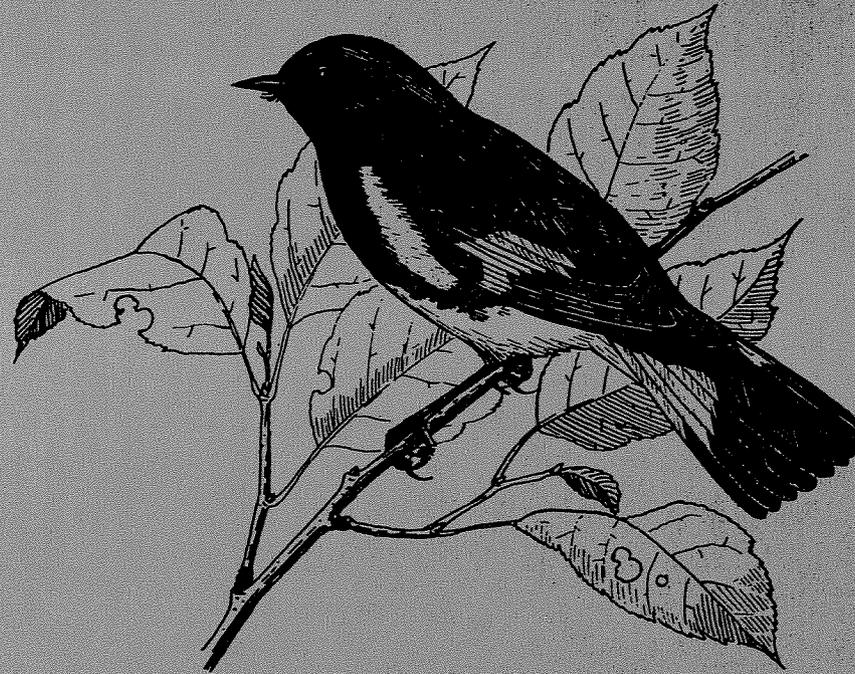


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APRIL, 1992



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Lesser Golden-Plover on Allegheny Front Mountain, West Virginia

George A. Hall

On the evening of September 25, 1991 I was walking along the Forest Service road atop the Allegheny Front Mountain about a mile north of the Red Creek Campground, when I flushed two birds from the road. They gave a flushing call with which I was unfamiliar. A dense fog which obscured the light of the setting sun made identification difficult. I was able to follow the birds and flush them several times as they were reluctant to leave the gravel road. The surrounding area was covered with a mixture of grass and heaths with a few scattered trees. The birds were obviously large shorebirds with pointed wings. As near as one could tell in the half light they were uniformly colored light brown. No good look at the bill was possible but the general appearance suggested a plover. No further identification was possible that evening.

On the morning of September 26, Virginia Byers, who was visiting the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, brought me a dead bird which she had observed at the side of the road at approximately the place where I had seen the strange birds the day before. The specimen was obviously a Lesser Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*). The bird had apparently been hit by a car.

On the evening of September 26 LeJay and Helen Ann Graffious sighted the remaining bird at approximately the same place. No further sightings were made.

The Lesser Golden Plover is only a casual fall migrant in West Virginia with most of the records coming from Mason and Cabell counties. The approximately dozen records are summarized in Hall (1983) and Kiff *et al.* (1986). In the early 1970s I had reports of Golden Plovers seen in Canaan Valley from Jim Surman, but there had been none in recent years.

According to Brooks (1944), A.S. Morgan had collected specimens in Putnam County, but when I examined Morgan's collection in 1971 no plover specimens were evident. Therefore this specimen, now in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pa. is the only state specimen.

The eastern race of the Lesser Golden-Plover breeds in the Canadian Arctic and in the spring migrates north through the Great Plains between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River. In the fall most of the population moves southeast to the coast of New England and the Maritime Provinces and then makes a long overwater flight to the wintering grounds in South America. Some of the first-year birds, however, go south by the interior route used in the spring (Palmer, 1967). West Virginia lies outside the normal route both spring and fall, and the few fall records are probably of first-year birds displaced eastward by storm systems moving from the west.

Recent studies would indicate that the western race, which nests in Alaska and winters largely on the islands of the Pacific, is a separate species. (Sibley and Monroe, 1990).

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Clay-colored Sparrow Sighted In Mason County, West Virginia

Mike Griffith

On May 2, 1992, Leon Wilson, Arline Thorn, Wendell Argabrite, and I were doing a "Century Day" bird count. This type of bird count, also known as a "Big Day," is an attempt to see as many species of birds as possible in one twenty-four hour period. While this type of bird count is not a scientific census, a team of good birders in the field all day at this time of year will frequently record interesting sight records. This day was no exception.

We had had a relatively slow day for warblers, but overall were doing very well. We had covered parts of Cabell and Wayne counties (West Virginia) and were moving north along West Virginia Route 2 in Mason County. At about 6:00 p.m., we stopped at Ashton, West Virginia, to check a farm field that for many years has been very dependable for sighting migrating Bobolinks. The Bobolinks were in their usual location, and we also observed Horned Larks and Savannah Sparrows in the vicinity.

While I was watching the Bobolinks, a sparrow hopped up on a black locust tree branch about four feet above the ground, approximately fifteen yards from me. The bird was in clear view and good light. As soon as I focused my binoculars on the bird, I knew it was not one of our "usual" sparrows. I indicated the bird's location to the others, and we all observed it with binoculars for about five minutes. The bird was very cooperative, hardly moving until it finally flew.

The sparrow was perfectly clear-breasted, with two thin, pale wing bars and a fairly long tail. Its head had a buffy median crown stripe, and there was a distinct

gray collar at the nape. Perhaps the most diagnostic field mark was a very distinct brown auricular patch with a dark outline. This ear patch appeared even more distinctive because of a very pale supercilium and malar stripe. The bird was not singing.

After discussing the field marks and consulting various field guides, we all agreed that it was a Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*). Leon, Wendell, and I had seen this species previously. I returned to the area the next morning but was not able to find the bird.

