

## **Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—June 1960**

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B. R. Chamberlain reported on the “fifth invasion” of Evening Grosbeaks. The first known flights of Evening Grosbeaks to reach the Carolinas had been in the winter of 1952–53, and subsequent flights occurred in 1954–55, 1955–56, 1957–58, and 1959–60. Chamberlain had previously (*Chat* 22:51–54) reported on the fourth flight, and he noted that while reports on that flight had been readily offered, because the species was a life bird for many, reports on the fifth flight had been much more difficult to elicit. “As the mounting cost of sunflower seed was reckoned, enthusiasm waned”. Chamberlain received reports from 37 locations in North Carolina, 12 in South Carolina, and 4 in Georgia. The earliest report was 11 Nov but most of the reports were from mid-February to the end of April, with the final report being 15 May in Atlanta, GA. The larger groups reported were in the order of 25–50 birds, with the largest being “200 or more”. In one case a group consumed 100 pounds of sunflower seed in a week or less. Several banded birds were recovered, most having been banded in early 1959, but one individual had been banded in Massachusetts in 1953. Today, Evening Grosbeak flights seem a thing of the past, with the only substantial flights of the last two decades having been in 1993–1994 and 1995–96.

Chamberlain also summarized the 12 spring counts for 1960. There was concern over unusually low counts of Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Bluebird for the second consecutive year. Of 210 species reported, only 18 were reported in numbers of 200 or more on at least one count. Among these was House Sparrow, which is no longer seen in such numbers. A male Bachman’s Warbler was seen and heard by the entire census group near Bull’s Island.

In General Field Notes, the editors noted that “The winter of 1959–60 was one of the most severe on record in the Carolinas. Sub-freezing nights and days in March robbed our wildlife of food and water too long. Many of our birds perished.” Several people submitted reports of finding large numbers of dead birds, including Robins, Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Bluebirds, and Myrtle Warblers.

Ernest Cutts reported finding three nests of American Coot at Magnolia Gardens, the first confirmed nesting in South Carolina (although young had been observed at the same location in the previous year).

—*Kent Fiala, editor*