

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Kit and Robin Chubb run the Avian Care and Research Foundation in Verona, where their home has become a hospital for sick and injured birds. In order to maintain this humane volunteer service the Chubbs are dependent on the generosity of others.

The injured Great Blue Heron which Joe Langlois found in December was taken to Kit. Though she was unable to tell how the bird had sustained its injuries, she nursed it back to health. It was released near the Mississippi River where there was plenty of open water and fish, as attested to by the presence of mergansers. If all went well, the bird has probably moved further south by now.

Jane Gallagher found an injured Screech Owl which she was unable to take to Verona herself. "Angel" Hector Capell, one of Kit's ambulance drivers - she dubs them "angels" - delivered the bird, which had suffered brain damage. The owl was not only nursed back to health, but its progress was videotaped from the time it could not stand, through stages when it adopted various leaning postures, and finally to the point where it was flying around the house. Once well, the owl was released not too far from Jane's place near Portland.

The North Leeds Birdwatchers (N.L.B.) recently had an informal meeting after a field trip. It was held at Bill Cutfield's home, and, as sandwiches and soup were enjoyed, results of previous field trips were discussed. Annette Mess, record keeper for the group, presented the results.

During 1986 the N.L.B. saw a total of 116 species on field trips held within the North Leeds area. A number of trips were made outside the territory and, if the results of these trips are added, the N.L.B. tallied a grand total of 160 species seen on their 1986 field trips.

In reply to a question, it is not necessary to be a member of the N.L.B. to attend field trips. If you think you are interested, try coming on a few to see if you enjoy them before committing yourself.

Some members of the N.L.B. participated in Christmas Bird Counts (C.B.C.s). Bill Cutfield, on the Thousand Island C.B.C., found a group of "black" birds which was comprised of European Starlings, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Common Grackles. However, the piece de resistance was the appearance of a striking western bird, the Yellow-headed Blackbird, among the flock. Annette Mess and a friend went to Lansdowne to see this "good" bird but were unsuccessful. As a consolation prize they discovered two Rusty Blackbirds.

The Westport C.B.C. held on December 23 yielded 42 species, including a Turkey Vulture. The Rideau Ferry C.B.C, which took place on December 29, brought forth 45 species. Two interesting birds on the count were a Black-backed Woodpecker and a wintering-over Brown Thrasher.

There have been several reports of Bald Eagles. Frank Phelan and Don Warren both saw an adult bird near Chaffeys Lock. Another was seen near the Big Rideau Lake, and Bill Cutfield saw both

an immature and an adult Bald Eagle at Red Horse Lake.

Phil Mott made an exciting observation when he spotted a Peregrine Falcon near his home. Peregrines have been in trouble due to the use of D.D.T. In order to help the species, various centres have been set up where birds are raised in captivity then hacked back to the wild. Perhaps in a later column we will tackle this subject in more depth.

This has been an interesting winter as far as winter finches are concerned. A large flock of Common Redpolls turned up in Kathy and Dennis Lawson's field. Sharp eyes picked out a different white bird in the flock, which was not a Snow Bunting. It turned out to be a Hoary Redpoll, a bird usually seen further north.

Flocks of American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks abound. All but the Pine Grosbeaks have been reported at the following persons' feeders: Katherine Sides, Kay Williams, Jacquie Wanless and John Goodman. John's "Gimpy", the lame Common Grackle, has disappeared - its fate unknown.

Winona Barker has a House Finch present at her feeder and Adele Fleming watches a wintering-over Northern Flicker at hers. Pat McManus received a bonus at the dump - two Common Ravens!

A flock of thirty Mourning doves are present at Harrison Peters's feeder in Portland and another fifteen or twenty rove around the Elgin area visiting corn cribs and feeders. Ruffed Grouse were seen feeding on deciduous tree buds near Lombardy and large numbers of Bohemian

Waxwings have been found, sometimes interspersed with a few Cedar Waxwings. A Great Horned Owl was seen silhouetted in the setting sun at the edge of a wood overlooking highway #15, and a Barred Owl sat out in the open in broad daylight by the Davis Lock Road.

