orth	occasional fairly common fall transient, no spring records
1976	Current status	a migrant and winter visitant usually uncommon but sometimes common; rare to uncommon breeder

The former two species of horned lark, Northern and Prairie, were wisely combined into one by the American Ornithologists' Union in 1973. In many cases it is impossible to separate the now-

subspecies in the field. However, our nesting birds, thoroughly studied at close range, have all been of the Prairie subspecies, and most of our

transient and wintering birds seem to have been the Northern.

For ten years (1949 to 1959), birds of the Prairie form nested at Lederle Laboratories, near Nanuet, on extensive lawns adjacent to the employee parking area. When the presence of nests was called to the attention of the groundsman, care was taken not to mow too closely to the nesting area, which was never occupied by more than one pair of birds. Contrary to Griscom's statement that nesting is in April, the Lederle birds regularly were on the nest in late February, and once as early as Feb. 18, 1954 (Frank R. Steffens). They completed their nesting in early May. In 1957, Frank Steffens noted that the eggs hatched on Apr. 28 and three young were being fed on May 3. In 1958 the Lederle pair ran into bad luck with weather; a week after they had been seen at their nest, an unseasonable snowstorm came on Mar. 20, and at the height of the storm Steffens saw the birds sitting on the manhole of a steam pipe. The earliest arrival date at Lederle was Feb. 15, 1950 (Dr. Robert L. Burkhart); the latest departure was Nov. 11, 1949 (Homer S. Kelsey).

After a five-year lapse, a possibly nesting pair was found on June 4, 1964, the male singing, at Kakiat School near Spring Valley (Kelsey). Five years later another nesting pair with three young was found on May 15, 1969 on the soccer field of Ramapo Senior High School ("The Kingbird," July, 1969). Another nesting was in the inner

quadrangle of the same high school in 1971, where the pair fed three young through mid-April ("The Kingbird," July, 1971).

The difficulties of distinguishing between the subspecies in the field were illustrated when Mr. and Mrs. Steffens studied a flock of 50 horned larks at New City on Feb. 23, 1952 but could not call them definitely the Prairie form. However, on Mar. 16, a single pair at the same site behaved as if nesting, hence was most probably the Prairie (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper. Nancy Sickels, Robert F. Deed).

The Northern form is presumably the one found on four of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, in numbers of 15 to 20; the species is absent from the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. Since one or the other subspecies may occur at any season, it is difficult to sort out early and late dates. Two birds at Lederle Laboratories on Oct. 4, 1961, our earliest fall date, may well have been from the nesting there; however, one at the top of Bear Mountain on Oct. 12, 1947 (George Komorowski) was doubtless a migrant Northern. The twos and threes seen at Lake Tappan on Oct. 7, 1964 and Oct. 8, 1970 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed) also "seemed" to be the Northern subspecies. In the spring, all dates after Mar. 26, 1952 (a flock of 30 near New City; Eugene R. Brown) were associated with nesting, hence were the Prairie subspecies.

TREE SWALLOW

Tachycineta [Iridoprocne] bicolor



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very numerous on Long Island marshes, April to September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident and transient; breeds
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, rare summer resident
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	common transient, occasional summer resident; breeds
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common, frequently abundant transient
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds; common migrant
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, rare local summer resident
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	very common to very abundant migrant, common breeder

Breeding in Rockland County proper is limited to remnant swamps along the Hackensack Creek, the Sparkill Creek at Tappan, the lakes and reservoirs, and a very few other spots such as the edge of the Ramapos near Suffern. But the bird nests in the Highlands in large numbers.

The fall migration is the more spectacular in sheer numbers of birds, and it may also be the more prolonged. Among the larger counts are 5,000-plus at Blauvelt on Aug. 28, 1952 (Robert F. Deed) and 4,000 to 5,000 at Grassy Point on Oct. 7, 1959 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed). The latest fall

date is Nov. 2, 1958, a single bird at Iona Island (Rockland Audubon Society field trip led by John C. Orth).

In spring, tree swallows generally arrive in mid-March, occasionally not until early April. Yet a single bird flew over Piermont Pier on the unseasonable date of Feb. 20, 1954 (Thomas Dow, David O. Hill, Deed), and we also have arrival dates of Mar. 6, 1956, a small flock at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Ruth Steffens), and Mar. 9, 1958, one bird at Lake De Forest (Dr. Hopper).



Adults

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

BANK SWALLOW

Riparia riparia

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 18 to Oct. 1
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient along the Hudson
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, occasionally breeding
1940	Carr	rare, irregular summer resident; breeds locally
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, very rare breeder

Outside the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, we have only one nesting record: June, 1971, in a sandbank near the Pomona post office. Numbers of migrants have reached 25 to 30 upon occasion in mid-May but not much more than that in September migrations. Local dates range from Apr. 10, 1972, two near Suffern (Bruce Edinger) to Oct. 20, 1956, two at Lake De Forest (Morton Isler).

1983 Addendum -- Some new nesting records: In 1978, at the Mt. Ivy sand pit and three spots in Sterling Forest; in 1979, a pair nesting in Southfields and 20+ pairs in Sterling Forest; in 1980, at least 10 active nests in spoil bank on Blauvelt Road, Lake Tappan.



Adult

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW

Stelgidopteryx serripennis [ruficollis]



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	rare summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common but local summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	rare summer resident, breeds locally
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common breeder and transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	locally fairly common breeder

Both in summer and on migration, this swallow is now far commoner than the bank swallow. It nests chiefly in sandbanks, both manmade commercial sandpits and the more or less natural banks along the shores of reservoirs; it also often nests in the retaining walls of bridge

abutments. Our dates range from Apr. 12, 1953 in Blauvelt (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to Aug. 22, 1958 at Queensboro Lake (John C. Orth). Obviously this species does not share in the early September southward rush of swallows.

BARN SWALLOW
Hirundo rustica



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"one of our most common visitors"
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, abundant transient
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 15 to Sept. 22
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, arrives Apr. 17
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, common migrant
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, abundant transient
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	very common to abundant migrant, common breeder

This is the ubiquitous swallow of our area, never so numerous as the tree swallow in fall migrations but more widespread from early spring to mid-fall. On May "Big Day" list chases, counts by a single party have ranged from 15 to 150 (twice reaching that number in ten counts from 1948 through 1961); numbers on these counts have averaged twice those of the tree swallow.

Dates range from Apr. 10, 1949 (Frank R. Steffens) to Oct. 7, 1939 (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis). Spring arrivals are remarkably regular around Apr. 15 to 17, and most barn swallows have departed by the end of September.

1983 Addendum -- A new early date, Apr. 3, 1980 at Hook Mt.

CLIFF SWALLOW

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, June and July; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 16 to Sept. 10; breeds
1898	Chapman	uncommon summer resident, common transient
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 1 to Sept. 12
1908	Brownell	fairly common but local summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	decreasing as a transient, rarer in fall
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon but regular transient
1940	Carr	uncommon transient; May, August, September
1942	Cruickshank	virtually extirpated as a summer resident; uncommon to rare transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, a casual breeder in the Highlands

By all accounts, this swallow once nested throughout rural Rockland County, as in similar farmlands not far to the north and west. But the only breeding records of the last half-century have been two at Camp Buckner, back of West Point: Apr. 23, 1971, six birds returning to an old nest site (John Getgood), and May 13, 1972,

nesting at the same place ("The Kingbird," July, 1972). As further indication of nearby breeding, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed on Aug. 25, 1974 saw two adults feeding four young birds on a wire near the end of Piermont Pier.

Spring: Apr. 19, 1954 (Thomas Dow) to June 8, 1936 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr).

Fall: July 17, 1949 (Frank R. Steffens) to Oct. 1, 1936 (Deed).

1983 Addendum -- At least four nests at Camp Buckner, back of King Mt. on July 2, 1980 (Robert Speiser, John Benzinger).

PURPLE MARTIN

Progne subis



Adult female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to August, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, becoming rare; breeds
1898	Chapman	uncommon summer resident, breeds
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Apr. 27 to Sept. 11
1908	Brownell	abundant transient visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare and local
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and summer resident, breeding at Rye
1940	Carr	rare migrant, July and October records only
1942	Cruickshank	rare spring transient, uncommon to rare fall transient
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, spring and fall

Except for the report by Nyack's Brownell, the record shows a downtrend for this species since the time of Edgar Mearns. Certainly the bird has not nested locally within the memory of the current generation of birders, nor has it ever been in modern times more than a very rare migrant, usually single birds and with lapses of several years between sightings. On June 4,

1959, Homer S. Kelsey saw a pair at Lederle Laboratories, near Nanuet, which might indicate at least a consideration of nesting. Since then, however, we have had only three records: Aug. 15, 1963 at Lake De Forest (Morton Isler), Apr. 10, 1966 at the Rockland Lake Nature Center (Kelsey); May 17, 1976 at Piermont (Anthony F. Amos).

Spring: Apr. 10, 1966 (Kelsey) to June 4, 1959 (Kelsey).

Fall: July 13, 1952 at Lake Kanawauke (Kenneth Chambers) to Sept. 18, 1939 at Queensboro Lake (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis).



Adults and Juveniles

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

CROWS, JAYS, and MAGPIES

BLUE JAY

Cyanocitta cristata



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common resident
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident and transient
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident, abundant transient
1940	Carr	common permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common to uncommon permanent resident, regular abundant spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	common to vary common resident, abundant migrant

Opinions of this bird's status appear nearly unanimous. During the past 40 years, the species seems to have increased both as a resident and as a migrant. Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont area tallied from one bird in 1934 to 25 each in 1935 and 1941; on Dec. 27, 1975, the party covering

the Town of Orangetown, which includes Piermont, for the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count recorded 65 jays. The RAS tally of jays ranged from 52 to 439 in the first ten years of the Christmas Count from 81 to 502 (in 1962) in the next ten years, and from 112 to 412 in the past nine years. Year-to-year fluctuations

Corvidae

can be sharp, though. In 1953, for example, the Bear Mountain Christmas Count set a record with 145 jays, but a year later only ten were found. And the RAS count of 469 in 1960 was followed by a count of only 81 in 1961. The two Christmas Counts seem to move in the same pattern: A poor count of only ten at Bear Mountain in 1968 was confirmed six days later by a poor count of 112 on the RAS census.

The numbers of birds in spring and fall flights are astonishing for a species that appears to stay put all year round. In both seasons, loose flocks stream through by the thousands per day with no regular timing. April and September-October are regarded as the migration months, yet one of the biggest flights I have ever seen was on May 17, 1958.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE
Pica hudsonia [pica]



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant. On Nov. 14, 1935, Park Ranger E. "Muzz" Jones found a bird snagged in a fallen tree at Island Pond, in the highest Harriman Section of the Park, and brought it to

Park Naturalist William H. Carr, who identified it. The skin is now in the American Museum of Natural History.

COMMON RAVEN
Corvus corax



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall migrant, recorded only five times: Nov. 24, 1930 at Palisades (Thomas. P. Gilman); Nov. 10, 1946, two at the summit of Bear Mountain (George Komorowski); Nov. 11, 1955, two at Sparkill, seen both perched and flying (David O. Hill, William Hill); Dec. 5, 1955 at Congers (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); Sept. 7,

1964 at Storm King Mountain (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber, Hugh Pembleton).

1983 Addendum -- Two new records: One over Hook Mt. at noon on 30, 1981 (Stiles Thomas, Hugh Martin), and one near West Point on June 27, 1981 (John Tramontano).

AMERICAN CROW [COMMON CROW]
Corvus brachyrhynchos



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	constant resident
1878-82	Mearns	resident
1898	Chapman	abundant resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident
1940	Carr	common permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common permanent resident, regular abundant spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	common resident, abundant to very abundant migrant and winter visitant

Despite Rockland County's loss of the farmland that is supposed to be the crow's favorite habitat, this species has greatly increased in the past 20 or 25 years. Its numbers are swelled in winter by large flocks that roost chiefly in inland

Rockland County. The crow is considerably less abundant in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park in any season. However, the Bear Mountain Christmas Count shows a steady increase over a 28-year period: from a "good" count of 23 in

1947 to 34 in 1954, 46 in 1956, 48 in 1958, 64 in 1964, and 134 in 1966. The Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count hit a high of 991 in 1948, dipped to a reverse of that figure—199—in 1949, peaked again at 1,114 in 1963, topped

that with 1,362 in 1965, had 1,219 in 1970, and set an all-time record of 2,083 in 1974.

Counts in May and in summer months tend to run between 20 and 30 birds for a day's active birding by a single party.

FISH CROW

Corvus ossifragus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	occasionally seen on the shores of Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	occasional
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, uncommon winter visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	summer resident in the Hudson Valley
1927	Kuerzi	locally a fairly common permanent resident
1940	Carr	undoubtedly present in the Park along the Hudson, none collected
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common permanent resident
1960	Orth	sporadic rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	probably an uncommon and local resident

The difficulty here, of course, is that the bird must be heard to be surely identifiable. For example, many--but not all--of the crows over the Piermont marsh are believed to be fish crows. Yet the species has been recorded only four times--1954, 1960, 1974, 1975--on the

Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, putting it in the same class of Christmas-time rarity as the Virginia rail. In spring, one may hear four or five fish crows at Piermont, but I know of only one or two reports at any season from other points in Rockland.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Poecile [Parus] atricapillus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident, rather rare in southern districts
1878-82	Mearns	common resident
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident, abundant in fall and winter
1927	Kuerzi	resident, fairly common in summer, abundant on migrations and in winter
1940	Carr	common permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common to common permanent resident, occasionally very common fall transient
1976	Current status	common resident, very common to abundant migrant and winter visitant

In the past dozen years, the chickadee has been declining in most of Rockland County, though it seems to have held its own in the Highlands. However, even on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, the high tallies were 224 in

1952, 196 in 1953, 194 in 1955, 180 in 1957, and 162 in 1964, a number reached in later years only by 161 in 1968 and 167 in 1969. On the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, the high for the 29 years was set in

1949, with 579. Other high counts were 497 in 1952, 515 in 1954, and 513 in 1962; in the last ten years, counts have stayed rather flat at a lower level: 143 in 1966, 229 in 1967, 252 in 1968, 143 in 1969, 367 in 1970, 338 in 1971, 222 in 1972, 262 in 1973, 280 in 1974, and 394 in 1975.

On fall migration, chickadees sometimes stream through our area in spectacular numbers. On Oct. 16 and 17, 1954, John C. Orth saw hundreds passing each day in migrant flocks. On a day in mid-May, 15 would be a good count for a single party. The species spends the summer in villages and housing developments as readily as in the woodlands.

BOREAL CHICKADEE

Poecile hudsonica [*Parus hudsonicus*]

A very rare winter visitant, with only ten records representing six winters. First reported in the winter of 1954-55: one at Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper's home in Upper Nyack at intervals from Dec. 27 through Jan. 7, and one or two in Grand View on Jan. 9 and 10, 1955 (Thomas Dow). Another bird was in Rockland Lake village from Dec. 26, 1959 through Jan. 22, 1960 (Dr. Hopper). Our first November record was Nov. 15, 1961 (Jean Kolars), followed that winter by one on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count at Pingyp on Dec. 23, 1961 (Robert F. Deed), another at Ladentown on Dec. 31, 1961 (David

O. Hill), and one at Valley Cottage on Feb. 21, 1962 (Dr. Hopper). One appeared on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count on Dec. 26, 1965 at Lake Lucille, near New City. The winter of 1969-70 brought at least four birds: three at Lake Lucille on the RAS Christmas Count on Dec. 27, 1969, and one earlier at Jean Kolars' home in West Nyack. The last Lake Lucille bird was seen on Mar. 22, 1970 (Joseph Weise). On Nov. 9, 1975 and again once later in the month, Anthony F. Amos saw this species at Piermont Pier.

TUFTED TITMOUSE

Baeolophus [Parus] bicolor



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in southern counties
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	local resident on Staten Island
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	accidental in New York State except Staten Island
1927	Kuerzi	occasional visitant, six records from 1874 to 1924
1940	Carr	uncommon transient
1942	Cruickshank	"several pairs are now established even as far north as Rockland and Orange Counties"
1960	Orth	regular uncommon permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	common to very common resident except in the Highlands, where it is only fairly common

Few species show so clear and steady a pattern of range extension from the south as the titmouse. When I started birding in the mid-1920s, the titmouse could be found only in the vicinities of Alpine and Englewood, N.J., where Griscom notes that heavy snows of February

and March, 1920 had wiped out the population and that "one or two pairs" had reappeared a year or so later at Englewood. However, around 1930 the titmouse turned up regularly in the southeast corner of Rockland County, near Palisades and Tappan, and I had maximums of

ten in a day in 1935 and 11 in a day in 1936. The Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count in the Piermont-Alpine area registered eight in 1934, ten each in 1935, 1936, and 1937, six in 1940, and 12 in 1941. This remained approximately the abundance of the titmouse in that district at least through the 1955 Rockland Audubon Society Count, when the party covering the area most comparable to that of the Bronx County Bird Club recorded nine titmice.

Meanwhile, though, the titmouse had spread across Rockland County. The first fully-manned count by Rockland Audubon in 1948 totaled 136, and counts ranged from 80 to 159 until 1960, when 226 were tallied. From 1960 through 1969, RAS totals ranged from 81 to 234; the most recent counts have been 185 in 1970, 135 in 1971, 166 in 1972, 188 in 1973, 170 in 1974, and 125 in 1975.

The titmouse's spread inland from the Hudson Valley and northward into the Highlands is a phenomenon familiar to the current generation of local birders; the cardinal, the Carolina wren, and the mockingbird have followed a similar pattern. Up to 1950, there were only four records of the titmouse for the Highlands, all in 1934 and

1935. And Kuerzi's notes show how much of a barrier the Hudson River seems to have been to an eastward spread of the species. The titmouse was not recorded on the first five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts; the first count of three birds appears on the 1951 list, and counts for several years thereafter (only one bird in 1954) came solely from the Hudson riverfront and the southern edge of the Park, outside the Highlands, strictly speaking. The titmouse was still scarce enough in the Park interior and to the north to merit the recording of such sightings as one bird at Lake Menonini, west of Queensboro Lake on Nov. 20, 1954 (Robert F. Deed) and one at Cornwall, the northern edge of the Highlands, on Oct. 29, 1955 (Edward D. Treacy). The Bear Mountain Christmas Counts even later rarely showed the titmouse to be as common in relation to the black-capped chickadee as in the Rockland County counts. In Rockland, the titmouse has been generally one-half to two-thirds the numbers of the chickadee, whereas in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park it has averaged one-fifth to one-third as numerous, with an all-time high of 56 in 1964. In Rockland County, the titmouse often outnumbered the chickadee by a wide margin in April and May.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH

Sitta carolinensis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident
1878-82	Mearns	resident, usually common
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common resident, common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	resident, more common in winter
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common permanent resident
1940	Carr	permanent resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common permanent resident, nests
1976	Current status	fairly common resident, with numbers swelled to very common in winter

As reflected in Christmas counts, numbers are now slightly lower than 25 years ago. Counts on May "Big Days" are less than one-quarter of Christmas counts in much the same territory. In Rockland County, the Christmas high is 150 in 1954, but the 1952 count was only 70 and the

1958 count, 68. A new low of 47 was struck in 1964, and still lower counts came in 1966 (36 birds) and 1969 (only 20). More typical, though, were counts of 121 in 1962, 95 in 1963, 89 in 1965, 86 in 1967, 92 in 1968, 105 in 1970, 75 in

1971, 86 in 1972, 74 in 1973, 73 in 1974, and 104 in 1975.

On the Bear Mountain Christmas Count, this nuthatch has maintained a curious parity with the common crow. It has been recorded on all 28 counts, with peaks of 41 in 1953, 45 in 1959,

and 46 in 1965; in recent years it has dipped as low as 11 in 1967 and 6 in 1971.

Mid-May counts in recent years have totaled 18 to 25 birds, countywide. However, the fairly early-nesting nuthatch is less conspicuous at this season.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH

Sitta canadensis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant, spring and fall
1878-82	Mearns	irregular winter visitant, a transient abundant at times
1898	Chapman	common transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	irregular winter visitant
1908	Brownell	common transient, irregular winter visitant
1923	Griscom	irregular transient, rarely wintering
1927	Kuerzi	irregular transient, sometimes numerous and occasionally wintering
1940	Carr	irregular transient, may winter
1942	Cruickshank	irregular transient visitant, fall
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, irregular rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, often fairly common winter visitant, rare summer visitant, may breed

This nuthatch is now considerably more regular on migration and in winter than it was 25 years ago, and far more regular than 50 years ago. It has been recorded in our area in every month of the year, not only in the higher Harriman Park

interior but even in Rockland County proper in summer. Its persistence in mid-June for the past seven years in the area of Surebridge and Pine Swamps (Eugene R. Brown) suggests breeding, but no nest has been found. It also spent most

of July, 1954, at Bardonia in central Rockland County (Theodore B. Eiben).

For once, Christmas Count records do not accurately reflect the numbers of a wintering bird; the red-breasted nuthatch is often much more numerous in early December and in February than at Count time--one respect in which it still is erratic. The highest count in its 13 appearances on 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts is 17 in 1951, a big year for the species in which there were several counts or 25 or 30 birds at one place during the winter. This bird has been represented on 18 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, including all but two years from 1964 through 1973; the high was 15 birds in 1969.

Disregarding the aberrant summer dates, occurrences range from the first week of August, 1957 at Upper Nyack (Brown) to May 18, 1960, two birds also in Upper Nyack (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). Summer records include that of Eiben at Bardonia, June 7, 1965 at Surebridge Swamp (Brown); June 10, 1969 at Surebridge (Brown); June 15, 1970, two at Hogencamp Mountain and Island Pond (Brown); June 11 and June 18, 1974, one at Surebridge Swamp (Brown).

1983 Addendum -- Our first definite breeding records: June 17, 1980, a pair feeding three young in spruce grove at the spruce grove at the Thruway's Harriman toll plaza (Speiser, Benzinger); a pair with at least three young from May 10 to July 5, 1980 in Black Rock Forest, back of Storm King (same observers).

BROWN CREEPER

Certhia americana [familiaris]



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident, breeds; considered uncommon
1878-82	Mearns	abundant but irregular winter visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common winter visitant
1908	Brownell	fairly common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly common winter resident, one breeding record
1940	Carr	winter visitor; June, July records, may breed
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, fairly common winter resident, "has undoubtedly bred in the highlands of Rockland County"
1960	Orth	regular rare permanent resident, regular-fairly common winter visitant; possibly nesting
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant and winter visitant, locally fairly common breeder in high interior of Park and very rare breeder in Rockland proper

A distinction must be drawn between this species' summer status in the 200- to 400-foot

elevations of the Rockland County interior and that in the 1,100- to 1,300-foot elevations of the

Harriman Park interior. Yet, ironically, breeding has been proven by the finding of an active nest in Rockland whereas, as Carr and Orth point out, breeding in the Park is only "possible" or "probable." It is, however, inconceivable that the creeper is not nesting in the Park when Eugene R. Brown has found numbers up to seven in a day in mid-June in recent years. Brown and Deed found a singing bird at Island Pond on July 29, 1951; Brown found three, all singing, at Surebridge Swamp on June 7, 1965, two pairs at Surebridge on June 15, 1968, three birds at Hogencamp Mountain and Island Pond on June 15, 1970, seven at Surebridge on June 11, 1974 and five there on June 18, 1974, and five at Surebridge and Pine Swamps on June 18, 1975.

Meanwhile, lower-lying Rockland County was accumulating summer records: Aug. 14, 1954, a bird trapped in the basement of John M. Price's home on South Mountain Road, New City; birds all summer in 1960 near Suffern (John LeMaire) and throughout August, 1960, in Pearl River (Raoul Nadeau), one on Little Tor on July 15, 1962 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

The one observation of an active nest began in mid-May, 1965 (the exact date is lost to history) when Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens found the nest in a dead stub beside a brook, 20 feet from Route 304 in Centenary (between New City and Haverstraw). The nest was under a loose piece of bark four or five feet above the ground. Three or four young were later noted, and in June the Steffenses saw the last bird leave the nest. At that time they could find only three young birds in the area.

The species has been counted on all of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, as well as on all six of the predecessor Bronx County Bird Club counts in the Piermont-Alpine area. On the RAS Count, the peak number was 26 in 1951, but good counts of 21 in 1970 and 23 in 1972 indicate sustained numbers. The species has been missed on only four of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, where the high was 28 in 1952, a number not approached in latter years.

1983 Addendum -- A rare summer report from "lowland" Rockland: June 21, 1981 on Clausland Mt. near Bluefields (Donald S. Deed).

HOUSE WREN

Troglodytes aedon



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	well known, late April to September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, Apr. 28 to Oct. 16
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, Apr. 20 to Oct. 20
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 23 to Oct. 14
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, arrives Apr. 27
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, Apr. 12 to Oct. 23
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, declining in numbers

Since the aerial spraying of Rockland woodlands with DDT in the summer of 1957, the house wren has never been as numerous as before, though suburban cats may also be a factor. In my own South Nyack neighborhood, we have not had a house wren in a dozen years; there had been at least two pairs previously. Numbers

in a given area in 1971 and 1972 May "Big Day" counts were only about half those of approximately the same date in 1957.

As the dates cited in the historical summary suggest, this is among the most regular of birds in arrival and departure. Our earliest spring date

Troglodytidae

is Apr. 18, 1960 (Homer S. Kelsey), and the first house wren, year after year, is, recorded on Apr. 19 or 20. Most birds depart with equal regularity about Oct. 12. A Bear Mountain date of Oct. 15,

1934 (Daniel B. Beard) is quite later, and a date of Nov. 27, 1950 at Owl Swamp in the Park (John C. Orth) is exceptional.

WINTER WREN

Troglodytes troglodytes



Adult

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	resident
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, fairly common winter visitant, Sept. 29 to May 1
1898	Chapman	fairly common winter resident, Sept. 20 to Apr. 30
1898	Fisher	fairly common winter visitant, Sept. 18 to Apr. 27
1908	Brownell	uncommon winter visitant, to May 1
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient, rare winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient, frequently wintering
1940	Carr	winter visitor, more common as fall transient
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient visitant, very uncommon winter resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant and winter visitant, rare and local breeder

Nesting of this species was suspected as early as the spring of 1963, when Eugene R. Brown found a singing bird that acted as if on territory near Pine Swamp, in the high Harriman Section of the Park. He again found a singing male on June 5, 1968 in nearby Surebridge Swamp and

on June 15 found six birds there, including four grown young, still clumsy in flight. Again at Surebridge on June 11 and 18, 1974, he found singing birds.

Troglodytidae

Elsewhere in our region, this is a migrant and winter visitant, quite regular in occurrence. In winter it is apparently more likely to be found in Rockland County proper, where it has appeared on 27 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, than in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, where it has been recorded on only 13 of the 28 counts. The peak Christmas count in both areas was in 1959, evidently a big year: four on the Bear Mountain count and ten on the Rockland count.

Dates range from Sept. 23, 1948 (John C. Orth) to May 19, 1961 at Blauvelt (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). There are several records for May 16 to 18. A very late date, possibly indicative of breeding, was recorded by Ned Boyajian atop the Palisades just south of the New York border on May 30, 1971.

1983 Addendum -- Another rare summer occurrence outside the Highlands: June 11, 1980 through July 12 on Bradley Road, between South Nyack and Blauvelt (Deed); young birds noted on June 20-July 5.

