

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY
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TO ALL BIRD MIGRATION OBSERVERS OF THE BIOLOGICAL SURVEY:

In the copy of Bird Migration Memorandum No. 1, recently sent to you, it was stated that this series is to be continued, as it should be of increasing value as time goes on. In the effort to get the first report into your hands in time for the current migration period, the data reported by observers were not scrutinized as carefully as would be desirable. As a result certain errors crept in. It is requested, therefore, that every cooperating observer retain his copy for personal use only and not for release for formal publication. Errors should be corrected as detected.

Working up these first tables was a task of such magnitude that it was difficult in preparing them to catch all errors in ornithology in the reports coming from the different parts of the country. For example, on page 9 (Atlantic Flyway) is given a record reported for the Broad-winged Hawk on February 3 in New York, whereas a winter sight record for this species anywhere in the United States is open to question; the record should be deleted. On the same page a migration record of January 1 is given for the Eastern Sparrow Hawk in Virginia, where this is a resident species; a June 2 record of the Black-bellied Plover in Connecticut is probably for an immature nonbreeder; while a late migration date of May 15 for the Woodcock in Pennsylvania also should be deleted, as this species almost certainly breeds in the area.

Records of the Wood Pewee in March and April in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England (p. 10) are probably based upon the observer's identification of the call note, and the birds giving it were probably Starlings, which frequently mimic the Pewee and other birds. Certain it is that there are no Pewees in those States during those months.

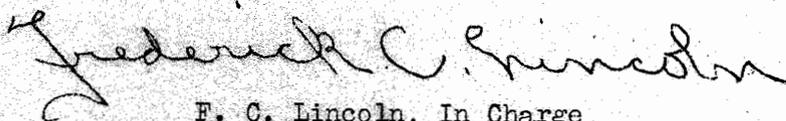
A more serious slip was the listing of reported occurrences of the Boat-tailed Grackle in Massachusetts (p. 15) and Kansas (p. 34), in which States it does not occur at any time. Also (p. 34) the Hooded Oriole is listed for Kansas and the Ringed Plover for South Dakota, in which States these species have never been recorded.

The tables on pages 37 and 38 contain several other errors in identification by observers, as the Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Least Flycatcher, Pointed Bunting, and Yellow-throated Warbler, which are not California birds; while the "Bluebird" reported may refer to either the Western or the Mountain Bluebird.

Records of a few nonmigratory birds, including the Carolina Wren and the Mockingbird, have also been entered in some of the tables.

While these and any other errors are greatly regretted, it is hoped that they will serve as an object lesson to observers. Accuracy in their reports is of first importance, and if there is any doubt about a species, it is best to omit the record entirely. Every observer should know the birds of his local list and report on them by the correct names in current usage. Loose terminology is likely to cause confusion and make it difficult to detect errors in such compilations as the one in point.

For nomenclature of North American birds, the Biological Survey follows the Check-List of the American Ornithologists' Union, 4th Edition, 1931. While it is not necessary that all observers have this work, they would at least find the pocket edition useful. This, while lacking the statement concerning ranges, gives the correct English and technical names of all species and subspecies of North American birds. Copies may be obtained at 50 cents each from the Treasurer of the A.O.U., Mr. W. L. McAtee, 3200 - 22d St., N., Cherrydale, Va.



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