

in early October that was probably "scolopaceus," but it was silent; other dowitchers I had seen in Wisconsin in fall were between early July and early September, and when call notes were heard, they were invariably the trebled guttural sound of the Short-billed Dowitcher. Then on September 24 I came upon a flock of large shorebirds feeding in a shallow stream in Selfridge Park in Ripon, consisting of two Greater Yellowlegs, one Lesser Yellowlegs, and 35 dowitchers. The dowitchers were all in the gray fall plumage; the darkness of the gray color, the tremendous length of the bills, and the late fall date all suggested the probability that these were Long-billed Dowitchers. But it was the call note that interested me most; the birds called frequently as they vied for choice feeding spots and occasionally flew short distances. The call given was strikingly different from that of the Short-billed. There was none of the harsh quality of the Short-billed call; these birds uttered notes that were more of the quality of the Solitary Sandpiper—clear and rather high-pitched. Often the notes were given as single "pips," but once in a while a series of "pips" would be given in rapid succession—sometimes three or four notes together, sometimes as many as eight. On the basis of this experience, I would hazard the guess that the two species of dowitchers can very readily be determined by note once the observer has become acquainted with the calls. In fact, the striking difference between the call notes suggests that the two species of dowitchers can be distinguished much more reliably by ear than by eye.—Sam Robbins, Adams.



FIELD NOTES

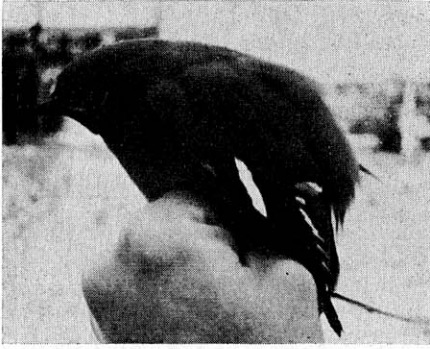
Winter Season

December 1958—February 1959

By HOWARD A. WINKLER

The winter of 1958-59 was one of the most severe experienced in Wisconsin for many years, both from the standpoint of snow cover and prolonged periods of cold. There were few days during the entire period when the temperature ranged much above freezing, and below-zero nights were far more common than above-zero nights. Sub-zero readings had occurred over most of the state even before the period began, and breaks in the cold pattern were few and far between until late in February. Snow cover was moderate in most of the state through December—not enough to interfere with the Christmas bird count. But early in February heavy snows struck in all but the northwestern corner of the state.

Despite these rigorous winter days there was no great influx of winter finches. Evening Grosbeaks were quite well represented at feeding



BOHEMIAN WAXWING

PHOTO BY C. A. KEMPER

stations in most parts of the state; Pine Grosbeaks were almost entirely limited to the northern counties; and Redpolls and Crossbills were scarce in most areas. Purple Finches were present in exceptional numbers, but normally this species is considered a "winter finch" from southern Wisconsin on south; this winter scattered flocks could be found in central and northern Wisconsin, and numbers at some feeders in southern Wisconsin were phenomenal.

Nor were there significant numbers of most other northern wanderers. Numbers of Gray Shrikes were below par; Goshawks and Snowy Owls were very scarce. There was one sight record of a Gyrfalcon, which perhaps represents the most outstanding winter bird.

There was one conspicuous exception to this general rule: the Bohemian Waxwing. The beginnings of a winter influx of this straggler were reported in the last field note summary, and the comment that it might be "one of the heaviest flights of this species in recorded Wisconsin ornithological annals" was borne out by the entire winter season. Reports came from 16 counties—so widespread that if there had been observers reporting from all 71 counties, this species would have been shown to have virtually "blanketed" the state. Contrast this with other recent years, when there have been an average of three or four observations from the entire state in a winter, with most observations coming from the northern half of the state; Among last winter's observations were numerous flocks of over 100 birds. Actually this was part of an almost nation-wide invasion that spread from the Rockies to the Appalachians, dipping as far south as Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Texas and New Mexico. William W. H. Gunn, writing of the Ontario region (1959 *Audubon Field Notes* 291), commented: "One has to go back to the records of the previous century to find an invasion on the scale of the one that took place this winter." In the same issue (p. 312) Oliver K. Scott describes the invasion for the Rocky Mountain area: "This winter has seen, the most massive invasion of Bohemian Waxwings we have on record."

