

first checking those over the holes through the side of the barn. The parent birds then went to the roof of the barn and did not return to the nest in the following 15 minutes that I watched.

These Starlings appeared to be guided to their nest by the cavity appearance of the hole and by the calls of the nestlings, and they improved in efficiency at finding the nest with added experience. Their nest attentiveness quickly waned when there were no young in the nest to guide them to the nest or to furnish search-stimulating calls.

## **Wintering Blue Grosbeaks And Yellowthroats at Chapel Hill, N.C.**

JAMES O. PULLMAN

Route 6, Box 149, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

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Two Blue Grosbeaks (*Guiraca caerulea*) spent the Winter of 1969-1970 near Chapel Hill, N.C., on the Mason Farm, a wildlife preserve of the University of North Carolina. First observed on 14 December 1969, they were seen again on at least 20 dates extending through March.

The birds, in brown plumage, frequented an area characterized by hedges of multiflora rose surrounded by large open fields of sorghum and soybean stubble. They were easily found at almost every attempt because of a tendency to perch in a "preferred zone" in the hedge, usually less than 100 feet in length. In the course of the winter, however, the zone drifted along the hedgerow, first 300 feet to the north and then 1,000 to the west.

At all times, the birds seemed healthy and fully active, this despite the fact that January temperatures averaged 9 degrees F below the 30-year mean, with weekly averages as much as 18 degrees below normal (*Monthly Weather Review* 98, 329). Solid precipitation was light, however, with just one severe ice storm which thawed quickly and no substantial snow. The birds were seen to feed (often with Cardinals) in the sorghum stubble and, once, in giant ragweed. They probably utilized the abundant rose hips as well.

The two birds were easily separated by individual plumage characteristics. Primarily, Bird A had rather thin, whitish wing bars and a rich brown crown, while the bars of Bird B were tan and the crown and nape duller with a blue-gray cast. These differences tended to become less distinct as the season progressed. On 15 February Bird A was found with a 1-inch diameter blue patch on the lower abdomen. By 15 March the blue covered a region from upper belly to vent. Plumage changes of Bird B, during this time, were much more subtle, with no patches of blue. Presumably Birds A and B were male and female respectively. On 29 March, the first soft songs were heard from Bird A. The birds had always been closely, but passively, associated. On this date, for the first time, they were frequently seen to chase each other over the fields. Unfortunately, attempts to band these birds were unsuccessful, so it is uncertain whether they joined the general fringillid exodus of early April or remained with the local breeding population.

I am aware of only one other winter record for this species in North Carolina. One was listed on the Stanly County Christmas count in 1966 (*Chat*, 31:22). Such records appear to be quite unusual for the United States as a whole. The Bent volumes on finches (US Natl. Mus., Bull. 237, p. 74) mention only that the species has been found to winter rarely in Louisiana and casually in Connecticut.

In view of the severity of the weather, it is odd that one or more Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*) also chose to winter on the Mason Farm this year. A banded male was found on 7 December and again on 17 January. An unbanded male, presumably a different bird, was seen on 1 and 8 March, and a female on 15 March. Migrating Yellowthroats normally reach Chapel Hill during the last week in March, and winter records are uncommon. The above sightings were all made in or near wet, weedy fields in which the Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) was characteristic.