There is only one previous state record for the Clay-colored Sparrow (Hall 1983). The traditional breeding range of this sparrow is the central great plains of southern Canada and northern U.S. However, during the last few years, its range has apparently been expanding eastward. Interestingly, Wendell and I observed a singing male Clay-colored Sparrow in July of 1991 at Grande Digue, New Brunswick. If this eastward expansion continues, in the future this bird could show up in West Virginia more often.

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Allegheny Front Migration Observatory: Fall Migration 1991

George A. Hall

The Thirty-fourth year of bird banding at the Allegheny Front Observatory, Grant County, West Virginia, was a great improvement over the past several years. The weather was nearly perfect and the number of birds caught compared favorably with the best years of the past. The station was in continuous operation from August 12 to October 14 with seven additional late October days. Weather forced the closing of the station on only one day so that banding was carried out on 70 days.

A total of 8212 birds of 89 (highest ever) species was banded with a station effort of 7231 net-hours (highest total) giving capture ratio of 113.6 birds per 100 net-hours (2nd poorest). While the total of birds banded was the 5th highest, this number was inflated by the late October captures which were not made during the peak years. A more comparable figure is the number of captures through October 6 which was the 9th highest total. August captures totaled 1146, September 4945, and October 2121. The station has now banded 146,767 birds of 116 forms.

Unlike the last two years, the continental weather patterns favored good flights at this station. The season was dry, and temperatures were generally above normal. The migration pattern followed the classical pattern, with a pronounced peak at the end of August followed by a period of low captures. The major wave of the season then came on September 12-15. Both of these waves were associated with cold fronts passing to the north, a cold front which brought the first sub-freezing weather to the station arrived on September 19-20 but did not produce a flight. The latter part of September and early October showed a concentration of good flight days, and the largest fraction of birds came through at that time, although the daily captures were below those of the earlier flight. The late October weather was also warm and fairly dry and lacked the prelude to winter so evident in past seasons. The highest daily count was 455 on September 12 with 404 on September 13. On four other days the counts exceeded 300, and on seven more days the count exceeded 200. The chart below shows the seasonal pattern.

The most numerous species was the Blackpoll Warbler with 1141 bandings (45% above the 10-year average). The Black-throated Blue Warbler with 1133 bandings (36% above the 10-year average) was second. The Black-throated Green Warbler was also above that average. On the other hand several species were below the 10-year average: Tennessee Warbler (44% below), Cape May Warbler (8.8% below), Blackburnian Warbler (41% below), and Swainson's Thrush (8.8% below). Of 45 species analyzed, 28 were caught in average numbers, (within one Standard Deviation (S.D.) of the 10-year average.) Of these 13 were above the average and 12 below. Seven species were banded in numbers one S.D. above the average, and 10 were banded in numbers more than two S.D. above. No species were caught in numbers more than one S.D. below the 10-year average. Twelve species (indicated

by a (*) on the following list were banded in record high numbers and two (indicated with (†)) tied the record high.

The day-long migrant counts were continued. A total of 396 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (45 on September 11) were counted; 17,114 Blue Jays (4593 on October 4), 3033 American Goldfinches (3845 on September 11), and 5468 Monarch Butterflies (1421 on September 18). The hummingbird was well below last year's count, but the other counts were much higher.

During the season 11,685 people signed the visitor's book. These visitors came from 18 states, the District of Columbia and from Brazil, Holland and Newfoundland. As usual several elementary and high school classes visited the station.

The banders who participated this year were Lynn Barnhart, Barbara Bilborough, Walter Fye, Sue Heselton, Trudy Smith, Jo Lane Stern, Judy Ward, Leon Wilson, Charles Ziegenfus and station co-leaders Ralph Bell and George Hall. LeJay Graffious was again responsible for the shelter, and as usual Genevieve and John Findley were in charge of the net-lanes. Ivareen Pierce, who also headed up the Blue Jay-Hummingbird count, and Ken Heselton were present for extended periods of time.

The following people aided in tending nets, carrying cages, keeping records, and in many other ways: Lee Bowen, Sarah Bowen, Chris Broyles, Carolyn Conrad, Dorothy Conrad, Helen Conrad, Jim Cyphert, Bob Dean, Hickory Dean, Ruth Ann Dean, Kevin Dodge, Cindy Ellis, Elise Faike, Hal Findley, Jenny Findley, Roger Findley, Kathleen Finnegan, Dawn Fox, Jay Fox, Matt Fox, Tom Fox, Flo Giffen, Helen Ann Graffious, Jay Graffious, JoAnn Graham, Phil Graham, Mike Griffith, Diane Holsinger, Harriett Hooker, Mel Hooker, Anne Hurley, George Hurley, Patrick Hurley, Tom Hurley, Jim Huey, Jean Huey, Mike Huey, Virginia Johnson, Steve Mace, Carol McCullough, Fred McCullough, Jason McCullough, Jack Mineer, Jolene Mineer, Jonathan Mineer, Jaccalene Mineer, Jonavieve Mineer, Loretta Mullins, Ben Myers, Evelyn Myers, Larry Myers, Terra Oldham, Marilyn Ortt, Joan Pattison, Daniel Perry, Charles Pierce, Jan Quailey, Beth Ritter, Randy Ritter, Jenifer Rosano, Carl Rowe, Ruth Rowe, Miles Runner, Joe Schreiber, Don Shearer, Martha Shearer, Bill Shuler, Jamie Simpson, Melissa Simpson, Rob Simpson, Dave Skinner, Sue Skinner, Earl Smith, John Stallings, Margaret Stallings, Ryan Stallings, Roy Ward, Andy Weaks, Bill Wentzel, Cory Wentzel, Jim Wiley, and Martin Wiley.

We also thank the personnel of the Monongahela National Forest: Supervisor Jim Page, District Ranger Nancy Feakes, Recreation Specialist Monica Gallion, and others of the Potomac District Ranger Station for their cooperation and support. Thanks also to Walt Lesser of the D.N.R. for the use of the Laneville Cabin for housing and for storage of the shelter. The Brooks Bird Club supplied some financial support.