CAROLINA WREN

Thryothorus ludovicianus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare visitor to Westchester and Rockland in December
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	resident
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	rare resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	irregular resident, scarce since winter of 1917-18
1927	Kuerzi	occasional visitant and rare permanent resident
1940	Carr	rare visitor, April and May records only for Iona Island
1942	Cruickshank	rare permanent resident
1960	Orth	rare permanent resident, eastern section of park
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common resident

The ebb and flow of range extension by this species from the south is in marked contrast to the steady progress of most other southern species. The wren seems particularly vulnerable to ice storms and heavily crusted snow. Relatively mild winters of the past 20 years have apparently given it an opportunity to establish itself more firmly than ever before, not only

along the Hudson shore, its historic avenue of approach, but also well inland and northward into the Highlands and beyond.

This seemingly solid footing in our region may yet succumb to severe winters (as the 1976-77 winter appears to be in its early months). Hoffmann's "Guide to the Birds of New England

Troglodytidae

and Eastern New York" (1904) called this wren a rather common resident of the eastern slope of the Palisades. But as Griscom notes, the winter of 1917-18 virtually extirpated the birds even on the Palisades. By the end of 1935, however, Carolina wrens had established themselves, step by step, northward along the riverfront as far as the southern edge of Haverstraw, and as far inland north of the New Jersey border as the village of Tappan, some three miles west of the Hudson. Then ice storms and crusted deep snow in the winter of 1935-36 seemed to wipe them out. Except for one startling record on Apr. 22, 1936 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr)--farther north than the species had ever been reported except for one May 12, 1929 record also by Carr--there were no further records in Rockland County until Apr. 28, 1947 at Palisades, N. Y. (Betty Barron). By 1951, birds had again reached northward to Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack (Eugene R. Brown) and a year later they once more reached Haverstraw. In 1954 they were deemed to be as numerous as they had been in 1935, and they soon reached

Bear Mountain, with John C. Orth's observation of Apr. 3, 1956. In late July and early August of 1960, a pair nested in the Orths' mailbox at Fort Montgomery and raised three young.

The Carolina wren was a major goal of the Bronx County Bird Club in contriving its Christmas Count area so as to include Piermont and the Palisades south to Englewood Cliffs. The wren was recorded on three of the counts from 1934 to 1941. It has been recorded on 20 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, being missed only three times since 1953; the peak count was 18 in 1957, and 12 each have been counted in 1974 and 1975. It has been recorded on only eight of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, all in the span from 1955 through 1962 and always either one or two birds. Recent indications of numbers include a count of four birds in one mile at Hook Mountain on Nov. 11, 1973 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) and a count of six in the Piermont-Palisades area on Oct. 15, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

MARSH WREN (LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN)
Cistothorus palustris [*Telmatodytes palustris*]



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	probably breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	common summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	locally common or abundant summer resident, casual to December and January
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	locally common summer resident, in winter purely casual inland
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, frequently recorded in December
1976	Current status	locally common breeder, rare winter resident

This wren most commonly occurs at Piermont marsh and Iona Island, though it has been recorded inland in the Hackensack swamps. It is secretive in winter and may be overlooked with the cessation of song. In any event, it has been found only three times on 28 Bear Mountain

Christmas Counts, always at Iona Island, and only six times on 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, usually at the Piermont marsh. A typical high count at the Piermont marsh was 18 on May 17, 1957 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed).

Troglodytidae

SEDGE WREN [SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN]

Cistothorus platensis

1844	De Kay	not numerous; late April to September
1878-82	Mearns	local summer resident
1898	Chapman	common local summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare summer resident
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare local summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and summer resident
1940	Carr	rare summer resident, breeds at Beaver Pond
1942	Cruikshank	very uncommon to rare local summer resident
1960	Orth	casual rare summer resident, one recent record
1976	Current status	virtually extirpated; accidental breeder

This is a bird whose demands for habitat--tufted grass wetlands--are too specialized for its own good. Before the flooding that created Lake Welch (the site of Bill Carr's "Beaver Pond"), several pairs nested annually in that kind of marsh, with dates ranging from May 12, 1935 (Robert F. Deed) to Oct. 4, 1934 (William Carr, Daniel B. Beard, H. A. Hochbaum). Since then, the few remnants of similar habitat in Rockland County and the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park have been closely watched for this always restricted and erratic breeder, but the watch has been mostly in vain.

On May 26, 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens found a singing bird near New City, in a spot where Morton Isler again found one on Oct. 4, 1962. On July 18, 1952, Kenneth Chambers found a bird at the end of Lake Kanawauke. On May 18, 1963, Isler and Robert Connor found "at least three birds" singing along the Tiorati Brook Road. The most recent record was on May 29, 1975 at the Rockland Lake Nature Center, where Philip Meisner, director of the center, said the wrens had nested in "recent" years.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

Mimus polyglottos



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"The Mocking-bird, the peculiar ornament of the forests of the Southern and some of the middle States, is comparatively rare in New York . . . The specimen figured in the plate was shot in Rockland County."
1878-82	Mearns	---
1898	Chapman	---
1898	Fisher	---
1908	Brownell	---
1923	Griscom	" . . . of rare and casual occurrence, and may be expected almost anywhere in our area except in extreme northern New Jersey. . . . Recorded at Croton-on-Hudson, winter of 1899 (Miss Anne Van Cortlandt). . . A pair nested at Tenaflly (N.J.) about 1876 and again in 1884, and one returned to the same place in the spring of 1885 (F. W. Chapman, on authority of Mr. Martin); one in early January, 1903, at Oradell . . . one seen February 14 and March 2, 1915 (J. T. Nichols)."
1927	Kuerzi	records in 1877, 1878, 1880, 1884, 1910, 1912, 1919, 1920, and 1922. The 1884 record was July 23, and the 1919 record was May 6 to 14; all others were fall or winter.
1940	Carr	---

Mimidae

1942	Cruikshank	rare or casual except in extreme northern New Jersey.
1959	Reilly & Parkes	"Very rare local breeder in southern and western parts of State; increasing in recent years. Recorded fall and winter through same area and may winter anywhere except mountains."
1960	Orth	casual very rare vagrant visitant; one Park record, Apr. 15, 1960 at Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth).
1976	Current status	fairly common to common resident.

Year-round, the mockingbird has now increased to about the same abundance as the white-breasted nuthatch, and in winter to more than twice the number of robins and more than half the number of cardinals. It was not recorded on the first four Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (1947 through 1950) but has been missed only once since (in 1955); thus it has appeared on 24 of the 29 Counts. From one or two birds in the 1950s, the count jumped to six in 1962, 16 in 1965, 21 in 1966, 25 in 1967, 43 in 1970, 46 in 1971, 48 in 1972, 49 in 1973, 74 in 1974, 83 in 1975, and 170 in 1976 (the 30th RAS Count, not included in other species write-ups).

Even more indicative of the depth of the bird's establishment in our area is the record of the Bear Mountain Christmas Count. As Orth's 1960 checklist indicates, the Park up to that time had only one very recent record, and the mockingbird does not appear on the Park's Christmas Counts through 1965. Then the 1966 Count (actually on Jan. 2, 1967) listed the first mocker; subsequent counts were one again in 1967, two in 1968, four in 1969, three in 1970, four in 1971, six in 1972, and five in 1973. And this record is for mountain terrain, quite properly described by Reilly & Parkes as unfavorable for wintering mockers.

Aside from De Kay's reference to a Rockland County specimen, we had only one record prior

to 1950: a bird in Palisades sometime in 1937 (Betty Barron). Then on Feb. 22, 1950, John Proper, a junior high school student, reported to a skeptical Eugene Brown that he had seen a mockingbird in Upper Nyack; returning to the spot, he showed Brown the unmistakable bird, which Brown watched through Apr. 2, 1950. The Upper Nyack bird reappeared the following winter, and one was seen in South Nyack in late April, 1951 (Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Sherman). In 1952, records came from inland New City and in following years from other parts of central Rockland County, including Viola and West Nyack. The first nest was found on May 31, 1957 on Ridge Road, near Lake De Forest (Irving G. Kennedy); on June 4, the nest in an ornamental cedar on a lawn, about three feet from the ground, held two young and an unhatched egg (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy); a second brood of three birds left the same nest on July 19. Several other nests have since been observed in all parts of Rockland County, though, as noted, progress into the Park and the Highlands was slow until the late 1960s.

In recent springs and summers, the number of singing mockingbirds in South Nyack and Nyack has approximately equaled the number of singing robins, which makes them common indeed. On a drive anywhere in Rockland County in most months, it is not difficult to count 15 to 20 mockingbirds along the roadsides.

GRAY CATBIRD

Dumetella carolinensis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	familiar
1878-82	Mearns	very common summer resident
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident, rare winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	very common summer resident, several winter records
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, a few winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder, rare to uncommon winter visitant

The catbird has declined markedly since the 1950s, when a mid-May field trip would register 30 to 50 birds. A mid-May trip on a good day in 1968 listed only eight, and a similar trip in 1971 had an unusually good count of 17. The bird has disappeared entirely from neighborhoods such as my own in South Nyack during the past eight

or ten years, perhaps because of cats or perhaps because of competition from mockingbirds. The aerial spraying of DDT in 1957 may also have been a factor, at least in the great reduction in numbers of catbirds on woodland edges.

Mimidae

Dates generally range from Apr. 22, 1960 at Upper Nyack (Eugene R. Brown) to Oct. 17, 1951 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper), though one earlier "arrival" on Apr. 11, 1959 at South Nyack (Robert F. Deed) and two later "departures," Nov. 20, 1954 at Stony Point (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) and Nov. 29, 1974 at South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner) may well have been of summer residents. In the year after the DDT spraying, it was noteworthy that no catbird was reported before May 1, and birds were scarce until a major influx on May 15-16. In 1960 the Deeds could not find a single catbird on two lengthy local field trips on Apr. 24 and 29.

The catbird has appeared on 20 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, usually only one to three birds. Counts of five each were registered in 1956 and 1958, and of eight each in 1974 and 1975--perhaps a sign of recovering numbers. Single birds have been recorded on three of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: 1961, 1971, and 1972. There are many other winter dates, largely in December and January. The paucity of February and March records may reflect the mortality rate among birds attempting to winter.

BROWN THRASHER
Toxostoma rufum



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, sometimes winters
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	common summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident; one in winter of 1919
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, a few winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, very rare to rare winter visitant

Numbers for this species seem to have remained constant in the past 40 years. A maximum count for one party in mid-May is five to eight birds. The species has appeared on only ten of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, all single birds except for two

in 1970 and three in 1974. It did not appear on any of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts.

The bird is highly regular in its arrival, usually about Apr. 22, and in its departure, usually about Oct. 25. Our earliest arrival date is Apr. 15, 1960 (Homer S. Kelsey); late departure dates are Oct.

27, 1937 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) and Nov. 10, 1957 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving). We have a dozen

winter dates in addition to those on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count.

AMERICAN ROBIN
Turdus migratorius



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	familiar resident
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, fairly common winter visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, occasional winter visitant
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, occasional resident
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident, uncommon winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	abundant summer resident, frequently wintering
1940	Carr	common summer resident; a few winter
1942	Cruickshank	abundant summer resident, scarce in winter
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, irregular rare permanent resident
1976	Current status	common to very common breeder, fairly common winter visitant, occasionally abundant

We should probably resist the temptation to call this species a resident, even though it is regular and sometimes abundant in winter, as in summer. The wintering birds are almost invariably the darker-backed, deeper-rufous northern races, though it is possible that

summer birds may linger. For another thing, the number of wintering birds is wildly variable, more in keeping with an influx of northern birds than with the retention of summer birds or fall migrants.

The robin has appeared on 28 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (missed only on the undermanned initial count in 1947). Numbers on these counts show no consistent trend: six each in 1948 and 1949, 47 in 1950, 22 in 1951, 31 in 1952, 27 in 1953, nine in 1954, 142 in 1955, 11 in 1956, 15 in 1957, 221 in 1958, and so on. The two most recent counts have been typical of the average: 22 in 1974 and 41 in 1975.

Two extraordinary winters for robins were 1955-56 and 1957-58. The then-record count of 142 on the Dec. 26, 1955 RAS Christmas Count was followed on Jan. 15, 1956 by counts of 50 at New City, 60 in the West Point area, and 300-plus at Rockland Lake. Later in January, one flock of 700 to 800 was observed at Viola.

Numbers on migration, too, are often in the "abundant" category. Our highest spring count on record for a single place is 450 robins in one field at Germonds on Mar. 29, 1965 (Elsbeth Arbogast), and the highest fall count is 1,838 in the Piermont-Palisades area on Oct. 21, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

Two oddities may be worth mentioning: on Feb. 17, 1958, a day after a near-blizzard, a robin associating with a flock of 22 evening grosbeaks at John M. Price's home near New City, and in October, 1955, no fewer than three albino robins--two at Valley Cottage (Frances H. Irving) and one at Tomkins Cove on Oct. 20 to 27 (Mrs. Nelson Hall). This Tomkins Cove bird was pure white except for a faint mark on one wing; it had dark red eyes, flesh-colored legs and feet.

WOOD THRUSH

Hylocichla mustelina



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 30 to Oct. 5
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, Apr. 20 to Oct. 10
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 30 to Oct. 2
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, arrives Apr. 27
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, very common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, common migrant

Comparison of many dawn-to-dusk counts in mid-May indicates that the flood of spring migrants is unabated. Yet post-migration visits to such favored woodland habitats as the Blauvelt Section of the Palisades Interstate Park reveal that this thrush, along with the veery, suffered a great loss in the wake of the 1957 aerial

spraying of DDT. As one might expect from the passage of DDT through the food chain, the thrushes were not noticeably affected until two seasons after the insectivorous birds. Through the 1950s, mid-May counts of 20 to 40 wood thrushes per day dropped to, say, 12 to 15 birds in the first week of June; by contrast, in the

Turdidae

1960s a similar daily count in mid-May dropped to four or five birds in early June. A count of 60, for example, on May 15, 1971 was followed by a count of five on Memorial Day, and the wood thrush has been entirely absent from my South Nyack neighborhood since May, 1958. Prior to that time, we had one or two pairs in summer residence.

This thrush is another of the punctual spring arrivals and fall departers. Year after year it

arrives on or about Apr. 26 and leaves around Oct. 12. Our earliest spring date is Apr. 22, 1960 at West Nyack (Edwin Gamble); our latest fall date is Nov. 4, 1957 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving).

HERMIT THRUSH
Catharus guttatus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in every part of the state; arrives in mid-May
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	common transient, occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, occasionally wintering
1940	Carr	common transient, March to May and September to December
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, very rare winter resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, recent uncommon summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, uncommon winter visitant; in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, an uncommon summer resident and probable breeder and a casual winter visitant

On the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, the hermit thrush has been recorded 16 times, with a maximum of seven birds each in 1950 and 1973. By contrast, it has been

recorded only twice (1949 and 1963) on 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. Other winter dates in Rockland County proper are too numerous to mention, whereas I know of no winter dates in

Turdidae

the Park except those on the Christmas Count. Conversely, the summer dates in the higher interior of the Harriman Park (above 1,100-foot elevation) are too numerous to list one by one. They include June 16, 1938 at Surebridge Swamp (William H. Carr, Robert F. Deed); nine records for June and July, 1954, at Lake Kanawauke, Island Pond, Pine Swamp, and Lake Nawahunta (John C. Orth, Richard Roche); May 31, 1957, in full song near Bradley Mine on the Arden-Tiorati Road (Eugene R. Brown, Deed); May 24, 1963, singing at Pine Swamp (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Brown); June 7, 1965, two singing at Pine Swamp (Brown); June 5 and 15, 1968, four at Surebridge Swamp (Brown); June 10, 1969, singing near Surebridge (Brown); May 23, 1970, singing at the same area

(Rockland Audubon Society Field trip); June 15, 1970, three at Hogencamp Mountain and Island Pond (Brown); June 11, 1974, eight at Surebridge and June 18, nine at Surebridge (Brown); June 18, 1975, one between Surebridge and Pine Swamp (Brown). Although no nest or young have been found, it seems inconceivable that the bird is not breeding in that area.

Spring: Excluding the Park highlands, Mar. 22, 1953 (RAS field trip) to May 16, 1958 at Blauvelt (Brown, Deed).

Fall: Oct. 2, 1951 (Brown) to Nov. 28, 1974 at South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner).

SWAINSON'S THRUSH
Catharus ustulatus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	probably breeds farther north
1878-82	Mearns	very common transient visitant, May 9-31 and Sept. 10 to Oct. 10
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	very common transient
1940	Carr	transient visitor in May and September to November
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, one winter record
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant, casual winter visitant

In middle and late May and again in late September, daily counts of the Swainson's thrush may range to 20 or more birds, but a count of half a dozen is more usual when big migration waves are not present. The winter records are more freakish than indicative of attempts to winter such as those of the hermit thrush. One winter record is for Jan. 2, 1955 at

Jones Point, a bird closely observed by John C. Orth and John Kenney on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count. Another came in the very same month, on Jan. 14, 1955, in the Nanuet area (Frances H. Irving). The only other winter record was on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count of Dec. 26, 1965 in South

Turdidae

Spring Valley (Mrs. Claire Mertz, John E. Stefan).

Spring: Apr. 15, 1930 (Jennie Fox) and Apr. 15, 1960 (Mrs. Josephine Worrall) to June 1, 1957, a singing bird near Nyack (Robert F. Deed, Kenneth R. Deed), and June 1, 1963, a bird singing at dawn in South Nyack (Robert F. Deed).

Fall: Sept. 3, 1960 (Homer S. Kelsey) to Nov. 16, 1959 (Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Cooke).

1983 Addendum -- Two more winter records: Jan. 6, 1981 at Sebago, well studied by Philip Meisner and Jack Focht; Dec. 982 on RAS Christmas Count, at Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed).

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH

Catharus minimus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, late May and Sept. 23 to Oct. 19
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, May 15 to June 1 and Sept. 29 to Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	uncommon transient visitant; May, June, September
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring transient, rare fall transient
1976	Current status	rare to very rare migrant, casual winter visitant

One can hardly conceive of Mearns' evaluation of this thrush as abundant, though it may possibly be overlooked in big migration waves. Our records since 1939 are so sparse that all occurrences have been noted—all 16 of them. On May 18 and 19, 1957, single birds were recorded by each of four "Big Day" parties, but

in most years we have been lucky to observe one bird all season. Strangely in view of the species' reputation for being more common in spring, more than half of our records have been in fall, and two of the others were in winter. The species has been known to nest in the Catskills, 75 miles to the north, but has not been found in

the Hudson Highlands or the Park interior on any significant date except June 4, 1938 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr). A bird well seen and studied on Aug. 29, 1963 at the Little Tor ridge between Haverstraw and New City (Morton Isler) may have been a very early fall migrant.

Spring: May 5, 1925 at Lake Kanawauke (Carr) to June 4, 1938 at Bear Mountain (Carr).

Fall: Aug. 29, 1963 (Isler) and Sept. 15, 1957 at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy) to Oct. 20, 1961 at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Weindling).

Winter: Dec. 13-14, 1956 at West Nyack (Mrs. Weindling); Feb. 22, 1962 at Palisades (Mr. and Mrs. Archer Stansbury).

VEERY

Catharus fuscescens



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	arrives last of April, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	rather scarce summer resident, common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 29 to Sept. 5
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, arrives Apr. 29
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, abundant transient
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder

In most years, this species is about one-half to one-third as numerous as the wood thrush. It, too, is very regular in arrival and departure. Our earliest spring date is Apr. 22, 1929 at Bear

Mountain (William H. Carr), but Apr. 28 is a more typical date. Our latest fall date is Oct. 7, 1963 at Congers (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

Sialia sialis



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	middle of March to November; sometimes winters
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, occasional winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, abundant transient visitant, fairly common winter resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident, rare winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly common summer resident, occasionally wintering
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, three nest sites in park; a few winter
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident, a few winter
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, irregular rare permanent resident
1976	Current status	rare breeder, no recent winter records

The spectacular crash of this species far surpasses in numbers such other crashes as those of the peregrine and the phoebe. From a status of at least fairly common in 1957, the

bluebird plummeted to the status of very rare from 1958 to the mid-1960s. Even with a considerable comeback in the past ten years, only two to six birds are recorded each year in

Turdidae

our entire area. The best places to see them at all remain the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park and the valley west of West Point.

The timing of the bluebird disaster suggests a connection with the aerial DDT spraying in the summer of 1957. Yet that spraying was supposedly confined to the woodlands, and the bluebird has always been more an open-country bird. At about the same time, it must be noted, several traditional nesting areas--farms and orchards--were absorbed by housing development. Also, for some unknown reason, the tally of house sparrows on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count jumped 50% from 1956 to 1957 and then doubled by 1959. Perhaps a combination of these factors accounts for the debacle.

On the RAS Christmas Count, the bluebird has appeared on 17 of the 29 lists, but not since 1965. Counts ran as follows: five in the incomplete 1947 coverage, 27 in 1948, 135 in 1949, 84 in 1950, 40 in 1951, 44 in 1952, 16 in 1953, 51 in 1954, 14 in 1955, 18 in 1956, 22 in 1957, 20 in 1958, 28 in 1959--and then the crash: one in 1960, two in 1962, one in 1963, and four in 1965. The bluebird has been recorded only three times on 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: four in 1953, two in 1955, and four in 1956.

May "Big Day" counts have always been smaller than the winter counts. In ten mid-May, single-party counts from 1948 to 1961, the number of bluebirds ranged from one to five through 1957, none in 1958, two in 1959, none in 1960 or 1961. In coverage of the entire Christmas Count area of Rockland by eight parties on all-day May 13 and May 15 trips, totals were four bluebirds in 1971 and two in 1972.

Even in the worst of years, encouraging remnants of the bluebird population were occasionally seen. On Sept. 3, 1962, Paul

Jeheber and Mr. and Mrs. John Dye saw 14 in one tree near West Point, in March, 1965, Mr. and Mrs. John LeMaire saw four or five in the Suffern area. Two or three turned up near the present Lake Tappan in October and November, 1966 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed). Pairs, and a few nests, were reported in 1968-70 from the Mine Road area back of West Point and from Bear Mountain and Long Mountain (Eugene R. Brown). A pair was sighted near Lake Kanawauke on Mar. 21, 1971 (Joseph J. McCormick, Jr.), another pair on June 27, 1971 (John E. Stefan) and July 14, 1971 (Joseph Phillips), both of these last on golf courses at Rockland Lake Park.

Four records in 1973 marked another gain in the bluebird's comeback: Mar. 18, seven birds at a feeder for hours (Mr. and Mrs. Padraic French) at New City; Apr. 15, a pair at a nest in the Lake Sebago area of the Park (Eric Single, Malcolm Gardner, and others); May 22, two adult males, an adult female, and a juvenile at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Anthony F. Amos); Nov. 3, a migrant seen on the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch (Single). On June 18, 1974, Eugene R. Brown found two bluebirds in the Surebridge Swamp area. Four males and two females were seen on Mar. 23, 1975 near Lake Welch (Rockland Audubon Society field trip), and Brown found two bluebirds on June 18, 1975 at Surebridge and Pine Swamps.

1983 Addendum -- Some signs of a return. Speiser and Benzinger found a dozen nests in Sterling Forest in 1978; in the summer of 1980 they used a tape recorder to survey the Highlands found at least 65 singing males in Harriman-Bear Mt. Park. On Oct. 18, 1980, about 20 Bluebirds found on Mine Road; a pair observed atop Hook Mt. by hawk watchers from Apr. 11 to May 4, 1982. In spring, 1983, Bluebirds have been found in southern of Bear Mt. Section of the Park; they also occur on Bear Mt. itself, along the Perkins Drive.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER

Polioptila caerulea



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	--
1878-82	Mearns	--
1898	Chapman	--
1898	Fisher	--
1908	Brownell	--
1923	Griscom	very rare or accidental except in Central Park and the Bronx region. "Where the spring birds go to and where the fall birds come from is a mystery which still awaits solution. Practically all the records are strictly coastal; the bird is very rare or unrecorded inland."
1927	Kuerzi	rare visitant, or perhaps transient; "there are about twelve records in the past ten years"
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	rare transient visitant
1960	Orth	recorded twice from Fort Montgomery
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common breeder

Prior to 1954 I know of only one record: Apr. 26, 1949 at Palisades (Betty Barron). Then the irruption began. On May 17, 1954, Mrs. Ruth Steffens discovered a pair building a nest beside

a branch of the Hackensack Creek, now inundated by Lake DeForest; the birds were incubating on May 24 and feeding young in the nest on June 14 to 18. In 1955 a gnatcatcher

Sylviidae

was seen in Grand View on May 4, 5, and 6 (David O. Hill). In 1956 gnatcatchers popped up on May 2 and 4 in Upper Nyack (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown), on May 5 at two localities in the Palisades area (Jennie Fox, Matthew Brennan, and Rockland Audubon Society field trip), on May 12 at the Steffens' home in New City, and again at the Steffens' home on Aug. 30 for Rockland County's first fall record. Meanwhile, also in 1956, Jack Orth was scoring the Park's first records in any season at Fort Montgomery on July 28 and Aug. 12. In 1957 birds were noted at Congers and Tomkins Cove, in 1958 at Congers and Rockland Lake, in

1959 at Congers, Blauvelt, and Stony Point Park, in 1960 at Suffern and Tomkins Cove, in 1961 at Fort Montgomery and Iona Island, and so on.

In ten May "Big Day" lists of a single party from 1948 to 1961, single gnatcatchers appeared in 1957 and 1958, and two in 1961. On the collective May "Big Day" coverage of the Rockland Christmas Count area in 1971, nine were found, and seven in 1972. Dates range from Apr. 11, 1959 at Congers (RAS field trip) to Oct. 12, 1958 at Rockland Lake (Morton Isler).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET

Regulus satrapa



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare
1878-82	Mearns	abundant winter visitant, Sept. 28 to May 7
1898	Chapman	common winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common winter visitant
1908	Brownell	common winter visitant to Apr. 25
1923	Griscom	fairly common winter visitant, common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient and fairly common in winter
1940	Carr	common transient visitor, uncommon in winter
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, rare to fairly common winter resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common winter visitant
1976	Current status	common migrant, fairly common winter visitant, commoner in winter in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park

The number of wintering birds is swelled in October-November and again in April by migrants, in spring overlapping the first wave of warblers. Our extreme dates are Sept. 28, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) and May 4, 1953 at West Nyack (Frances

H. Irving). At least in their fall arrival, birds are quite regular; we have other dates for Sept. 29 and Oct. 1.

The species has appeared on 26 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts,

Regulidae

though only five birds or less in seven of those years. High counts have been 41 each in 1952 and 1973, and 32 in 1953. On the 23 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, the species was recorded 25 times, with highs of 85 in 1952, 46 in 1970, and 40 each in 1957 and 1973.

1983 Addendum -- Pairs with young found July 7, 1979 at Black Rock Forest and July 5, 1980 in same area by Speiser and Benzinger. An unexpected addition to the area's breeding list.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

Regulus calendula



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant, April and November
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant, Apr. 7 to May 18 and Sept. 22 to Nov. 2
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Apr. 8 to May 13 and Sept. 16 to Nov. 3
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant, rare winter
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	common transient visitor, rare in winter
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient visitant, very rare winter resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, several winter records
1976	Current status	common migrant, uncommon to fairly common winter visitant

The winter status of this species flies in the face of conventional expert opinion. The bird has been recorded on 21 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts and on seven of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. On Bear Mountain Counts, it has been

less numerous as well as less frequent, yet there are other winter records in the Park.

A few RAS Christmas Count comparisons with numbers of golden-crowned kinglets: 1948, 7 ruby to 14 golden: 1952, 3 to 41; 1956, 5 to 11;

1959, 3 to 9; 1961, 3 to 5; 1964, 4 to 9; 1967, 2 to 7; 1968, 2 to 4; 1969, 1 to 1; 1971, 2 to 1; 1972, 9 to 16; 1973, 4 to 41; 1974, 2 to 9; 1975, 11 to 16. Such ratios are not new; on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of Dec. 26, 1937 in the Piermont-Alpine area, the tally was 8 ruby-crowned to 12 golden-crowned.