Comments on the season varied considerably in different areas of the state. Mrs. Lester Pedersen writes of Polk County: "We have had a very open winter here, with just an inch or two of snow at times, and that didn't stay on the ground very long. This was a very poor winter to see any but the usual resident birds here." Quite a contrast in Edwin Cleary's report for the Green Bay area: "Many unusual species of birds have been observed wintering in the Brown County region. In fact, this winter period will be remembered by bird observers as one of the best they have ever experienced. The following species have been seen in exceptionally large numbers at feeding stations: Red-bellied, Hairy and

Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jay, Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Starling, House Sparrow, Cardinal, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Junco and Tree Sparrow." The balance that probably best expresses the situation for much of the state was noted by Alfred Bradford in Appleton: "The season was marked by an almost total lack of Pine Grosbeaks and Redpolls. I saw only one small flock of Longspurs. On the other hand we had the first large flight of Purple Finches I have seen in many years; all the feeding stations in Appleton had them. We had more Juncos than usual."

Winter observations were sent in by 34 observers, covering Burnett, Polk, Bayfield, Marathon, Shawano and Oconto Counties in the north; La Crosse, Adams, Waupaca, Outagamie, Brown and Manitowoc Counties in the central sector; and Vernon, Sauk, Dane, Rock, Columbia, Waukesha, Sheboygan, Milwaukee and Kenosha Counties in the south. Added to these are the Christmas bird counts: 34 counts sampling the December bird life in 27 counties. A total of 111 species was recorded, among them Wisconsin's first mid-winter record of the Eared Grebe.

Horned Grebe: Two in winter plumage observed at Neenah on Feb. 21 and 28 (Daryl Tessen); one found in the snow at Two Rivers on Jan. 10 later died (John Kraupa).

Eared Grebe: Earl Loyster and Ray Kyro picked one up in a corn field in Rock County on Feb. 12, following a heavy snow. It was alive when found, but subsequently died.

Great Blue Heron: At least two wintered in Adams County (Sam Robbins).

Canada Goose: An estimated 375 wintered at Green Bay (Ed Cleary), and three were recorded on the Wausau Christmas count on Dec. 28. A few early migrants were noted in Rock County on Feb. 27 (Mrs. Joseph Mahlum).

Blue Goose: Five wintered at Green Bay (Ed Cleary).

Pintail: Individuals wintered at Madison and Milwaukee.

Green-winged Teal: One in Adams County, Dec. 27 (the Roy Lounds & N. R. Bangers).

American Widgeon: Two on the Racine Christmas count, Dec. 27.

Shoveler: Two wintered in Madison (Tom Ashman, Tom Soulen, Bill Hilsenhoff); one on the Racine Christmas count, Dec. 27.

Wood Duck: Male wintered in Milwaukee (Harold Bauers, Allie Kruger); noted on the Adams and Wausau Christmas counts.

Redhead: Noted on the Lake Geneva Christmas count, Dec. 21.

Canvasback: Seen on Christmas counts at Beloit, Lake Geneva, Madison, Milwaukee and Cedarburg.

Greater Scaup: A bird wintering in Madison was determined to be of this species. Wintered in numbers along Lake Michigan.

Lesser Scaup: Wintered in Madison (Bill Hilsenhoff); noted on Christmas Counts at Adams and Dancy.

Oldsquaw: None noted away from Lake Michigan.

White-winged Scoter: Noted on Dec. 21 on Christmas counts at Milwaukee and Lake Geneva; seen in Ozaukee County on Jan. 26 (Harold Bauers).