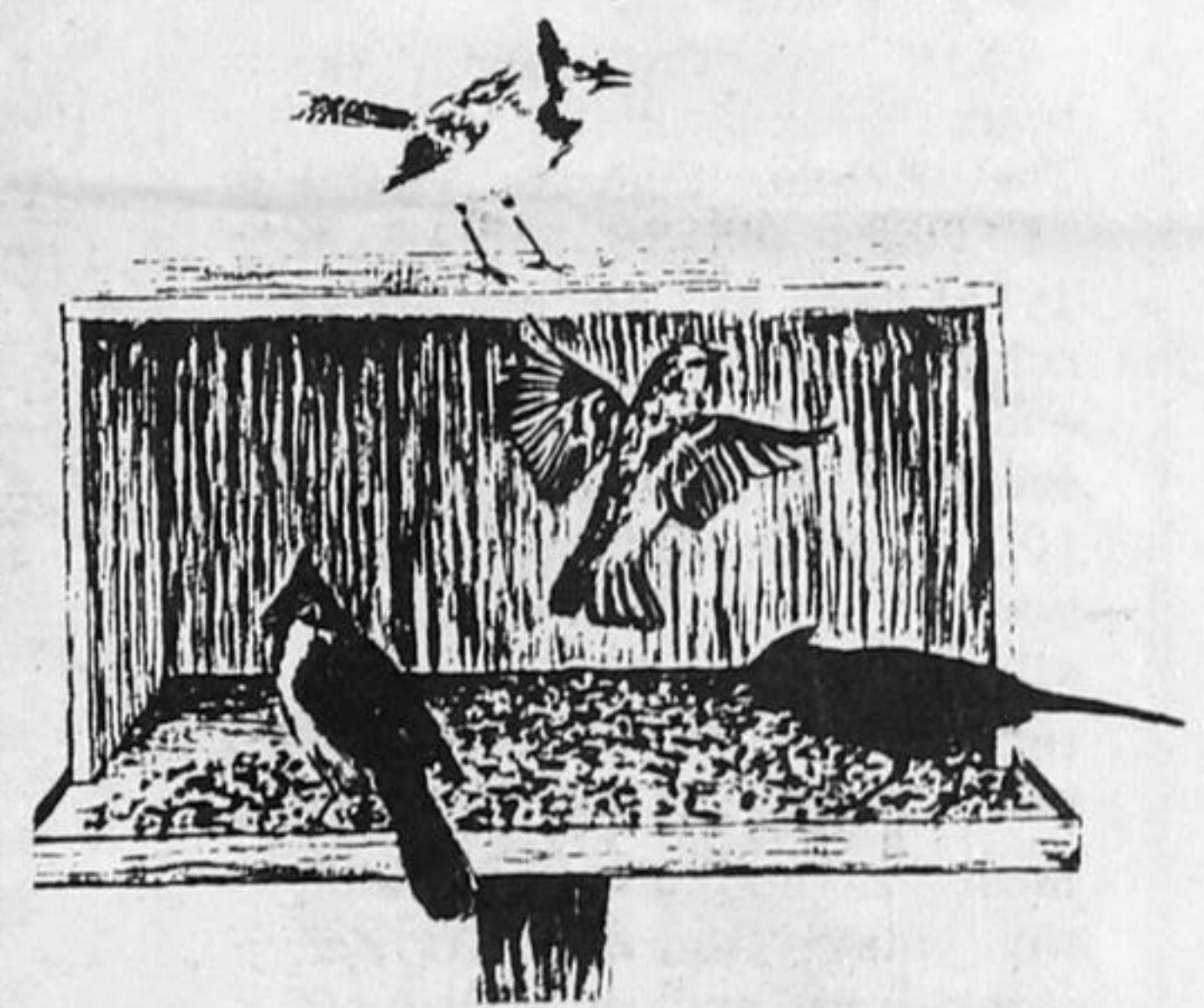
Harrison Peters discovered a Brown Creeper - a first for him. This mouse-like bird with its high-pitched call note is difficult to both see and hear during the winter. But as spring approaches, even while snow is on the ground, its long and varied breeding song will ring through the woods.

Watch for signs of spring in February! Crows will become noisier, Horned Larks will turn up along the roadsides, Screech Owls will spend more time sunning themselves at their tree holes and by the end of the month Great Horned Owls will be on the nest.

Last minute flash! Betty Blackman phoned to say that this morning, January 18, three Northern Cardinals arrived at the feeder at the Jackson residence, as ordered up in last month's column!

The bird number is 359-5178. Until next month
GOOD BIRDING.

by M. Hendrick



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