

Kansas Ornithological Society

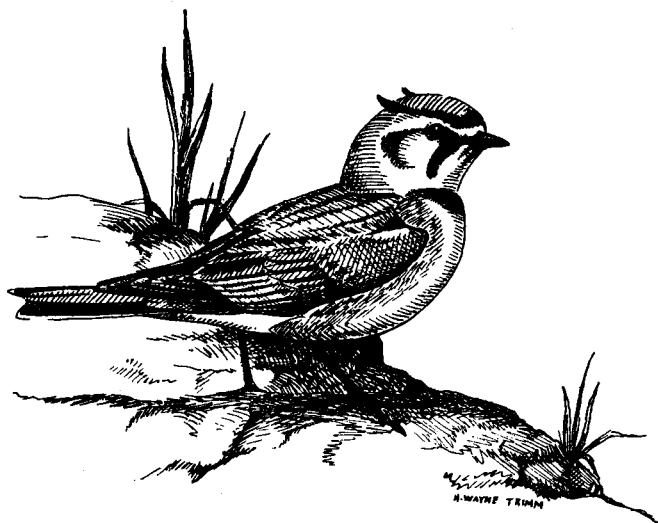
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PINE GROSBEAKS IN TOPEKA

BY ORVILLE O. RICE

On the morning of November 24, 1960, John Pat Atkinson and Marvin Kuehn of Topeka reported a flock of five or six Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*) in a brushy area on the north side of the Security Benefit Association grounds, west of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. Atkinson and Kuehn tried to take a specimen, but were unsuccessful. The following day single birds of this species were seen by me both at my home at 1663 W. 28th Street Terrace, Topeka, and at the Security Benefit Association grounds. These individuals were in flight and were recognized primarily by the three-noted flight-call, *tis-a-lip*, or *tee-tee-tew*.

The grosbeaks were reported again on December 1, 1960, by Mrs. Walter Huxman and Mrs. Charles F. Martin, Jr., of Topeka. They saw at least four individuals in the southwest corner of Gage Park, Topeka, approximately 1.5 miles eastsoutheast of the place on the Security Benefit Association's grounds where Atkinson and Kuehn had seen grosbeaks on November 24. Subsequently, the birds in Gage Park were seen irregularly in numbers of up to six individuals through January 10, 1961. A number of observers saw these birds several times, and I was fortunate in obtaining color photographs of the birds on four separate occasions.

It is with pleasure that I submit the accompanying photograph and data, which afford proof of the occurrence of the Pine Grosbeak in Kansas. The picture was taken on December 3, 1960, on High Speed Ektachrome film with a 400 mm lens at a distance of 20 feet. The sky was overcast, light conditions poor, and the resulting photograph is somewhat soft in focus.

Although the Pine Grosbeak is a heavy-bodied bird nearly the size of a Robin, its characteristic sedentary demeanor allows it to escape immediate notice, and it is possible that the species may have visited Kansas more frequently than records indicate. The following notes on the birds and the conditions under which they were seen may help other observers find grosbeaks in the future.



FIG. 1.—Male Pine Grosbeak in bush honeysuckle, Gage Park, Topeka, Kansas, December 3, 1960.

December 2, 1960, 12:30 p.m.; sky clear, wind SSW at 20 m.p.h., temperature 52° F. We saw no Pine Grosbeaks in the southwest corner of Gage Park on arrival, but soon two birds flew from the bush honeysuckle undergrowth into the branches of a nearby tree; they gave a low call-note similar to that of the Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*). They wiped their beaks against a branch in order to remove an accumulation of berry pulp and then flew back into the undergrowth. Even knowing where they were, it took us almost five minutes to see the grosbeaks again, and it was their low-pitched, "conversational" warble, rather than movement, that exposed their location. While circling one of the birds to obtain a picture, I passed within three feet of another and noticed it only after hearing it cracking seeds. Our stumbling through undergrowth, breaking twigs, and bending branches apparently had no effect on the birds. They sat nearly motionless as long as berries could be obtained and then sidled along a branch or flew a short distance to reach other berries. After a quantity of berry pulp accumulated on their beaks, the birds took time to wipe their beaks on a convenient twig and to preen themselves before resuming feeding. I finally counted six birds in the flock, four males with varying amounts of orange-red in the plumage, and two females with grayish-ochre patches on crown and rump.