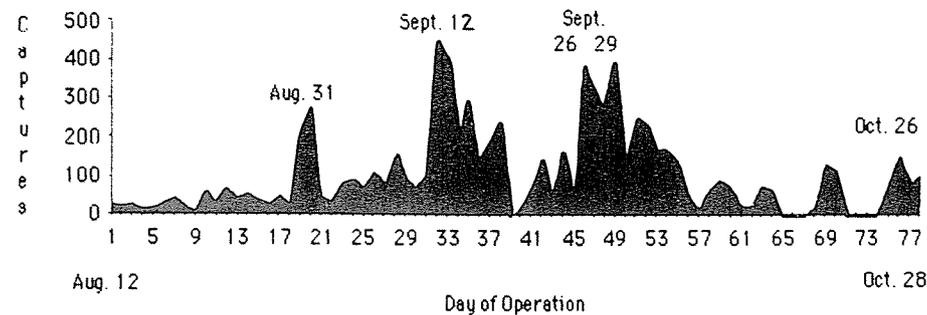
Total Numbers, Extreme Dates, Peak Numbers and Dates of Meaningful Peaks

	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Sept. 13	Oct. 6		
Cooper's Hawk	1	Aug. 12			
Merlin	1	Oct. 10			
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Sept. 22			
E. Screech-Owl	2	Sept. 9			
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N. Saw-whet Owl	*7	Aug. 29	Oct. 27		
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	Sept. 27	Oct. 8		
Downy Woodpecker	5	Sept. 27	Oct. 27		
Hairy Woodpecker	1	Sept. 29			
Northern Flicker	1	Sept. 30			
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Eastern Wood-Pewee	3	Aug. 25	Sept. 24		
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	2	Sept. 2	Sept. 26		
Acadian Flycatcher	1	Sept. 6			
Eastern Phoebe	2	Aug. 17	Sept. 8		
Blue Jay	233	Sept. 26	Oct. 13	39	Oct. 2
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Black-capped Chickadee	25	Aug. 12	Oct. 28		
Tufted Titmouse	3	Sept. 18	Sept. 27		
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	Sept. 28	Oct. 19		
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	Sept. 27	Oct. 28		
Brown Creeper	21	Sept. 28	Oct. 26		
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Carolina Wren	*5	Aug. 17	Sept. 24		
House Wren	2	Sept. 9	Sept. 28		
Winter Wren	28	Aug. 28	Oct. 27		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	496	Aug. 28	Oct. 28	101	Oct. 26
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	138	Sept. 12	Oct. 28	15	Oct. 9
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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	Sept. 6	Oct. 4		
Veery	† 19	Aug. 16	Sept. 6		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	25	Sept. 13	Oct. 5	4	Sept. 24
Swainson's Thrush	367	Aug. 16	Oct. 12	46	Sept. 26
Hermit Thrush	33	Aug. 15	Oct. 25		
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Wood Thrush	42	Aug. 26	Oct. 12	6	Sept. 28
American Robin	*39	Aug. 15	Oct. 28	12	Oct. 28
Gray Catbird	25	Aug. 12	Oct. 26		
Brown Thrasher	3	Aug. 21	Oct. 5		
Cedar Waxwing	23	Aug. 15	Oct. 19		
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White-eyed Vireo	1	Sept. 28			
European Starling	3	Oct. 2	Oct. 14		
Solitary Vireo	*31	Aug. 31	Oct. 25		
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	Aug. 31			
Warbling Vireo	2	Aug. 21	Sept. 7		
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Philadelphia Vireo	33	Sept. 8	Oct. 9		
Red-eyed Vireo	67	Aug. 14	Oct. 9	9	Sept. 12

Total Numbers, Extreme Dates, Peak Numbers and Dates of Meaningful Peaks

	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
Golden-winged Warbler	3	Aug. 12	Aug. 30		
Tennessee Warbler	549	Aug. 15	Oct. 14	57	Sept. 12
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	Sept. 28	Oct. 13		
Nashville Warbler	134	Aug. 30	Oct. 12	17	Sept. 26
Northern Parula	11	Aug. 25	Oct. 8		
Yellow Warbler	*2	Sept. 12	Sept. 22		
Chestnut-sided Warbler	*94	Aug. 13	Sept. 29	13	Aug. 30
Magnolia Warbler	399	Aug. 13	Oct. 12	46	Sept. 13
Cape May Warbler	597	Aug. 16	Oct. 8	64	Sept. 12
Bl.-throated Blue Warbler	1133	Aug. 14	Oct. 10	90	Sept. 29
Bl.-throated Green Warbler	643	Aug. 17	Oct. 10	56	Sept. 29
Blackburnian Warbler	247	Aug. 12	Oct. 4	41	Aug. 31
Pine Warbler	1	Oct. 14			
Palm Warbler	12	Sept. 13	Oct. 26		
Bay-breasted Warbler	257	Aug. 19	Oct. 9	39	Sept. 13
Blackpoll Warbler	1141	Aug. 30	Oct. 19	108	Sept. 27
Cerulean Warbler	1	Aug. 31			
Black-and-white Warbler	52	Aug. 13	Oct. 3	7	Sept. 15
American Redstart	49	Aug. 13	Oct. 11	11	Aug. 31
Worm-eating Warbler	3	Aug. 22	Aug. 30		
Ovenbird	211	Aug. 14	Oct. 9	26	Sept. 13
Northern Waterthrush	4	Aug. 21	Oct. 7		
Louisiana Waterthrush	†3	Sept. 12			
Connecticut Warbler	*34	Aug. 28	Oct. 3	5	Sept. 16
Mourning Warbler	3	Sept. 28	Oct. 1		
Common Yellowthroat	205	Aug. 12	Oct. 10	10	8/30, 9/4
Hooded Warbler	14	Aug. 13	Oct. 8		
Wilson's Warbler	23	Aug. 17	Sept. 27		
Canada Warbler	15	Aug. 14	Sept. 15		
Scarlet Tanager	*30	Aug. 25	Oct. 4	5	Sept. 12
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	24	Aug. 14	Oct. 9		
Indigo Bunting	8	Aug. 29	Sept. 30		
Rufous-sided Towhee	28	Aug. 13	Oct. 11		
Chipping Sparrow	5	Aug. 19	Oct. 11		
Field Sparrow	9	Aug. 17	Oct. 28		
Vesper Sparrow	2	Sept. 3	Sept. 8		
Savannah Sparrow	4	Aug. 14	Sept. 4		
Fox Sparrow	4	Oct. 8	Oct. 19		
Song Sparrow	22	Aug. 12	Oct. 28		
Lincoln's Sparrow	*21	Sept. 12	Oct. 25		
Swamp Sparrow	*26	Aug. 14	Oct. 28		
White-throated Sparrow	*84	Sept. 30	Oct. 28	28	Oct. 28