On migration, daily counts range to 20 or more birds. One high autumn count of more than 30 birds was made by Bruce Edinger in the Suffern area on Oct. 19, 1972.

Spring: Apr. 2, 1953 at Bear Mountain (John C. Orth) to May 26, 1935 at Blauvelt (Robert F. Deed).

Fall: Aug. 16, 1951 at Lake Tiorati (Elizabeth McClelland, Ruth Hoffman), an exceptionally early and isolated date that may indicate a summer stray, to Nov. 30, 1974 at South Nyack (Deed).

Winter: Many records aside from Christmas Counts, including Dec. 3, 1951 at Bear Mountain (Orth); Jan. 12, 1952, a singing bird at Stony Point (Eugene R. Brown), Dec. 26, 1955 at Hook Mountain (Brown); all winter of 1956-57 at Bear Mountain (Orth); Dec. 22, 1957, a bird at Lake Kanawauke with the brightest crown I've ever seen (Mr. and Mrs. Deed); Dec. 18 and 19, 1959 in Upper Nyack (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper), Feb. 22, 1960, a singing bird in New City (the Deeds); Jan. 1, 1966 at Rockland Lake (Wesley Hennessy).

AMERICAN PIPIT [WATER PIPIT]
Anthus rubescens [spinoletta]



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant in early May and in October
1878-82	Mearns	occasional transient visitant in fall
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon spring, common fall transient
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant; April, September, and October records only
1942	Cruickshank	Uncommon spring, common to abundant fall transient
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common spring and common fall transient
1976	Current status	irregular fairly common spring migrant and common fall migrant, very rare winter visitant

When it occurs at all, the pipit may appear in numbers of a dozen in spring and 30 or 40 in fall. But it does not appear at all for years at a time. We have no records, for example, from fall 1959 to spring 1962, and none from winter 1967 to spring 1972. In winter, it has occurred at

Piermont Pier on Dec. 25 and 27, 1936 (Robert F. Deed and Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count), on Dec. 12 and 26, 1937 (same observers), and on Dec. 30, 1967, four birds on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count

(Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed), plus a single bird on Feb. 21, 1975 (the Deeds).

Spring: Mar: 23, 1975, one bird at Lake Welch (Mary Wilfred and RAS field trip) to May 13, 1972, a flock of 13--our highest spring count--at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

Fall: Sept. 15, 1955 at Lake Sebago Beach (John C. Orth, Thomas LeNoir) to Nov. 29, 1936 at Piermont Pier (Deed). Among the high counts: 7 at Pearl River on Oct. 29, 1959 (the Deeds),

40 at West Haverstraw on Oct. 27, 1959 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown), 20-plus on Oct. 29, 1964 at the drained Congers Lake (the Deeds), 25 at the Suffern High School athletic field on Oct. 2, 1972 (Bruce Edinger), and 34 on Nov. 6, 1975 at Piermont Pier (Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Very early fall migrants: two at Cornwall Bay on Aug. 21, 1977 (Benton Sequin) and one on Aug. 23.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING

Bombycilla garrulus

Edgar A. Mearns called this species "a rare winter visitant" to the Highlands, and John Bull's "Birds of the New York Area" refers to two specimens collected in Rockland County by J. G. Bell in the 19th Century. These specimens

are not mentioned in Bull's "Birds of New York State," perhaps because no dates are given in the American Museum of Natural History records.

CEDAR WAXWING

Bombycilla cedrorum



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	well-known, frequently winters; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common resident
1898	Chapman	fairly common winter resident, common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, uncommon summer resident, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	irregular summer resident, breeds; records from June to November
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, ordinarily extremely rare in winter
1960	Orth	regular common spring and fall transient, regular uncommon summer resident, several winter records
1976	Current status	fairly common to common migrant and winter visitant, occasionally abundant; uncommon breeder

This erratic species is normally considered to be at peak numbers in early October and early April, yet it often appears in even bigger flocks in late fall and in winter. It is much less numerous

in winter in the Park highlands, yet much commoner there in summer. The Waxwing has been recorded only six times, in numbers up to four birds, on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas

Bombycillidae

Counts. It has been recorded on 24 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, generally in numbers from 10 to 30 but on Dec. 27, 1958 with a record count of 415. Other typically large counts have been flocks of 100 or more at several places at the end of February,

1962; a flock of more than 150 at Iona Island on Oct. 28, 1967 (Bernd Gravenstein); 60 near Suffern on May 19, 1972 (Bruce Edinger), and more than 100 in South Nyack on Nov. 20, 1974 (Louise S. Deed).

NORTHERN SHRIKE

Lanius excubitor



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found at all seasons, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	winter visitant, fairly common at times; Nov. 9 to Mar. 31
1898	Chapman	uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common winter visitant, Oct. 26 to Apr. 17
1908	Brownell	rare winter visitant
1923	Griscom	irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	irregular winter visitant, occasionally fairly numerous, as in the winter of 1921-22
1940	Carr	uncommon and irregular winter visitor, November to March
1942	Cruickshank	irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	occasional rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	very rare winter visitant

This species is highly erratic in its occurrence, and even in years that are "good" for the metropolitan area as a whole, Rockland County seems to miss it. We had half a dozen records in 1934 and 1935, three in 1950, two in 1954, one in 1955, another in 1956, and one each in 1960

and 1961. Then eight years passed before the next record, and three years before the record after that. The winter of 1975-76 gave us two records from Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos): Dec. 5, 1975 and Feb. 22, 1976. And the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count of

Dec. 26, 1976 recorded two birds, in different districts, and missed a third bird that had also been seen in the count period.

Dates range from Nov. 17, 1935 at Lake Kanawauke (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) and Nov. 17, 1969 near Suffern (Edwina Bruggeman) to Mar. 12, 1935 at Queensboro Lake (Carr, Anthony Roos). A shrike that was stunned in hitting a window in Hillburn (Emma Stuart) on the unlikely date of Oct. 21, 1959 may

have been a loggerhead, not a northern as it was then identified, though it should be distinguishable in the hand.

1983 Addendum -- An early fall date of Oct. 25, 1978 at Hook Mt. (Berna Weissman) and an immature in the Tome Valley on Dec. 30, 1978 on the Fyke Christmas Count (Robert Speiser, John Benzinger, Tom. Bosakowski). On Nov. 20, 1982 Chuck Harten found one on Piermont Pier, and Ned Pollock saw it an hour later.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Lanius ludovicianus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	confused with the northern shrike
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	very rare transient visitant, former summer resident
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	rare transient visitant, Aug. 24
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant in September
1927	Kuerzi	somewhat irregular and uncommon fall transient, very rare in spring
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon fall, very rare spring transient
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient, one record
1976	Current status	very rare fall migrant, no spring record since 1959

Seven of our 21 records for this species are in spring but, as noted, none since 1959. In fact, only nine of our records have come since 1959. During the 1950s, this shrike was rare but regular. Before that, the only local record known to me was May 19, 1931 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman). Then we had two spring dates and one fall date in 1950, a spring date in 1953, a fall

date in 1955, two spring and two fall records in 1956, a fall date in 1957, and a spring date in 1959.

Spring: Mar. 30, 1956 at Centenary (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy) to May 19, 1931 (Gilman).

Fall: Aug. 11, 1968 at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) to Nov. 13, 1975 at the

Pier (Anthony F. Amos)

EUROPEAN STARLING

Sturnus vulgaris



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	--
1878-82	Mearns	--
1898	Chapman	fairly common resident
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	common or abundant; considerable evidence to show that the bird is becoming migratory
1927	Kuerzi	abundant and ever-increasing permanent resident
1940	Carr	permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	abundant permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular common permanent resident, the Hudson River
1976	Current status	very abundant resident

According to Griscom, the first birds were released in 1890, and Kuerzi notes that the first record for Bronx County was May 9, 1891 (Bicknell). In view of the rapid spread of this introduced species, it is surprising that Brownell

reported no record for Rockland County even after the turn of the century.

Partly because counting starlings is a thankless chore for birders, even on Christmas Counts when species are relatively few, it is hard to

establish a population trend for the starling. Numbers on Christmas Counts, for example, tend to be higher when the weather is inclement and birders are reduced to touring the villages and public institutions to count starlings for want of anything better to do. Yet there is a rise and fall of numbers over the years that seem more volatile than this explanation would allow. And whatever trend there is seems to be upward.

In the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont-Alpine area, starlings ranged from zero in 1940 and 10 each in 1936 and 1941 to a high of 100 in 1934. In the South Orangetown district of the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, which includes Piermont plus much other territory west to Pearl River, the 1975 tally was 1,665 starlings. The first five of the 29 RAS Christmas Counts ranged from 266 to 589 starlings for the entire county. Then 1952 must have been a year of genuine boom in starlings, because the RAS count jumped to 2,262 and the Bear Mountain Christmas Count hit an unheard-of figure of 259, a total never approached on the 28 Bear

Mountain counts until a record 301 in the 1966 Count. The next peak in the RAS series came in 1958, with 4,168 starlings, followed by still another new high of 4,619 in 1961. For the next five years the number dropped to 2,100 or less, followed by a mild peak of 3,252 in 1967. Recent counts have been 2,903 in 1970, 2,416 in 1971, 3,426 in 1972, 4,301 in 1973, 5,374 in 1974, and 3,408 in 1975.

Some enormous roosts have been found: in January, 1962, about 5,000 birds at Mount Ivy (Homer S. Kelsey); on Nov. 8, 1975, a careful estimate of 18,000 at the Piermont marsh (Anthony F. Amos), and for several recent years a roost of some 10,000 birds on the steelwork under the Grand View end of the Tappan Zee Bridge causeway.

Possibly the only starling ever observed enthusiastically by local birders was a total albino at Stony Point on Oct. 5, 1961 (Mrs. John Eckert, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). Observers attested that it was indeed a beautiful bird.

WHITE-EYED VIREO

Vireo griseus



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, April to October; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, arrives May 4-21
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, May 1 to Oct. 3
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 29 to Oct. 3
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, arrives May 10
1923	Griscom	summer resident, becoming rare
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	rare breeder, uncommon to rare transient
1960	Orth	irregular rare summer resident, one nesting record
1976	Current status	rare breeder, becoming rarer

The white-eyed vireo, a bird of brushy fields and roadsides, has succumbed in most of Rockland County to the conversion of such habitat into housing developments. It still clings to the Ramapos and the Highlands and their fringes, but today I would not know where to go in

Rockland County proper to find a single white-eyed vireo.

This bird has never been common in the past 45 years, but before World War II and the postwar housing boom, it nested regularly in such areas as Palisades, Blauvelt, and Mount Ivy. In ten

May "Big Day" counts by single parties, 1948 through 1961, it was listed six times, with a high count of five in 1949; the countywide "Big Day" counts of 1971 and 1972, covering the Rockland Audubon Society's Christmas Count territory, tallied three and two birds respectively. As recently as 1963, about five pairs were nesting in the New City area.

Dates range from Apr. 22, 1951 (Frances H. Irving) to Oct. 11, 1954 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

1983 Addendum -- A resurgence of this species after a 20-year hiatus, Singing, probably nesting, birds in 1982 at Haverstraw, West Haverstraw, and Sickeltown Road in Blauvelt. Others in 1983: south of Monsey, on Storrs Road at Letchworth Village, and in the Orangeburg area of Lake Tappan. Still a rather rare bird.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO

Vireo flavifrons



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	occurs May to September
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident and transient
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Apr. 30 to Sept. 7
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, occasional summer resident
1923	Griscom	suddenly a rare bird since 1917
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident, increasing in recent years
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, about half as numerous as the red-eyed vireo; in migration, about one-third as numerous as the red-eyed

This species has maintained its numbers well during the past 45 years. Dates range from Apr.

19, 1954 (David O. Hill, Thomas Dow) to Sept. 27, 1952 (William G. Irving).

BLUE-HEADED [SOLITARY] VIREO

Vireo solitarius



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rarest of the genus in the state
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, Apr. 28 to May 24 and September and October
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, Apr. 20 to May 20 and Sept. 10 -to Oct. 25
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient
1940	Carr	regular migrant
1942	Cruickshank	a fairly common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, once in summer
1976	Current status	rare to uncommon migrant, probably a rare and local breeder in the highest portions of the Park interior

Perhaps because so few of these vireos sing at our latitude in spring and also mostly precede the main warbler waves that attract birders into the field, we rarely hear of more than five or six all spring, and even fewer in the fall. Yet a Rockland Audubon Society field trip on Apr. 29, 1956 found three birds singing on the hill behind

South Nyack, and at least seven were singing in the same area on Apr. 27, 1957 (Robert F. Deed, Kenneth R. Deed). As for the fall migrations, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed found three silent birds at West New Hempstead on Oct. 10, 1961.

Vireonidae

The summer records are interesting in the light of the breeding of this species surely as nearby as the Shawangunk Mountains, and perhaps even closer. Until the last couple of years, we had just the one summer record cited by Orth: July 16, 1952 at Lake Welch (Kenneth Chambers). Then Eugene R. Brown's study of the high portions of the Harriman Section of the Park between Lake Tiorati and Island Pond yielded three of these vireos at Surebridge Swamp on June 11, 1974 and one on June 18. On June 18, 1975, Brown found five at Surebridge, including a pair carrying food. But no nest was found.

Spring: Apr. 16, 1960 (Homer S. Kelsey) and Apr. 18, 1952 (Ruth Steffens) to May 19, 1956

(Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy).

Fall: Sept. 19, 1969 (Ruth Steffens) and Sept. 20, 1936 (Deed) to Nov. 7, 1937 (Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Further multiple evidence of breeding in the Highlands: nests with eggs at two points in Sterling Forest (Robert Speiser) in June 1978; a pair feeding two young beside a nest south of Island Pond in Harriman Park on June 5, 1979 (John Benzinger); pair on a nest at Surebridge Swamp in June 1980 (Speiser); four young on 1779 Trail near Bultontown on July 13, 1981 (Deed); pair and three young on 1779 Trail west of Palisades Parkway on July 14, 1982 (Deed).

RED-EYED VIREO
Vireo olivaceus



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, breeds throughout the state
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, May 4 to Oct. 8
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 29 to Oct. 19
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	very common summer resident
1940	Carr	a common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common to common migrant and breeder

Even in its favored woodlands, many of which are protected by being Palisades Interstate Park property, the red-eyed vireo has declined somewhat in numbers since the 1930s. For a few years after the DDT spraying in the summer of 1957, it was actually hard to find in mid-May, after decades of sharing with the redstart the status of being the most numerous of the vireo/warbler group at that season. Single-party

counts of 20, or more in mid-May of 1949 to 1955 dipped to as few as three birds in a dawn-to-dusk trip. The countywide, eight-party coverage of the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count territory on May 15, 1971 tallied 43 red-eyed vireos; the similar count on May 13, 1972 turned up only 13--a poor count but perhaps partly explained by being slightly

ahead of the major migration. The first arrivals generally range from May 12 to May 19.

Our earliest spring date is Apr. 22, 1951 (Frances H. Irving); our latest fall date is Oct. 19, 1935 (Robert F. Deed).

PHILADELPHIA VIREO
Vireo philadelphicus



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant once, Sept. 24, 1875
1898	Chapman	very rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	extremely rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	very rare transient in spring, uncommon to rare in fall
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient, one record
1976	Current status	casual migrant, even rarer in spring

We have only five records for this easily overlooked vireo, even though transmission-tower kills and mist-netting operations in the metropolitan area assure us that it is a much commoner migrant than it is reputed to be. Surely the species nests to the north of us, especially in northern New England, in numbers that assure a substantial flow of migrants in our

area unless the birds take an awkwardly long detour.

Our records: Sept. 22, 1935 on Tiorati Brook Road (Robert F. Deed), the record to which Orth alludes; Sept. 28, 1955 at Tallman Mountain Park (David O. Hill, Thomas Dow); May 9, 1959 in Valley Cottage (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper), our only spring record; Oct. 10, 1965, a bird recently

killed by a cat (Edwin Gamble); Aug. 31, 1975, a bird studied at 15 feet at Rockland Lake (Donald S. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Our five records have grown to eight with these new dates: Aug. 16, 1981 on Mine Road; Apr. 30, 1983, a very early date but a bird well studied on Clausland Mt., Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed); a singing bird at the Deed home on May 19, 1983.

WARBLING VIREO

Vireo gilvus



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to October; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common summer resident, arrives May 7 to 20
1898	Chapman	common local summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, May 3 to Sept. 18
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient, local summer resident
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon summer resident
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident, declining
1960	Orth	irregular rare summer resident
1976	Current status	cyclically fairly common breeder, now at the bottom of a cycle, and rare

In the long-term trend, this bird of village shade trees and tall, isolated trees in farmlands and marshes has greatly increased in numbers during the past 40 years. And it seems not to have been affected by the 1957 aerial spraying of woodlands with DDT as so many insectivorous birds were in their breeding season. Rather, its numbers appear to rise and

fall in a cycle of about six years. For example, in ten single-party May "Big Day" lists from 1948 to 1961, we had only one bird in 1948 but a peak of ten birds in 1949, with the count returning to one or two birds in 1950, 1952, 1956, and 1958 (zero in 1957) before rebuilding to six in 1959 and then dropping to two or three in 1960 and 1961. On May 13, 1968, this was the most

numerous vireo--six birds, compared with five red-eyed and four yellow-throated. But countywide "Big Day" coverage of the Christmas Count territory in 1971 and 1972 again yielded only five and two birds respectively for eight parties afield.

In one year not covered by a May "Big Day" count--1954--this vireo seemed to reach an all-time peak in numbers of nesting pairs. An early June walk in South Nyack produced five pairs in half a mile, and at least three pairs were indicated by singing males in a small area at

Grassy Point. According to Carr, the species bred in the Park chiefly at Bear Mountain and at Beechy Bottom (approximately the site of the Anthony Wayne Recreation Area on the Palisades Parkway).

Dates range from Apr. 28, 1960 at West Nyack (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to Sept. 19, 1951 at Bear Mountain (John C. Orth).

1983 Addendum -- Again locally quite common: Congers, New City, West Haverstraw, Thiells, Stony Point, Rockland Lake, etc.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER

Mniotilta varia



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, April to September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, common summer resident; Apr. 26 to Oct. 14
1898	Chapman	common transient. fairly common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 18 -to Oct. 1
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, occasional summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	common migrant, fairly common breeder

This familiar warbler, little changed in abundance over the decades, is among the earliest to arrive, regularly around Apr. 20. Dates range from Apr. 14, 1954 at Palisades (Jennie Fox) to Oct. 16, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr)--plus an isolated bird in Grand View on Nov. 23, 1959 that surprised David O. Hill by singing in response to his imitation of a screech owl as he tried to raise his local owl.

1983 Addendum -- A high summer count of 15 in the Pine Swamp-Surebridge area of Harriman Park on June 4, 1979 (Eugene R. Brown). Two remarkable winter records, our first for that season: one near Suffern on Dec. 18, 1980 (Jack LeMaire) and one at Iona Island on Dec. 28, 1981 (Peter and Ellen Derven).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

Protonotaria citrea



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	---
1878-82	Mearns	---
1898	Chapman	---
1898	Fisher	---
1908	Brownell	---
1923	Griscom	casual or very rare spring visitant, one fall record
1927	Kuerzi	---
1940	Carr	rare visitant, June 6, 1927
1942	Cruickshank	extremely rare spring transient, purely casual fall transient
1960	Orth	still only the one record
1976	Current status	very rare spring visitant

After a promising upsurge of five records in the mid-1950s, this southern visitor has been reported only once, and not at all since 1967. We have eight records in all: June 6, 1927 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr), May 18, 1937 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); May 11, 1953 at Palisades (Fox), Apr. 19-22, 1954 at Congers Lake (Ruth Steffens), May 2, 1954 at Palisades (Eugene R. Brown); May 10, 1955 at Grassy

Point (Irving G. Kennedy); May 7, 1959 near Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); May 14, 1967 at Centenary (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

1983 Addendum -- After 12 years of no reports, I found a bird singing at Fifth Avenue, Blauvelt, on the Hackensack Creek on May 30, 1979; on June 18 it was singing steadily near the sewage

pumping station on the west side of the creek, and a day later a pair hovered around an apparent nest site in a small nearby bog. Unfortunately, on June 22 a flood knocked out the sewer station pumps, allowing untreated sewage to pour into the Hackensack, and the ensuing movement of heavy machinery and truckloads of chemicals to treat the water both

halted my visits and destroyed the possible nest site. On Apr. 27, 1980 Peter Derven had a sighting at the Palisades tank farm; on the amazingly early date of Mar. 29, 1981 Vic Schwartz saw a brightly plumaged bird at the Tallman Mt. swimming pool; another bird was at the tank farm on Apr. 24, 1983 (Vic Schwartz, Ned Pollock).

SWAINSON'S WARBLER

Limnothlypis swainsonii

It is hard to take this species seriously as ever occurring in our area, but this is what James E. De Kay had to say in "Zoology of New York," Part II, page 67: "This is a southern species, and apparently rare. I have never seen it in this state, but my young friend H. C. De Rham assured me that he had obtained it from Rockland County. His premature and much

regretted decease prevented me from examining the specimen. It has since been observed in Massachusetts, by Mr. Samuel Cabot." De Kay referred to the species as "Whistling Warbler, *Vermivora swainsoni*." There is no reference to Rockland County occurrence in either--the A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds, 1957, or Bull's "Birds of New York State."

WORM-EATING WARBLER

Helmitheros vermivorus



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to September, not abundant
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common summer resident, arrives May 8 to 15
1898	Chapman	rather rare and local summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 7 to Aug. 23
1908	Brownell	uncommon summer resident, from Apr. 24
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient and summer resident
1940	Carr	uncommon and local summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder in Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder

This bird of wooded hillsides is virtually absent from central Rockland County, but it is regularly present in small numbers in the Hudson Valley, the Ramapos, and the Highlands, which may have marked its northern range limit a half-century ago. Oddly, its local numbers never seem to be swelled by migrants, perhaps because so few birds do go farther north. A

day's count of half a dozen birds in mid-May is about as high as this species' numbers ever go. Dates range from Apr. 27, 1957 (Eugene R. Brown) to Oct. 6, 1959 in Upper Grand View (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- Very late near Pine Swamp on Nov. 22, 1979 (Robert Speiser).

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER

Vermivora chrysoptera



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, arrives May 10 to 15
1898	Chapman	rather rare transient and summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare summer resident, May 8 to Aug. 25
1908	Brownell	rare summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	rare transient and summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon but regular transient
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident in highlands of Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, uncommon breeder in Ramapos, Highlands, and their foothills

Outside the peak days of spring migration, the best places to find this warbler are Lake Welch, Queensboro Lake, and Mine Road, behind West Point. Even on days of big warbler waves, it is most unusual to find more than two birds. On the ten May "Big Day" single-party counts from 1948

through 1961, it was missed entirely in three years. Dates range from Apr. 26, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to Sept. 19, 1934 at Lake Nawahunta (Carr, H. A. Hochbaum, Daniel B. Beard).

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER

Vermivora pinus



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"have met with two specimens"
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, arrives May 12 to 17, breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 4 to Sept. 7
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, arrives Apr. 22, breeds
1923	Griscom	very common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	very common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	fairly common to common breeder

Whatever may have happened between De Kay's time and that of Frank Chapman, the status of this warbler has not changed noticeably in the past 45 years. It is a widely distributed bird and can be found in numbers in excess of 15 per day in mid and late May. Dates

range from Apr. 15, 1973, two at Lake Sebago (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to Sept. 21, 1949 at Lake Skannatati (Bear Mountain Trailside Museum staff). However, most birds arrive after Apr. 25 and leave by Sept. 5.

BREWSTER'S WARBLER LAWRENCE'S WARBLER

Vermivora chrysoptera X *Vermivora pinus*

These hybrids of the golden-winged and blue-winged warblers are no longer recognized by the A.O.U. as species but are no less interesting for that. We have records of 16 occurrences of the Brewster's, nine of the Lawrence's form. It may be significant that most of the records for the Brewster's which more closely resembles the golden-winged, come from the Highlands whereas all but three of the nine records for the Lawrence's come from central Rockland County—in fact, from only two areas, West Nyack and Valley Cottage, that are only a couple of miles apart. This is blue-winged warbler country.

The banner day for these hybrids must have been July 30, 1952. On that day, Frances H. Irving at her home in West Nyack banded a Brewster's warbler that had come to her birdbath and banding trap in the company of a golden-winged warbler and a Lawrence's warbler that had arrived at a different time of day in the company of a blue-winged warbler.

Other records for the Brewster's form: June 18, 1925 (William H. Carr); Aug 14, 1929 at Queensboro Lake (Carr); June 23, 1936 (Carr, Roger Tory Peterson); May 16, 1937 at Beechy Bottom (now the Anthony Wayne Recreation Area) on the Palisades Parkway (Vivian B. Krum, Donald W. Deed, Robert F. Deed); July 12, 1937 (Carr); Aug. 28, 1938 (Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis); July 29, 1951, two at Lake Welch (Eugene R. Brown, R. F. Deed); May 5, 1954 at Valley Cottage (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); May 27, 1954 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); May 19, 1956 at West Point (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); May 17, 1957 at Lake Welch dam with male golden-winged (Brown, Deed); June 4, 1958 back of West Point (Treacy); Aug. 18, 1963, a hybrid that was

probably this one, on Little Tor (Morton Isler); May 17, 1971 at Weyant's Pond back of West Point (Treacy); May 13, 1972 in same area (Paul Jeheber, Treacy).

Other records for the Lawrence's form: Aug. 18, 1935, with a small flock of golden-winged warblers at what is now Lake Welch dam (Deed); Aug. 2, 1950 in West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving); July 29, 1951 (Brown); May 4, 1953 at West Nyack (Mrs. Irving); May 17-19, 1953 at Valley Cottage (Dr. Hopper, Mrs. Steffens, Deed); May 1-5, 1954, two birds at Valley Cottage, one paler below (Mr. Hopper and Rockland Audubon Society field trip); May 18, 1971 on Mine Road back of West Point (Mrs. Steffens); June 20, 1971 on Hogencamp Mountain in Harriman Park (Donald S. Deed and Rockland Audubon Society field trip).

1983 Addendum -- *Brewster's Warbler*: A bird with no yellow on its breast north of Queensboro Lake on June 14 and June 16, 1978 (Robert Speiser); a bird essentially a Blue-winged except for broad yellow wingbars at the Nike Center, Piermont, May 16-26, 1979 (the Deeds); a young Brewster's being fed by two Blue-wingeds at the Hackensack Creek pumping station on June 28, 1981 (Donald S. Deed); also a record for May 26 1981 on Mine Road.

Lawrence's Warbler: May 10, 1976 at Weyant's Pond, Mine Road (Edward D. Treacy); a singing male on Mine Road on May 12, 1980 (Kenneth McDermott); a female carrying food, mated to a Blue-winged on Clausland Mt., Blauvelt (Donald S. and Robert F. Deed); May 8 to June 8, 1982 singing the Golden-winged's song on Mine Road, with a female Blue-winged carrying nesting material.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER

Vermivora celata



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"undoubtedly belongs here"
1878-82	Mearns	rare transient visitant, May 13
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	casual in spring, very rare in fall
1927	Kuerzi	very rare transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	rare fall transient, very rare spring transient, extremely rare in winter
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient, one record
1976	Current status	casual spring migrant, very rare fall migrant

We had no known records of this species until 1951, and then the record came in spring; a bird that lingered in Upper Nyack from Mar. 17 to May 2 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper and others). Our only other spring record also came from a bird at Dr. Hopper's home on Apr. 25, 1956.