December 6, 1960, 12:30 p.m.; sky clear, wind N at 15 m.p.h., temperature 37° F. Four Pine Grosbeaks were found in the usual area in Gage Park today, and they had begun to eat hawthorn fruits as well as bush honeysuckle berries. The birds appeared to be restless and used a clear, loud alarm-note (*per-lee*) as they fed. None of the birds seemed disturbed at my approach and I assumed that something else had made them anxious. Mr. T. W. Nelson reported later that a Cooper Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) had come close to capturing one of the females the day before, and it is possible that this hawk had returned to the area shortly before my visit.

Observers watching for Pine Grosbeaks should listen carefully for a Purple Finch type of song in sunny weather and for the ringing alarm note, *per-lee*. The flight-call, *tis-a-lip* or *tee-tee-tew* is also distinctive, and flight from one place to another is always at tree-top level or higher. Berry-producing shrubs should be checked carefully, and the observer should not expect this grosbeak to betray its presence by nervous movements characteristic of many other kinds of birds.—*Topeka, Kansas, January 11, 1961.*

MIDWINTER BIRD COUNT FOR 1960

By JON C. BARLOW AND ABBOT S. GAUNT

Nineteen participating stations reported 73,802 individuals of 109 bird species in the midwinter bird count of the Kansas Ornithological Society. Thus, the count for 1960 was again a representative one in both numbers of individuals and varieties of species. However, the numbers of waterfowl, approximately 16,000 birds more than last year, still were relatively low (27,694), perhaps reflecting the continuation of unfavorable environmental conditions in northern breeding areas.

The most notable sightings were of the Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) and the Cassin Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*). The latter constitutes the first sight record of the Cassin Finch for the state but, owing to the lack of substantiating data or a specimen, this species has been excluded from the table. Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) also were reported for the first time since the initiation of the K.O.S. counts. All of the above records are from Hays. The distribution (4 stations) and number (105) of Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) seemingly indicates we are having one of the periodic crossbill invasions.

Baldwin (same as previous years).—December 26; 8½ hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 135, foot 12; observers: Mrs. Ethan Allen, Amelia J. Betts (compiler), Jim Bond, Mr. and Mrs. I. L. Boyd, Barbara Boyd, Roger Boyd, Ray Couser, Katharine Kelley, Mrs. Francis McKaughan, R. F. Miller, Mrs. J. H. Nelson, Fred Purvis and Floyd Schmidt.

Camp Naish (2 mi. E Bonner Springs, Wyandotte Co.; 10% grassland, 19% brushland, 70% woods, 1% lake or river).—December 29; 7 hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.); miles: car 2, foot 10; observers: Roger Beers, David Howard, Bill Kerfoot,

John G. McPheeters, Dan Michener, Eric Shulenberger and S. D. Roth, Jr. (compiler).

Chase County (7½ mi. radius from a point near Saffordville in eastern Chase Co.; 50% grassland, 25% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 12% woods, 3% lake or river).—January 2; 6 hours (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.); miles: car 40, foot 5; observers: Helen H. Ryan and Edward J. Ryan (compiler).

Clay County (3 mi. N of Clay Center to 11 mi. N along K-15, 2 mi. wide strip; 50% field, 30% brushland, 15% woods, 5% lake or river).—December 26; 7½ hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.); miles: car 19, foot 8; observer: Ted R. Anderson (compiler).

Fostoria (same as previous years).—December 31; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 67, foot 2½; observers: Don Hunt, Mrs. Louise Latschar, Mrs. Eunice Webster and Mrs. Mabel Willis (compilers).