	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
White-crowned Sparrow	3	Oct. 13	Oct. 19		
Dark-eyed Junco	*341	Aug. 13	Oct. 28	45	Oct. 28
Purple Finch	3	Aug. 21	Oct. 9		
American Goldfinch	23	Aug. 21	Oct. 10		



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The Cowbird Dilemma

Ralph K. Bell

Many people are now getting concerned about what appears to be a significant decline in various species of birds - especially Neotropical migrants (those that winter south of the United States but nest here in North America). These include the Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, White-eyed Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, and others that nest here in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania. At the same time there has been a dramatic increases in Brown-headed Cowbirds in the United States and southern Canada.

The scientific name for the Brown-headed Cowbird is *Molothrus ater*. The Greek word *Molothros* signifies vagabond or parasite and this is a very good description. The Cowbird requires open areas, and its ancestral home was primarily the Great Plains area in the central United States where it once followed the vast Buffalo herds. The clearing of the forests by the early settlers helped the cowbird to greatly expand its range. Another requirement seems to be livestock, chiefly cattle or horses.

BBC member Chan Robbins has rightfully deplored the fragramation of our forests as some bird species seem to require large forest tracts. Others suggest that tropical deforestation has a more direct adverse impact on the Neotropical migrants. Both are valid reasons for causing a decline, but at the present time I consider the cowbird to be as big or greater immediate threat to the future of some species.

Other factors no doubt have helped contribute to the apparent decline. These include the increasing numbers of cars and high-speed highways. If each auto or truck in the U.S. killed just one bird per year, the total would run into many millions. An article by Patricia Byrnes "A Sickness In The Woods" in the *Wilderness Magazine* (1990) quotes Daniel Klem, Jr., a biologist at Muhlenberg College, who "estimates that at least 100 million birds are killed each year when they crash into window-panes in homes, shopping malls, office buildings, phone booths and cars." Also, overhead wires, bridges, fog, storms - not only on the nesting grounds but during migration all take their toll. And we must not forget predators like jays, grackles, crows, snakes, squirrels, chipmunks, foxes, racoons, and cats that feed on adult birds as well as their young and eggs. Also, pesticide use, both here and on the wintering grounds, causes mortality. Spring migrating passerines are naturally attracted to flowering fruit trees that may have just been sprayed.

But this article is to be about the Brown-headed Cowbird and what one person can do to help our so-called more desirable species of birds. I received my banding permit in 1954 and since only European Starlings and House Sparrows can be legally disposed of without a permit, I applied for and received a federal permit to get rid of any cowbirds captured in connection with my bird banding operations.

While growing up on our farm here in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania, I became quite interested in birds and kept records of both nesting and migration

dates. My first cowbird record was on March 24, 1928. Soon I became aware of the fact that the cowbird did not build nests but laid their eggs in other birds nests. The friendly Chipping Sparrows were one of my favorites at the time, and when I saw them feeding a much bigger young cowbird, instead of its own, my dislike for the cowbird began.

For many years I removed cowbird eggs from many nests and shot all cowbirds possible. this intense dislike for the cowbird continued until the 1960s when some Brooks Bird Club members argued that the cowbird was part of the "balance of nature" and should not be interfered with. I had always felt that mankind had upset the balance so much that something needed to be done about the cowbird. I remember finding a Hooded Warbler nest at a BBC Foray that contained a cowbird egg, and we had quite a discussion about removing the egg. I finally yielded and we walked away with the foreign egg still in the nest.

From that time on for a few years, I even banded all captured female cowbirds in the hope of getting recoveries and learning more about their movements and livability. Then one summer day I noticed a "giant" young cowbird being fed by a "tiny" Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. I even found a Gnatcatcher nest that contained a cowbird egg. That did it. Practically all captured cowbirds were disposed of for serveral years. But not many were captured because any new arrivals did not know about the feeders. Most species are attracted to the feeders if their own kind are around, so a new tactic was tried. I disposed of all captured female cowbirds but banded and released all males so that they would bring any newly arriving females to the feeders. No female cowbirds have been banded here since 1972, but all captured males were banded and released. Also the feeding of bird feed containing white millet seemed to help draw cowbirds to the feeders. Perhaps it should be mentioned that the number of cowbirds available for capture may be limited unless horses or cows are in the vacinity.

Table 1 shows the number of males banded and number of females disposed of (by year) since 1973. The first and last capture dates of both sexes are also given (some female capture dates were lost).

TABLE 1

Year	First Capture	Date	Last Capture	Date	Males Banded	Females Removed
1973	Mar. 2		May 16		69	44
1974	Mar. 22		May 7		36	26
1975	Mar. 8		May 2		29	11
1976	Mar. 14		May 11		148	40
1977	Mar. 29		May 16		30	20
1978	Apr. 1		May 20		48	45
1979	Apr. 3	Apr. 5	May 20	May 14	136	66
1980	Apr. 2		May 21		104	113
1981	Mar. 24		May 1		48	36
1982	Mar. 23	Mar. 27	May 2	May 13	159	177
1983	Mar. 5	Mar. 17	May 24	May 27	181	166
1984	Mar. 26	Mar. 19	May 25	May 22	79	90
1985	Mar. 26		May 14		101	111
1986	Mar. 23	Mar. 27	May 16	May 10	141	195

Year	First Capture	Date	Last Capture	Date	Males Banded	Females Removed
1987	Mar. 8	Mar. 29	May 5	May 10	79	84
1988	Mar. 24	Mar. 27	May 10	May 10	111	199
1989	Mar. 30	Mar. 4	May 19	May 25	75	124
1990	Mar. 15	Mar. 14	May 21	May 27	64	115
1991	Mar. 29	Mar. 28	May 8	May 19	49	97
					1687	1777

Total captures during spring Mar. - May migration

Some captures may be migrants that could be going farther north, but since there are no large flocks, and no recoveries north of here, it would appear that most will occupy territories nearby. In fact, four of the first six males captured and banded (on five different days) in 1977 were recaptured here in future years.