Fall records for this little-known bird: Oct. 4, 1951 at Dr. Hopper's home; Nov. 18, 1952 at

Bear Mountain (John C. Orth); Oct. 6, 1956 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Nov. 17, 1956, a bird picking at weed seeds in the driveway of the Robert F. Deeds' South Nyack home; Nov. 30 to Dec. 29, 1961 at the upper Nyack home of Mrs. H. Rossi returning there from Jan. 25 to at least Feb. 2, 1962; Oct. 13, 1962, one killed by a car near Suffern (John LeMaire); Nov. 17, 1963 at

Bardonia (Robert Connor); Oct. 16, 1975 at
Piermont (Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Two new records: Sept. 18,
1977 at Cornwall (Al Merritt); May 12, 1981 near
Stilwell Lake, Mine Road.

TENNESSEE WARBLER

Vermivora peregrina



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare
1878-82	Mearns	rare transient visitant abundant at times
1898	Chapman	rather rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, May 22-27, Aug. 22 to Oct. 2
1908	Brownell	uncommon transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon spring, common fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	regular fairly common spring transient, sometimes abundant fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring transient visitant, common fall transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	migrant uncommon in spring and rare, though perhaps overlooked, in fall

This warbler has become considerably more regular during the past 45 years or so. It was regarded as quite rare in the 1930s; I had totals of two and four birds for the entire years of 1935 and 1936. Even now it is missed in some years. In ten May "Big Day" lists from 1948 through 1961, it appears only once, with two birds in

1958. Single-party "Big Day" trips found four birds in 1964, five in 1965, none in 1966 or 1968. In the Rockland Audubon Society's concerted "Big Day" coverage of the Christmas Count territory, totals were four birds in 1971 and five birds in 1972.

Spring: May 4, 1969, six birds, among the commonest warblers that day (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to May 30, 1954 (Thomas Dow).

Fall: Aug. 24, 1975 at Dunderberg (Edward D. Treacy) to Oct. 7, 1961 (John LeMaire, Mathilde Weingartner).

1983 Addendum -- Especially abundant in spring 1978; a high count of 40 on May 23, 1978 (Deed).

NASHVILLE WARBLER
Vermivora ruficapilla



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, rare summer resident, breeds; May 6 to Sept. 21
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient, rare summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant, may breed; May 7 to 27 and Aug. 11 to Oct. 4
1908	Brownell	uncommon transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, one winter record
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds at Beechy Bottom
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient visitant, "breeds sparsely in the higher sections of Rockland County"
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, probably nesting at Weyant's Pond in 1956
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, rare and local breeder in the Highlands and high interior of the Park

Further investigation of likely breeding sites has multiplied the nesting records for the Nashville Warbler, but it remains about as uncommon on migration as the Tennessee. The largest single-party count in our records is six or seven birds at

Tallman Mountain, Piermont, on May 17, 1956 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed), and the species is absent from more than half the 16 or 17 May "Big Day" lists I have checked.

As for breeding, William H. Carr's record for Beechy Bottom (now approximately the Anthony Wayne Recreation Area at the north end of the Palisades Parkway) is based on finding birds on June 16, 1935. John C. Orth's reference is to the discovery of a pair at Weyant's Pond, back of West Point, from June 9 to July 10, 1956 (Edward D. Treacy). Eugene R. Brown's explorations of the Harriman Park between Lake Tiorati and Island Pond yielded two birds at Surebridge Swamp on June 7, 1965; a singing male at Surebridge on June 10, 1969 a singing male at the 1,300-foot elevation of Hogencamp Mountain on June 15, 1970; a pair at Hogencamp Mountain on June 6, 1971 and three birds there on June 20, 1971; a pair at a nest in Surebridge Swamp on June 18, 1974, and pairs at both Surebridge and Pine Swamps on June 18, 1975. There is also a still older breeding record, apparently overlooked in Carr's 1940 list but perhaps associated with his Beechy Bottom report: a pair feeding young on July 28,

1919 on "Queensboro Road, Bear Mountain" (Silloway, 1920). The north end of the Beechy Bottom area is at Queensboro Lake.

In the rest of Rockland County; migrations are well defined:

Spring: Apr. 20, 1937 (Carr) to May 30, 1967, four birds on South Mountain, Blauvelt, in a big late migration wave (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed). There is also an isolated very early spring--or winter--record for Mar. 17, 1951 at Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper's feeder in Upper Nyack.

Fall: Aug. 15, 1953 at Lake Tiorati (Elizabeth McClelland) to Nov. 20, 1956 (Ruth Steffens). Fall departure by mid-October is more typical.

1983 Addendum -- At least eight new summer records of singing in Surebridge Swamp, Green Swamp at Lake Welch, and Sterling Forest.

NORTHERN PARULA
Parula americana



Adult, Female, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant, uncommon summer resident, breeds; May 1-30, Aug. 15 to Oct. 25
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant, local summer resident
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	very common transient
1940	Carr	migrant
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, possible breeding in northern Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	fairly common and occasionally very common migrant; may breed at the higher elevations

The average number of parulas on an average spring migration day seems to be six to eight birds, yet on May 16, 1958 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed) a single-party count of 52 was second only to an estimated 100 myrtles. The Rockland Audubon Society "Big Day" counts

with eight parties covering the Christmas Count territory produced 28 birds in 1971 and 33 birds in 1972.

Spring: Apr. 19, 1952 at South Nyack (Deed) to June 5, 1937 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis).

Fall: Aug. 21, 1955 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to Nov. 1, 1955 (Thomas Dow, David O. Hill).

Summer: June 7, 1965 at Surebridge Swamp (Brown); June 20, 1971 at Hogencamp Mountain (Brown and Rockland Audubon Society field trip). These places are in the area where other northerly species have been found nesting.

YELLOW WARBLER
Dendroica petechia



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common summer resident, May 9 to Sept. 3
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 30 to Sept. 27
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, arrives Apr. 28
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	very common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	common breeder

Despite the changes in Rockland County habitat during the past 45 years, happily this species has not been adversely affected. On a typical mid-May birding trip, it is not difficult to count 40 or more yellow warblers, and numbers hold up well in summer. Birds can be found almost

everywhere except woodlands, and they coexist compatibly with man even in the villages and outlying developments. Dates range from Apr. 21, 1954 (Ruth Steffens) to Oct. 17, 1970 on Clausland Mountain, Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed).

MAGNOLIA WARBLER

Dendroica magnolia



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	sometimes among the rarest warblers, at other times more common
1878-82	Mearns	common transient visitant, May 8 -to 28 and Sept. 6 to Oct. 5
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, May 9 to 28 and Aug. 13 to Oct. 11
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, May 6 to 15 and Aug. 28
1923	Griscom	very common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	very common transient
1940	Carr	transient visitor
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant, occasionally common

Numbers of magnolia warblers in spring migration vary sharply. In one May "Big Day" list of more than 100 species, the magnolia may be missing entirely; in another, the count may be 20 or more. A good average in a spring warbler wave is eight or ten magnolias. Peak dates tend to be around May 10 and Sept. 20.

Spring: Apr. 28, 1951 (Frances H. Irving) to May 31, 1950 (Eugene R. Brown).

Fall: Aug. 15, 1948 (John C. Orth) to Nov. 6, 1962 (Mr. and Mrs. Archer Stansbury).

CAPE MAY WARBLER

Dendroica tigrina



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very rare; one taken in May on Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	rather rare transient, May 14 to 20 and Sept. 8 to 20
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant, Aug. 20, to Oct. 1
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common spring, common fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common spring and fall transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring, fairly common fall transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular rare spring transient, no fall records
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant

The above summary suggests a pronounced rise and fall in this species over the decades, and modern experience confirms this, although Jack Orth's evaluation reverses the seasonal abundance noted by Ludlow Griscom. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Cape May was considered a very rare bird, the crown jewel of a banner spring migration wave. In 1935 I had two Cape Mays; in 1936, none. And until the mid-1950s, all the activity of the Rockland Audubon

Society produced few records. However, 1956 brought an unprecedented number, both spring and fall; in the week of May 13. Jack Orth reported the Cape May "unusually numerous" in the Bear Mountain area, and in the first half of October, seven or eight turned up in central Rockland County. In 1957, Frances H. Irving saw several in a "huge" warbler wave at West Nyack on Oct. 1 to 3, and 1959 was another good year, when Edward D. Treacy counted 12

in a warbler wave at Highland Falls on May 6-7. The next good spring was 1963, and after that, 1969. Only three birds were found on the Rockland Audubon Society's countywide May "Big Day" in 1971, but the count of 11 on the similar survey in 1972 put the Cape May in the same abundance bracket as the magnolia, chestnut-sided, blackpoll, and Canada warblers and the Louisiana waterthrush.

Spring: May 2, 1957 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) to May 27, 1954 at Bear Mountain (Orth).

Fall: Aug. 29, 1963 at New City (Morton Isler) to Oct. 26, 1956 (Ruth Steffens).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER

Dendroica caerulescens



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	occurs in April and November
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, May 4 to 22 and Sept. 11 to Oct. 17
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Apr. 25 to May 28 and Aug. 26 to Oct. 10
1908	Brownell	common transient, Apr. 24 to May 3 and Sept. 12
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, scarce breeder in northern Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, irregular rare summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common to common migrant, casual breeder in highest portion of Harriman Park

In nine out of 13 May "Big Day" lists, this species ranged in numbers from zero to seven. Yet, it is not uncommon to find ten on a good peak day, and on the "Big Day" of May 16, 1958 the count was 24 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed). The countywide Rockland Audubon

Society "Big Day" of May 13, 1972 tallied 40-plus.

Breeding indications are two: Silloway's 1920 report that the species had bred at Lake Kanawauke and Eugene Brown's discovery of a

pair at Hogencamp Mountain (1,300-foot elevation) on June 15 and 22, 1970.

Spring: Apr. 16, 1976 at Tallman Mountain, Piermont, after a week of temperatures in the 90s (Eric Single) and, more normally, Apr. 27, 1951 at Palisades (Betty Barron) to May 30, 1967, two birds in a big migration wave (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

Fall: Aug. 12, 1964, a male at West Nyack (Mabel Weindling), and more normally, Aug. 31, 1975 at Rockland Lake (Donald S. Deed) to Oct.

24, 1954 at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Rockland Audubon Society field trip).

1983 Addendum -- Unusually abundant in recent spring migrations and many more records of singing males and pairs in summer in the Highlands; on June 11, 1977, Eugene Brown clinched a breeding record with discovery of a nest with four eggs. A high fall migration count: more than 20 birds in two hours at the Palisades tank farm (the Deeds) on Oct. 9, 1981. This must have been a huge warbler waves: We also had 250+ Myrtle Warblers in two hours.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER

Dendroica coronata



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common in early May and November
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, occasional winter visitant; Apr. 17 to May 28 and Sept. 23 to Dec. 1
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant, local winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, occasional winter visitant; Apr. 13 to May 28 and Aug. 16 to Nov. 11
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	abundant transient visitant, regular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	abundant transient, occasionally wintering
1940	Carr	transient visitor
1942	Cruickshank	abundant transient visitant, common local winter resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common to common spring and fall transient, many winter dates
1976	Current status	very common migrant, very rare winter visitant

The history of the myrtle warbler is essentially the history of the bayberry in Rockland County. As recently as 20 years ago, this species of warbler was common to very common in winter, and local birders had been trapped into assuming that this was a normal condition.

Apparently what had happened was that extensive tracts of land were simultaneously going through a brushy stage, rich in bayberries, the myrtle's chief winter food--such tracts as the old parade ground at Camp Bluefields, Blauvelt; the abandoned farmlands around Rockland

State Hospital; World War II's Camp Shanks, and several farms and orchards that were in the process of being converted to real estate developments after years of lying fallow.

On the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont-Alpine area (1934 through 1941), the high count for the myrtle was 125 birds in 1941. This species has appeared on 21 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, but only three times since 1964. In the early years of the RAS Count, before the bayberries were crowded out by houses and by natural plant progression, the numbers were impressive: 85 myrtles in 1947, 36 in 1948, 93 in 1949, 100 in 1950, 53 in foggy 1951, 280 in 1952, 162 in 1953, 190 in 1954, only 16 in 1955, a comeback to 123 in 1956, 71 in 1957, 63 in 1958. Then the downtrend became obvious: 14 in 1959, 15 in 1960, 38 in 1961, 5 in 1962, 16 in 1963, and 5 in 1964, and after that, only a count of two birds in 1968 breaks the string of zeros until the appearance

of seven birds in 1974 and four birds in 1975--both counts in a newly discovered field containing bayberries near Suffern. The myrtle has long been scarce in Bear Mountain-Harriman Park; it appears on only four of the 28 Christmas Counts there: single birds in 1955, 1962, and 1963 and three birds in 1970.

On migration, the myrtle is consistently the commonest warbler, with single-party tallies on May "Big Days" up to 100 in 1958 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed) and a countywide tally of 173-plus on the Rockland Audubon Society coverage of May 13, 1972.

Dates range from Aug. 30, 1975 at Rockland Lake (Philip Meisner) to May 28, 1950 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). Peak numbers tend to cluster around Apr. 5 and Oct. 25. If the species continues to evaporate as a winter resident, it will become easier to bracket dates for spring and fall migrations.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER

Dendroica virens



Adult Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	somewhat rare, May 10 to October
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, uncommon summer resident, breeds; May 1 to Oct. 28
1898	Chapman	transient visitant and local summer resident
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, uncommon summer resident; Apr. 30 to June 3 and Sept. 1 to Oct. 26
1908	Brownell	abundant transient, uncommon summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	very common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, several pairs breeding local
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds; common transient
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, uncommon local breeder in highlands of Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident in hemlock forests; nests
1976	Current status	common migrant and breeds

This species was among those most severely hit by the DDT aerial spraying of Rockland County woodlands in the summer of 1957. From previous May "Big Day" counts of 12 to 15, the species dipped to one to four birds, and numbers have not markedly recovered. This bird, breeding in the hemlock groves of the hills

behind South Nyack, was one of the first warblers I became acquainted with in the late 1920s; in 1935 its numbers, both on migration and in the breeding season, equaled those of the redstart. Today only an occasional black-throated green is heard in these hills in the nesting season.

Spring: Spring dates start at Apr. 18, 1954 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens), although a week or ten days later would be a more normal arrival time. Peak numbers are generally around May 5

to 10. In fall, numbers peak about Oct. 5, and most birds are gone by the end of October. Our latest fall date is Nov. 8, 1956 at West Nyack (Jean Kolars).

CERULEAN WARBLER

Dendroica cerulea



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	---
1878-82	Mearns	"A rare migrant. I secured a fine male of this beautiful species, near my residence, May 17, 1875"
1898	Chapman	---
1898	Fisher	---
1908	Brownell	---
1923	Griscom	"an exceedingly rare or casual transient"
1927	Kuerzi	two records in May, 1921 and 1926
1940	Carr	---
1942	Cruickshank	rare or casual transient
1960	Orth	one recent record
1976	Current status	rare but recently regular spring migrant, casual breeder at higher elevations, casual fall migrant

One of the thrills of my early birding was Ludlow Griscom's report that this species has been breeding not far away in Dutchess County, but it remained for my year's residence in the Washington, D. C., area in 1950-51 to acquaint me with the bird. And, except for Mearns' 1875 specimen, we had no local records until 1952.

Then they poured in--at least 25 records through 1975. The cerulean warbler seems to be among the later arrivals in spring, mostly in the last half of May, yet its persistent appearance in late May in the Mine Road-Weyant's Pond area behind West Point has repeatedly raised hopes that it was nesting. One firm report of breeding is for

1969 and several prior years at Sterling Forest (Richard Sloss and others, noted by John Bull). Eugene R. Brown's exploration of the Surebridge Swamp area also turned up singing males on June 18, 1974 and June 18, 1975. Irving G. Kennedy noted birds also at Lake Kanawauke in June, 1975.

The area's first known cerulean warbler was sighted on May 28, 1952 in Blauvelt by Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, who also had the second record, a singing male at Stony Point on May 29, 1953. Other localities have included New City, Palisades, Tappan, West Nyack, Upper Nyack, South Nyack, and Nauraushaun. The first Bear Mountain record, noted by Orth was at Doodletown, near Iona Island, on May 14, 1955

(Edward D. Treacy). Other spring records for the Park and the Mine Road-Weyant's Pond area include May 18, 1965, singing near Lake Kanawauke (Brown), May 24, 1965, singing near Lake Cohasset (Hopper, Brown); May 11, 1967, two near Turkey Hill Pond (Brown); May 13, 1968, singing all afternoon at Mine Road (Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); May 25, 1969, three singing at Mine Road (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed); May 15, 1972, two singing at Weyant's Pond (the Deeds); May 13, 1972, two at Tiorati Brook (Brown party); May 27, 1973, singing at Weyant's Pond (the Deeds).

1983 Addendum -- Unprecedented numbers of summering, probably breeding, birds in 1978, 1979, and 1982 but virtually none in 1983.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER

Dendroica fusca



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	summer resident, May 1 to August; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	very common transient, May 7 to 28 and Sept. 20 to Oct. 10
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient
1898	Fisher	common transient, May 10-29 and Aug. 15-Oct. 15
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant, May 5-15
1923	Griscom	common spring, fairly common fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	rare summer resident, breeds; irregular migrant
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient visitant; a few breed in northern Rockland County
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident in hemlock forests; nests
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, uncommon breeder in hemlock forests of Harriman Park

A half-dozen of these birds would be typical in May migration waves, and half a dozen breeding birds in the area of Lake Tiorati to Island Pond. However, some of the greater migration waves,

usually after mid-May, run to higher counts, such as the 17 birds on May 16, 1958 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed). Often the peak of numbers is about May 20.

Parulidae

Dates range from Apr. 26, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to Oct. 7, 1951 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) and Oct. 7, 1954 (Ruth Steffens). The latest spring migrant outside the

Harriman Park breeding area was on May 30, 1967, six birds in a big late wave (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed). The earliest fall date outside the breeding area is Aug. 29, 1963 at Little Tor (Morton Isler).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER

Dendroica dominica



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental spring visitant from the south on May 7, 1956 at Gilchrest Road, Congers, singing and watched at close range for some time as it worked the trunks and limbs of small trees in a clearing (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). Dr. Hopper was previously familiar with the species in the South.

1983 Addendum -- Our single record is augmented by two occurrences at Sterling Lake, in Sterling Forests June 23 to at least July 1, 1978, a singing male (Robert Speiser); June 13, 1979 and several days thereafter in same spot (John Benzinger).

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER

Dendroica pensylvanica



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare, May 20 and Aug. 20
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, May 3 to Sept. 30
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant, locally common summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, May 2 to Sept. 24
1908	Brownell	common transient, fairly common summer resident, breeds; May 2 to Oct. 4
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant and breeder

The chestnut-sided warbler has declined considerably in 40 or 45 years, with the disappearance of so many of its favored brushy fields. Single-party May "Big Day" counts ranged up to 21 birds in 1952 and 20 in 1956, but in 1971 and 1972 those were the totals for the

whole of Rockland County. The species seems to be holding its own in the Highlands, though, and in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park interior. Dates range from Apr. 25, 1953 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving) to Oct. 16, 1952 at Bear Mountain (John C. Orth).

Parulidae

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER

Dendroica castanea



Adult Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	usually rare
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, May 14 to 29 and Sept. 19 to October
1898	Chapman	irregularly fairly common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, May 14 to 28 and Aug. 5 to Sept. 26
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant, from May 9
1923	Griscom	common spring transient a week after the migration peak, common fall transient in late August and first half of September
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	rare migrant, June and August records only
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient visitant
1960	Orth	occasional rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	rare to uncommon spring and fall migrant

For this species, May "Big Day" listings are a few days too early to reflect true numbers. But even at the spring peak, May 20 to 27, numbers usually are small, one to five birds. And the fall

migration, which is earlier than for many warblers, is even lighter.

Spring: May 10, 1961 at Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth) and May 10, 1970 on Clausland

Mountain, Blauvelt (Mary Wilfred and Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to June 5, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr and Trailside Museum staff).

Fall: Aug. 27, 1955 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving) to Sept. 16, 1938 at Beechy Bottom (Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis).

1983 Addendum -- First summer records a male and probable female in Sterling Forest on July 14, 1978 (Speiser, Benzinger).

BLACKPOLL WARBLER

Dendroica striata



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	one of our most common species
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, May 9-29, Sept. 9 to Oct. 16
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, May 7 to June 6 and Aug. 30 to Oct. 16
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, May 22-30
1923	Griscom	very common spring, abundant fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	abundant transient
1940	Carr	migrant, May and June, September and October
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant

Again, the major migration of blackpoll warblers comes too late in spring for May "Big Day" records to be of much significance. Peaks of the year for this species are about May 25 and Sept. 25. Daily numbers rarely exceed a dozen birds at either season, although on Oct. 14, 1975

Anthony F. Amos counted 40 birds in the Piermont-Palisades area that he was studying on a daily basis.

Spring: Apr. 29, 1956 at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Rockland Audubon Society field trip)

and Apr. 29, 1962 at Highland Falls (Mr. and Mrs. John Dye, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy) to June 6, 1927 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Dr. G. Clyde Fisher).

Fall: Aug. 31, 1975 at Rockland Lake (Donald S. Deed) to Oct. 18 in 1951, 1952, and 1954 (all by Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

1983 Addendum -- New late spring date of June 16, 1978, singing in the Silvermine parking lot (Speiser, Benzinger).

PINE WARBLER
Dendroica pinus



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not uncommon in early April and October
1878-82	Mearns	rather rare transient. Apr. 11 to May 3 and late August
1898	Chapman	fairly common summer resident on Long Island
1898	Fisher	occasional transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	uncommon spring, very rare fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient, perhaps breeding
1940	Carr	migrant, April and May, September and October
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring, rare fall transient
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant unreported since 1962

Inasmuch as this bird nests as near as the Shawangunk Mountains, some 30 miles north of Bear Mountain, it should be better known in this area than it is. And we did indeed have many reports in two decades, the 1930s and the 1950s. Migrating early, with a spring peak

around Apr. 10, it may merely escape observation. It has not appeared on any May "Big Day" list. Our seven records since 1937 are all of single birds.

Spring: Mar. 18, 1935 (Robert F. Deed) to May 2, 1927 (William H. Carr, Dr. G. Clyde Fisher).

Fall: Aug. 10, 1934 (H. A. Hochbaum, Daniel B. Beard) to Oct. 27, 1937 at Lake Welch (Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) and Oct. 27, 1954 (Thomas Dow). The most recent record is Sept. 7, 1962.

Winter: One record, a bird in bright plumage on Dec. 18, 1960 at the window feeder of Mrs. Chandler Stetson in South Nyack, studied from a range of three or four feet.



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

PRAIRIE WARBLER
Dendroica discolor



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not uncommon on Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	rare summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	rare transient and summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare summer resident, May 2 to Sept. 14
1908	Brownell	occasional transient visitant. from May 12
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common spring, fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	rare migrant, May and September records
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common breeder and transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and rare fall transient. may nest in southern part of Park
1976	Current status	common migrant and breeder

This warbler of open country and clearings has obviously increased greatly since pre-Griscom days and even since 1940. It is now possible to count three to six in one day, whereas those

were my year's totals in 1935 and 1936. Dates range from Apr. 28, 1957 (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to Oct. 7, 1964 at Naurausaun (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

PALM WARBLER

Dendroica palmarum



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	seldom noticed
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, Apr. 11 to May 8 and Sept. 20 to Oct. 24
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, Apr. 11 to May 5 and Sept. 20 to Nov. 8
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient, Mar. 30 to Apr. 19
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	migrant, April-May and October
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant

Records are for the far more common yellow palm subspecies, which is a regular early spring migrant and regular fall migrant, chiefly in October. Daily numbers in both seasons reach approximately eight birds. The only example of the Western palm subspecies that I have ever

identified satisfactorily was on Oct. 13, 1935 on Tiorati Brook Road, and we have no other records by other observers.

Spring: Unusually early on Mar. 14, 1952 at Bear Mountain (John C. Orth). A more normal

early arrival date is Apr. 3, 1934. also at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr), and the late 164 spring date is May 17, 1958 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy, Richard Deignan). Spring numbers usually peak between Apr. 20 and Apr. 25.

Fall: Sept. 18, 1963 at Grassy Point (Morton Isler) to Oct. 31, 1954 at Iona island (Orth). Our peak fall count is eight in the Piermont-Palisades area on Oct. 12, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

OVENBIRD

Seiurus aurocapillus



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 26 to Oct. 16
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 27 to Oct. 10
1908	Brownell	a common summer resident, from May 1
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common and frequently abundant transient, common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder, very common transient
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	common migrant and breeder

This vociferous woodland bird is consistently among the commonest warblers, usually slightly more numerous than the yellow warbler and the redstart. There has been no noticeable change over the past 45 years. Even after the 1957

aerial spraying of DDT, this species did not seem to suffer losses as great as those of other woodland birds, perhaps only because it was so abundant prior to the poisoning. Single-party numbers for mid-May range from 15 to 30 birds,

Parulidae

occasionally higher. Dates range from Apr. 10, 1954 (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) and Apr. 10, 1957, singing at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving) to Nov. 22, 1964 at a feeder in New City (Mr. and Mrs. John M. Price).

1983 Addendum -- A strange winter record: On Dec. 10, 1982 Charles Holbrook saw an Ovenbird, its crown quite visible, on the main street of Congers.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH

Seiurus noveboracensis



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant, May and late August
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient, Apr. 26 to May 29 and Aug. 31 to Sept. 16
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, May 11 to 21 and July 28 to Oct. 3
1908	Brownell	uncommon transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient
1940	Carr	transient visitor, also a record for June 16, 1938
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring transient, no fall records
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, casual and local breeder

This species has been found in June in the same Canadian Zone habitat of the Park interior as several other northern nesters, and Edward D. Treacy confirms that a pair nested at Sterling Forest in 1962. The June 16, 1938 record of William H. Carr and Roger Tory Peterson at

Surebridge Swamp was well after the normal spring dates for this bird's northward departure. Daily numbers on migration rarely exceed two or three birds in mid-May, though Eugene R. Brown and Robert F. Deed had counts of seven on May 14, 1950 and six on May 16, 1958.

Parulidae

Spring: Apr. 17, 1937 at Bear Mountain (Carr) to May 16, 1958 (Brown, Deed).

Fall: Sept. 5, 1958 at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Mr. and Mrs. Deed) to Sept. 25, 1963 (Edwin Gamble).

1983 Addendum -- Additional breeding evidence: On June 29, 1978 a pair at Cedar Pond Swamp in Sterling Forest (Robert Speiser,

John Benzinger); June 5, 1979, pairs at that same spot and one singing near Dismal Swamp in Harriman Park (Benzinger); July 8, 1980, pair with one young at Black Rock Forest (same observers); previously, on June 20 that year, at least seven males sang in response to tape recordings at Green Swamp near Lake Welch; May 19, 1982 both this and the Louisiana Waterthrush at a swamp in Sterling Forest (same observers).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH

Seiurus motacilla



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 15 to early fall
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 9 to Aug. 24
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common breeder and transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder, lately much diminished in numbers

In contrast to the ovenbird, this species was virtually wiped out in favored woodlands by the aerial spraying of DDT in the summer of 1957, and it still has not returned to most of its former nesting areas along the brooks of the extensive Blauvelt Section of the Palisades Interstate

Park. Countywide mid-May cooperative counts by the Rockland Audubon Society tallied only nine birds in 1971 and 12 in 1972. While this seems low, a single-party count on a day in mid-May even before the birds were attacked from the air rarely exceeded six birds.

