THE ORIOLE

A Quarterly Journal of Georgia Ornithology; Official Organ of the
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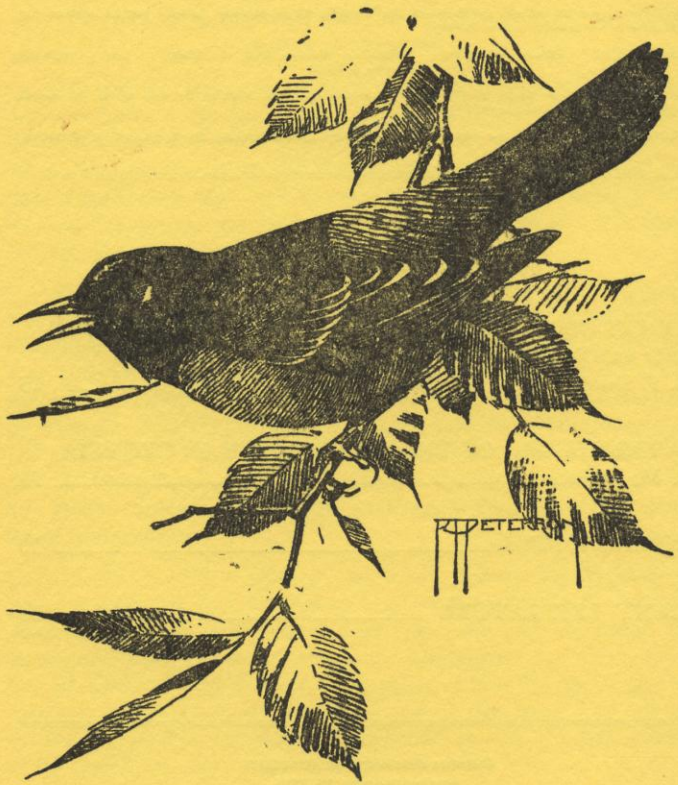

VOL. XXXV JUNE and SEPTEMBER, 1970 NOS. 2 & 3

THE ORIOLE

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CONTENTS

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VOL. XXXV JUNE and SEPTEMBER NOS. 2 & 3

TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF THE McKINNEY'S POND ROOKERY

G. Frederick Shanholtzer, Wayne J. Kuenzel, and Joseph J. Mahoney

The last 21 years have brought considerable changes in species of heron rookeries in the southeastern United States. Range expansions of the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) and the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) are to large measure responsible for the new composition of nesting colonies. Despite these dramatic differences, there is little documented evidence showing these changes quatitatively. This report presents such information and describes a large interior rookery.

McKinney's Pond Rookery, located approximately one mile southeast of Midville, Georgia, in Emanuel Co., has been the object of much ornithological interest since 1948. Several censuses of this heronry have been undertaken since that time. The first ten years of observation, including the findings of Odum and Humphries (1954), are summarized by Denton (1958). The next published record of rookery composition and activity was in 1967 when Dopson and Hopkins described the extension of White Ibis breeding range, and the division of this rookery into two groups (termed Old and New McKinney's Pond Rookeries) several hundred meters apart.

On July 4, 1968, a banding party led by Kuenzel and Mahoney obtained a species account of wading birds in the area (Table 1). On June 21, 1969, the writers, assisted by Nancy Kuenzel and Elaine Mahoney, conducted a thorough census of approximately two thirds of the Old McKinney's Pond Rookery. The threat of heat damage to eggs and nestlings prevented completion of the survey at this date. The task was finished on July 8 by Shanholtzer. Shanholtzer performed a cursory census of the New McKinney's Pond Rookery on June 6.