Approximately 90% of the female cowbirds were captured in April with new females showing up on most days. In April of 1988, females were captured on 28 different days and new males were banded on 25 different days.

Males are usually trap-shy after being captured and banded. Only 18 of the 181 banded in 1983 were recaptured that same year (14 of the 181 were recaptured in later years). Apparently, the male cowbird is very happy to bring any newly arriving females to the feeders. By disposing of the female cowbirds, a vacuum has been created and no doubt that is what any newly arriving females are looking for.

It is interesting to note that males outnumbered the females the first seven years and the reverse is true the last eight years. Evidently the local sex ratio is eventually skewed when the females are constantly removed year after year. Darley (1971) estimated the sex ratio at 1.3 to 1 and 1.5 to 1 in favor of males at London, Ontario.

When female cowbirds begin to lay eggs is variable with a lot depending on the weather and availability of suitable nest sites. The number of eggs laid by a female cowbird is still open to debate. According to Scott and Ankney (1983), the average female cowbird lays about 40 eggs in an eight week laying season and the cowbird shows no regression of the ovary and oviduct between clutches of eggs as do other passerines.

By using the reasoning that each female cowbird lays 40 eggs a season and there are plenty of nests, then 40 nests could be affected. But predation, storms, etc. all take their toll, so it should be safe to say that at least 10-20 nests out of every 40 should be successful. Assuming that the above estimates are correct, we should expect at least 40 more young of the more desirable species to fledge for every female cowbird that has been eliminated. Therefore, if only one million female cowbirds were disposed of, 40 million individuals of those more desirable species should fledge. Of course, not all will survive to nest the next year, but it should help slow down the declining numbers of desirable passerines.

Many short distant migrants seem to be holding their own. But these often produce two or even three broods each summer. Since cowbirds mainly parasitize nests in April to early June (in this area) those extra brooded species should survive. Neotropical migrants often produce only one brood. If their nest is found by a predator, they often have time to reneest, but if parasitized by the cowbird (and not found by a predator) their whole season is taken up raising the cowbird.

Also, the incubation period of cowbird eggs is usually less than the host species and the young cowbird gets a head start. Often, legitimate nestlings get trampled or are pushed out of the nest alive by the young cowbird.

Friedman and Kiff (1985) list 144 host species that have reared Brown-headed Cowbird young (out of 220 known parasitized species). They seem to agree with Young (1963) when he hypothesized that approximately six cowbird young are produced annually by a single adult female cowbird. This estimate may seem low (if a cowbird lays 40 eggs) until one considers why this is possible. Some host species simply eject the strange egg from their nests, some desert their nests, some cowbird eggs are laid in already deserted nests and some cowbird eggs are buried under new nesting material (as the Yellow Warbler often does). Also, predation and storms all take their toll.

The disastrous affect of the cowbird on the Kirtland's Warbler is well known. Mayfield (1977) wrote that in one year, 83% of the Kirtland's nests were paratized and 29 nests in the study sample yielded only two fledgeling warblers. But after the adult cowbirds were largely removed during the 1972-77 period, parasitism dropped to 6.1%.

Anyone interested in population dynamics should read Mayfield's article on the cowbird, how it has expanded its ancestral home in the central prairies to include much of the United States and southern Canada. Mayfield says the "balance of nature" concept is evidently not working too well with some species in much of the cowbird's present territory. Mayfield cites Louis W. Campbell's 50-plus years of records for northwestern Ohio, and there has been a constant and severe decline in Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos and the following warblers: Black-and-white, Golden-winged, Cerulean, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat and American Redstart. He then pointed out that the cowbird, an agent capable of damaging such species, was present and increasing during the same period of time.

In the 1890s here in Greene County, Pennsylvania, the American Redstart was considered abundant by J. W. Jacobs (1893), but I didn't consider it a local breeder in the 1930s. But after I started eliminating all captured female cowbirds (and just banding the males), the Redstart started nesting here on our farm. Between 1966 and 1972, not a single Redstart was recorded on our local Breeding Bird Survey route. Now, eight have been recorded in each of the last two years. Many other species have increased on the route since 1972 (Bell, 1991).

Gaines (1974) found that virtually all the passerines that have declined markedly since the turn of the century in riparian areas of the Sacramento Valley in California are species known to be highly susceptible to cowbird parasitism. Grzybowski (1991) states that the cowbird nest parasitism poses a significant threat to the Black-headed Vireo in its limited range in the western United States. It is locally affecting 80 to 100 percent of the nests in most years. And because the vireo's incubation time is roughly four days longer than that of the Brown-headed Cowbird, no vireo young will be produced from parasitized nests.

Some species are able to produce a reduced number of their own kind if only one or two cowbird eggs are in a single nest, but as the cowbird population continues to increase, more and more nests will probably contain several cowbird eggs. Bent (1965) tells of a Wood Thrush nest containing six cowbird eggs, a Scarlet Tanager

with four, Black-and-white Warbler with five, Red-eyed Vireo with six, Ovenbird with seven and a Towhee nest that contained eight cowbird eggs.

There were an estimated 5 million cowbirds on the 1989 Pine Prairie, Louisiana Christmas Bird Count, and that 5 million cowbirds is only a fraction of the total number of wintering cowbirds in the United States and Canada. Also, some people now think cowbirds and grackles are being helped during critical periods by an increasing number of people feeding birds.

Cowbirds can live for a long time. A report by Klimkiewicz & Futcher (1989) lists a male that lived 16 years, 11 months. So far, my oldest cowbird falls far short of that record — a second year male (that may still be around) was banded on April 16, 1981 and was last captured and released on April 9, 1989.

The following map shows where 11 cowbirds banded here have been recovered and three banded elsewhere have been recovered here in Greene County Pennsylvania. Closed circles indicate recovery locations and open circles indicate banding locations for the three that were recovered here.