Dates range from Apr. 6, 1952 at West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving) to Oct. 5, 1947 (Robert F. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- New early spring date of Mar. 29, 1981 at Fort Montgomery.

KENTUCKY WARBLER
Oporornis formosus



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"This is a rare bird in this State. . . . It has also been observed at Hoboken, and in Rockland County in this State"
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	common local summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 2 to Aug. 27
1908	Brownell	uncommon summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	former local summer resident, now a transient only near the Hudson valley
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and summer resident
1940	Carr	one record for Storm King Mountain, July 2, 1934 (Dr. W.T. Helmuth, Linnaean Society Report No. 47--1935)
1942	Cruickshank	very rare transient, possibly has bred in Rockland County
1960	Orth	casual and very rare, still only the Helmuth record
1976	Current status	again a very rare spring visitant after an outburst or annual appearances in 1958-66; casual in fall

In a period when most southern birds were extending their range dramatically northward into our area, this species seems to have been

retracting, judging by the notes of Chapman, Fisher, and Brownell. Until 1958 we had only five records since Brownell at Nyack was

observing local birdlife: Helmuth's Storm King record, Aug. 12, 1933 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman); May 6, 1943 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); May 12, 1947 (Bull. in litt.), and May 12, 1948 at Palisades (Fox). It may be significant that all of these records are from steep, wooded hillsides, and the three at Palisades are from the historic entry point of southern birds following the Hudson Valley northward. In contrast, most of our nine records starting in the spring of 1958 have been inland in wet, shrubby woods typical of this warbler's preferred habitat in more southerly states such as Maryland and Virginia.

At least two male Kentucky warblers seem to have made serious attempts to find a mate and establish a nest. One was the second of two records in 1958. A singing male in Nauraushaun, near Pearl River, on June 4 (Emily Paulson) was found only on that day. It may conceivably have been the same bird that was found on June 7 in a swampy woodland west of Route 303 and south of Congers (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); the distance between the two sites is only half a dozen miles. The Congers bird was studied almost daily at the same spot but by June 20 was ranging farther from the original site and singing less frequently (Eugene R. Brown): it was last noted on June 27 on the edge of Valley Cottage (Thomas Dow), nearly a mile from the original spot. Similarly, Homer S. Kelsey found a singing male at Pomona on or about May 14, 1961 that remained, singing, to at least June 11.

Other spring records include: May 13, 1965, singing on Bradley Road, Blauvelt (Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Deed), May, 1966, singing at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Brown); June 10, 1966, singing at the Deeds' South Nyack home on a rainy morning; June 2, 1966 at Pomona again (Kelsey); May 13, 1970 on Bradley Road, Blauvelt (Brown).

Besides the Palisades record for Aug. 12, 1933, we have only one other fall date: Aug. 24, 1966, a bird singing off and on all day long at the Deeds' home in South Nyack.

1983 Addendum -- Still no proof of breeding but a plethora of singing males that may someday be expected to find mates: July 3-5, 1979) a non-singing bird at Long Swamp, Sterling Forest (Speiser, Benzinger); May 31, 1980 to June 11, two birds singing near Pearl River sewer plant, Lake Tappan (Derven, Deed); May 22, 1980, two singing on Pine Meadow Road East, Harriman Park (Benzinger); June 9, 1980, two singing in Tome Valley (Benzinger); May 14, 1980 on Mine Road; May 17, 1980 singing at Dunderberg; May 31, 1981 singing near Weyant's Pond, Mine Road, and also on June 1; May 15, 1982 singing near north base of Low Tor, off Central Highway (Deed); May 20, 1982 singing at Dunderberg (Speiser, Benzinger); June 19, 1982 at Mine Road; May 25, 1983 to May 31, two singing at Low Tor site (Deed) to June 6; June 1, 1983 singing at 525 South Mountain Road (Deed) to June 5.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Oporornis agilis



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: John Lampkin

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	abundant (!) fall transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, Aug. 26 to Oct. 9
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	exceedingly rare in spring, irregularly common in fall
1927	Kuerzi	irregular fall transient, sometimes unrecorded, occasionally fairly numerous
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	very rare to casual spring and uncommon to rare fall transient visitant
1960	Orth	casual very rare fall transient, one record
1976	Current status	very rare fall migrant, no spring records

Of our 15 records, 12 are crammed into the period of 1956-63, when there must have been a sharp rise in abundance of this bird. The two

earlier records are Sept. 24, 1930 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman) and Oct. 3, 1935 on Tiorati Brook Road (Robert F. Deed.), the single Park

Parulidae

record to which Orth refers. The one more recent record is Oct. 12, 1974 at South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner).

The eruption of records in the late 1950s began with a bird in the birdbath of the Steffens home in New City on Sept. 4, 1956 (Ruth Steffens). On Sept. 15, 1957, Robert Connor saw this warbler in the yard of his home in Bardonia, and on Oct. 2 of the same year Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper saw one in Upper Nyack in a huge warbler wave. On Oct. 10, 1958, a Connecticut warbler was found dead in Tappan (H. Babcock). In 1959 there were two more records: Connor saw one again

in his yard on Sept. 19, and a bird with a broken leg was found in West Nyack on Oct. 12 (Mrs. William D. Hackett). Connor again saw Connecticut in his yard on Sept. 20 and 22, 1962, and on Sept. 26, 1962 Morton Isler found a bird freshly killed by a cat. Three records were also made in 1963: Sept. 11 and Sept. 16, both at Haverstraw (Isler), and Sept. 14 (Dr. Hopper, Alma Polhemus).

1983 Addendum -- Early fall date, Aug. 15, 1981, an immature at 20 feet at Iona Island (Edward D. Treacy).

MOURNING WARBLER
Oporornis philadelphia



Adult Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare, taken in Rockland County and on Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	rare transient visitant, May 13-26
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, May 28-29 and Aug. 18 to Oct. 1
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, May 20-30
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient
1940	Carr	rare migrant, two May records only
1942	Cruickshank	rare spring, very rare fall transient
1960	Orth	sporadic very rare spring transient, three records
1976	Current status	rare spring and casual fall migrant

Of our two dozen spring dates, 16 are from May 22 or later. Thus, the mourning warbler passes through our area so late in May that it rarely makes the "Big Day" lists, though it did so in the Rockland Audubon Society's countywide coverage on May 15, 1971 and May 13, 1972, with one bird in each year. The clustering of

records in the last week of May suggests that the species may not be as rare as the paucity of records indicates--it may simply be overlooked as local birders relax their monitoring of the migration.

Spring dates range from May 13, 1926 at Palisades (Jennie Fox, Thomas P. Gilman) and May 13, 1972 at Mine Road (Edward D. Treacy and others) to June 1, 1967 at West Nyack, a bird present since May 29 (Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Weindling).

The three Park-area records mentioned by Jack Orth have now grown to five: May 26, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Dr. G. Clyde Fisher); May 24, 1934 at Bear Mountain (Carr); May 24, 1956 at Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth); May 15, 1971 at Weyant's Pond in the Mine Road area (Adrian Dignan, reported in

July, 1971 "Kingbird"); May 13, 1972 at Mine Road.

We now have four fall records: Sept. 17, 1960 at Highland Falls (Robert Connor); Sept. 22, 1962 in the Haverstraw marsh (Connor, Morton Isler); Sept. 11, 1963, same area (Isler); Oct. 12, 1970 on Clausland Mountain, Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed).

1983 Addendum -- A new late spring record, a female at the Palisades tank farm on June 5, 1980 (Dr. Victor Schwartz) and one more fall record, Sept. 19, 1981 at Mine Road.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

Geothlypis trichas



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, May to September
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 4 to Oct. 15
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 28 to Oct. 23
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, from May 6
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	very common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	common to very common breeder, casual winter visitant

This warbler is remarkably consistent both in numbers and in arrival and departure dates. The early date of Apr. 18, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) still stands; the late fall date is Nov. 7, 1960 at Tappan (Donald Stoneham). We have four winter records: Dec. 13, 1936 to Jan.

1, 1937 at Palisades (Vivian B. Krum, Robert F. Deed, and others); Dec. 30, 1967 at the Mount Ivy swamp (Homer S. Kelsey); Dec. 18, 1975, a male at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Dec. 27, 1975 at West Nyack (Eric Single).

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

Icteria virens



Adult, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common in southern parts of the state
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, arrives May 1-24
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 28 to Aug. 29
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, from May 8
1923	Griscom	fairly common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident, locally abundant
1940	Carr	uncommon summer resident, breeds at Beechy Bottom
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident, "decreases sharply around all densely settled suburban areas"
1960	Orth	irregular rare summer resident
1976	Current status	casual breeder, only one record since 1969; casual winter visitant

From Brownell to Orth to the present day, the benchmarks show the crash of this species. My own records alone count 19 chats in 1935; I have not seen a chat in Rockland County since 1958, and all known records put together show only five occurrences since then--and one of

those was on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, hardly a normal season for a chat. However, as Jack Orth points out, the bird is irregular, and our area did enjoy a chat boom in 1956 and 1957. So the bird may yet return in numbers; there is still much Park territory where

it would not run afoul of Cruickshank's behavior note.

Our dates range from May 2, 1954, two birds (RAS field trip) to Nov. 22, 1957 at Pearl River (Joseph Morlan). A more typical late date is Nov. 6, 1956 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

In the winter of 1956-57, a chat was observed at New City from Dec. 25, 1956 through Jan. 5, 1957 (Mrs. George Hudson, Mr. and Mrs. Steffens), another at Grand View on Dec. 30-31, 1956 (Thomas Dow), and a third in Nyack from Jan. 13, 1957 through the month of January (Virginia Crawford). In 1957, Miss Crawford saw a chat on Aug. 30, Frances H. Irving had chats at West Nyack in a big warbler wave on Oct. 1 and 3, and Morlan had his Pearl River bird.

Since then, though, the only records have been: Aug. 30, 1958 at Lake Welch (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Martha Niss); Aug. 30, 1959 at

Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth); Sept. 9, 1969 at Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens); June 3, 1972, two pairs at the Zackman Farm near Suffern (Bruce Edinger); May 24, 1976 at Piermont (Anthony P. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- As of 1976, we had only one record since 1969; we have had at least seven since then; May 20, 1980, singing in Ramapo Torne valley (John Benzinger); June 17, 1980, male and two females or immatures on Sterling Mine Road (Speiser, Benzinger); May 13-16, 1981, singing at sewer pumping station near Fifth Avenue, Blauvelt (Deed); Sept. 5, 1981 at Mine Road; Dec 19, 1981, a rare winter record at Cornwall Bay on the Mearns Christmas Count (Vaughn Morrison); Sept. 11, 1982 at Iona Island; May 30 to June 6, 1983, on lower north slope of Low Tor (the Deeds). Perhaps significantly, half these records come from slashes under high-tension powerlines.

HOODED WARBLER

Wilsonia citrina



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare; in Westchester County in middle of May
1878-82	Mearns	very common summer resident, May 4 to Sept. 8
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare summer resident
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, from May 10
1923	Griscom	locally common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	regular but uncommon transient, fairly common and increasing as a summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common breeder
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident, nests
1976	Current status	rare to uncommon breeder

This beautiful warbler is another of the conspicuous victims of the 1957 aerial spraying of DDT, which virtually eliminated it from the Blauvelt Section of the Palisades Interstate Park, a tract where it had been particularly

common. Although it usually arrives in the first wave of warblers, May 2 to 5, the numbers tallied on the Rockland Audubon Society's countywide "Big Day" coverage in 1971 and 1972 was pitifully low; three birds on May 15,

1971 and four on May 13, 1972. As recently as 1961, a single-party list for the county on May 18 tallied eight birds, though few or none in the Blauvelt woodlands that had been sprayed four years earlier. My year lists for 1935 and 1936 show 75 and 31 hooded warblers respectively, outnumbering such other warblers as the magnolia and the blackpoll. It must be noted, however, that the hooded warbler has maintained its numbers in the Bear Mountain-

Harriman Park--paradoxically for an allegedly southern bird, in the Canadian Zone habitat of the high interior, coexisting with the Canada warbler on nesting ground.

Dates range from Apr. 27, 1957 (Eugene R. Brown) to Sept. 22, 1935 at Tiorati Brook Road (Robert F. Deed) and Sept. 22, 1962 at Rockland Lake (Morton Isler, Robert Connor).

WILSON'S WARBLER

Wilsonia pusilla



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	once shot near New York City in early May
1878-82	Mearns	very rare transient visitant, arrives May 12 to 17
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant, May 9 to 30 and Aug. 10 to Sept. 9
1908	Brownell	occasional transient visitant, May 12
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common spring, uncommon fall transient
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to fairly common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, accidental in winter

Wilson's warbler may well have increased in numbers during the past 45 years. I had only eight birds in all of 1935 and none in 1936. On May 17, 1956, Eugene R. Brown and I tallied 15-plus, and one party in the Rockland Audubon Society's countywide "Big Day" effort on May 13,

1972 had 16 of the 26 Wilson's warblers counted that day.

Spring: Apr. 23, 1938 at Island Pond (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis), an isolated and extremely early date, and May 1, 1974, two birds

at Mine Road (Paul Jeheber) to May 31, 1968, singing at Lake Tappan (James Demes).

Fall: Aug. 18, 1952 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving) to Oct. 18, 1957, an immature killed in hitting a window in Upper Nyack (John Colgan).

Winter: On Nov. 23, 1961, a male in bright plumage appeared at the Stony Point home of Irving G. Kennedy, remaining until Dec. 19, 1961.

CANADA WARBLER
Wilsonia canadensis



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Andreas Kanon

1844	De Kay	very rare but seen occasionally in early May
1878-82	Mearns	very common transient visitant, May 10 to 28 and Sept. 9
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, May 6 to June 2 and Aug. 10 to Oct. 11
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, May 10 to 27
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	very common transient
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds; Island Pond, Pine Swamp, Surebridge Swamp
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, "nests locally in the highlands of Rockland County"
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, irregular rare summer resident; nests
1976	Current status	fairly common to common migrant, uncommon breeder in highest portions of Harriman Park

In spring migration, a good daily count would be a dozen, though the tally has risen as high as 25

on May 17, 1956, compared that day with only 15 redstarts (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F.

Parulidae

Deed). In portions of the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park above 1,000 feet, two to four pairs may be found in appropriate habitat during the nesting season. Dates range from Apr. 23, 1952 (Brown, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to Oct. 12, 1970 on Clausland Mountain, Blauvelt (Donald S. Deed). Early fall migrants outside the

breeding area were noted on Aug. 15, 1957 in New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and Aug. 15, 1963 between New City and Haverstraw (Morton Isler). A late spring date for lowland Rockland County is May 24, 1953 (Federation of New York State Bird Clubs field trip).

AMERICAN REDSTART
Setophaga ruticilla



Adult, Male, Breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	last of April to September
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Apr. 27 to Oct. 4
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 1 to Oct. 3
1908	Brownell	common summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	abundant transient and common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, common to abundant transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident
1976	Current status	common migrant and breeder

This is one of the commonest and most widespread warblers wherever woodlands exist, at whatever altitude. Party lists at the peak of spring migration in mid-May can exceed 50 birds, putting the species barely into the "very common" category.

Dates range from Apr. 23, 1960 at Hassenclever Mine near Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth) to Nov. 6, 1966 at New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

1983 Addendum -- An unusual number of
60 to 70 on Sept. 9, 1981 at the Palisades

tank farm (the Deeds).

HOUSE SPARROW

Passer domesticus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	abundant resident
1898	Fisher	resident
1908	Brownell	abundant resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident, a perceptible decrease in recent years
1940	Carr	a decreasing permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular very common permanent resident, inhabited areas of the Park
1976	Current status	very common to abundant resident, decreasing

As with the starling, the best index to numbers of this species is the Christmas Count; yet it is not a bird that is counted enthusiastically and precisely by field parties. Also as with the starling, numbers of this species often are in

villages and other areas unattractive to Christmas Counters. Yet even inaccurate, probably grossly conservative, counts serve as an index of year-to-year numbers, and the two series of Christmas Counts in our area both

reach the same conclusion that the number of house sparrows peaked in about 1962.

The decline noted by Kuerzi and Carr may well have occurred, since the early Christmas Counts of the Rockland Audubon Society and the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum staff agree that numbers were relatively small through 1955 or 1956--counts of 17 to 106 for Bear Mountain and 131 to 907 for the RAS. The Bear Mountain peak came in 1962 with 174 birds, followed by a drop below 100 except for two widely separated years. On the RAS Count, the house sparrow total jumped from 828 in 1957 and 815 in 1958 to 1,164 in 1959, 1,287 in 1960, a dip to 875 in 1961, and then up to 1,251 in 1962 and 1,293 in 1963. After a count of 1,209 in 1965, the tally declined fairly steadily: 1,172 in 1966, 1,135 in 1967, 1,185 in 1968, 985 in 1969, 786 in 1970, 534 in 1971, 612 in 1972, 523 in 1973, 539 in 1974, and 307 in 1975.

The decline in the past decade may be as much a natural condition as the earlier dip from Kuerzi's benchmark year, but there were also interesting external influences, notably the disappearance of farms from Rockland County and the rise of a suburban cat population. Most interesting of all is the possibility of meaningful competition from the house finch. As it happens, the first two house finches were registered on the 1962 RAS Christmas Count, just a year before the house sparrow's all-time peak. And house finches have increased on the RAS Count at a furious pace--to 186 in 1975. In my own South Nyack neighborhood and in the Nyack business district, house finches have shown themselves to be highly aggressive in driving house sparrows from their customary nesting places on buildings, and even from bird feeders in winter. It may be that the house sparrow has, more or less by accident, met its natural control.

BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES

BOBOLINK

Dolichonyx oryzivorous



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	early May to October, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, fairly common summer resident, breeds; May 5 to Sept. 22
1898	Chapman	rare summer resident, formerly abundant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, May 1 to Oct. 5
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident breeds; arrives May 15
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, local summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident, abundant fall transient
1940	Carr	rare summer resident in Arden Valley only; breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common breeder in "the larger meadows of Rockland," uncommon spring and abundant fall transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular rare summer resident
1976	Current status	uncommon though locally sometimes very common spring and fall migrant, casual summer visitant

As this summary indicates, the bobolink has had a checkered career. In the 1920s it seems to have been recorded regularly in our area, including Carr's breeding record for Arden; in the

1930s, it was uncommon enough to be an exciting find--my own records show totals of 33 birds for 1935 and 15 for 1936, in 172 and 139 field trips respectively. In the 1940s, we had only

one record, and only three records from 1950 to 1958. But since 1958 we have had two dozen records, both spring and fall and including nearly every year. High counts include 80 on May 21, 1972 at the Zackman Farm near Suffern (Bruce Edinger) and 62 at Piermont Pier on Aug. 24, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

Spring: Apr. 21, 1941 in Blauvelt (Jennie Fox) to June 4, 1972 at Zackman Farm (Edinger). An early spring arrival date of May 10 is more typical; we have one May 8 date and three May 10 dates.

Summer: June 16, 1929 at Arden Farm (William H. Carr); July 26, 1952 at Lake Kanawauke (Kenneth Chambers); June 13, 1972, three females lingering at Piermont Pier (Amos); Aug. 3, 1975, two birds at Rockland Lake (Donald S. Deed).

Fall: Aug. 24, 1975, the flock of 62 at Piermont Pier (Amos) and Aug. 26, 1956 at Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth) to Nov. 10, 1975, the last bird at the Pier (Amos). Peak numbers in fall are usually about Sept. 1.

1983 Addendum -- Many more reports than in the past; perhaps nesting.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK

Sturnella magna



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	well known in all parts of state; breeds, sometimes winters
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, occasional resident; breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident. uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, occasional resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, arrives Mar. 17
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident, numbers increased during migrations and appreciably decreased in winter
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant and rare summer resident; winter records in the Park
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common summer resident, a few winter
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient, one winter record
1976	Current status	rare to uncommon migrant and breeder, lately only a casual winter resident

This field bird, understandably never common in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park and the Highlands, is perhaps the single most conspicuous victim of the suburbanization of

rural Rockland. It has shown a marked decline since 1960 on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, and has been missed entirely in the last four years. Mid-May single-party

Icteridae

counts as high as 20 birds in 1959 shrank to one or two birds by 1966 and 1968 and to zero in 1971. Even the Rockland Audubon Society's county-wide "Dig Day" coverage revealed only nine meadowlarks on May 15, 1971 and six on May 13, 1972, most of these in Ramapo.

It is not surprising that the meadowlark was recorded only twice in 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: a single bird in the Queensboro area on the 1955 Count (Jan. 2, 1956) and three birds on the 1958 Count. However, the meadowlark was once a staple of

the RAS Christmas Count, and it is no longer that. Numbers always varied considerably from winter to winter. High counts have been 57 in 1950, 43 in 1956, 22 in 1957, 28 in 1959, and 41 in 1961. After that, numbers on the RAS Count dropped to 0 to 6, except for surges to 22 in 1967 and 15 in 1970. From 1972 through 1975, zeros on the RAS Count.

1983 Addendum -- Now so rare that one seen at New City by Vic Schwartz on Mar. 17, 1981 is well worth recording.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK
Sturnella neglecta



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant from the west; found singing on June 22, 1960 in the same field as an

Eastern meadowlark, on Sickeltown Road, in Orangetown (Frances H. Irving).

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD
Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Another accidental visitant, on Mar. 25, 1976, in the same area as the above. An unmistakable male was at the feeder of Mr. and Mrs. Berne Sickels, within ten feet of the window as the Sickels were describing it by telephone to Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper.

1983 Addendum -- Our second record: Jan. 13, 1981 at a feeder in the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum for an hour, an adult male in winter plumage (Mark Reynolds, John Mead).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Agelaius phoeniceus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	March to November
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds; Mar. 6 to Nov. 17
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant, common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, Mar. 16 to Nov. 20
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, uncommon in winter
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, common summer resident, casual in winter
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, nests; irregular uncommon permanent resident at Iona Island, regular abundant spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very common to abundant resident, very abundant migrant

This species has thrived and multiplied over the years. Today it is possible in a single day's field trip to see as many redwings as I counted in an

entire year back in 1935 and 1936. And the gains extend over all seasons, as demonstrated by trends in both the Christmas Counts and the

Icteridae

May "Big Day" counts. Numbers are especially high in fall, with flocks of more than 5,000 birds not uncommon and at least two records of flocks exceeding 10,000 birds. Migrant flocks are most punctual in their spring arrival, almost always within two days of Feb. 20 at our South Nyack neighborhood. But their fall massings blend imperceptibly into the wintering population.

May "Big Day" counts by a single party from 1948 through 1961 ranged from 30 to 80 birds; collective countwide counts were 579 in 1971 and 568-plus in 1972. Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts started modestly with two to five redwings in 1947 through 1950, jumped to 22 in 1951 and then to 110 in 1954 and 197 in 1955. The next new high was 306 in 1965. Counts were low, two to seven birds, for the next three years; then they rose to 56 in 1969 and 76 in 1970. After a count of ten birds in 1971, redwings hit a new peak of 312 in 1972—and then moved up to a whole new plateau altogether: 122 in 1973, 415 in 1974, and 2,023 in 1975. The species has never been comparably numerous on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count, but it has been recorded 23 times on the 28 Counts that began in 1946. The Bear Mountain highs have been 64 in 1961, 43 in 1963, 75 in 1964, 57 in 1965, 41 in 1971, 48 in 1972, and 46 in 1973.

In early spring, starting in the last week of February, flocks of up to 200 birds are seen. In fall, flocks up to 1,000 have been seen as early as Aug. 29, 1956 at dusk in the Sparkill-Tappan area (Robert F. Deed). Perhaps the largest migrant flock ever seen in this region was estimated by John C. Orth at 50,000 birds dropping into the Iona Island marsh at 5 p.m. on Nov. 5, 1954. At the Piermont marsh, Anthony F.

Amos estimated 12,000 on Oct. 24, 1975; 3,000 redwings with an almost equal number of grackles on Nov. 12, 1975; 4,000 redwings on Dec. 21, 1975, and an accurate count of 7,046 on Feb. 21, 1976.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

ORCHARD ORIOLE

Icterus spurius



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	more common than the Baltimore in the southern part of the State
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, breeds; May 3 to Sept. 17
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 2 to Aug. 6
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds; from May 5
1923	Griscom	locally common
1927	Kuerzi	locally a fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	irregular migrant, doubtful summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to rare spring transient, very rare to casual fall transient visitant; "a few pairs nest in the lowlands of Rockland County"
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring transient, no fall records
1976	Current status	rare spring migrant, casual breeder, accidental fall migrant, casual winter visitant

The record for this oriole is a mixed bag: very few modern dates prior to 1950, when I got my own first record in Rockland County; one positive and four probable instances of nesting;

only one fall record but three winter records. All this against a background of the old reports of Mearns and Brownell. Even since 1950, the bird appears one spring in one area, then disappears

Icteridae

only to pop up somewhere else in a subsequent spring. Occurrences have one thing in common: All are in the interior of Rockland County except for one May 5, 1927 record at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr), two female or immature birds on July 19 to 22, 1951 at Grassy Point (Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed), a young male on May 21, 1958 at the Sparkill Creek, Piermont (Edwin Gamble), a probable nesting in South Nyack in 1965, and our lone fall record. Favored localities in spring and summer include Congers, Orangeburg, Nanuet, Pearl River, Nauraushaun, West Nyack, New City, New Hempstead, and Rockland Lake. The highest one-day count is six at Orangeburg on May 24, 1953 (Federation of New York State Bird Clubs trip).

Spring: Apr. 30, 1960 at Nauraushaun (Morton Isler, Robert Connor) to May 24, 1953, as noted above.

Summer: Male found at Congers Lake on May 20, 1950 (Brown, Deed) sang through June; July 19-22, 1951 at Grassy Point (as noted above); June 29, 1958 (Gamble) through the summer at Town Line Road, Nanuet, last seen by Homer S. Kelsey; July 29, 1960, singing males at South Mountain Road, New City (Molly Price) and at

West Nyack (Frances H. Irving); May 14, 1963 and through the summer, a pair nesting at New Hempstead (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); a singing male throughout June and early July, 1965, at the same point in South Nyack (the Deeds, Alma Polhemus, Donald S. Deed).

Fall: Sept. 4, 1924 at Stony Point (Jennie Fox).

Winter: Jan. 31 to at least Feb. 25, 1956, a male in full breeding plumage visiting the suet at a Pearl River feeding station (Dr. Hopper, Mrs. Edward Backus, Mrs. Richard D. Weindling); Dec. 18, 1957, a male in battered winter plumage at the Mabie home in Tappan, seen through Dec. 31 (Dr. Hopper); Jan. 25, 1973, a female or immature at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Paulson near Pearl River, photographed in color movies by Mrs. Emily Paulson and identification confirmed by Dr. Hopper.

1983 Addendum -- A virtual explosion of this species from 1979 to date; in Queensboro Lake, South Nyack, Grassy Point, Tuxedo, Lake Sebago, Mine Road, Iona Island, Congers, Rockland Lake, West Haverstraw, Piermont, Upper Nyack, etc. On June 16, 1982 a pair with three or four grown young, near the Stony Point Ski Area (Deed).