Ruddy Duck: Seen on Christmas Counts at Cedarburg and Hales Corners on Dec. 29.

Hooded Merganser: One at Cooksville, Rock County, on Jan. 1 (John Wilde et al.); one in Milwaukee in mid-December.

Goshawk: One in Adams County, Dec. 15 (Sam Robbins); one in Forest County, Dec. 31 (Roy Lound).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: One in Sheboygan County, Jan. 6 (Harold Koopmann); one in Outagamie County, Feb. 2 (Alfred Bradford); reported on Christmas counts at Wausau, Kewaunee, Waukesha, Madison and Mazomanie.

Cooper's Hawk: Wintered in Waupaca (Florence Peterson) and Milwaukee (Harold Bauers) counties; noted at Sauk City from Jan. 18 on (Edna Koenig); found at Madison until Jan. 24 (Bill Hilsenhoff); seen in Waukesha County on Feb. 23 (Emma Hoffmann); reported on Christmas counts as far north as Adams, Bancroft and Mishicot.

Red-tailed Hawk: The most northern reports were from Christmas counts in Buffalo and Chippewa Counties (C. A. Kemper).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Found on Christmas counts in eight areas, as far north as Chippewa Falls (C. A. Kemper) and Two Rivers (John Kraupa); remained in Madison through January (Bill Hilsenhoff).

Rough-legged Hawk: Numerous reports from southern and east-central Wisconsin, but in fewer numbers than in other recent winters.

Bald Eagle: Observations limited to the open water areas of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, and apparently down in numbers. The 21 birds on the Adams Christmas count was down from 34 the previous year; noted also on Christmas counts at Mazomanie and La Crosse.

Marsh Hawk: A surprising number of reports, considering the severity of the winter: noted on nine Christmas counts, including areas as far north as Kewaunee and Shiocton. Later dates include Jan. 11 at Two Rivers (John Kraupa) and Feb. 15 in Sauk County (Harold Kruse).

Gyr Falcon: One in white phase seen in Sauk County on Feb. 14 (the Harold Kruses). See "By the Wayside."

Sparrow Hawk: Instead of being limited to the southern counties, found as far north as Adams, Waupaca, Shiocton, Green Bay and Wausau.

Prairie Chicken: 68 counted on the Christmas count at Bancroft (Fran Hamerstrom et al.).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Wintering birds found in Bayfield (David Bratley) and Price (V. N. Sylvan) Counties; one flushed in Adams County on Dec. 27 (Tom Nicholls, Mary Walker).

Gray Partridge: Small flock noted in northwestern Dane County, one mile from Sauk City, on Feb. 14 (Tom Ashman); scattered other reports from usual haunts in eastern Wisconsin.

Coot: Wintered in Madison (many observers); seen on Christmas counts in Buffalo, La Crosse, Adams, Brown, Walworth and Rock Counties.

Common Snipe: Again wintered in Adams County in spite of severe cold, indicating that if open water remains available this species can stand sub-zero weather; also found on Christmas counts in La Crosse, South Wayne, Mazomanie, Madison and Lake Geneva.

Glaucous Gull: One at Marinette on Feb. 21, resting in company with 35 Herring Gulls on ice on the Menominee River on the Wisconsin-Michigan line.

Mourning Dove: Christmas count figures show the remarkable total of 751 birds found in 17 areas in the early part of the winter; that considerably fewer birds survived to the end of the winter is suggested by the fact that the re-take of the Mazomanie count showed a drop from 250 to 73 birds; one that did survive was far north in Shawano County (the Russell Rills).

Screech Owl: A few can still be found outside southern Wisconsin, as witness Christmas count birds at Wisconsin Dells, Adams and Two Rivers, one near Plainfield on Dec. 29 (Fran Hamerstrom et al.), one at Appleton on Dec. 5 (Alfred Bradford), and one in Polk County off and on from Dec. 27 to Feb. 8 (Mrs. Lester Pedersen).