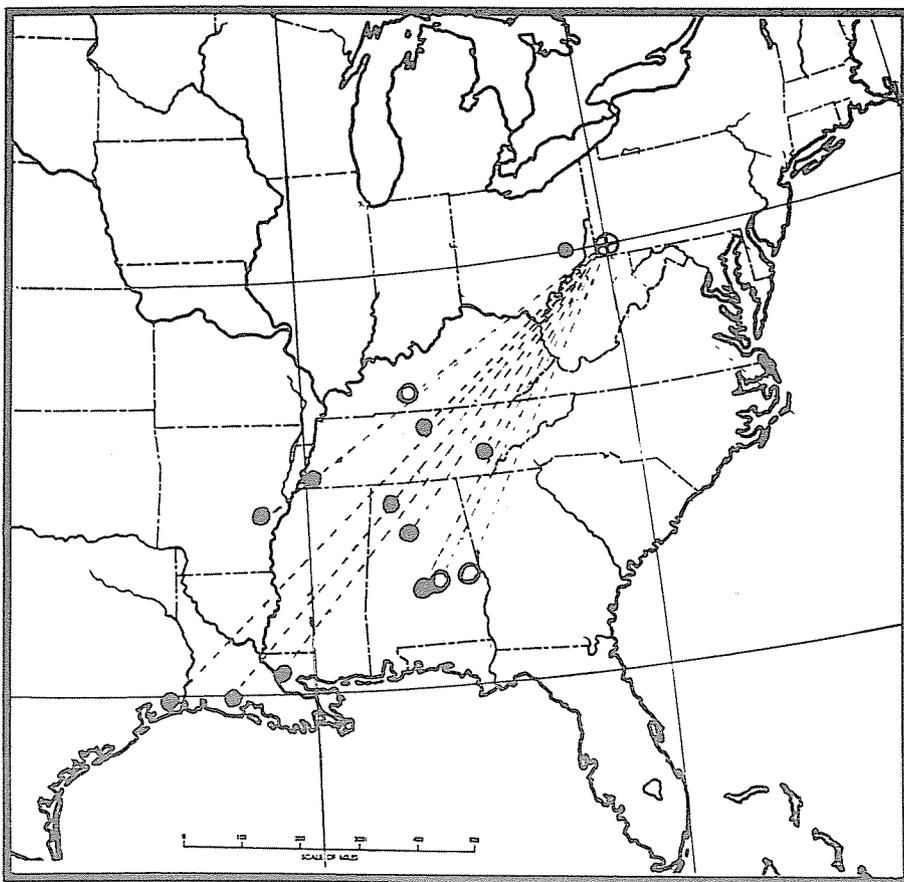


Table 2 lists the place and date of banding as well as the place and date of the recovery of those shown on the map.

TABLE 2

Band No.	Place of banding	Date	Sex	Place of Recovery	Date	How Recovered
54-120420	Clarksville, Pa.	03/26/55	M	Beaumont, Texas	12/17/55	Shot
54-120477	Clarksville, Pa.	04/10/55	F	DeWitt, Arkansas	01/15/57	Killed
54-170589	Clarksville, Pa.	09/11/55	U	Arkadelphia, Ala.	02/20/57	Found dead
55-157105	Clarksville, Pa.	07/18/56	U	Cambridge, Ohio	10/09/56	Shot
55-157196	Clarksville, Pa.	10/07/56	M	Leighton, Alabama	11/20/56	Killed
26-176546	Clarksville, Pa.	04/13/60	F	Benton, Alabama	01/10/61	Shot
821-37108	Clarksville, Pa.	04/17/75	M	Sweetwater, Texas	12/01/75	Found dead
821-37444	Clarksville, Pa.	05/09/76	M	Baton Rouge, La.	01/?/77	Found dead
861-82722	Clarksville, Pa.	05/14/80	M	Gallatin, Tenn.	03/18/81	Found dead
861-82696	Clarksville, Pa.	05/01/80	M	Kablan, La.	02/15/81	Found dead
971-44012	Clarksville, Pa.	04/24/86	M	Memphis, Tenn.	02/17/88	Found dead
291-89072	Montgomery, Ala.	11/29/60	U	Waynesburg, Pa.	Spring/61	Shot
64-101176	Auburn, Ala.	01/29/63	F	Waynesburg, Pa.	Aug./?/63	Found dead
801-84566	Roseville, Ky.	01/15/82	M	Clarksville, Pa.	04/15/02	Trapped and released

The sex of hatch-year cowbirds can be told before the first fall molt by taking wing measurements. Of 138 individual female cowbirds measured, the wing length varied between 92 and 101 mm, while males varied between 102 and 115 (184 in sample).

On August 30, 1990, I captured a hatch-year male cowbird with six cysts around the vent area. These cysts are evidently caused by a trematode (parasitic worm), I have noticed these cysts on several species of birds, including an American Robin, European Starling, Blue Jay and on at least four Purple Martins.

In conclusion, let me add that since there are millions of Brown-headed Cowbirds here in the United States, we don't need to worry about hurting the species. Any skeptics should read "Brown-headed Cowbird: agent of extermination" Mayfield (1977) and pages 52-58 in John Terborgh's new book "Where have all the Birds Gone?" If we act now, perhaps we can help save many of the colorful and beautiful singing Neotropical migrants. I am going to do my part.

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Carolina Wren and Other Lowland Species at Higher Altitudes in West Virginia

George H. Breiding

In *West Virginia Birds* with reference to the Carolina Wren, George A. Hall states, "Distribution: The Carolina Wren occurs throughout the state, but becomes less numerous at higher elevations, and is not found in the spruce forest. Nests have been found as high as 900 m in Pocahontas County, but the species becomes uncommon above 750 m. It occurs in a variety of habitats, but is most common in second-growth forest and wooded park situations. It is not usually numerous in dense mature forest."

On the evening of July 4, 1991, I heard a Carolina Wren singing at the Shaver Centre at Snowshoe ski resort area, Pocahontas County, West Virginia, elevation 4848 feet above sea level.

The bird not only sang its clear well-enunciated refrain but emitted trilling and chattering calls that identify the species. The next evening, July 5, and the following morning, July 6, I rechecked the area and on both occasions heard the unmistakable song of the Carolina Wren. Fences and other obstacles prevented me from getting close enough to get a view of the bird.