BALTIMORE [NORTHERN] ORIOLE

Icterus galbula



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, May 2 to Sept. 22
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 2 to Sept. 1
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, May 4 to Sept. 30
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, a few winter records
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, one winter record
1976	Current status	common migrant and breeder, rare to very rare winter visitant

The Baltimore oriole, widely distributed, is highly punctual in its spring arrival, usually within two days of Apr. 27. A one-day count in mid-May migration or in the early June nesting season generally runs slightly more than 20 birds. A dozen may be seen at a single point during the

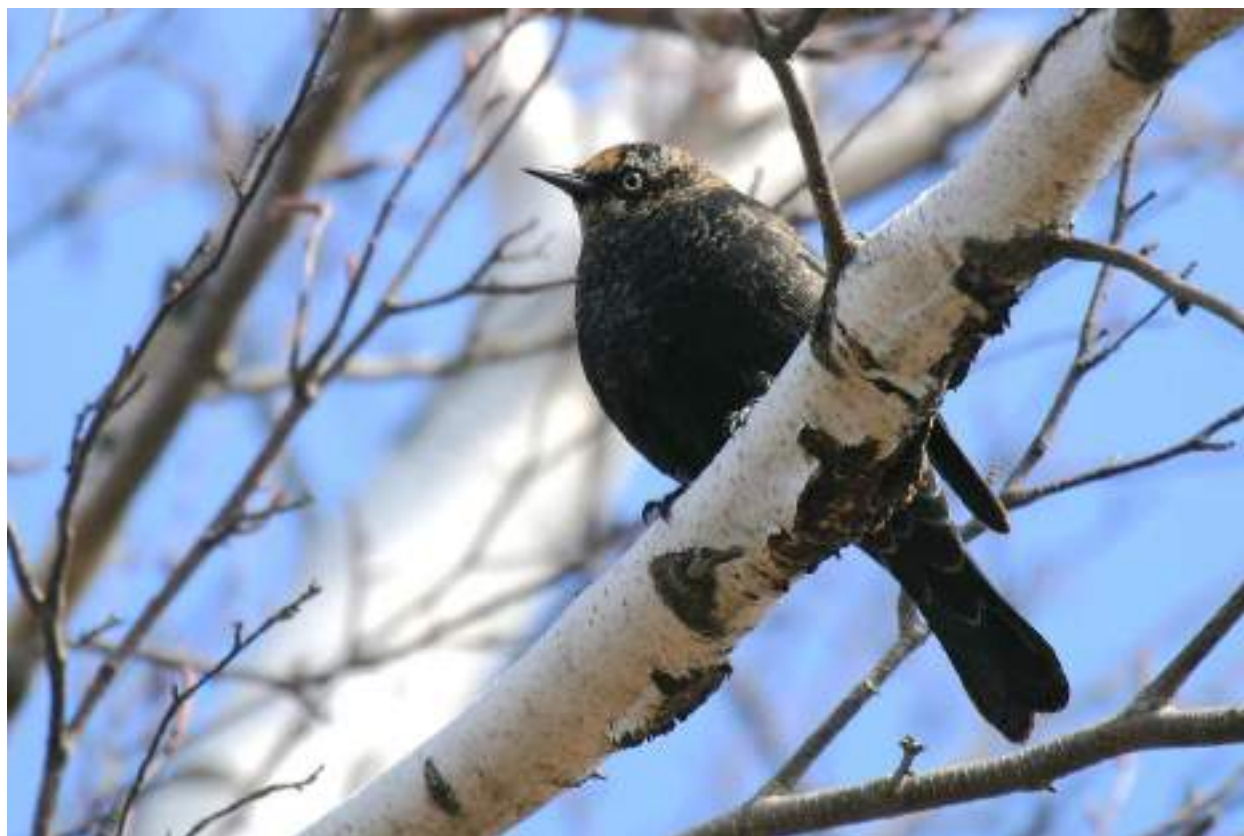
fall migration, which seems to peak around the end of August even though birds regularly linger into early November. In the past 20 years we have had no fewer than ten convincing winter records.

Icteridae

Dates of migration and summer residence range from Apr. 25, 1975 at Palisades (Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wilfred) to Nov. 30, 1957 at Grand View (Frances H. Irving). Winter records include Dec. 1, 1957 to Feb. 17, 1958 at Highland Falls (Edward D. Treacy); Jan. 1, 1960; Dec. 3-10,

1960; a pair daily throughout December, 1964 (Edwin Gamble); Dec. 27, 1964; Jan. 3 and 10, 1965, a pair in Upper Nyack; Jan. 20 to Feb. 3, 1967 at Nanuet; Feb. 19, 1967; Mar. 30, 1969; Dec. 11-30, 1972 at Nanuet; Jan. 19, 1975 and the rest of the month, at Haverstraw.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD
Euphagus carolinus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to November, sometimes January
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, Mar. 11 to May and September to December
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 26 to May 8, Sept. 28 to Nov. 27
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant, occasional winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, fairly frequent in winter
1940	Carr	transient visitor
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to locally common transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, irregular uncommon winter visitant
1976	Current status	rare to uncommon spring migrant, fairly common to very common fall migrant, rare to occasionally common winter visitant

A wide range of frequency and numerical rating is necessary to reflect the erratic nature of this species. For example, it has appeared on ten of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with 53 birds in 1974 and three in 1975

but only one bird in the previous 12 years. The high count from 1947 through 1961 was 25 birds in 1953. The rusty has also appeared on eight of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, but not

since 1965; the high counts were 13 in 1956 and 10 in 1961.

Spring: Mar. 8, 1958, two at Tappan (Robert F. Deed, Martha Niss) to May 15, 1948 at Blauvelt (Eugene R. Brown, Deed). The peak in spring is Mar. 15 to Apr. 15.

Fall: Sept. 18, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) to the third week in November. High counts in fall include several hundred on Little Tor on Oct. 21, 1973 (Mr. and Mrs. Deed) and several hundred at South Spring Valley on Oct. 25, 1973 (Malcolm Gardner).

Winter: Apart from the Christmas Counts, records include Jan. 2, 1961 and the rest of the winter, three to six birds near Suffern (Mr. and Mrs. John LeMaire); Jan. 2-6, 1964 at Bear Mountain; Feb. 5, 1964, a small flock at the LeMaires' home; Feb. 20, 1964, seven at the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum; Jan. 13, 1970, a female or immature in South Nyack (Donald S. Deed); Jan. 14, 1973, three at the Sparkill Creek, Piermont (Anthony F. Amos); Dec. 13, 1975, two at the same area (Amos).

COMMON GRACKLE
Quiscalus quiscula



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant, Feb. 29 to Mar. 12, and November
1898	Chapman	Purple grackle--common local summer resident, abundant transient visitant. Bronzed grackle--fairly common fall transient
1898	Fisher	Purple--fairly common summer resident, Feb. 15 to Nov. 8 Bronzed--fairly common transient, April and November
1908	Brownell	summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	Purple--common summer resident. Bronzed--regular transient visitant; most fall and winter flocks are this species
1927	Kuerzi	Purple--common summer resident Bronzed--probably a regular transient, a few in winter
1940	Carr	Purple--uncommon summer resident, breeds Bronzed--common transient, mainly in Hudson Valley
1942	Cruickshank	common to very common local summer resident, abundant transient visitant, very scarce in winter
1960	Orth	regular abundant spring and fall transient, regular common summer resident
1976	Current status	very common to abundant spring migrant, common breeder, very abundant fall migrant, uncommon to very common winter visitant though rare in the Highlands

It is safe to say that no other bird has taken such a beating from the taxonomists as the grackle has (or the grackles have). Over the generations the pendulum has swung from one or two species to as many as four subspecies making up one species, and now--as of the 1973 A. O. U. Checklist--to a single species, by courtesy of the same group of museum types who cannot tell a European teal from a green-winged teal (yet who still will not go so far as to combine all the puddle ducks into a single species although the mallard does get around, interbreeding with the pintail, baldpate, black duck, and others). Differentiations among grackles--whether species, subspecies, or races--must be based in the field on iridescent colors that run true in life but that, like similar colors in fish, vanish quickly in death. One suspects that because museum experts working with skins cannot see grackles as they appear in the field in good light, they quite seriously cannot tell one from another.

Allan Cruickshank, surely one of the top three field observers in modern times, writes favorably in "Birds Around New York City" of Dr. Frank M. Chapman's articles in "The Auk" (1935, 1936, 1940) that point out that "there are four distinct grackles in the east": Florida (*Q. q. quiscula*), Stone's (*Q. q. stonei*), Ridgway's (*Q. q. ridgwayi*), and Bronzed (*Q. q. aeneus*). At some point along the way, the trinomial for the last of these was changed to *versicolor*. But Chapman put his finger on constant characteristics of plumage, visible in good light, that distinguish the three subspecies which occur in the Northeast. Based on this breakdown, the local summer population, in my own five-year study that counted only birds seen in perfect light, consists wholly of *stonei* and *ridgwayi*. And, curiously enough, these subspecies or races occupied separate areas and showed different nesting habits year after year. All birds nesting in the tall hemlocks and pines of my South Nyack neighborhood were *stonei*; all summer birds a few miles away at Congers and Rockland Lakes--nesting in deciduous trees and high shrubs and in coniferous hedges--were *ridgwayi*. In the course of this concentration on grackles, I only once found *aeneus* (or *versicolor*) birds in summer: in South Nyack on dates in June, 1954 but not thereafter. In winter and on migrations,

especially in the fall, *aeneus* (or *versicolor*) overwhelmingly predominated.

If there is a weak point in study of plumages in the field, it is the fact that "all birds" must be construed as "all birds that were identifiable." Even in a seemingly homogeneous flock, not all birds will pose properly in good light to be recognized confidently. Yet in my spring and summer studies, I felt that the unidentified birds were more likely to be the duller females than intergrades in which the distinctions noted by Dr. Chapman were blurred. Not more than 2% to 5% of any flock I studied in the five years seemed potential intergrades. Year after year, a localized group of grackles appeared to be unchanged, though I suppose it is possible that South Nyack birds might interbreed with Rockland Lake birds; the flocks remained apparently pure. And the fall and winter birds distinguished themselves readily by being almost entirely lacking in green or purple iridescence on necks and backs.

John Bull, an experienced field observer as well as museum ornithologist, notes in "Birds of the New York Area" that male purple and bronzed grackles can be distinguished in the field under favorable circumstances.

In the old two-species breakdown, the purple grackle appeared to be a common summer resident and the bronzed grackle a common and sometimes abundant migrant and an uncommon to rare winter resident--as of 1954. Since 1954 grackles have increased enormously in numbers. And it seems likely from the notes of Chapman, Fisher, Griscom, and Kuerzi that this increase has been under way for a long time. Nowadays a winter field trip may find anywhere from half a dozen to several hundred grackles; a February or March trip in the Piermont area may find 10,000; a mid-May trip, about 50 to 75, and a fall trip almost anywhere in Rockland County proper, 10,000 to 25,000. The spring arrival dates for our summer residents, or perhaps migrants north bound, are remarkably consistent: Feb. 22 to 28 in my South Nyack neighborhood and also at Bear Mountain.

Some seasonal notes:

Spring: a maximum of 14,000 at the Piermont marsh on Feb. 17, 1976 (Anthony F. Amos); 1,000 on Mar. 20, 1960 at the site of the present Lake Tappan (Robert F. Deed); numbers up to 50 on May "Big Day" single-party counts in 1948 through 1961.

Fall: A maximum of 27,000 at the Piermont marsh on Oct. 24, 1975 (Amos); 2,500 at the same place on Nov. 12, 1975 (Amos); 8,000 at West Nyack on Oct. 27, 1956 (Frances H. Irving). Several uncounted "streams of thousands at a time for half an hour" have been reported around Nov. 1.

Winter: In six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts from 1934 through 1941, the "bronzed"

grackle was detected only once, two birds in 1937. The grackle has appeared on 22 of the 29 Audubon Society Christmas Counts, in widely varying numbers: one in 1949, two in 1953, 40 in 1954, 28 in 1955, one in 1957, 19 in 1959, 10 in 1960, 394 in 1961, one each in 1962 and 1963, five in 1964, 275 in 1965, 22 in 1966, 132 in 1967, five in 1968, seven in 1969, three in 1970, 62 in 1971, seven in 1972, three in 1973, 117 in 1974, and 163 in 1975. From 1946 through 1965, the grackle never appeared on the Bear Mountain Count. Then one was found on the 1966 Count (Jan. 2, 1967), two on the 1971 Count (Jan. 2, 1972), and two on the 1973 Count. Obviously, wintering grackles are very rare in the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park and adjacent Highlands.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD

Molothrus ater



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	April to October
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, Mar. 30 to August
1898	Chapman	common summer resident, rare winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Mar. 22 to Nov. 11
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, Mar. 29 to Nov. 15
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, rare in mid-winter
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common suumer resident, common to abundant transient visitant, rare winter resident
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident, regular abundant spring and fall transient, several winter records
1976	Current status	common breeder and spring migrant, abudant fall migrant, fairly common to abundant winter visitant

This unpopular parasitic bird has greatly increased, especially in the last 10 years, as demonstrated by soaring numbers on local

Christmas Counts. It was not a very common bird 40 years ago; I had a total of 48 cowbirds in 172 trips afield in 1935, only 28 in 139 trips in

Icteridae

1936. On May "Big Day" counts in the 1940s and 1950s, I had up to 25 birds per day, and the countywide "Big Day" counts have been in three figures. The cowbird has appeared on 24 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with the first peak of 49 birds on the eighth Count, in 1954; the next peaks of 112 in 1960 and 189 in 1961, an all-time peak of 431 in 1968, and counts of 11 and 86 in the two most

recent years, 1974 and 1975. The cowbird has also appeared on 12 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with peaks of 70 in 1959, 52 in 1963, 32 in 1964, and 150 in 1973. In the fall of 1975, Anthony F. Amos had an October maximum of 100 birds in the Piermont-Palisades area on Oct. 24 and a November maximum of 800 birds on Nov. 22.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

WESTERN TANAGER
Piranga ludoviciana



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant, with only one old records
a young male shot at Fort Montgomery by Edgar

A. Mearns on Dec. 21, 1881, also attributed to
neighboring Highland Falls.

SCARLET TANAGER

Firanga olivacea



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to September, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 3 to Oct. 8
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 4 to Oct. 9
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident from May 10
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, common migrant

This familiar woodland bird has arrived as early as Apr. 28, 1938 at Beechy Bottom (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) and Apr. 28, 1956 at West Nyack (Richard D. Weindling), but May 5 to 8 is more typical. In fall migration, Mr. and

Mrs. Robert F. Deed saw one flock of nearly 50 in South Nyack on Oct. 6, 1959. Our latest fall date is Oct. 16, in both 1954 and 1959 (both Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

SUMMER TANAGER

Piranga rubra



Edgar A. Mearns wrote "I took a female in perfect plumage at Highland Falls, N. Y., on May 12, 1883." But we have had only three records in modern times for this southern bird, and two of those appeared to be a direct result of storms.

On Apr. 5, 1952, Maryland and the District of Columbia were swept by freakish 75-mph gales, and on Apr. 6 Mr. and Mrs. Ned Barron found an immature male in noticeably battered plumage

on Rockleigh Road, Palisades. The bird was seen at the same place on Apr. 7 and 10 and finally, by Mrs. Barron, on Apr. 11.

On Sept. 5, 1954, after an Aug. 31 hurricane, Frances H. Irving saw a female in good plumage at West Nyack. On Mar. 17, 1957, Mrs. Jean Kolars, familiar with the species down south, saw a female or immature at her window feeder on the opposite side of West Nyack.

NORTHERN CARDINAL

Cardinalis cardinalis



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer visitant in the Atlantic district; breeds?
1878-82	Mearns	once, May 17, 1876
1898	Chapman	fairly common local resident
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	uncommon resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	nearly extirpated
1927	Kuerzi	formerly bred, now probably only an occasional visitor
1940	Carr	irregular visitor, Jones Point, Apr. 16, 1938; also May and September records
1942	Cruickshank	permanent resident, "breeds regularly though sparsely in southern Rockland County"
1960	Orth	regular fairly common permanent resident
1976	Current status	fairly common to common resident

The cardinal has the distinction in my own mind of being the first bird I was ever conscious of; sometime in 1919 I was led by the hand across a road on the outskirts of South Nyack to see a male "redbird" in the garden of a neighbor. I did not see my next cardinal until 1928, despite a

couple of years of vigorous birding, and in 1930 I knew of only one pair in South Nyack.

Like other invaders from the south, the cardinal at first moved only along the Hudson River in its northward drive and, as Carr noted in 1940, only

as far as Jones Point, where the Highlands begin. In fact, that still marked the effective northern limit of penetration as late as 1948. However, numbers boomed in the 1950s, overrunning the Highlands and the entire interior of Rockland County. Both Christmas Counts in the region indicate that the population peaked 12 to 15 years ago and has been shrinking since. The cardinal is a bird apparently not disturbed by proximity to man, but perhaps, as a bird nesting on or near the ground, it is vulnerable to the cats that man has brought to suburbia. In my own South Nyack neighborhood, too, its decline has coincided with the rise in number of mockingbirds. Around 1950 I would count at least three pairs of cardinals on one daily walk of eight blocks on my way to work; today I know of only one pair in the same area.

The best index to cardinal population undoubtedly is the Christmas Counts. When the May "Big Day" counts are made, the birds are already somewhat retiring and scattered for nesting, whereas in winter they are conspicuous, especially at feeders. On Jan. 17, 1958, for example, Mrs. Adolph Meyer in New City had 17 cardinals simultaneously at her feeder. In contrast, single-party "Big Day" counts never exceeded that number, and often were less, even though they were made in a dawn-to-dusk tour covering the whole county.

On the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont-Alpine area from 1934 through 1941, the cardinal was recorded only twice: two birds in 1935 and one in 1936. It has been listed on all 29 Rockland County Audubon Society Christmas Counts, starting in 1947. In 1948, the first fully manned RAS Count, 43 cardinals were tallied; in 1950 and 1951, 73 each year; 80 in 1953, 96 in 1955, and 119 in 1956. A new high of 169 cardinals was set in 1957, and an all-time high of 341 in 1960. This peak was nearly matched by 339 in 1962 but through the rest of the 1960s the count fluctuated in the 200-plus level. It was still a fairly healthy 196 in 1970. Since then, however, it has run 99-157-145-107-165.

In Bear Mountain-Harriman Park, the first significant date for a cardinal in the Park interior was July 3, 1952, when Kenneth Chambers saw a bird at Lake Kanawauke. The species has been recorded on 25 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (1946 through 1973); it was missed in 1946, 1948, and 1949. In the early counts, all birds were along the Hudson. Not until 1956 did the Count total reach 20 birds. The next highs were 23 in 1959, 31 in 1960, 42 in 1961, 37 in 1962, 55 in 1963, and 53 in 1964. By the 1966 Count (held on Jan. 2, 1967), the downturn had brought the total to only 37 cardinals, and the count dipped to 17 in 1971, ten in 1972, and five in 1973, the most recent Bear Mountain Count.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

Pheucticus ludovicianus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, May 4 to Sept. 21; breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, May 3 to Oct. 1
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, arrives May 9
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common summer resident, fluctuating
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder

Spring and early summer numbers for the rose-breasted grosbeak are similar to those of the scarlet tanager and somewhat below those of the Baltimore oriole. Our dates range from Apr. 23, 1952 (Eugene R. Brown) to Oct. 13, 1957 (Joseph Morlan), but a range from Apr. 28-May 1 to about Oct. 6 is more characteristic. Single-party May "Big Day" tallies go as high as 17

birds, but the number is below ten in about half the years.

1983 Addendum -- An astonishing winter record of a torpid female near the old Piermont Erie station on the RAS Christmas Count of Dec. 20, 1981 (Peter Derven party).

Cardinalidae

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK
Pheucticus malanocephalus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant from the west, found on Apr. 23, 1955 by Helene Stansbury at a feeder in Palisades, where residents said it had been appearing for a week. The bird, in nearly mature male plumage, was seen daily through Apr. 26 and finally on Apr. 30 by a Rockland Audubon

Society field trip that was blessed with good views in morning sunshine.

1983 Addendum -- Wintered at Cornwall to Mar. 3, 1979 (Benton Seguin). Second record for the area.

BLUE GROSBEAK

Passerina [Guiraca] caerulea



Adult male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual visitant from the south, with two records of three birds: May 3, 1956, two separate birds that appeared at the homes of two of our most active young birders, both in Grand View and a few hundred feet apart--a male at Thomas Dow's home and an immature male at David O. Hill's home; on May 9, 1956

the immature male was singing (Hill, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Eugene R. Brown); on May 23, 1970, a male at Surebridge Swamp, Harriman Park (Rockland Audubon Society field trip).

INDIGO BUNTING

Passerina cyanea



Adult male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to September, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common summer resident, May 4 to Sept. 2
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, May 4 to Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, May 8 to October
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds; April to October
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder

In 1935-36, this bird was at least as abundant as the scarlet tanager; nowadays it is about half as numerous. In most springs it is among the latest migrants to arrive, yet we have several late April dates and one almost incredible appearance of a pair at a West Nyack feeder on Apr. 17, 1961

(Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Weindling). Otherwise, our dates for the indigo bunting range from Apr. 25, 1927 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) and Apr. 25, 1949 in Grand View (Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Collins) to Oct. 2, 1939 at Queensboro Lake (Carr).

DICKCISSEL

Spiza americana



Adult male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

From January, 1952 to January, 1970 we had 14 separate reports of this species--but none before or since! Griscom in 1923 wrote "A common summer resident in parts of our territory and elsewhere on the Atlantic Coast eighty years ago, the disappearance westward of this species is one of the ornithological mysteries. It has long since become extinct in our area." And the eruption of dickcissels in our recent 18-year span is another mystery, especially when numbers reached five birds at a time. Bull's "Birds of New York State" rates the species as a rare to uncommon but regular fall migrant on the coast but still rarer in spring and "at any time " inland.

Three of our 14 records are in spring: Mar. 1-18, 1960, five birds at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving); Mar. 21, 1956, two days after a heavy

snowfall, three birds at West Nyack (Irving); May 9, 1963, a bird in fine plumage at Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper's home in Upper Nyack all day long.

Five of our records are in fall: Oct. 4, 1960 at New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Oct. 19, 1952 at Dr. Hopper's feeder, remaining until Apr. 17, 1953 and with two birds at times in November; Oct. 28 to Nov. 6, 1959 at Dr. Hopper's home; Nov. 19, 1957 at New City (Ruth Steffens); Nov. 20, 1959, three birds at West Nyack (Irving).

The winter dates are: Dec. 26, 1969 and well into January, 1970 at an Upper Nyack feeder (Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mole); Dec. 28, 1963 and through at least February, 1964, four birds at the Steffens' feeder in New City; Jan. 2, 1962, a singing male at Germonds (Edwin Gamble); Jan.

6, 1952 to Apr. 9, 1952 at Palisades (Jennie Fox); Jan. 7, 1969, one bird, and Jan. 8, 1969, two birds, at Dr. Hopper's feeder; Jan. 20, 1954 to Feb. 15, 1954, one at Dr. Hopper's feeder.

In sum, our dates range from Oct. 4, 1960 to May 9, 1963.



Adult female, breeding

Photo Credit: Martha Deed

EVENING GROSBEAK

Coccothraustes vespertinus [*Hesperiphona vespertina*]



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	no mention
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	winter visitant in 1890
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	irregular winter visitant, more frequent than the pine grosbeak
1927	Kuerzi	irregular winter visitant
1940	Carr	rare and irregular winter visitor, 1926, 1928, 1933, 1935, 1938; November, January, and February records
1942	Cruickshank	rare and irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	occasional fairly common winter visitant
1976	Current status	fairly common to very common migrant and winter visitant, more numerous in fall and winter than in spring; casual summer visitant

Until 1950, the only records of this species for the entire region were a dozen or less from Bear Mountain, ranging from Jan. 5, 1926 (William H. Carr) to Mar. 5, 1947 (John C. Orth). And I had

been birding for nearly 25 years before I saw my first evening grosbeak, in a small flock in West Nyack on the unpromising date of May 12, 1950. The change since 1950 has been astonishing.

Fringillidae

Although I soon stopped keeping a record of each individual sighting, even the summarized notes cover more than seven sides of 3 by 5 index cards, typed single-spaced.

Dates range from Sept. 11, 1960 at Fort Montgomery (Patricia Orth) to May 17, 1958 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

Two summer records underscore the erratic occurrence of the evening grosbeak: July 2, 1962, a pair at a feeder near Suffern (Mrs. A. P. Ziesing) and Aug. 14, 1961, a flock of about 25 at Valley Cottage (Jamie King). There was some speculation that the Suffern pair might represent an attempted nesting--and a yielding to the temptation presented by a feederful of sunflower seeds primarily intended for goldfinches.

The evening grosbeak has appeared 15 times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, all since 1954; 14 times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts; at least twice on May "Big Day" lists. Yet even the highest figures on the Christmas Counts--549 on the 1969 RAS Count and 83 on the 1969 Bear Mountain Count--do not fully reflect the bird's abundance in good flight winters. In 1957-58, one such winter, Frances H. Irving made a telephone survey, aided by newspaper publicity, and gleaned reports of 651 birds on Feb. 6, 1958, compared with 220 on Dec. 18, 1957. As it happens, too, the 1969 RAS Christmas Count peak of 549 birds was far out of line with the average; the next highest RAS Count was 125 in 1959, followed by 66 in 1963.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of the growth in occurrences of this species is the consistency of at least some records every year since 1954:

1954-55 Winter. Many reports but rather small numbers, from Oct. 24, two birds on the hill behind Grand View (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to Apr. 25, a flock of 25 birds at Nanuet (Frances H. Irving, Mrs. Walter Bollman).

1955- 56. From Nov. 13 at the Bear Mountain Trailside Museum (Peter Smith, John H. Mead) to Apr. 29, a singing male (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

1956-57. This may have been the one exception to the rule of "some records every year since 1954." A few reports by non- birders, but no substantiated records.

1957-58. Probably the biggest winter of all for this species, as reflected in Mrs. Irving's survey mentioned above. A flock was reported in the Highland Falls area as early as Oct. 24 (Edward D. Treacy), and a lone female lingered at New City until May 17, our latest spring date ever, as noted above.

1958-59. A winter of modest numbers, with dates from Nov. 23 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) to Feb. 28 (RAS field trip). The largest single flock was 36 at Stony Point on Feb. 18 (Mr. and Mrs. Irving G. Kennedy).

1959-60. Another big year, starting with a dozen birds at Bear Mountain on Oct. 30 (John Kenney) and continuing to May 11 at New City (Mrs. Adolph Meyer). Mrs. Meyer found it incongruous that on May 5 an evening grosbeak was sharing the bird bath with a rose-breasted grosbeak.

1960-61. A good but not sensational winter, starting with Pat Orth's flock of ten at Fort Montgomery on Sept. 11, our earliest fall date ever, and extending to May 10, a bird near Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth). Flocks did not exceed 25 or so.

1961-62. Again modest numbers, from Oct. 10, a half-dozen birds at Rockland Lake Landing (the Deeds) to May 15.

1962-63. A better than average winter, with several flocks of 35 to 50 birds and more reports than usual, from Sept. 22 at Cornwall (Mr. and Mrs. John Dye) to Apr. 2 at New City (Mrs. Levy).

1963-64. A strong fall migration, from 20 birds at Pomona on Oct. 16 (Homer S. Kelsey), but only four or five birds by January.

1964-65. A weak winter, with only two reports, in January and March.

1965-66. Again a strong start, with flocks of 35 or so from Oct. 20 (Edwin Gamble) but few birds after the turn of the year.

1966-67. Only two or three birds reported all winter.

1967-68. One flock of nine at Valley Cottage on Nov. 30 (Mrs. Thomas R. Milligan) and very few other reports all winter.

1968-69. A better winter than the past few, with 15 birds at the Deeds' feeder in South Nyack on Dec. 8 and birds found as late as May 4, two birds in Blauvelt (James Demes).

1969-70. A banner year, with the all-time high count of 549 on the RAS Christmas Count, in which the evening grosbeak ranked fourth in abundance, behind only starling, house sparrow and herring gull. The season's first bird was Nov. 8 (RAS field trip); the last was on May 3, seven birds on the hill behind Grand View (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

1970-71. A moderately good winter, with only 23 birds on the RAS Christmas Count on Dec. 27 but quite a few reports of flocks of half a dozen birds later in the winter.