Halstead (all points within a 15-mile diameter circle, center 3½ miles NE of Halstead, chiefly along the Little Arkansas River and Emma Creek; 43% grassland, 11% brushland, 46% woods).—December 31; 10 hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 179, foot 13½; observers: Joan Challans, Marie Dettweiler, Ruth Rose, Alma K. Ruth, Edna L. Ruth (compiler), Donald Stevens, Terry Stevens, Ivan D. Sutton, and Debbie, Joe, Sally and Robert G. Weiner.

Hays (same as previous years).—December 28; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 60, foot 10; observers: Charles Ely (compiler), Steve Glassman, Mike Harvey, Mrs. Richard Mermis, Richard Mermis, Jr., Fred Samples, Max Schroeder, Jerrell Smith and Gerald Tomanek.

Holton (7-mile radius from courthouse square; 10% grassland, 5% cultivated fields, 25% brushland, 10% woods, 50% lake or river).—January 2; 8 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 44, foot 10; observers: Duane Alwin, Paul Besco, D. Eugene Enos (compiler), Roy McKinsey and Gary Tollefson.

Junction City (7-mile radius from KJCK radio tower; 40% grassland, 30% cultivated fields, 5% brushland, 20% woods, 5% lakes or river).—January 2; 8 hours (9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 60, foot 2½; observers: Mr. and Mrs. Ed Dailey, Bob La Shelle, Betty La Shelle, Jock La Shelle (compiler), Celia White and Mary White.

Kansas City, Kansas (Quivira Lake, Camp Towanyak, Wyandotte Lake, Memorial Park Cemetery; 10% grassland, 10% cultivated fields, 20% brushland, 30% woods, 30% lake or river).—January 1; 11 hours (6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 105, foot 9; observers: Ted Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. C. Black, Steve Black, Elizabeth Cole, Mike Furcolon, Jim Myers, Mary Louise Myers (compiler), Clarence and Evelyn Schutty and Bernice Tatum.

Lawrence (same as previous years).—January 1; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 235, foot 29; observers: Mrs. Ethan Allen, Jon Barlow, Bert Chewing (compiler), Mrs. Bert Chewing, Kirk Downing, Marshall Fauhl, Mrs. Marshall Fauhl, Martha Fauhl, Henry Fitch, John Fitch, Richard W. Fredrickson, E. R. Hall, Mrs. E. R. Hall, Roy Johnson, Richard Johnston, Bill Kerfoot, Mrs. Roy Laird, Carol Martin, Ethel Martin, Dan Michener, Mrs. John Nelson and Stanley Roth.

Linn County (same as previous years).—December 26; 12½ hours (5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 200, foot 18; observers: Marla Jo Babcock, John Carr, Rosetta Cople, Ellen Dingus, Wilson Dingus, Mrs. Wilson Dingus (compiler), Martha Ellen Fauhl, Mrs. Marshall Fauhl, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Morse, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Moody, Ed Schmidt, Ivan Sutton, J. W. Wallace and Frank Wood.

Manhattan (within a 5-mile radius of Manhattan; 35% grassland, 10% cultivated fields, 25% brushland, 20% woods and 10% lake or river).—December 26; 9 hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 30, foot 10; observers: E. K. Beals, Don Gier, H. T. Gier (compiler), Andrew Hendrickx, Lloyd Hulbert, Eugene Lewis, Paul Lewis and Philip Marvin.

Olathe (15-mile circle around Gardner Lake; 11% grassland, 17% cultivated fields, 15% brushland, 45% woods, 12% lake or river).—January 2; 8 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 130, foot 10; observers: Amelia Betts, Barbara Boyd, Ivan L. Boyd, Roger Boyd, Katharine Kelley, Mrs. Francis McKaughn, Fred Purvis and Ray Wackly (compiler).