Snowy Owl: Only reports: Madison, Dec. 20; Beloit, Dec. 21 (Christmas count); Adams County, early February (Bill Barton); Columbia County, Feb. 22 (Donald Cors).

Long-eared Owl: Small flocks reported on Christmas counts at Racine, Hales Corners, Milwaukee and Madison; other individuals seen or heard in Kenosha, Rock and Adams Counties.

Short-eared Owl: Noted in Rock County on Dec. 15 and 21 (Frances Glenn, Bernice Andrews); two at Lake Geneva and one at Milwaukee on Christmas counts on Dec. 21.

Saw-whet Owl: One was again found wintering in a cedar swamp in the University Arboretum at Madison (Roy Lound et al.).

Belted Kingfisher: The 15 individuals seen on Christmas counts is about the same as in recent years. At least three Adams County birds and one near Sauk City were still present in mid-February; how well the others fared is not known.

Flicker: One present in Rock County from Dec. 21 to Feb. 26; only one was found in the Mazomanie area on Feb. 14 where there were eight on Jan. 1; other records in December and early January from Green Bay, Appleton, Waupaca, Milwaukee, Racine, Waukesha, Lake Geneva, Madison and South Wayne.

Pileated Woodpecker: For the first time in years, one spent the winter in the University Arboretum in Madison (many observers); one came regularly for suet at the feeder of Mr. & Mrs. Hy Hunter near Green Bay.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Apparently it is only the forested regions of northern Wisconsin that have not been covered by the spread of this species; northeastern records this winter include one in Shawano County from Dec. 22 on (the Russell Rills), one wintering in Waupaca (Florence Peterson), and another in Green Bay (Ed Cleary).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Numerous reports from as far north as Polk, Portage, Waupaca and Manitowoc Counties, but not in the large numbers that have occurred in some winters.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: One in Appleton, seen on Dec. 3, 14 and 22 (Daryl Tessen).

Horned Lark: Wintered in more than the usual numbers in southern Wisconsin; migrants had reached Marathon County by Jan. 29 (the Spencer Dotys).

Gray Jay: Only report: eight in Forest County, Dec. 31 (Roy Lound).

Raven: Reports from Forest and Bayfield Counties.

Boreal Chickadee: Eight in Forest County, Dec. 31 (Roy Lound). No others reported.

Tufted Titmouse: This species keeps rights in step with the Red-bellied Woodpecker, even to the point of being found in the same north-eastern counties—Shawano, Waupaca and Brown—this winter.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: An average year, neither abundant nor scarce; the largest concentration was one of 17 in Forest County, Dec. 31 (Roy Lound).

Brown Creeper: Restricted as usual to the southern portion, being noted on Christmas counts as far north as La Crosse, Adams, Portage and Manitowoc Counties.

Robin: Northern records include one in Burnett County on Dec. 2 (Norman Stone), and one in Marathon County on Jan. 16-17 (the Spencer Dotys). The usual sprinkling of scattered individuals and small groups in central and southern Wisconsin.

Hermit Thrush: One in Madison, Jan. 23 (Bill Hilsenhoff); "I have in past years occasionally seen this species as late as the first week in January, but then in mild winters and near open water; this bird was at least a mile from open water, and far from any feeders as far as I know."

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Three on the Racine Christmas count, Dec. 27.

Bohemian Waxwing: The invasion that began in October and gathered momentum in November continued strong throughout the period; sometimes lone individuals were seen, sometimes there were small groups of five to ten, often flocks of 50-100 were encountered. By late December flocks of 40 or more had been recorded in Polk (Mrs. Lester Pedersen), Marathon (the Spencer Dotys), Juneau (Tom Nicholls-Mary Walker) and Winnebago (Daryl Tessen) Counties; in January flocks of that size were observed in Manitowoc (John Kraupa), Brown (Harold Kruse-Sam Robbins), Outagamie (Daryl Tessen), Waupaca (Florence Peterson) and Vernon (Margarette Morse) Counties; in February sizable flocks reached Dane (J. G. Waddell et al.) and Rock (Florence Peterson) Counties. Smaller flocks were sighted in Adams, Bayfield, Fond du Lac, Milwaukee and Sauk Counties.