1971-72. A big winter, with birds unusually widely distributed but no especially large flocks. Dates ranged from Oct. 30, eight birds at Little Tor (the Deeds) to May 13, one bird in Harriman Park (Eugene R. Brown and others).

1972-73. Unusual in being devoid of reports until spring, then an Apr. 21 report and a season-ending May 12 report of 15 birds near Suffern (Bruce Edinger).

1973-74. Strangely, just the reverse of the preceding winter season, with a report of eight birds on Oct. 6 by the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch and no reports at all after Jan. 1.

1974-75. Not a winter for wide distribution, but the species was recorded on the Dec. 28 RAS Christmas Count and a flock of about 40 visited the Deeds' South Nyack home on Jan. 16.

1975-76. Not a big winter, though birds made an early appearance in the Piermont-Palisades area on Oct. 20 (Anthony F. Amos), and Amos made a maximum day's count of 105 on Oct. 22. In November, Amos saw grosbeaks on seven days, with a high of ten birds on Nov. 9; but he had no birds in December or January, and only one in February, on the 16th.

PURPLE FINCH

Carpodacus purpureus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	Atlantic district in May, November, January
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident and winter visitant, breeds
1898	Chapman	rare summer resident, common transient visitant, uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	rare resident, common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	uncommon resident, common transient visitant; breeds
1923	Griscom	irregular spring and abundant fall transient
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, uncommon in winter
1940	Carr	transient, rarely winters
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring and common fall transient visitant, rare to locally common winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, irregular uncommon winter visitant, numerous records since 1953 in June, July, and August
1976	Current status	uncommon breeder, common migrant, fairly common winter visitant

Although this bird was first believed to be nesting in the area, if at all, only in the Canadian Zone high interior of Harriman Park or possibly, as Orth suggests, in the Bear Mountain area,

where young were seen being fed in the first week of July, 1959 and during June, 1960. However, most of our records of presumed and actual breeding have come from the lower-lying

Fringillidae

portions of Rockland County, specifically Nyack, South Nyack, West Nyack, Blauvelt, and Tallman Mountain, Piermont. And except for two June dates in Nyack in 1936 and two June dates at Tallman Mountain in 1952, all summer records have come since 1953, as Orth noted at Bear Mountain.

Singing males in summer were reported in 1955, 1957, and 1958, and on July 2, 1958 at West Nyack an adult was feeding a young bird (Frances H. Irving). However, our best breeding records came in two years: 1956 and 1966. In 1956 a pair spent the summer at Blauvelt, appearing about Labor Day with two young birds that were still clumsy in flight (Willis McCraw); another pair spent most of the summer at New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens), and still another pair at West Nyack brought young to a feeder in late summer (Mr. and Mrs. Richard D. Weindling). In 1966 Mr. and Mrs. McCarrell Leiper of Blauvelt on June 18 discovered a pair nesting in a discarded Christmas wreath at their home: the nest contained three newly hatched young, and all three were raised successfully.

On migration, the peak numbers center around May 1 and Oct. 15, with substantially more birds in fall (up to 40 or 50). The bird is quite regular in winter; it has appeared on all but one of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, averaging about 75 birds a year but with a peak of 158 in 1949. It has appeared on 12 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, averaging about eight birds and with a peak of 19 in 1968. Frequency and number have not changed much since the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont-Alpine area from 1934

through 1941; those counts had one purple finch in 1936, three each in 1935 and 1937, and 12 birds in 1941.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

HOUSE FINCH

Carpodacus mexicanus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

According to John Bull in "Birds of New York State," the first illegally possessed cage birds were released in western Long Island in 1942. For many years the area around Hewlett and Lawrence, L. I., was the place to see these birds living in the wild. As they do on their native West Coast, house finches favor villages and suburbs; in Rockland County since the early 1960s, they have established themselves firmly in the same niche as the house sparrow. Today they must be accounted common to very common residents of inhabited areas, though still rare to uncommon in the Highlands.

Rockland County's first recorded house finch arrived on Nov. 13, 1955 in New City, where Mrs. John M. Price was able to compare it directly with a purple finch on the same feeder. In 1960 a female house finch turned up in New City (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and a pair

in South Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Cooke). From Nov. 5, 1962 to May 10, 1963, two pairs were in Upper Nyack (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) and four birds were in South Nyack on Mar. 16, 1963 (Alma Polhemus); a pair spent the summer of 1963 in South Nyack (Carl Boll). In the fall of 1963, Dr. Hopper had as many as eight birds at once at her home, and finches had clearly established residence in the Nyacks by the summer of 1964. At present there is a singing male to virtually every block throughout the Nyacks, and people in other villages report much the same concentration. Ivy on buildings, even in the middle of business districts, seems to be a favored environment for nests.

The Rockland Audubon Society's Christmas Count affords an interesting measurement of the growth in numbers of this basically sedentary species. The first entry is two birds in 1962,

followed by four each in 1963 and 1964, eight in 1965, seven in 1966, 81 in 1967, 74 in 1968, 45 in 1969, 47 in 1970, 92 in 1971, 86 in 1972, 79 in 1973, 139 in 1974, and 186 in 1975. The house finch has outnumbered the purple finch in every RAS Christmas Count since 1963; even in 1964, with only four house finches, there were only two purple finches. However, the house finch was never recorded on any of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts through 1973.



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

PINE GROSBEAK

Pinicola enucleator



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	visits the Atlantic district sparingly
1878-82	Mearns	irregtuar winter visitant, abundant at times; Nov. 22 to Dec. 11
1898	Chapman	irregular winter visitant
1898	Fisher	irregular winter visitant
1908	Brownell	rare winter visitan
1923	Griscom	very rare and irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	rare and irregular winter visitant
1940	Carr	rare winter visitor, records for 1929, 1930, 1935
1942	Cruickshank	rare and irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	occasional fairly common winter visitant
1976	Current status	rare to occasionally abundant winter visitant

Prior to the fall of 1951, we had only Carr's few Bear Mountain Park records, another record for the Park on Mar. 8, 1947 near Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth, Harold Hahn), and two records by Thomas P. Gilman for Palisades: Mar. 15, 1925 and Jan. 17, 1930. Then all at once we had

several records: Nov. 9, 1951, eight birds on top of Bear Mountain (John Bull) and three birds at West Nyack on the same date (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); birds seen often through the winter and early spring at Palisades to Apr. 3, 1952 (Betty Barron). An even bigger winter for these

Fringillidae

grosbeaks was 1954-55, starting with a small flock near Bear Mountain on Nov. 16, 1954 (Katherine D. Dienemann) and ending with a large flock at Lake Sebago on Mar. 18, 1955 (Park Ranger "Muz" Jones). The fall of 1955 also brought pine grosbeaks, and in 1957 the RAS Christmas Count on Dec. 28 tallied 27 birds. The next flight year was 1961, with both a few birds in January and a large number in the fall, including 53 on the RAS Christmas Count of Dec. 30, a flock of 50 near Suffern feeding with robins on dropped apples in an orchard in January, 1962, and the last birds of the season on Mar. 28, 1962 (Orth).

The winter of 1968-69 is our biggest on record for this species. On Dec. 22, 1968, the pine

grosbeak was by far the most abundant bird on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count--328 individuals. Six days later the RAS Christmas Count tallied only 11 birds. But on Jan. 25, 1969, Eugene R. Brown counted 20 at Pine Swamp in Harriman Park and Bernd Gravenstein had a count of 15 at Lake Kanawauke. There were also several other reports of smaller flocks in Rockland County.

More recently, a flock varying from 12 to 18 birds remained at Long Mountain Circle in Bear Mountain Park from Jan. 13, 1973 (Dennis Murphy) to Jan. 21 (Brown).

Extreme dates are Oct. 22, 1962 (Brown) to Apr. 3, 1952 (Barron).

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH

Carduelis carduelis

This unmistakable finch, introduced at Hoboken, N. J., in 1878 (Griscom, 1923), was an accidental visitant to Rockland County many years after it had apparently been extirpated from its last known habitat in western Long

Island. From Mar. 30 to Apr. 4, 1968, a single bird frequented a feeder in New City Park in the company of common goldfinches (Ruth Steffens). Where it had come from and where it went after that is anybody's guess.

COMMON REDPOLL

Carduelis [Acanthis] flammea



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter visitant, abundant at times
1898	Chapman	irregular winter visitant
1898	Fisher	irregular winter visitant, Nov. 25 to Mar. 25
1908	Brownell	occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	irregular winter visitant, occasionally abundant
1940	Carr	irregular winter visitor, recent records in 1936, 1938
1942	Cruickshank	irregular winter visitant, usually very rare, occasionally common, and periodically abundant
1960	Orth	occasional very common winter visitant
1976	Current status	recorded in only two years since 1970, yet generally ranging from uncommon to very abundant as a winter visitant; highly erratic

Like several other northern finches, this bird was extremely rare in our area until the mid-1950s. My records show none for 1935, one or two flocks totaling 68 birds in 1936. Through 1953,

only half a dozen records were known, most of them from the Bear Mountain Park, where flocks occasionally appeared in the birch groves near Queensboro Lake. On Mar. 22, 1953, a

Fringillidae

Rockland Audubon Society field trip found a flock of 15 to 20 birds near New City--one of the few records up to that time for the Rockland County lowlands, and also the latest spring date until then.

Now our dates range from Oct. 10, 1957 at Pearl River (Emily Paulson) to May 10, 1960 at New City (Mrs. Adolph Meyer), and maximum numbers range up to 7,000 to 10,000 birds in a single flock in early 1960--one of the three times I have found myself disoriented and a bit frightened by a swirling abundance of birds, the others being the gannets on St. Bonaventure Island in the Gaspé and the blackbirds swarming to roost at dusk on Kent Island, Md.

The spring of 1956 brought the first real irruption of redpolls. From Mar. 1 to Apr. 1, John C. Orth found them common in the Bear Mountain area, with flocks well over 100. The 1957-58 winter season was another big year for redpolls, though the largest reported flock was 50 at Hook Mountain, Upper Nyack, on Mar. 23, 1958 (Eugene R. Brown). Small flocks were reported again in 1958-59.

The great flight came in 1959-60, starting with the species' first appearance on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas of Count of Dec. 26, 1959 (195 birds) and on the Bear Mountain

Christmas Count of Jan. 2, 1960 (29 birds). On Feb. 7, 1960, Craig Campbell discovered a flock first estimated at more than 5,000 at Pomona, in two large weedy fields separated by a highway. This flock remained through February. It was seen by many observers and at one time was estimated at possibly 10,000 birds--a difficult estimate with so restless a mass and with so many birds always hidden among the tall weeds but an estimate supported by the fact that the birds were numerous enough to literally darken the sky at times. On Mar. 18, 1960, a flock of 83 redpolls was at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving), and single birds were noted during April at West Nyack and Suffern and on May 4 at West Nyack and May 10 at New City.

Numbers dropped abruptly in subsequent winters: a few birds in January and February, 1961; a few in the Februaries of 1962 and 1963; a flock of 70 at Hook Mountain on Nov. 28, 1963 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); scattered single birds in the winter of 1966-67: a flock of 50 in Blauvelt on Jan. 6, 1969 (Bernd Gravenstein); 130 birds on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count of Jan. 3, 1970; and flocks of up to 18 on Feb. 10, 1970 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). In 1971-72, several flocks of up to 25 birds were reported. The only other season for the redpoll since 1970 was the spring of 1976, with up to six birds (Louise S. Deed, Donald S. Deed).

PINE SISKIN

Carduelis [Spinus] pinus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	observed from October to March
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter visitant, abundant at times
1898	Chapman	transient and winter visitant, Oct. 20 to May 31
1898	Fisher	irregular resident
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	irregular transient and winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common and frequently abundant transient, occasionally winters in numbers
1940	Carr	irregular transient, October to April
1942	Cruickshank	irregular common fall and uncommon spring transient visitant, rare to common in winter
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon to common winter visitant
1976	Current status	common to abundant migrant and winter visitant

Of all the northern finches, this is the least erratic, yet its numbers on a given day in season may vary from zero to 1,000 or more. It has been recorded on two of the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts in the Piermont-Alpine area (20 birds in 1935 and 13 in 1937),

on 20 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (with a high of 949 in 1963), and on 16 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (with a high of 498 in 1963). Yet the highest numbers have not been at Christmas Count time, or even in the winter of 1963-64

Fringillidae

when those counts reached their all-time peaks. The winter of 1957-58 brought the biggest flight in our records.

As early as Oct. 7, 1957, a flock of 75 was at Nauraushaun (Ruth Steffens, Eugene R. Brown); hundreds were seen on Jan. 12, 1958 during the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs waterfowl count; on Jan. 24, 1958, Eugene Brown saw more than 1,500 siskins, including one flock of 1,000-plus, north of Rockland Lake Landing. Perhaps more

remarkably, a pair lingered at New City until June 6, 1958 (Mrs. Adolph Meyer).

The winters of 1963-64, as noted, and 1971-72 also brought major flights of siskins. On Mar. 31, 1972 Eugene Brown saw a flock of 250 birds in Upper Nyack. The highest recent count has been 136 at Piermont on Nov. 30, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

Our dates range from Sept. 28, 1937 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis) to June 6, 1958 (Mrs. Meyer).

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH
Carduelis [Spinus] tristis



Adult male, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found at all seasons, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	common resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident, usually scarcer in winter
1940	Carr	permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular common permanent resident
1976	Current status	common to very common resident

At peak times throughout the year, a single party may see 100 goldfinches in a day. And, judging by a comparison of countywide Rockland Audubon Society May "Big Day" totals with Christmas Counts, the species is as common in winter as in spring. It has been recorded in all 29 RAS Christmas Counts, with highs of 373 in

1949, 268 in 1953, 352 in 1957, 274 in 1963, 243 in 1965, 231 in 1968, 466 in 1972, and 295 in 1974; but only 88 in 1975. It has also been recorded on all 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with highs of 103 in 1953, 144 in 1955, and 205 in 1953 but no total above 50 since 1972.

RED CROSSBILL
Loxia curvirostra



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Michael Garber

1844	De Kay	breeds in the state
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter visitant, abundant at times as in December, 1874
1898	Chapman	regular winter visitant
1898	Fisher	irregular resident (!)
1908	Brownell	occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	irregular visitant in any month
1927	Kuerzi	rare and irregular in spring, fall, and winter; one breeding record
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	irregular and rare visitant
1960	Orth	no recent records
1976	Current status	very rare fall and winter visitant, accidental summer visitant

We have nearly 20 records for this species, which is considerably rarer than the white-winged, but the records are spread over nearly a hundred years. John Bull cites a Mearns specimen at Highland Falls on Mar. 10, 1875, and our next record is for the odd summer date of July 29, 1923 at Palisades (Jennie Fox). The next occurrence after that was Oct. 6, 1940 at

West Nyack (Thomas C. Wilfred). Then there was a gap until Feb. 8, 1953, two birds at Palisades (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) and May 12, 1953, an injured female or immature (Katherine D. Dienemann, Frances H. Irving). But we had four records in 1954, two each in 1963 and 1964, one each in 1965, 1967, and 1970, and our most recent record of five

birds on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count of Jan. 2, 1972 (Donald S. Deed).

Dates range from Oct. 2, 1954 at Tappan (Thomas Dow, James Bloor) to the May 12,

1953 date at West Nyack. This crossbill has been scored once on the RAS Christmas Count (two birds in 1954) and three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (seven in 1967, 14 in 1969, and five on the 1971 Count).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL

Loxia leucoptera



Adult, Female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rare in southern part of state
1878-82	Mearns	occasional winter visitant, Dec. 28, 1874
1898	Chapman	irregular rare winter visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, Oct. 29 to Dec. 6
1908	Brownell	rare winter visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare and irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	rare and irregular winter visitant
1940	Carr	one record for Feb. 2, 1929, Kanawauke Lake
1942	Cruickshank	very rare and irregular winter visitant
1960	Orth	casual uncommon winter visitant
1976	Current status	rare winter visitant

Until the boom in northern finches in the mid-1950s, only two records were known to me: Carr's 1929 record at Kanawauke and a record for Feb. 3, 1923 at Palisades (Jennie Fox). Since the beginning of 1953, however, we have had more than two dozen records covering all

years except 1958 through 1962, 1966 through 1969, 1971, and 1975. The species has been recorded on three of the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts covering 29 years (three birds in 1957, two in 1963, and eight in 1972) but only once on the 28 Bear Mountain

Christmas Counts (eight birds in 1955). The largest single flock was 20 birds at Palisades on Jan. 30, 1955 (Mr. and Mrs. Ned Barron). Dates range from Oct. 18, 1954 at Grand View (James Bloor, David O. Hill, Thomas Dow) to May 13, 1972, six at Central Nyack (Mrs. Winston Perry, Sr.).



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

EASTERN [RUFIOUS-SIDED] TOWHEE

Pipilo erythrophthalmus



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, April to November, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, Apr. 25 to Oct. 15
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 21 to Oct. 31
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, May 1 to Nov. 10
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, a few records in winter
1940	Carr	summer resident, March to October
1942	Cruickshank	very common summer resident, abundant transient visitant, rare winter resident
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, recorded several times in winter
1976	Current status	common breeder. uncommon to fairly common winter visitant

This familiar species has proven quite regular on Christmas Counts, at least in the main portion of Rockland County. It has been recorded on 24 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Counts (highs of 23 in 1961, 18 in 1963 and 17 in 1969) but on

only six of the 28 Bear Mountain Counts. On a May "Big Day" single-party counts range up to about 40 birds. Migrants tend to arrive in the last week of March and to leave in the first week of November, but the number of wintering birds

Emberizidae

(many records besides those on Christmas Counts) confuses any attempt to arrive at realistic arrival and departure dates. The largest winter numbers at one point at one time were ten birds at a feeder in West Nyack on Dec. 30,

1961 (part of the all-time high RAS Christmas Count of 23) and eight at a feeder in Congers on Dec. 28, 1963 (part of that year's RAS Count of 18 birds).

SAVANNAH SPARROW
Passerculus sandwichensis



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	quite common, April to October, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	common transient, uncommon summer resident
1898	Chapman	abundant transient, rare summer resident
1898	Fisher	common transient, Apr. 3 to May 13 and Aug. 28 to Oct. 28
1908	Brownell	common transient, rare summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, several pairs breeding locally, occasional in winter
1940	Carr	transient visitor
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, one winter record on Jan. 2, 1960 at Lake Welch
1976	Current status	fairly common to common migrant, uncommon to common winter visitant

While this sparrow has been registered only once on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (the cited record of Jack Orth), it has been recorded on 18 of the 29 Rockland Audubon

Society Christmas Counts, with a high of 50 birds in 1974 and other counts of 29 in 1972 and 25 in 1973. Although the largest numbers, both in winter and on migration, tend to come from

the Hudson riverfront, birds have also been found in inland fields, notably in Nanuet, Pearl River, Nauraushaun, New City, and Orangeburg.

Peak numbers on migration are generally recorded about Apr. 6 and Sept. 25. Although these birds rarely sing at our latitude, one was singing at Orangeburg on May 14, 1966 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed). Contrary to the notes of Mearns and Brownell, we have no summer records at all. Among the high counts of migrants: Oct. 27, 1959, about 25 at West Haverstraw, (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper,

Eugene R. Brown); Apr. 6, 1972, 25-plus at Piermont Pier (the Deeds); Dec. 13, 1975, 22 at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos), which must have mostly been very late migrants, since only three birds stayed for the Christmas Count exactly two weeks later.

Spring: Mar. 28, 1926 at Palisades (Jennie Fox) to May 25, 1928 at New City (Fox).

Fall: Sept. 9, 1967, six at Nauraushaun (Bernd Gravenstein) to Nov. 12, 1951 (Dr. Hopper) and possibly the Dec. 13, 1975 date.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW
Ammodramus savannarum



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	May to October in large numbers; breeds?
1878-82	Mearns	rare summer resident, breeds
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 27 to Oct. 23
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	formerly a common summer resident, a few still breeding locally
1940	Carr	transient visitor, may breed; April, May, and September records
1942	Cruickshank	common local summer resident
1960	Orth	occasional rare summer resident, no nesting records
1976	Current status	former uncommon breeder, now a very rare migrant

This bird of tall-grass fields has been a tragic victim of the area's change from rural to suburban. Forty years ago it nested regularly in fields such as those around Blauvelt, and I had counts of 13 birds for the year 1935 and four for 1936. It was a late-arriving migrant, usually commonest about May 20 to 25, but its song

was a familiar sound along roadsides during June. With the rise of housing tracts after World War II, we had two records for the species from 1946 to the spring of 1968: an apparently injured bird at Grassy Point on Dec. 27, 1952 on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (John C. Orth, John Kenney), and our latest fall

date, Oct. 19, 1954 (Thomas Dow, David O. Hill). Our earliest spring date is Apr. 27, 1930 at Beechy Bottom, near Bear Mountain (William H. Carr).

Since early 1968, hope of this species' survival has been raised by four records: May 21, 1968,

a bird singing at Nauraushaun, studied by James Demes from a distance of seven or eight feet; May 16, 1971, two birds photographed at Piermont Pier by Anthony F. Amos; May 13, 1972, one on the Pier (Amos); June 3, 1973, five on the Pier (Amos).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW

Ammodramus henslowii

1844	De Kay	noticed in Rockland County and on Long Island
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	fairly common local summer resident
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, Oct. 5-10
1908	Brownell	local summer resident, breeding May 23, 1897
1923	Griscom	local summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon or rare transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	extremely rare transient visitant; "since 1932 a few pairs have bred in central Rockland County
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	casual migrant, accidental breeder

Apparently never in recorded time has the Henslow's sparrow been anything but very rare and local as a breeder (see Brownell's status report on the Nyack area, above). And it has been equally elusive as a transient. We have one breeding record: a singing bird found on Blanchard Road, near Lake Welch, by Homer S. Kelsey on July 17, 1961 and observed through

Aug. 3 by Kelsey and others; on or near the latter date, it was seen with young by Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber, and Mr. and Mrs. John Dye. We have only two other records, both in spring: May 9, 1930 at West Nyack (Robert F. Deed) and June 1-2, 1963, a singing bird near Letchworth Village, Thiells, and perhaps on nesting territory (Robert Connor, Morton Isler).

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW

Ammospiza caudacuta



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	found only in salt marshes, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	(Nelson's) transient visitant, Oct. 12 and 16
1898	Chapman	abundant local summer resident; (Nelson's) rather rare transient
1898	Fisher	(Nelson's) fairly common transient, Sept. 28 to Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	fairly common local summer resident, arrives May 4
1923	Griscom	summer resident confined to salt marshes; (Nelson's) fairly common fall transient, according to Fisher
1927	Kuerzi	locally common summer resident
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	locally fairly common summer resident
1960	Orth	no recent records
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, accidental summer and winter visitant

Cruickshank's "Birds Around New York City" refers to specimens collected at Piermont on Oct. 19, 1889 as being in the American Museum of Natural History; Bull's "Birds of the New York Area" mentions five specimens in the Museum's collection, two taken on Oct. 10, 1888 at

Piermont and three on Oct. 19, 1888. Orth quotes a passage from Edgar A. Mearns: "I have only found it during the month of October (16, 1874; 12, 1877), and at a single locality--on the salt marsh that joins Concook Island to the West Shore."

Emberizidae

All five modern records come from the Piermont marsh: July 8, 1930 (Jennie Fox); Dec. 22 to 29, 1935, a brightly plumaged bird at the river edge of the marsh that was identified as the Nelson's form (Vivian B. Krum, Donald W. Deed, Alfred Eynon, John Matuszewski, Howard Van Deuzen); May 23, 1954 (Norman P. Hill); May

24, 1973 at the edge of the Piermont dump (Anthony F. Amos); Oct. 3 to 5, 1975 (Amos).

Editors Note: This species is currently split into Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*). It is not possible to determine on which species these observations were based.

SEASIDE SPARROW

Ammodramus [Ammospiza] maritima



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident in our salt marshes, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	abundant local summer resident
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	accidental except in salt meadows
1927	Kuerzi	locally fairly common summer resident
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	local uncommon summer resident
1960	Orth	no mention
1976	Current status	accidental summer visitant, perhaps breeding; accidental winter visitant

Bull's "Birds of the New York Area" notes specimens in the American Museum of Natural History of an adult female (seen with young) taken at the Piermont marsh on June 6, 1892 and an adult and three immatures taken there on Aug. 24, 1888, as well as at least six other

specimens from this locality. On June 15, 1973, Anthony F. Amos, penetrating the streams of the marsh by boat, observed a pair of these sparrows at close range, but no nest or young were found. We also have a freakish winter record on the Rockland Audubon Society

Emberizidae

Christmas Count of Dec. 27, 1959, a bird observed at Grassy Point at a distance of six or seven feet by Dr. John M. Price, Jr. and Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, both of whom were thoroughly familiar with the bird on the Long Island shore.

VESPER SPARROW

Pooecetes gramineus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common all year in the Atlantic district
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident, breeds; Mar. 30 to November
1898	Chapman	common summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Apr. 2 to Nov. 4
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident, breeds
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common transient, uncommon summer resident, rare in winter
1940	Carr	transient visitor, March-April and September-October
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, fairly common summer resident in Rockland County
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, casual winter visitant

It is hard to conceive of this bird as a common summer resident as recently as Griscom's time, since in the past 15 years it has virtually disappeared even as a migrant. In fact, three of our six records since the beginning of 1961 have

been winter dates for isolated birds. And we have had only six winter dates in all.

From 1956 through 1960, this sparrow did enjoy something of a boom, when probably more records were accumulated than in all other

years put together: Oct. 10, 1956, about ten birds at Lake De Forest (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper. Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Nov. 17, 1956 at Iona Island (John C. Orth and Rockland Audubon Society field trip); Dec. 29, 1956 at Lake De Forest on RAS Christmas Count (Dr. Robert L. Burkhart, James Bloor); several records in 1957 from Apr. 7 (the Steffenses) to Dec. 28, a half-dozen birds at Orangeburg on the RAS Christmas Count; records in 1959 from Apr. 19, two or three birds in West Nyack (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) to Oct. 27, six birds at West Haverstraw (Eugene R. Brown, Dr. Hopper); Oct. 23, 1960, about 15 birds in the Viola area (Homer S. Kelsey and RAS field trip); Dec. 26, 1960, eight birds in two areas on the RAS Christmas Count.

Records since 1960 are sparse, and many birders now active in the area have never seen a vesper sparrow in Rockland County. On Mar. 19, 1961, Joseph Morlan saw one in Naurauschaun; on Dec. 23, 1961, one was found on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count; on the rather late date of May 24, 1963, Dr. Hopper and Gene Brown found one at the Long Mountain

Circle near Bear Mountain; a bird stayed a few days in December, 1969 at the Rockland Lake Nature Center (Philip Meisner); May 13, 1972, one at Mine Road, back of West Point (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber); Dec. 16, 1972, one in South Spring Valley (Rolf Carstens).

Probably the most recent sign that this sparrow ever bred in Rockland County was Thomas P. Gilman's record of a bird at Palisades on Aug. 9, 1926.

Spring: Mar. 19, 1961 (Morlan) to May 27, 1937 (Robert F. Deed).

Fall: Sept. 4, 1927 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to Nov. 17, 1956 at Iona Island (Orth and party).

1983 Addendum -- Three additional records for this rare bird: Dec. 18, 1977, behind Lederle Labs on RAS Christmas Count (Donald and Bob Deed); Oct. 12, 1981, three at Tallman Mt. (Louise and Bob Deed); Oct. 23, 1982, one on Mine Road.