The nests and floral composition of the rookeries were as reported by Dopson and Hopkins (1967) with the majority of nests in Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and Tupelo (*Nyssa sp.*). Two distinct nest-

TABLE 1

Nest Totals — McKinney's Pond Rookery 1948-1969[1]

Source of Data	Denton 1958		Odum, et.al. 1954		Denton 1958		Dopson, et.al. 1967	Shanholtzer, et.al. 1970	
Census Dates	May 22, 1949	May 6, 1950	May 27, 1951	May 15, 1953	May 19, 1957	May 11, 1958	June 24 1967	July 14, 1968	June 6 - July 8, 1969[2]
Cattle Egret	—	—	—	—	—	—	189	92	788
Little Blue Heron[3]	175	50	141	90	20	4	19	8	73
Common Egret	325	0	44	239	50	35	18	4	11
White Ibis	—	—	—	—	—	—	35	10	46
Green Heron	—	—	—	1	1	0	1	0	1
Anhinga	3	8	2	3	4	5	10	1	6
Nest Totals	503	58	187	333	75	44	272	115	925

[1] Table modified from Denton (1958).

[2] Includes data from Old and New McKinney's Pond Rookery and only visibly active nests. Does not include 93 unidentified nests.

[3] Neill (1949) mentioned 45 nests of this species.

ing periods characterized the Old McKinney's Pond Rookery during 1969, the first beginning in late April and early May, and the second in early June. Only common Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*) and Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) comprised the initial nesting, which coincided with the only nesting period at the New McKinney's Pond Rookery. Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), Common Egret, Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*), and Cattle Egret nests were found in the New McKinney's Pond Rookery. The second nesting consisted of Little Blue Herons, Cattle Egrets, and White Ibis. An impressive feature of the second nesting was the synchrony with which egg laying took place—within the span of one week for most nesting pairs.

Since Little Blue Herons, Cattle Egrets, and White Ibis have similar incubation periods (Palmer, 1962; Jenni, 1969), nestling percentages (total number of nestlings x 100 ÷ total number of eggs plus nestlings) may be used to estimate nesting sequences for these species (Table 2). Nestling percentage for the Little Blue Heron lends evidence to their initial establishment. Cattle Egrets and White Ibis appear to have nested simultaneously.

No grouping of nests of different species was apparent within the rookery. Little Blue Heron nests were more or less randomly dispersed among the mass of Cattle Egret nests. White Ibis, Common Egret, and Anhinga nests were restricted to sturdier vegetation such as Tupelo, but still were randomly distributed with respect to other species' nests. White Ibis nests were located close to trunks of supporting vegetation, and in well shaded positions. Common Egret and Anhinga nests were not always protected from the sun.

Of special interest was interspecific nesting in this rookery. One Cattle Egret nest contained two Cattle Egret eggs and one White Ibis egg; one White Ibis nest contained three White Ibis eggs and one Cattle Egret egg. These observations were not followed up to determine differential survival.

Several features should be noted in Table 1. The most active year for nesting was 1969. Totals for Cattle Egrets and White Ibis were maximum to date, while Anhinga nest totals have fluctuated little over the last two decades. Little of a definitive nature can be said concerning Green Heron nesting.

Despite the recent, extensive Cattle Egret invasion, the numbers of indigenous nesting species seem to have been little affected. Common Egrets and Little Blue Herons were on the decline prior to this invasion. Anhinga numbers have remained consistent throughout this period. A

TABLE 2

Species Composition

Old McKinney's Pond Rookery 1969

Species	Data from 21 June - 8 July			Data from 21 June[1]					
	Total Nests	Tota Eggs and Nestlings	Mean Clutch Size	±	2 Standard Errors	Percent Nestlings	Sample Nests	Size Nestlings
Cattle Egret	728	1971	2.80	±	.068	15.1	555	1567
Little Blue Heron	58	164	3.03	±	.221	38.0	33	100
Common Egret	4	8	2.00	±	1.540	100.0	4	8
White Ibis	46	127	2.78	±	.226	15.7	41	114
Anhinga	6	14	2.33	±	.843	92.8	6	14[2]

[1] Due to increasing nestling mortality with time this data represents the closest approximation of true clutch size.