On July 5, 1991, on the section of the Highland Scenic Highway, designated Rt. 150, I heard the song of this species again at an elevation of approximately 4150 feet.

I proceeded to Rt. 39 and to the Cranberry Glades botanical area, elevation 3400 feet. About half-way around the board-walk, I heard the song of a Carolina Wren. The scolding and chattering sounds coming from various directions led me to believe there were young birds scattered about in the underbrush.

Also, Snowshoe possibly has one of the "highest" (altitudinal) summer populations of Killdeer in West Virginia. Again, on the evening of July 4, 1991, a flock of Killdeer was noisily flying and running about. Those in the air were probably flying at 4900 feet. Evidently, the clearing to establish graveled parking lots attracted the birds as potential nesting sites.

Another species I considered a "high flyer" is the Barn Swallow. It was swooping about at an elevation of over 4800 feet.

Although such a situation at Snowshoe is not to be unexpected, I was somewhat surprised to be able to see within "a few minutes" in the spruce zone a Hermit Thrush, hear the song of the Magnolia Warbler and the Dark-eyed Junco and a species of wren, the killdeer and a swallow generally associated with relatively lower elevations.

The latter three species likely would not be present at the higher elevations during the first week of July were it not for human intrusion. The construction of roads and buildings, the cleared open spaces and the interspersed landscaping of trees and shrubs contribute to or provide the requirements for each of those species.

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FIELD NOTES

FALL SEASON
SEPTEMBER THROUGH
NOVEMBER, 1991



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The weather was very mild during most of the season. The banding station at Dolly Sods, Grant Co. lost only one day due to the weather (GH). A storm in November produced some interesting finds in some areas. The sighting of **Bald Eagles**, **Ospreys** and **Peregrine Falcons** away from the hawkwatching stations is promising but the report of an eagle shooting is saddening. Songbird banding at Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, Grant Co. (GH) and hawk counts at Peters Mt., Monroe Co. (GHu) and East River Mt., Mercer Co. (AM) indicated higher numbers for several species. A wide variety of waterfowl and some of the shorebirds were found in the region during the season, but most reporters considered the numbers for these species to be low.

Loon through shorebirds — **Common Loons** were reported in November along the Ohio River, Cabell Co. (TI), on Bluestone Lake, Summers Co. (JP) and Peters Mt., Monroe Co. (WA). **Pied-billed Grebes** were in good numbers and widely spread across the area. **Double-crested Cormorants** were seen in September in the southern part of the state in Mercer (JP), Summers (JP) and Monroe (AV) counties. They were reported in October in Kanawha (HG) and Cabell (TI) counties. Paul Osburn, of East River Mt. (3,300 ft. elevation) on the Virginia/West Virginia line was awakened in the early hours of October 6 to find an **American Bittern** sitting in his driveway. **Great Blue Herons** were found in good numbers and near most of the larger streams. **Great Egrets** were reported from along the Ohio River (TI, MBC) and eighteen were seen by hawkwatchers on Peters Mt. on October 7 (GHu). The last date for **Green-backed Herons** came from Wood Co. (MBC) on October 4. The only report for **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was about this same time and also from Wood Co. (MBC).

A few **Tundra Swans** appeared in November in Kanawha (AV), Mason (TI) and Barbour (KB) counties. **Canada Geese** continue to be abundant. A **Snow Goose** was seen at Glenwood, Mason Co. (TI). The mild weather probably encouraged **Wood Ducks** to remain in numbers throughout the season. **Green-winged Teal** were seen in several areas during mid-October, but a few were still present at the end of the period. **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeons**, **Buffleheads** and **Lesser Scaup** were found in the usual waterfowl areas. The only report for **Common Goldeneyes** came from Barbour Co. (KB). **Hooded Mergansers** seemed to return to most streams in good numbers. It was unusual that all three scoters were found in the state during the season. A male **Surf Scoter** was observed near Bluefield, Mercer Co. (JP) on November 10. Kyle Bush found a **Black Scoter** in Barbour Co. on November 13 and a **White-winged Scoter** in the same area on December 2.

George Hurley reported **Broad-winged Hawks** up by 20% at Hanging Rocks, Monroe County. **Bald Eagles** and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** had also shown an

increase. The **Osprey** count at East River Mt., Mercer Co. (AM) was the second best in fourteen years. A summary for the season at both stations follows:

	Hanging Rocks	East River Mt.
Osprey	45	36
Bald Eagle	7	1
N. Harrier	9	10
Sharp-shinned Hawk	548	154
Cooper's Hawk	85	50
N. Goshawk	2	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	0
Broad-winged Hawk	3735	2295
Red-tailed Hawk	247	16
Rough-legged Hawk	0	1
Golden Eagle	2	0
Amer. Kestrel	94	64
Merlin	1	0
Peregrine Falcon	3	2
Unidentified	28	24

Black Vultures were found in their usual haunts. **Turkey Vultures** remained throughout the period with concentrations sighted in Mercer Co. (nearly 100) in early November (JP) and in Kanawha Co. (over 100) in mid-November (AV). Over 100 birds were noted in the roost near the mouth of the Bluestone River, Summers Co. in mid-October (JP). Away from the hawkwatching stations, **Ospreys** were seen along New (JP), North Fork (KB), Elk (HG) and Ohio (TI) rivers during September. Has anyone ever attempted an Osprey count along the major rivers during migration? A late **Osprey** was seen along the Ohio River on November 23 (MBC). An adult **Bald Eagle** with a wing tag and two leg bands was shot and killed in Pendleton Co. in November. It had been banded in Payne, Indiana in July, 1987 (CG). A **Bald Eagle** was seen in Jackson Co. (MBC) on September 1. Other sightings for this species included an adult in Cabell Co. (TI), and immature in Summers Co. and three adults along the South Branch River, Hampshire Co. (AV).