Parsons, Altamont, Oswego (Lake McKinley, NE of Parsons, to Silcott's farm, SW of Oswego; 40% grassland, 15% cultivated fields, 15% brushland, 15% woods, 15%

lake or river).—December 27; 8 hours (8:22 a.m. to 4:20 p.m.); miles: car 89, foot 1; observers: 3, (Fern Monroe, compiler).

Pittsburg (7½-mile radius around K.S.T.C.; 10% grassland, 25% cultivated fields, 65% lake or river).—December 31; 10 hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 24, foot 10; observers: Dr. Ross H. Anderson, Bessie Boso, Dr. Gladys C. Galligar, Dr. Theodore M. Sperry (compiler).

Topeka (Shawnee County centering on State House; 20% grassland, 30% cultivated fields, 15% brushland, 20% woods, 15% lake or river).—December 31; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 170, foot 10; observers: John Pat Atkinson, L. B. Carson (compiler), Roberta Foote, Mrs. Walter Huxman, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Kingman, Marvin Kuehn, Mrs. Doris Martin, Pearl Maus, Clyde R. Morris, T. W. Nelson, Orville O. Rice, Mrs. John C. Schuler, Mrs. Emma L. Thompson, Joyce Thompson, Eugene Willet and Harold Williams.

Wichita (15-mile diameter circle centering on the confluence of the Little and Big Arkansas Rivers; 10% grassland, 20% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 10% woods, 50% lake or river).—December 26; 8½ hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 191, foot 29½; observers: 21, (O. J. Selfridge, compiler).

Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, February 20, 1961.

REVIEWS

Life-histories of Central American birds II Families Vireonidae, Sylviidae, Turdidae, Troglodytidae, Paridae, Corvidae, Hirundinidae and Tyrannidae.—Alexander F. Skutch. Berkeley, California, Cooper Ornithological Society (Pacific Coast Avifauna, no. 34), Feb. 19, 1960. 10¼ × 6¾ in. 593 pp., col. front., 100 text-figs (56 wash drawings, 40 photos, 4 line-drawings). Price \$15.00 buckram.—Ornithologists and others interested in birds everywhere will welcome the appearance of the second volume of Dr. Skutch's impressive series of contributions to our knowledge of the habits and breeding biology of Neotropical birds (the first volume, dealing with the Fringillidae, Thraupidae, Icteridae, Parulidae and Coerebidae appeared in 1954 as Pacific Coast Avif. no. 31; reviews *Auk* 1955:313, *Wilson Bull.* 1956:342). The progress of his labors "downward" in the taxonomic series through the flycatchers suggests that his work may be successfully concluded with one more volume.

That portion of these labors so far reported, as we are informed in the introduction to Part II, has extended from 1929 through 1956, in numerous parts of Central America but most especially Costa Rica, and, as all ornithologists know, has been extensively reported in a wide variety of zoological journals.

The present volume concerns itself chiefly with the accounts of those species (of the families here dealt with), which have not elsewhere been reported upon, or about which the author has acquired extensive new information since originally reporting. However, as a convenience to readers with inadequate library facilities, extensive summaries of earlier papers appear in their appropriate places, with citations of the original articles. Thus, treated either in full or in summary, are 3 kinds of vireos and greenlets, 2 "Old World warblers," 5 thrushes, 12 wrens, 2 tits, 2 jays, 3 swallows, and 31 flycatchers. The family Mimidae, which might have been expected to appear, is not included because the author's information, pertaining to but a single species, has been published elsewhere (*Condor*, 1950). A most useful and important feature of the work is the inclusion of a general summary of the information on each family, with special reference to its Central American representatives, but with full cognizance of extralimital material and thorough reference to a widespread literature. In the cases, at least, of essentially Neotropical families, these are probably the best such accounts in print (*e.g.*, tanagers, flycatchers).