[2] Data from 21 June - 8 July.

similar conclusion has been reported by Dusi (1968) in Alabama. One must look elsewhere for the causes of these declines. Elimination of appropriate habitat and pesticide influences are possible explanations.

Some important factors determining rookery composition are the amount and the availability of feeding areas to nesting sites and their capacity to support numbers of nesting species. Drought and excessively wet weather, for example, can cause fluctuations in numbers of nesting pairs from year to year. In addition, drainage of swamp areas and conversion of land from forest to pasture can elicit changes of a more permanent nature. Evidence of these events has been noted in the McKinney's Pond area. Denton (1958) attributed decreased nesting activity of wading birds in the mid-1950's to severe drought conditions. He also noted that the feeding localities of the Anhinga (large artesian fed pond and Ogeechee River) were less subject to large fluctuations in water level. Potential alterations in Anhinga nesting are moderated by this factor.

Development of pasture acreage near the rookery likely augmented initial establishment of nesting Cattle Egrets and enhanced their numbers. Cattle Egrets were seen flying to this rookery from pastures up to five miles away. Flooded farmland was frequented by other species (Common Egret and Little Blue Heron) early in the nesting season.

In the future censusing of this area, visits should be timed to avoid omitting either an early or late nesting period. Early to mid-June would be recommended if only one visit could be made. On June 21, 1969, most nesting in the Old McKinney's Pond Rookery had just begun, and fledging was nearly completed at the New McKinney's Pond Rookery. Quite possibly censuses prior to 1969 missed a nesting attempt. In early August a road was constructed within a few yards of one corner of the Old McKinney's Pond Rookery. Nesting was little affected by this disturbance, but future nesting activity may be considerably altered at this site.

This study was financed by a grant from the Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund, administered by the American Museum of Natural History, and by an Ecology Traineeship from the National Institute of Health. The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, Aiken, South Carolina, under contract AT (38-1)-310 between the University of Georgia and the United States Atomic Energy Commission, supported manuscript preparation and provided research facilities. The authors sincerely appreciated the critical advice and assistance of Dr. Eugene P. Odum, Dr. Sidney Gauthreaux, Dr. Carl W. Helms, Dr. J. Whitfield Gibbons, Mr. C. William Dopson and Mr. Henry J. Kania.

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Department of Zoology, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30601.

WINTER RECORD OF THE HOUSE FINCH IN GEORGIA

C. M. Einhorn

On January 29, 1970, Mrs. Laura Galbreath of McDonough, Ga., noticed a bird among the Purple Finches at her feeders which seemed unusual. She studied it carefully, referred to an Audubon Land Bird Guide and concluded it was a female House Finch (*Carpadacus mexicanus*). The next day she saw what she was certain was a male of this same species. Noting that these birds were outside their range as mentioned in the guide, she made several phone calls to find someone with whom she could discuss the matter and she eventually reached me the evening of Feb. 5.

My wife and I went to McDonough the morning of Feb. 7. Shortly after arriving at Mrs. Galbreath's home, we saw a female House Finch (with which we had become familiar in several western states). After about an hour, we had to leave without seeing the male bird. However, before we left, we contacted a few members of the Atlanta Bird Club and requested that they spread the word and possibly arrange for photographs to be taken.

Other members of the Atlanta Bird Club who confirmed the identity of the House Finches were Fred Beers, Jack Carusos, Mr. and Mrs. John Galli, William Griffin, Bob Manns and John Paget. The birds were also seen by Mrs. J. H. Whiteman and Mrs. J. W. Jones of West Point, Ga. At least 2 males and 3 females were noted between Jan. 29 and Apr. 4.

Photographs were taken by John Galli on Feb. 22. He delivered them to me and I forwarded them to Mr. C. W. Dopson, Jr., Dept. of Zoology, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. where they were assigned Museum No. UG 3265. The House Finch is therefore now eligible for a place on the Check List of Georgia Birds as an accidental.