Four **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were banded at AFMO (GH) in September. **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's Hawks** began to stake out bird feeders by the end of the period. Little mention was made of **buteos** away from the hawkwatching stations. **Rough-legged Hawks** appeared in November - one near the Mason/Putnam Co. line (AV) and two in Wood Co. (MBC). There was no mention of **Golden Eagles** away from the hawkwatching stations. **American Kestrels** were considered to be in good numbers. **Merlins** were reported for Mercer (CC), Monroe (AV), Mason (TI), Kanawha (HG) counties and one was banded at AFMO (GH). Two **Peregrine Falcons** were seen in Wood Co. in September and one in another location in Wood Co. in October (MBC).

Several folks reported **Ruffed Grouse** drumming through the end of the period. **Wild Turkeys** continue to expand their range. Tom Igou sent along the front page of "The Herald Dispatch" with a photograph of a Wild Turkey in downtown Huntington. **N. Bobwhites** are mentioned only in the respect of their absence.

Deanna Dibartolomeo found a dead **Sora** on Hornbeck Rd., Monongalia Co. in early October (GB). **American Coots** seemed in good numbers and **Killdeer** were especially abundant. **Greater Yellow-legs** were pretty well through the region by mid-October (MBC). The late date for **Spotted Sandpipers** was November 5 in Summers County (JP). **Dunlin** were reported in November in Mercer (JP) and Mason (WA) counties. **Pectoral Sandpipers** were noted by several observers from late October to the middle of November.

Common Snipes were still in Wood Co. by the third week of November (MBC). An **American Woodcock** was seen in Kanawha Co. the third week of October (HG). **Bonaparte's**, **Ring-billed** and **Herring Gulls** were reported in Mercer (JP). Cabell (TI) and Wood (MBC) counties during November. The only report for terns was a **Common Tern** in Cabell (TI) County on November 22.

Owls through warblers — More than the usual number of reports were received for **E. Screech-Owls**. A **Snowy Owl** was present at Willow Island, Pleasants Co. from November 11-30 (MBC). A photograph of a **Barred Owl** on a third-floor railing of the Radisson Hotel, Huntington was included on the front page of "The Herald Dispatch" (TI). Seven **N. Saw-whet Owls** were banded at Allegheny Front Migration Observatory during the season (GH). Most of the **Common Nighthawks** were gone by mid-September. The last date was for Wood County on October 2 (MBC). Large numbers of **Chimney Swifts** were noted by observers, and they were pretty well gone by the middle of October. The last date for **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** was October 4 in Wood Co. (MBC). Banders at AFMO counted 396 of these birds flying by during the season.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were found in Mason (TI), Wood (MBC) Kanawha (HG) and Mercer (AM) counties. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** had returned to most areas by the second week of October. The last date for **E. Wood-Pewee** was October 23 in Kanawha Co. (HG). **E. Phoebes** seemed especially abundant in southern West Virginia in October and November (JP). Most of the swallows were gone by the end of September. Migrating flocks of **Blue Jays** were noticed over a wide area and in large numbers. Two pretty good sized roosts of **American Crows** were forming by the end of the period in Summers (JP) and Raleigh (DS) counties. George Breiding noted a flock of 30-40 **Common Ravens** along the Scenic Highway, Pocahontas Co. in late October.

Brown Creepers had returned to most areas by mid-October. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were especially numerous from the third week of October to the middle of November. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** appeared in late October. Low numbers were again indicated for **Swainson's Thrushes** at AFMO (GH). The only other mention of thrushes included **Swainson's** in Wood (MBC) and Kanawha (HG) counties and **Veery** in Kanawha (HG) County. A few **White-eyed** and **Red-eyed Vireos** were still in the region in mid-October and a **Philadelphia Vireo** was seen in Morgantown on September 21 (GB). Most of the warblers seemed to be as expected. Several contributors made note of **Orange-crowned Warblers** and **Palm** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were very obvious. At AFMO (GH), the most numerous species banded were **Blackpoll**, **Black-throated Blue**, and **Black-throated Green Warblers** and the **Tennessee**, **Cape May** and **Blackburnian Warblers** were below the ten-year average.

Tanagers through finches — **Summer Tanagers** were last seen September 29 (HG) and **Scarlet Tanagers** on October 3 (MBC). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** (MBC) and **Blue Grosbeaks** (TI) were last seen in early October. **Indigo Buntings** were gone by the last of September. A few **Field Sparrows** and one or two **Chipping Sparrows** could be found at the end of the period. Unusual was a **Lark Sparrow** in Wood Co. on October 24 (MBC). **White-throated** and a few **White-crowned Sparrows** began to appear in October. **Dark-eyed Juncos** had returned by the first of October. **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Common Grackles**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and **Rusty Blackbirds** appeared at several feeding stations after a storm on November 11. The only reports for **Pine Siskins** came from Wood (MBC) and Cabell (TI) counties. There were no reports of **Evening Grosbeaks**.

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Book Review

A Stillness in the Pines: The Ecology of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker by Robert W. McFarlane. 1992. W.W. Norton and Co., New York. 270 pp., 28 figs. & illus. \$22.95.

In spite of endangered species status, an expensive effort by government and private agencies, and extensive research, Red-cockaded Woodpecker populations continue to decline. Robert W. McFarlane, a noted expert on the species, attempts to explain the decline. Most of **A Stillness in the Pines** is a clearly written, fascinating discussion of woodpecker ecology in general with emphasis on the Red-cockaded Woodpecker in particular. Using field data from numerous researchers and many illustrations, McFarlane discusses the Red-cockaded Woodpecker's specialized nesting and dietary requirements, its extraordinarily large territorial requirement, and its cooperative breeding behavior. The author also offers an interesting discussion of the interaction between the southern pine beetle, the pine trees they feed on, and the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. In a chapter, "Woodpeckers as Agents of Biological Control," he shows how woodpeckers respond to southern pine beetle infestations, and he asks the question, is the decline of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker connected to the more frequent and widespread southern pine beetle outbreaks of recent decades?

Much has been learned, and in fact McFarlane is convinced that enough is known about the Red-cockaded Woodpecker to reverse its decline and save it from extinction. In his final two chapters, "Peckerwood Politics" and "Meanwhile, Deep in the Heart of Texas," McFarlane reveals how the political forces of the timber industry have prevented the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service from applying this knowledge for the benefit of the woodpecker. This book is must reading for all people interested in bird ecology and conservation of endangered species.

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