

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg State University Digital Commons

Correspondence

Sperry-Galligar Collection

2-18-1971

Correspondence from Chandler S. Robbins to Theodore Sperry

Chandler S. Robbins

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/sperrycorrespondence>



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Bi-b-distr

Migratory Bird Populations Station
Laurel, Maryland 20810

WRes

February 18, 1971

Mr. Theodore M. Sperry
Kansas State College
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762

Dear Mr. Sperry:

Thanks very much for the copy of your interesting paper, "A Comparison of Mid-winter Bird Census Methods in Southeastern Kansas."

With the cooperation of the Maryland Ornithological Society we have been testing winter census methods in Maryland also. I am enclosing a copy of our summary for last winter. The study was repeated again this winter but the results are not all in as of this date.

Sincerely yours,

Chandler S. Robbins

Chandler S. Robbins, Chief
Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies
Division of Wildlife Research

Enclosure

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

WRes

TO : Winter Bird Survey Participants

DATE: March 11, 1971

FROM : Chief, Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies

SUBJECT: Winter Bird Survey

Editing of the Winter Bird Survey reports was completed last week and they were sent down for punching on Thursday. On the following day the computer spewed out a machine listing for each route and a summary by species. The computer also corrected three errors in addition and detected two coding errors, one punching error, and two errors that resulted from illegible entries on the forms. These errors are presently being corrected and a revised listing for your route is attached to this memo. We hope you will find it in perfect condition, but if you detect any error, please be sure to let us know.

The number of species recorded on the Winter Bird Survey in Maryland this winter was 84, which is exactly the same as last year. Species counts per route ranged from 19 to 40, with 40 species being recorded on the Sterling, Laurel and Gibson Island routes.

The Downy Woodpecker, Common Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Cardinal, ~~Slate-colored Junco~~ and Song Sparrow were found on all routes and the Blue Jay, Mockingbird, Slate-colored Junco and White-throated Sparrow on all routes except one.

The following species were reported from only one Maryland route: Pintail, Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, American Coot, Common Snipe, Great Horned Owl, Saw-whet Owl (road kill), Water Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, Pine Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, Pine Siskin and Vesper Sparrow.

Species found this year but not last year were: Wood Duck, American Coot, Great Horned Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Water Pipit, Pine Warbler, Vesper Sparrow and Fox Sparrow.

The ten commonest species this year were the Starling, Common Grackle, Common Crow, House Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Blue Jay, Cardinal, Mourning Dove and Robin.

In the progress report I sent you earlier I did not make any mention of species whose numbers appeared to be substantially higher or lower than last year--for fear that observers who had not yet covered their routes might unconsciously be stimulated to pay special attention to



Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

certain species. The remarks that follow are based on a comparison of the 37 routes that were run in both years. The most conspicuous change, aside from the almost complete absence of northern finches, was the tremendous increase in Blue Jays this winter. There were higher totals of Blue Jays on 34 of the 37 counts, 2 counts were exactly the same and there was only one route where Blue Jays showed a decrease. White-throated Sparrows had an increase in 32 areas and a decrease in 5. Song Sparrows increased on 26 counts, decreased on 7, and were the same on 4. Tree Sparrows increased on 13, were the same on 1, and decreased on 18 counts.

Red-breasted Nuthatches dropped from 40 birds on 10 routes last year to no birds this year. On the other hand, the Cedar Waxwing, which occurred on only 1 route last year, was seen on 14 routes this year with a total of 168 individuals.

There was a big jump in the Robin counts in 1971, but by plotting all of the counts by date, it is apparent that an early migration of this species arrived on February 7. The highest count prior to that date was 19 birds on February 3, and the second highest was 5 individuals. On the 7th, however, the totals ranged from 10 to 90 birds and the average count from February 7 to the end of the period was approximately 50 Robins per count.

Counts for all of the more common species were subjected to statistical analysis and we found statistically significant increases in the Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Robin and Song Sparrow, and, on the coastal plain, for the Rufous-sided Towhee.

There were some other striking changes between the two years such as a big increase in White-throated Sparrows and a decrease in Tree Sparrows, but because of the high variability between routes, the statistical test used did not show the changes to be significant at the 95% level of probability.

A chi-square test was used on the other species that showed a marked increase or decrease in total birds recorded. This test compared the number of increases and decreases, route by route, and told whether the ratio obtained was greater than would have been expected by chance alone. Bearing in mind that this test is more subject to error from weather conditions on the days of the counts than is the analysis based on actual numbers, it still permits a helpful appraisal of population trends within the area studied. The chi-square test indicated a significant increase in the Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Meadowlark, White-throated Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow, and a significant decrease in the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch and Red Crossbill.

Thanks again for your wonderful cooperation which made this Survey possible.

Chandler S. Robbins

Attachment



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Migratory Bird Populations Station
Laurel, Maryland 20810

WRes

Bi-b-distr

March 17, 1971

Mr. Theodore M. Sperry
Kansas State College
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762

Dear Mr. Sperry:

With further reference to my letter to you of February 18, I am sending you a copy of the letter I am sending to the people who participated in our Winter Bird Survey in Maryland this winter. I thought the results might be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

Chandler S. Robbins

Chandler S. Robbins, Chief
Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies
Division of Wildlife Research

Enclosure