Cedar Waxwing: During December this species was widespread and numerous in southern Wisconsin, being recorded on ten of the southern Christmas counts; numbers decreased as the winter progressed, but some remained to mix with the Bohemians that finally reached the southern counties. A few Cedars were seen as far north as Waupaca and Green Bay, and one was recorded on the Wausau Christmas count.

Northern Shrike: During the Christmas count period birds were recorded from 16 areas representing all parts of the state; the only later records were in Waukesha County on Jan. 28 (Emma Hoffmann), in Polk County from Jan. 12 to Feb. 22 (Mrs. Lester Pedersen), and in Waupaca County during January and February (Florence Peterson).

Myrtle Warbler: One near Mazomanie on Jan. 1 (the N. R. Bangers & Roy Lounds), the second consecutive year that this species has been found on the Mazomanie Christmas count. No one was surprised that the bird could not be found on the Feb. 14 re-take of this count, after weeks of sub-zero temperatures and 18 inches of snow.

Meadowlarks: The re-take of the Mazomanie count showed 28 birds on Feb. 14 where only one was found on Jan. 1; it would appear that either these birds are widely spread out inconspicuously on open fields

when snow cover is light, or else that some definite migration is under way by the middle of February. Wintering birds were found as far north as Brown and Waupaca Counties.

Redwing: Madison again had a huge wintering roost of an estimated 5000 birds; late December dates came from Wausau, La Crosse, South Wayne, Mazomanie, Waukesha, Milwaukee and Racine. A Feb. 25 date in Waupaca County (Florence Peterson) suggests early migration.

Rusty Blackbird: One in Polk County, Jan. 18-Feb. 17 (Mrs. Lester Pedersen); a one-legged bird at Appleton, Dec. 29 (Daryl Tessen); recorded on Christmas counts at Madison and Mazomanie.

Common Grackle: Wintered successfully at Green Bay (Ed Cleary); one at Appleton, Dec. 2-Feb. 5 (Daryl Tessen); one in Polk County until Jan. 9 (Mrs. Lester Pedersen); noted at Beloit, Jan. 6 (Frances Glenn-Bernice Andrews); late December dates from La Crosse, South Wayne, Madison, Waukesha, Milwaukee and Racine.

Cowbird: 77 counted in the huge blackbird roost near Madison on Dec. 21; three noted on the Waukesha count.

Evening Grosbeak: Not the very best, but certainly one of the better years for this species. These birds tend not to stay long periods of time in areas where there are no bird feeders, coming in for a few days or weeks and then disappearing; but those with an inexhaustible supply of sunflower seeds often end up with an inexhaustible supply of Evening Grosbeaks.

Purple Finch: The Mazomanie-Sauk City Christmas count had the distinction of registering the highest total (780) for this species of all North American counts—due largely to the prodigious feeding program of the Henry Koenigs. Other feeders attracted large numbers all winter long, and observers in central and northern Wisconsin recorded the birds where ordinarily they are absent in winter. Truly a banner flight.

Pine Grosbeak: More common than usual in the Oconto region (Carl Richter), with other northern Wisconsin observations being made in Bayfield (David Bratley), Price (V. N. Sylvan), Marathon (the Spencer Dotys), Langlade (Tom Soulen) and Forest (Roy Lound) Counties; central Wisconsin observations were made in Waupaca (the Russell Rills), Outagamie (Daryl Tessen) and Brown (Ed Cleary) Counties; the only southern record was of four birds in Madison on Dec. 21 and 27 (Tom Soulen).