The individual accounts of species, after preliminary general remarks, group the author's observations under such headings as voice, nest building, the eggs, incubation, the nestlings, summary, and others as needed, and an immense amount of information is particularized and summarized. What is not easy to convey to the reader not already familiar with it, is an idea of the charm and easy grace of Skutch's style, which makes even essentially statistical information not only palatable but at times fascinating. I may do best by quoting Dr. Alexander Wetmore's foreword to

the first volume: "One who has worked in southern forests will find in these pages many memories of happy days of tropical travel, while those to whom these delights have been denied may through them sense, in a less intimate way, the varied pleasures of observation in a completely strange and unknown world."

To the pleasant prose the colored frontispiece and numerous wash drawings of Don Eckelberry (who spent some months in Costa Rica with Dr. Skutch incident to the present project) form a fitting and useful adjunct. Always adequate, they are sometimes spirited, and seem to me a distinct improvement over his scratchboard work in the first volume. While an apparent straining for simplicity sometimes leaves his "props" and backgrounds overbare or even weak, his effects are generally good and his concepts original and bold. The fact that he rarely sees birds just as I do makes his work even more interesting to me!

The immense value of Dr. Skutch's pioneer work in filling in the behavioral meat on a morphological taxonomic skeleton cannot be overestimated. It is difficult to realize that this productive and perceptive zoologist is best known in a wide professional area as a research botanist. His work is heartily recommended to members of the Kansas Ornithological Society.—ROBERT M. MENGEL.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Annual Meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society will be held at Washburn University of Topeka, Topeka, Kansas, on April 29–30, 1961. Papers will be read on the morning and afternoon of April 29, the annual banquet will be held the evening of April 29, and the next morning will be devoted to field trips to selected areas of ornithological interest around Topeka. Information concerning lodging in Topeka and a call for papers will be distributed to members this month.

The next number of the *Bulletin* will be devoted largely to the list of members of the Society. Members in good standing as of May 6, 1961, will be listed.

Members who may find themselves in southwestern States in early April will find it of great interest to look in on the meetings of the Cooper Ornithological Society in Tucson, Arizona, April 6 through 9, 1961. In addition to regular paper sessions and field trips, a special trip at night for owls will be held under the direction of Dr. Joe T. Marshall, Jr., on April 6.

The Wilson Ornithological Society will hold its annual meeting at Huntsville, Ontario, Canada, on June 8 through 11, 1961. This will be the first meeting of the Society in Canada.

The creation of three new national wildlife ranges in Alaska in the closing months of the Eisenhower administration, an important event in the history of conservation, has received little local attention. The ranges are the Izembek Wildlife Range of 415,000 acres just east of Unimak Island of the Aleutian chain, the Kuskokwim Wildlife Range of 1,800,000 acres on the coast west of Bethel, and the Arctic Wildlife Range of 9,000,000 acres in the northeastern corner of the State adjoining the Arctic Ocean. A map and a good discussion of these ranges by Frank A. Pitelka is to be found in the last number of the *Condor* (vol. 63, no. 1, Jan., 1961, p. 99).

The Kansas Breeding Bird Survey received 652 new records of nesting birds in 1960; it is to be hoped that at least that many records will be forthcoming in 1961. Special attention could profitably be paid to certain species this year, as follows: Green Heron, hawks except the red-tailed, Bobwhite, Coot, Killdeer, all caprimulgids, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Magpie, Tufted Titmouse, wrens except the House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Warbling Vireo, all warblers, and fringillids except the Cardinal. Records are desired for all species, but those listed above are only weakly-represented in the files.

Protests originating both within and without the United States against the plan of the military authorities on Midway Island to exterminate the albatrosses of Midway have resulted in extensive modification of those plans. An alternative, and expensive, program has been undertaken, the result of which has been to remove sand dunes near aircraft runways. The dunes had been creators of air currents that had encouraged albatrosses to soar over runways, which constituted a hazard to moving aircraft. The new arrangement has reduced the number of albatrosses over runways to a degree now considered non-hazardous.—Ed.