The appearance of this species in McDonough sparked an interest which led to the formation of the Henry County Audubon Society. 1340 Holly Lane, N. E., Atlanta, Ga. 30329.

GENERAL NOTES

IDENTIFIED FOOD ITEMS IN THE DIETS OF NESTLING LITTLE BLUE HERON, CATTLE EGRET, AND ANHINGA—Regurgitation of food by young herons and Anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*) as a means of nest protection, elimination of undigestible food particles, and as a survival instinct orientation device is a well established fact. The action, however, does not seem to be an entirely involuntary one, for many young birds seem to work at some length and with much physical effort to accomplish the feat.

This regurgitated food can in many instances be positively identified even to species, since in many cases most vertebrates and many insects retain their natural colors remarkably well.

The asynchronous hatching of chicks in ardeine species and in the Anhinga is possibly an adaptive device brought about by selection against larger broods when there is a scarcity of food. Foods brought to the species of birds under discussion apparently differed according to the age of the nestlings and also no doubt depended on the availability of different foods. For example, during a late May visit to a rookery in Dodge County, Georgia, near Abbeville, P. G. Murton and I estimated that the Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) nestling diet was almost 75 per cent crayfish (*Cambarus sp.*). On subsequent visits we determined that their diet consisted of at least 90 per cent small fishes.

Closely related species of herons in rookeries apparently do not compete for food nor does the Anhinga compete with the herons. This is related in part to their different feeding niches in the same environment. Even nest mates of a particular brood sometimes are given a diet wholly different from one another. At a Little Blue Heron nest in a rookery near Rebecca, Turner County, Ga., which contained three young on July 6, 1968, two of the nestlings regurgitated Blue Gill Bream (*Lepomis macrochirus*) fishes (the most commonly stocked farm pond fish in this area), while the other nestling regurgitated a mass of dragon fly (*Libellulidae*) nymphs or naiads. Food of the Anhinga, especially in advanced nestling stages, consisted almost entirely of fishes 100 to 150 millimeters in length. These larger fishes probably came from deeper water than the small fishes in the waders' diets.

In all but a few instances my interests have inclined toward vertebrates in identifying foods of these birds, and the material here is intended to be of a qualitative nature with a few comments on quantities where deemed desirable.

Table 1—Food items of nestling Little Blue Herons, listed in order of the number of times occurring.

Fundulus notti lineolatus—Eastern Star-headed Top Minnow
Gambusia affinis—Eastern Mosquita Fish
Cambarus sp.—crayfish
Notemigonus crysoleucas—Southeastern Golden Shiner or Roach
Lepomis macrochirus—Bluegill Bream
Notropis—minnows not identified as to species
Esox americanus—Red-fin pickerel or pike
Fundulus chrysotus—Golden Top-minow
Elassoma evergladei—Everglades Pigmy Sunfish
Etheostoma barratti—Swamp Darter
Micropterus salmoides—Large-mouth Black Bass (fingerlings)
Labidesthes sicculus—Brook Silverside
Libellulidae—Dragonfly nymphs
Rana pipiens sphenocephala—Leopard Frog (single occurrence).
Abastor erythrogrammus—Rainbow Snake (single occurrence).
Natrix sp.—unidentified water snake (single occurrence).
Notropis hypselopterus—Sailfin shiner (single occurrence).

Food items of the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) consisted of at least 90 per cent insects in various stages of development. Only four species of vertebrates were found (table 2).

Table 2. Vertebrates eaten by Cattle Egret Nestlings.

Rana pipens sphenocephala—Southern Leopard Frog (two occurrences)
Microhyla carolinensis carolinensis — Carolina Narrow-mouthed Toad (Single)
Diadophus p. punctatus—Ring-necked Snake (single occurrence)
Lygosoma laterale—Ground Skink (single occurrence)

Both of the Leopard Frogs were over 100 millimeters in length, snout to vent, and the Ring-necked Snake was 200 millimeters in length.