LARK SPARROW

Chondestes grammacus



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental early fall visitant to the Piermont marsh. On Aug. 23, 1975 and again the next day, Anthony F. Amos repeatedly flushed and carefully studied a bird, possibly two different birds, at the Piermont village dump (which is covered by earth fill). On the first day, in good light, Amos noted the bird's bright spring plumage; on the second day, the bird at the

same spot seemed to be in duller plumage. However, it was drizzling on that day, and the light was poor.

1983 Addendum -- A second coming: on Nov. 28-30, 1980, two at Wes Hennessy's feeder, New City.

DARK-EYED JUNCO

Junco hyemalis



Adult, male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	resident, breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant winter visitant, Sept. 28 to May 9
1898	Chapman	abundant winter resident, Sept. 20 to May 10
1898	Fisher	common winter visitant, Sept. 19 to May 4
1908	Brownell	abundant winter visitant, Sept. 24 to May 1
1923	Griscom	common winter visitant, abundant in migrations
1927	Kuerzi	abundant transient and common winter resident
1940	Carr	transient and winter visitor
1942	Cruickshank	very common winter resident
1960	Orth	regular common to very common winter visitant, several summer records
1976	Current status	very common to abundant migrant and winter visitant, about half as numerous as a dozen years ago; rare summer resident, probably breeding in highest portions of Harriman Park

Numbers of wintering juncos took a sharp plunge in 1964 and 1965 on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count and in 1965 and 1966 on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count, and they have never consistently

recovered. Until 1957 the junco out-numbered the house sparrow on all but three RAS Christmas Counts, starting in 1947. Its decline coincided with a similar crash in numbers of tree sparrows, and most local observers attributed

Emberizidae

both declines to broader trends in the entire Northeast. From 1948 to 1961 on the RAS Christmas Count, the junco ranged from 462 to 866 per year, with the high in 1952; in 1962 the count was 613, and in 1963 it was 695. Then it slumped to 218 in 1964 and 233 in 1965, bouncing back with 682 in 1966 and 837 in 1967 before dropping below 550 for every year since then except 1972 (704 birds). The most recent counts were 446 in 1974 and 335 in 1975. On the Bear Mountain Christmas Count, peaks came in 1953 (251 birds), 1961 (250), and 1964 (287). The 1966 tally dipped to a mere 44 juncos, and the highest count since then was 159 in the 1971 Count.

Besides the relatively old summer records to which John C. Orth referred in 1960, further evidence of probable breeding has come from Eugene Brown's explorations of the high interior of Harriman Park in mid-June: June 15, 1970, a pair at Island Pond Mountain (elevation nearly 1,300 feet) and June 18, 1975, three birds at Surebridge and Pine Swamps.

The junco is so very regular in its autumn arrival that for many years we had a three-way tie for the earliest date; Sept. 21, 1937 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis); Sept. 21, 1952 (Rockland Audubon Society field trip), and Sept. 21, 1955 at two separate places (Dr. Marjorie H. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). Then two observations in one year, 1957, broke the old record: Sept. 18, 1957 (Joseph Morlan) and Sept. 20 (Ruth Steffens). Similarly, for many years the latest spring date (outside the suspected nesting grounds) was May 14, 1950 (Brown, Robel F. Deed). Then Paul Jeheber found a junco on May 31, 1969 on the old Storm King Highway, Cornwall. The year's peak numbers usually come about the first of November.

We also have seven records for the so-called Oregon junco, now reduced to the status of a race by the 1973 A. O. U. Check-list, and four records for the so-called pink-sided junco, similarly treated by the A. O. U.

Oregon: Oct. 19, 1954, positively identified by several observers at Dr. Hopper's home in Upper Nyack; Mar. 21, 1956, two at West Nyack, two days after a heavy snowfall (Frances H. Irving); Nov. 6, 1958 in the same area (Mabel Weindling); Dec. 23, 1961, well seen at Lake Sebago on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (Frank Steffens); Feb. 9 to 11, 1962 at Palisades (Mr. and Mrs. Archer Stansbury); Feb. 3, 1963 at Suffern Park (Kenneth Fraser, John LeMaire, William S. Mount); Dec. 25, 1969, a bird in especially bright plumage on Crickettown Road, near Tomkins Cove (Mrs. Dormann).

Pink-sided: Jan. 9 through at least Jan. 15, 1955 at the New City home of Mr. and Mrs. Steffens (many observers); Mar. 16, 1959 at the Highland Falls home of Edward D. Treacy; Oct. 5, 1963 at Dr. Hopper's home in upper Nyack; Feb. 26-27 and Mar. 2, 1965, again at Dr. Hopper's home and well studied by several observers.

1983 Addendum -- *Dark-eyed Junco*: Breeding confirmed at last: June 3, 1977, a nest with three young on the Arden-Surebridge Trail in Harriman Park and the following day the young being fed near the nest (Robert Speiser, David Schwenker, Lance Verderame). Also June 30, 1980, a singing adult with a young bird at High Peak, Harriman Park (John Benzinger) and on July 9, 1980 four adults and a juvenile being fed on Island Pond Mt. (Benzinger).

Oregon Junco--Good sighting of this subspecies at Blauvelt on RAS Christmas Count of Dec. 20, 1981 (Donald S. Deed).

LARK BUNTING

Calamospiza melanocorys



Adult, Male

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1983 Addendum -- A new species discovered on Oct. 9, 1977 by Bob Connor at his New City home and studied also by Wesley Hennessy; appeared to be an immature male. On Nov. 11, 1977 Tom Wilfred saw a male, showing much

black and white contrast, at the paper mill on Piermont Pier. And from Feb. 25 to Apr. 12, 1978 Doris Metraux had this species at her feeder in Stony Point and photographed it.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW

Spizella arborea



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant winter visitant, Oct. 26 to Apr. 29
1898	Chapman	abundant winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common winter visitant, Oct. 10 to Apr. 27
1908	Brownell	fairly common winter visitant, Oct. 25 to Apr. 10
1923	Griscom	abundant winter resident
1927	Kuerzi	abundant winter resident
1940	Carr	winter visitor, October to April
1942	Cruickshank	common winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular common to very common winter visitant
1976	Current status	common winter visitant, about half as numerous as a dozen years ago

This bird has declined in tandem with the junco, suffering much the same crash in about 1964. Up to then, the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count was tallying numbers in the 400 to 600 range, with a record high of 762 in 1954; in 1963, the total dropped to 269 and in 1964 to 220. After a comeback to 523 in 1966,

numbers declined to recent lows of 144 in 1971 and 146 in 1975. These lows as totals for all of Rockland County were not much above the 125 count in 1936 for the Piermont-Alpine district alone, in the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count. Moreover, in the last decade many districts of Rockland County were so lacking in

Emberizidae

tree sparrows that on one Count our party spent more than eight hours afield in good weather without finding a single tree sparrow. The record of the Bear Mountain Christmas Count is similar: a high of 497 tree sparrows in 1955, a count of 419 as recently as 1961, and counts since then

mostly between 90 and 100 birds. One aberrant high was 252 in the 1971 Count.

Dates range from Oct. 5, 1963, two birds at Grassy Point (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 13, 1972 (Padraic French).

CHIPPING SPARROW

Spizella passerina



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	familiar to all; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant summer resident, Apr. 2 to Nov. 29
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 9 to Nov. 7
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, Apr. 2 to Nov. 10
1923	Griscom	abundant summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	very common summer resident, two winter records
1940	Carr	common summer resident
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, very common transient visitant, "extremely rare in winter"
1960	Orth	regular common summer resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, casual winter visitant

This sparrow is distributed widely, yet one-day single-party counts rarely exceed eight to ten birds, perhaps because it tends to be commoner in residential areas than in the wilder territory where we do more of our birding. Dates range

from Mar. 13, 1962 (Edwin Gamble) to Nov. 10, 1951 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

In winter, this tends to be one of the most misidentified birds of all. Even on Christmas Counts, where extreme care is requested,

observers report "small flocks" that "do not show any dot on the breast, so they can't be tree sparrows," forgetting that in other respects the chippy is a quite different-looking bird. In my own nearly 50 years of birding, I have never seen a chipping sparrow in winter. However, four records are worthy of consideration: Dec. 30, 1961 on the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, seen at upper Nyack by:-Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, one of our best observers;

Jan. 3, 1970, carefully studied by Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens at their New City home shortly after they had expressed skepticism about chipping sparrow reports on Christmas Counts; Dec. 17, 1970 at Cornwall (Al and Barbara Merritt); Dec. 28, 1974, a bird studied at Stony Point with appropriate skepticism on the RAS Christmas Count by Nancy Single, Joanne Schiff, and Michael Pavda.

FIELD SPARROW
Spizella pusilla



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, arrives in April; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	abundant summer resident, arrives Apr. 17-28, breeds
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, rare winter resident
1898	Fisher	common summer resident, Apr. 2 to Nov. 7
1908	Brownell	common summer resident, Apr. 3 to Nov. 19
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	common summer resident, wintering regularly
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common summer resident, winters regularly
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, several recorded in winter
1976	Current status	Fairly common breeder and winter visitant

In breeding season, the field sparrow is only slightly less numerous than the chippy, and in winter it is regular. It has been recorded on all 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with highs of 33 each in 1960 and 1961, 43 in 1972, and an exceptional 75 in 1974. It has been recorded, however, only six times on 28

Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with a high of three birds in 1968. Dates normally range from Mar. 19, 1935 at Queensboro Lake (H. A. Hochbaum) to Nov. 23, 1958 at Iona Island (John C. Orth).

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW
Zonotrichia leucophrys



Juvenile

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rather rare
1878-82	Mearns	rather rare transient, May 12-23 and Oct. 12-16
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, May 9-26 and Oct. 3-30
1908	Brownell	common transient visitant, May
1923	Griscom	rather rare transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon spring transient, occasionally fairly common fall transient
1940	Carr	rare migrant, May and June records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon spring, fairly common fall transient, casual in winter
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, casual winter visitant

If we discount Brownell's Nyack report as being out of line with others of his period, this handsome sparrow seems to have gained in numbers since the turn of the century. It enjoyed a special boom during the 1950s and 1960s, when reports were too numerous to mention.

However, before 1954 and after 1967, we have only a handful of records. Winter reports must be scrutinized with care, though it is primarily the non-birding public that perpetually calls every bright male white-throat a white-crowned sparrow.

The species is highly regular in producing its peak numbers, and sometimes the only birds of a year, at May 15-20 and Oct. 20-23. But the pattern is broken in good flight years, such as 1956, when flocks of four to six birds appeared in backyards everywhere in the last half of May, or such as 1960 and 1963, when fall birds predominated. High counts have been on Oct. 2, 1962, a flock of 14 in a yard near Suffern (Josephine Worrall) and Oct. 10 to 14, 1974, a maximum of 11 birds in South Spring Valley (Malcolm Gardner).

Spring: Apr. 18, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr) to May 26, 1925 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman). I cannot find the June record or records to which Carr's 1940 checklist refers.

Fall: Sept. 26, 1959 near Suffern (John LeMaire) to Nov. 5, 1961, same place and same observer.

Winter: Dec. 29, 1956, two at Tallman Mountain, Piermont (Mr. and Mrs. Archer Stansbury); Dec. 28, 1963, six near Pearl River on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (Emily Paulson), Dec. 26, 1966, four on RAS Christmas Count in two areas, plus one bird at West Nyack through January, 1967; Dec. 30, 1967, three at Naurausaun on RAS Christmas Count (Richard Gigger).

1983 Addendum -- Another winter record, Dec. 20, 1981 at New City on RAS Christmas Count (Wesley Hennessy).



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

Zonotrichia albicollis



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	more or less during the whole year breeds?
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient visitant, Apr. 2 to May 30
1898	Chapman	common local winter resident, abundant transient
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, occasional winter visitant; Apr. 10 to May 21 and Sept. 20 to Oct. 30
1908	Brownell	abundant transient, occasional winter visitant; Oct. 15 to Apr. 20
1923	Griscom	abundant transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common transient and winter resident
1940	Carr	common transient
1942	Cruickshank	common spring, abundant fall transient visitant, regularly winters, casual in summer
1960	Orth	regular common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	common to very common migrant and winter visitant, casual summer visitant

Like the junco and the tree sparrow, this species suffered a sharp dip in the mid-1960s but, unlike them, it has made a strong comeback and is now a familiar bird at winter feeding stations. Its

spring peak in numbers comes about Apr. 25; its fall peak spans a much broader period, from about Sept. 25 to Oct. 20.

This sparrow has been recorded on all 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with peaks of 445 in 1951, 425 in 1955, 470 in 1958, 575 in 1959, 302 in 1972, and 435 in 1974--and lows of 102 in 1964, 139 in 1965, and a mere 90 in 1966. Although Jack Orth's 1960 checklist does not mention winter records, the species has been recorded on 21 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with peaks in 1958 (81 birds) and 1972 (32 birds).

The early fall date is Sept. 14, 1963 at Little Tor (Morton Isler); the late spring date is May 28, 1952 (Eugene R. Brown). We have several June

dates: June 2, 1961 at Pomona (Homer S. Kelsey); June 4, 1961 near Stony Point (Kelsey); June 9, 1961, singing at Garnerville (Robert Froman); June 7, 1965, singing at Surebridge Swamp (Brown); June 8, 1972, singing in Upper Nyack (Brown). We also have two July dates: July 4, 1935, singing at Palisades (Donald W. Deed, Robert F. Deed) and July 24, 1972 at South Spring Valley (Mrs. Fred Heckel). An immature bird at Little Tor, back of Haverstraw, on Aug. 31, 1968 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) might have been either a summer bird or a very early migrant.

FOX SPARROW
Passerella iliaca



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	migrant in early spring and October-November
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient, Feb. 28 to Apr. 30 and Oct 22 to Dec. 8
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant, rare winter resident
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 4 to Apr. 20 and Oct. 14 to Nov. 28
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient, occasional winter visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common and occasionally abundant transient, frequently wintering
1940	Carr	common transient
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant, a few winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient, several winter records
1976	Current status	fairly common migrant, uncommon winter visitant

This sparrow is probably more numerous in winter than it was 40 years ago, when a wintering bird was considered a rare find. It has been listed on 23 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, in numbers up to 20 (in 1974). High counts for a single flock include 22 on Mar. 27, 1955 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R.

Steffens), up to 25 per day from Oct.17 to Dec. 5, 1957 at West Nyack (Frances H. Irving), and precisely 47 at Germonds on Mar. 29, 1965 (Mrs. Arbogast).

Emberizidae

Spring: Mar. 6, 1958, two at New City (the Steffenses) to Apr. 11, 1957 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).

Fall: Oct. 12, 1952 (the Steffenses) to Dec. 5, 1957 (Mrs. Irving).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW

Melospiza lincolnii



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"observed by William Cooper near New York"
1878-82	Mearns	no mention
1898	Chapman	rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, Sept. 29 to Oct. 16
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	uncommon but regular transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon but regular transient
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient visitant
1960	Orth	casual very rare spring transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, accidental winter visitant

As rare as the Lincoln's sparrow is today, it is by no means as rare as it was 25 years ago. Until 1950 we had only one record: May 13 to 15, 1935 at Blauvelt (Vivian B. Krum, Donald W. Deed, Robert F. Deed). Since then we have had 16 records, though only three of them during the current decade. Twice as many records have originated in spring as in fall; all but one winter

report has been rejected--this sparrow ranks with the chipping in misidentifications in late fall and winter, being continually confused with immature swamp and even song sparrows. The one winter record that is acceptable is of a bird at the feeder of Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens in New City on Feb. 21, 1965, studied long and

under favorable conditions by two of our best observers.

Spring: May 2, 1957 at Highland Falls (Edward D. Treacy) to May 19, 1956, birds at both Cornwall (the Steffenses and Treacy) and Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth).

Fall: Sept. 16, 1951 at Blauvelt (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed) to Oct. 15, 1975 at Piermont (Anthony F. Amos).

1983 Addendum -- Two new records for this rare bird: May 25, 1978 at the Hackensack Swamp, Blauvelt, studied at 15 feet (Donald S. Deed) and May 4, 1981 at the Palisade tank farm (Peter Derven).

SWAMP SPARROW
Melospiza georgiana



Adult

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer resident, breeds abundantly
1878-82	Mearns	occasional summer resident and winter visitant; breeds
1898	Chapman	abundant summer resident, rare winter visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, occasional resident
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident
1923	Griscom	common summer resident
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common permanent resident, somewhat scarcer in winter
1940	Carr	summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant transient visitant, common summer resident, winters regularly
1960	Orth	regular fairly common summer resident, irregular rare permanent resident
1976	Current status	fairly common breeder, uncommon winter visitant

Although one would expect this sparrow to have suffered from the destruction of so much of its habitat in Rockland County, in suitable environments it remains solidly entrenched as ever. It is considerably less common in Bear

Mountain-Harriman Park than in Rockland County proper, where it has been recorded on 25 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, with an extraordinary high of 38 birds on Dec. 26, 1959--34 of them in one

flock on Piermont Pier. The recent counts have averaged 5 to 12 birds. The species has been recorded on 11 of the 28 Bear Mountain

Christmas Counts, with a high of three birds in each of several years. Peak numbers tend to be about May 1 and Oct. 15.

SONG SPARROW

Melospiza melodia



Adult, breeding

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"with the bluebird, the earliest harbinger of spring"
1878-82	Mearns	abundant resident
1898	Chapman	common resident, abundant summer resident
1898	Fisher	common resident
1908	Brownell	abundant summer resident, occasional resident
1923	Griscom	common resident
1927	Kuerzi	common permanent resident
1940	Carr	permanent resident
1942	Cruickshank	very common permanent resident
1960	Orth	regular uncommon to common permanent resident
1976	Current status	common resident

This familiar, widely distributed bird has had surprising ups and downs, judging by Christmas Counts, which should be a reliable index for year-to-year comparisons. From one year to the next, a day's list in spring may fluctuate between 5 and 20 song sparrows; a day's list in fall, between 25 and 50 birds. But the Christmas Counts are rather consistent for most birds

unless their populations are showing a pronounced trend. On the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Counts, numbers of song sparrows have ranged from 75 (in 1954) to 290 (in 1967), and a sharp decline is noticeable after 1968. However, the 1975 Count was back up to a respectable 150 birds. The Bear Mountain Christmas Count in its 28 years also fluctuated--between 3 and 37

Emberizidae

birds. In 1953, for example, 25 song sparrows were tallied on the Bear Mountain Count; in 1954, only six. In sum, however, no marked

trend is visible in this area during the past 30 years, just erratic year-to-year variations.

SNOW BUNTING

Plectrophenax nivalis



Adult, non-breeding plumage

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in Atlantic district after severe snowstorms
1878-82	Mearns	irregular winter visitant, Nov. 8 to March
1898	Chapman	abundant winter resident
1898	Fisher	irregular winter visitant, Oct. 25 to Mar. 22
1908	Brownell	winter visitant
1923	Griscom	rare and irregular winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	irregular and uncommon transient and winter visitant
1940	Carr	uncommon, irregular transient, Nov. 2, 1937
1942	Cruickshank	inland, generally rare and irregular
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common winter visitant

Until 1950 this was a very rare bird, with only seven records. Then in February, 1950, it appeared in flocks of up to 35 birds at New City (Mr. and Mrs. William G. Irving). The last bird that winter was at Silvermine, near Bear Mountain, on Mar. 3, 1950 (Joseph Ossman, John C. Orth). Flocks of 50 at Lederle Laboratories, near Nanuet, on Jan. 3, 1961

(Frank R. Steffens) and 70 to 80 birds near Rockland Community College, Viola, on Jan. 27, 1961 (Helen Roca-Garcia) were soon topped by 100 birds that remained in the Viola area from Feb. 17 to 21, 1962 (Mr. and Mrs. John LeMaire). And the all-time high for the snow bunting was a count of 176 birds between Lake

Sebago and Sloatsburg on Jan. 14, 1963 by John C. Orth.

The snow bunting has been recorded on three of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas counts and on five of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts.

Dates range from Oct. 21, 1958 at Piermont Pier (Edwin Gamble) to Apr. 20, 1965 at West Nyack, a bird in "patchy" plumage (Gamble).



Adult, female

Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Recent Additions to Species List

Buff-breasted Sandpiper. November 4, 2002. Three *Buff-breasted Sandpiper* seen by Gene Herskovics at Kennedy Dells Park soccer fields. Individuals were in a mixed shorebird flock, including three *Pectoral Sandpipers*. Flock was scattered by Cooper's Hawk. Not seen on subsequent dates.

Cackling Goose. Mar 18, 2008. Apparent first record of Cackling Goose from Rockland County. Seen at Rockland Lake by Carol Weiss and others. Based on the relatively light breast, this is probably a Richardson's Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*)

Barnacle Goose. December 20, 2009. Spotted at Piermont Pier during the Christmas Bird Count by Drew Ciganek and Karl Knoecklein. The bird was swimming with a small number of Canada Geese and a single Snow Goose. In the past, the Barnacle Goose has been generally considered an escaped exotic from a waterfowl collection. Increasing numbers and banding evidence now suggests that at least some birds are true vagrants. Despite extensive searching, the goose was not seen again after the initial sighting.

White Ibis. Aug 10, 2008. Apparent first record of White Ibis from Rockland County. Found at Piermont Pier and lower Sparkill Creek by Della Wells, Carol Weiss, Glenys Foster Roberts and Alan Wells. Initially seen flying over the ballfield at the base of Piermont Pier. Subsequently found feeding along muddy shore of Sparkill Creek at low tide. Seen from NYSDEC area along Paradise Ave.

Rufous Hummingbird. Sep 27, 2008. Adult male present at a private residence in Clarkstown. Seen over several days in garden and at feeder. Observed by Carol Weiss, Beverly Simone, Della Wells, and Alan Wells. Seen periodically through November. An apparent first for Rockland County.

American Avocet. October 7, 2001. Single winter plumage individual sighted at Piermont Pier, Rockland Co., NY, 9:30 AM by Della Wells. Also seen by Alan Wells, Carol Weiss, Veronica Krause, Janet Cohen, and Leah Tomar. Bird was seen feeding and resting along shore and shallows of Hudson River at the south side of pier. Watched for approximately one hour, often seen at very close range (20 ft). Photos taken by Alan Wells.

King Eider. Nov 24, 2008. Immature male reported by Drew Ciganek from Piermont Pier on 11/23/08. Observed on 11/24/08 by Carol Weiss, Drew Ciganek, Della Wells, and Alan Wells. An apparent first for Rockland County.

Ivory Gull. February 25, 2007. Piermont Pier, Rockland Co. Apparently the first record from Rockland Co., NY. Likely present from at least 2/23/07. On that date photographer Steve Sisti reported an unusual white gull at the Pier to Carol Weiss. Carol spent a short time on Saturday searching unsuccessfully for what she expected to be an Iceland Gull. On Sunday 2/25/07, at approximately 2 PM, Drew Ciganek located and identified an Ivory Gull. He immediately notified Carol and other RAS members. The bird was observed from 4:30 PM to 5:15 PM by 20-30 people at distance of approximately 150 ft at Fly Wheel Park (at the base of the Pier). During this time, it was loafing on the ice with a group of Ring-billed Gulls. It then flew north toward the Tappan Zee Bridge where it appeared to join a group of Ring-bills floating far out into the Hudson River. The

gull was last seen at the at the Pier Monday afternoon (2/26/07) flying north toward the Tappan Zee Bridge. There was a sketchy report of a sighting on 2/28/07 of the gull on the river ice near the Peekskill train station.

Franklin's Gull. Found at Piermont Pier. Reported by Carol Weiss and Gene Brown on September 22, 1999. This may be a first for Rockland County. Seen over several weeks, generally near breakwater (upriver side) during afternoon low tides.

American Oystercatcher. American Oystercatcher at Piermont Pier, Sept 17, 1999. Reported by Marsha Meyer. A second Rockland County record was discovered on May 25, 2001 on the North side of Piermont Pier. Reported by Carol Weiss and 5 days later by Drew Ciganik.

Black Skimmer. An injured individual was picked up by a rehabilitator at Piermont Pier on May 20, 2000. First reported by Pat Lutter and Jim Previti. May 25, 2001.

Lapland Longspur. October 22, 2006. During an RAS field trip to Croton Point Park, Della Wells found two *Lapland Longspur* on the capped landfill. The birds were seen well by the ten other members of the party. Although Croton Point Park is in Westchester Co., it is directly across the river from Rockland. Photographed by Alan Wells.

Black-headed Gull. An uncorroborated sighting by Tom Dow, north side of Piermont Pier. Seen at approximately 5 PM, Jul 31, 2007. Tom returned at 7 PM but the bird was not seen. Searches the following day by Alan Wells, Della Wells, and Veronika Krause did not relocate the bird. Tom described the gull as having a chocolate colored head, red legs and feet, and reddish bill.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Single adult observed May 26, 1997 at Iona Island by Jack Focht, Phil Meisner, S. Bauer, N. Bates, M. Reynolds, and Tom Englert. Searched for, but not seen the following day.

Western Grebe. Found and identified by Rosemarie Widmer Wednesday (November 11, 2009) morning. Subsequently observed by Judy Cinquina and Dennis Murphy. First reported to RAS by Carol Weiss. Seen along the south side of Piermont Pier, from the discharge pipe area to the barge remnants. Typically about 150 to 200 ft offshore, but sometimes closer. Observed and photographed by many throughout the following day. Was observed actively diving and feeding Wednesday morning. By Thursday morning, photos indicate the bird was entangled fishing line (see last photo) and possibly ceased feeding. On Nov 15 a Western Grebe was reported from South Amboy, NJ. This location is approximately 30 miles down river from Piermont. Given the high, storm related flows in the river, the NJ bird could easily be the same bird seen at Piermont.

Exotics/Escapees

Mandarin Duck. Jan 15, 2009. Gorgeous mature male reported by photographer Curt Schlenker from Sparkill Creek, Memorial Park, Tappan, NY on 1/15/09. Additional photos taken on 1/16/09 by Alan Wells. See again in winter and fall of 2010. Memorial Park is located at the intersection of Washington St. and Main St. in Old Tappan. It is in the company of mallards and various domestic ducks. Rare in Rockland County; invariably a local escapee.

Recent Additions

Yellow-fronted Canary. On August 22, 2009, Drew Ciganek, Carol Weiss, Alan Wells and Della Wells observed this bird for over an hour near the end of Piermont Pier. The bird favored the trees and grasses along the north side of the Pier near the emergency rescue boat launch and LDEO building. It was easily located by following its clear, unique song, somewhat reminiscent of an Indigo Bunting. It sang almost continuously over the observation period. Drew and Carol had seen the bird at this location during the previous week. This African native is the ancestral canary type. It is likely an escapee from captivity.

Ringed Turtle-Dove. Seen June 1, 2003 by Carol Weiss, Alan Wells, and Della Wells at the feeder of Eric and Pauline Anderson, Stony Point (near Grassy Point). A domestic variety of Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Pin-tailed Wydah. Adult male seen by Eric and Pauline Anderson, Stony Point (near Grassy Point) at their feeder during August, 2005. Carol Weiss looked for the bird on three separate occasions, but it was not found. An Estrilid Finch native to Africa and introduced into the West Indies, including Puerto Rico. The small size, stark black and white plumage, red bill, and long streamer-like tail of the male is distinctive. Sometimes kept in collections. Surely an escapee.

Egyptian Goose. Photos taken by Carol Weiss on June 28, 2010. The bird was on Florence Katzenstein's beach in Upper Nyack. Carol called Gene Brown while she was there but he arrived too late to see the goose - it had wandered off to the south and out of sight. Both Gene and Carol looked at likely spots for the next few days but did not relocate the bird. This species is common in waterfowl collections and is undoubtedly an escapee.

ROCKLAND COUNTY MAP

