

Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—September 1958

An article, *Evening Grosbeaks Fly South Again*, by B. R. Chamberlain described flights since 1952. In the winter of 1951–1952 the flight was mainly from January through early May and reached Greenville, SC. Another extensive flight began in November 1954, and there was another in the next winter, with birds reaching within nine miles of Charleston. The 1957–1958 flight was “the most extensive yet to be recorded”, extending from the end of October through the middle of May, and with birds reported in nearly all parts of the Carolinas. Chamberlain suggested that the explanation for four good flights in seven winters was that many of the birds did not return fully to their usual summer range.

The spring 1958 meeting was held at Cashiers, NC with approximately 160 members attending. The Saturday field trips tallied 88 species, surprisingly few by modern expectations, but the editor noted, “High Hampton is one of the finest areas CBC has ever chosen for a field trip”.

Only nine areas reported 1958 spring counts. A few species, notably Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Bluebird, had much lower numbers than in 1957, perhaps due to severe weather of the previous winter. Three of the counts reported Evening Grosbeaks.

In General Field Notes, names from the Fifth Edition of the AOU Checklist of North American Birds became standard for the first time. The editor noted the need to begin using such unfamiliar names as Whimbrel, Dunlin, and Rufous-sided Towhee, but noted that “comfort should be found in the belief that we are through with changes for some years to come.”

Ernest Cutts reported that there had been about 20 breeding pairs of Cattle Egrets on Drum Island in Charleston harbor in 1958. One nest with eggs and one bird were collected for the Charleston Museum, establishing the first official record of nesting in the state. The first record of the species in the state was in 1954.

In North Carolina, a Cattle Egret was found by Jeannette Bachman in Henderson, Vance Co. on 28 April 1958. It remained through 3 May and was recorded on the spring count.

Roy Brown reported a sighting of two Peregrine Falcons on Whiteside Mountain, near Highlands, Jackson Co., NC on 27 June 1958. Summer observations in the mountains were considered rare at the time.

Ernest Cutts reported that the use of traffic lights for nesting by Purple Martins seemed to be on the increase in Charleston. Martins seemed to prefer the red (top) light. The cover photo showed a Purple Martin nesting in the protruding shade of a traffic light. The shade is a complete cylinder, unlike modern shades which are open at the bottom.

Charles H. Blake reported picking up 10 dead birds at the WUNC-TV tower in Chatham Co., NC after the overcast night of 11 May 1958. A Gray-cheeked Thrush was noted without further comment as “probably *bicknelli*”). — *Kent Fiala, editor*