Food items of the Anhinga consisted almost entirely of fishes which increased in length and breadth as the nestlings grew. Some fishes over 125 millimeters in length and over 75 millimeters in breadth were regurgitated by these birds. These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Food items of Anhinga nestlings, listed in order of number of times occurring.

Lepomis macrochirus—Blue-gill bream
Centrarchus macropterus—Flier
Esox americanus—Pike
Huro salmoides—Large-mouth Bass
Erimyzon sucetta—Eastern Chubsucker (one occurrence)

Milton Hopkins, Jr., RFD 5, Box 113, Fitzgerald, Georgia, August 15, 1968

SONG SPARROW AND HOUSE WREN NESTING IN ATLANTA—Two new species have been added to the list of breeding birds of the Atlanta area with the discovery of nests of the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) in 1967 and the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) in 1969.

The possible nesting of the Song Sparrow was first suspected on May 27, 1967, when a bird was heard singing in the northeast section of the city in an apartment development through which a small stream flowed. The singing bird was perched in a black willow which grew at the top of the bank along the stream. I watched this bird for about forty-five minutes on this date and searched the likely places in the vicinity for a nest, but without success. On May 28 and 30 the bird was again observed, but its actions did not disclose a nest. On June 4 the bird, or its mate, was seen carrying food, and although the general location of the nest was determined, circumstances prevented its actual discovery. Two days laer, on June 6, the nest was found and contained four young birds which appeared to be three or four days old. It was located in rank growth on the steep bank of the stream and was eighteen inches above the ground. The near edge of the stream was approximately seven feet horizontally from the nest and about five feet below it. The main support of the nest was two rose canes to which it was flimsily attached. Among other plants in the immediate area were elderberry, Johnson grass, willow, privet, pokeberry, grape, and box elder shoots. The area was essentially open, although a box elder grew about twelve feet from the nest, and some of its lower branches overhung the nest, being about six feet above it.

On June 18 the nest was empty, and the two adult birds and one young bird were seen about two hundred feet downstream. I watched these birds for almost an hour at mid-afternoon, and during this time the male (presumably) sang only briefly. None of the birds could be found on July 1.

In the past few years there has been a number of instances reported of singing Song Sparrows in the Atlanta area in summer; so it is possible that this bird is now nesting here regularly in small numbers.

The House Wren nesting occurred in a box put up for Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) in the backyard of Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Stubbs in the Druid Hills section of northeast Atlanta. The box was located in a clear area about sixty feet square which was bounded by an outbuilding, a tall, untrimmed growth of privet, and several large pines and oaks. The box was placed ten feet from the privet and faced a group of pines about fifty feet distant. Its opening was sixty-six inches above the ground.

When I visited the site on June 20 and 21, 1969, both parent birds were busily engaged in feeding an undetermined number of young in the box. Mrs. Stubbs reported that at least some of the young birds were still in the nest late in the day on June 27. All were gone early the next morning. She also said that after leaving the nest the young birds were not seen, but the adults returned and raised another brood. Richard A. Parks, 253 Fourteenth Street, N. E., Atlanta, Georgia.

A GLOSSY IBIS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA — On April 5, 1970, a Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) was observed near Augusta, Ga., during a field trip of the Augusta Bird Club. Present on this trip were: Mrs. Carl Angerman, Miss Julie Angerman, Miss Gladys Buckner, Miss Mercedes Buckner, Jack L. Cooper, M. Ray Holzworth, Tom M. Rial, and the writer.

The Glossy Ibis was first sighted flying over a marshy area of the Merry Brothers Brick Co. Ponds at a distance of several hundred yards and was kept under constant observation as it flew to within 30 yards of the observers at the closest approach. The ibis went approximately 100 yards past the observers before circling back toward the marsh and this time passing within 45 yards of the observers. As the morning sun was at our backs, the lighting was excellent, and we could easily see the field marks such as outstretched neck, decurved bill, deep purplish color of body, and absence of white on belly or face.

