

The Weather in Relation to Fall Migrations

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THE fall migration is over now (November 15) for the season as winter has set in in earnest and the summer birds are now far away. As compared to last season the real winter started slightly later this year—November 12 as against November 7 last season—but we had much more cold winter-like weather this year from October 17 on, and even some before that.

It has been a very unusual season all through. Our last winter was long and severe with a great amount of snow, followed by a heavy down-pour in early spring, flooding lowlands and sloughs. This provided ideal conditions for all the water fowl and those birds inhabiting the vicinity of marshes. But the cool wet summer was not so favorable for the land birds. Many started nesting much later and had fewer broods than in a normal year, yet some birds such as the Robin were around in much larger numbers than usual and nested everywhere.

The fall migration started about the normal time—August 15—with the movement of Sandpipers and gatherings of Tree Swallows. Canada Geese were first noted from further north, August 21. About August 27, after a heavy rain, a wave of Bluebirds, Robins, Vesper Sparrows and Barn Swallows gathered. The Warblers were first noted from the north September 5. On September 11 a large flock of Hawks (species unidentified) were noticed circling over and going southeast. At the beginning of the shooting season, September 17, some geese were around feeding on fields, but not as many as last year.

Frequent rain showers during the fall, and cool weather caused many birds to go south early. A Belted Kingfisher was seen September 19. This was the first one noted here for many years. The first light frost occurred on September 20, followed by more cool, wet, rainy weather, culminating in a killing frost, September 22 and 23, followed by light snow showers. Some Barn Swallows were then noted migrating south.

The 24th was very cold and on the 25th a severe frost occurred—15 degrees of it—killing all garden stuff. Some Barn Swallows were still flying around but there was no food for them. A heavy snow started at noon on the 25th and continued all the next day. It cleared on the 27th but was very cold. This finished off the Barn Swallows that were around and did not migrate in time. The Sparrows, Juncos and Robins stayed all through it but must have had a hard time finding food. The last of the Crows disappeared, going southeast, on October 1.

The last Whistling Swan was seen October 24th and Mallard Ducks on November 10. A few Juncos and Tree Sparrows were still around then, but since have either gone on or have been frozen.

The winter birds have been all seen except Waxwings, Evening Grosbeaks, October 3; Snow Buntings, October 8; Common Redpoles, October 26; Pine Grosbeaks, October 27. So far this season none of these are plentiful. One Snowy Owl was observed sitting on a haystack November 11.

The common Field Mice are very numerous here—in fact they are present in millions. They will probably do a great deal of damage to any grain left unthreshed in the fields over winter.