Hoary Redpoll: Roy Lound identified four individuals in Forest County on Dec. 31.

Common Redpoll: A scattering of December reports, as indicated by its inclusion on eight Christmas counts; but thereafter the birds disappeared, with the only later record coming from Waupaca County, Feb. 20 (Florence Peterson).

Pine Siskin: The 115 birds on the Christmas count in Forest County on Dec. 31 (Roy Lound) is surprising, for most of these birds are south of Wisconsin in winter. Small numbers noted in Antigo on Dec. 21, Wausau on Jan. 10 (the Spencer Dotys), Kewaunee on Dec. 28 (Elmer & Millie deCreamer, Roy Lukes), Mishicot on Jan. 4 (John Kraupa et al.), Appleton on Dec. 6 (Alfred Bradford), Plainfield on Dec. 30 (Fran Hamer-

strom), Sauk City from Jan. 22 on (Edna Koenig), and Madison from Dec. 14 (Tom Ashman) to Jan. 1 (J. G. Waddell).

Goldfinch: When snow is not deep and weeds seeds are plentiful, this is one of the winter's most common birds; note that seven of the Christmas counts enumerated over 200 of this species. Note also that when the re-take of the Mazomanie count was taken on Feb. 14, with 18 inches of snow on the ground, the numbers were cut from 1465 (highest of all North American Christmas counts) to 238.

Red Crossbill: Only report: Eight in Portage County, Dec. 30 (Fran Hamerstrom).

White-winged Crossbill: No repeat of the influx of the previous winter; the 58 birds counted in Forest County on Dec. 31 (Roy Lound) constituted the only winter record.

Towhee: One at a feeder in Baraboo, Dec. 9-20 (Mabel Geissler); one at Kenosha, Dec. 28 (Mrs. Howard Higgins).

Savannah Sparrow: Straggler in Green Bay, Dec. 21 (Ed Cleary), first winter record for the area.

Vesper Sparrow: Late birds seen on Dec. 21 on the Beloit and Waukesha Christmas counts.

Slate-colored Junco: Numbers up in central Wisconsin.

Oregon Junco: Wintered in Vernon (Margarette Morse), Sauk (Harold Kruse) Waukesha (Emma Hoffmann) and Waupaca (Florence Peterson) Counties; noted also on Christmas counts at Mazomanie, Madison, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Wisconsin Dells and Bancroft.

Tree Sparrow: The count of 2927 in Waukesha County was the highest for any North American Christmas count.

Field Sparrow: Careful observation of flocks of Tree Sparrows and listening for the distinctive chip are paying off with yearly discoveries of wintering birds; noted this year on Christmas counts at Adams, Mazomanie, Beloit and Waukesha.

Harris' Sparrow: One noted at Beloit on Dec. 21 (Darrel Cox).

White-throated Sparrow: Appleton, Dec. 20 (Daryl Tessen); Adams County, Dec. 27 (Sam Robbins); Milwaukee and Beloit Christmas counts on Dec. 21.

Swamp Sparrow: Noted on Christmas counts in Madison, Waukesha and Milwaukee, but not noted thereafter.

Song Sparrow: Decidedly fewer than usual. One wintered at Green Bay (Ed Cleary); seen on ten other Christmas counts, but not found later than January 10.

Lapland Longspur: Scattered wintering in southern counties is suggested by Christmas count birds at Beloit and Cooksville, birds in Columbia County on Jan. 11 (Donald Cors), and a few individuals near Sauk City on Jan. 1 and Feb. 14 (Sam Robbins et al.); wintering in central Wisconsin is less certain, but 12 were seen near Shiocton on Dec. 25 (Alfred Bradford) and birds were present in Brown County from Jan. 29 on (Ed Cleary).

Snow Bunting: Few flocks in scattered locations: Polk, Langlade, Shawano, Outagamie, Waupaca, Portage, Dane and Kenosha Counties.