This appears to be at most the third record of the Glossy Ibis for Richmond County. Burleigh (1958, Georgia Birds, U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla.) refers to a May 17, 1945, sighting near Augusta, Ga., and Tom M. Rial (personal conversation) advises of a Nov. 14, 1965, sight record when a Glossy Ibis was seen near the location of the April 5, 1970, sighting by him and five other Augusta Bird Club members. Gerald E. Knighton, 3 Linnet Loop, N. Augusta, S.C., 29841, May 15, 1970.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE IN WAYNE COUNTY, GEORGIA — A single Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) was observed circling just above treetop level over the woods and U. S. Highway 25-341 about seven miles southeast of Jesup about 1:00 P.M. on April 16, 1970. After circling about a dozen times in the near vicinity, it disappeared over the treetops toward the southwest. It was interesting to watch the undulating movements of the forks of its tail as it balanced in flight in the bright sunshine and to see its underparts as it traversed the near side of its circles and its upperparts during its flight on the far side of the circles. Apparently there have been few sightings of this bird in Georgia in recent years. Mozelle and McRae Williams, 755 Ellsworth Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30318.

SOME NOTES ON BLUEBIRDS AND PINE WARBLERS — In the northwest outskirts of Columbus the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) has steadily decreased with urbanization over the past twenty years. The present population seems to be confined to the relative few that are brooded in boxes designed and put out exclusively for them. In one of these we have noted young birds as early as March 30th (1968).

In late summer they are joined by Pine Warblers (*Dendroica pinus*) that follow them through the trees, to the birdbath, and even to a late-nesting box where bluebird young were being fed, during which operation one immature warbler waited while perched on its top.

In fall the warblers also follow them as they cling low on the trunks of pines from which vantage they search the ground for insects. The warblers also light on the ground, sometimes poking their heads beneath fallen broad leaves and turning them over.

The one occasion we've noticed that the warblers show no interest in following is when the bluebirds take off on their long flights over the treetops. On these we've seen them start out, but soon turn back. These long flights of bluebirds are not only high, but mostly direct. Noting the indicated direction we have followed the best we could by car and have found them at one of their favored retreats as far as a mile away, indicating that destination had been selected at the time of their departure.

Also, we have noted that Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) have a deterring effect on bluebirds. More often than the one species chasing the other, the tumult of the mockers madly chasing one another apparently causes the bluebirds to withdraw.

Finally, Ernest Corley and I once came upon a large wooden Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) house in a farm yard. We noted that every compartment was in use with birds going busily in and out. Imagine our surprise when we saw bluebirds feeding their young in the lower right cubicle! L. A. Wells, 322 Cascade Road, Columbus, Georgia 31904.

EARLY FALL RECORD OF BLUE GOOSE AT PINE MOUNTAIN, GA. — On October 26, 1969, my wife and I saw an immature Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) on Mountain Creek Lake in Callaway Gardens. Later we watched it feeding on land near the edge of the lake. Before leaving the Gardens, we made a report to Fred Galle who later advised that Ted Ellis had confirmed our observation the next day. A further inquiry regarding the status of the Blue Goose at the Gardens resulted in Mr. Galle's requesting Mr. Ellis to check his records on this species. Mr. Ellis commented that Blue Geese have often been seen coming in a week prior to the arrival of the Canada Geese, but that his records show the Blue Goose had not previously been sighted in the area before mid-November.

Although this is an early record for Pine Mountain, there are two slightly earlier reported records for Georgia. Burleigh (1958, Georgia Birds, U. of Okla. Press, Norman) states that "Stoddard (1942) reports three flocks flying southwestward over Grady County on October 25, 1941"; also "and Rotchford (1953) one bird on McKinley Lake at Milledgeville, October 24-26, 1952." C. M. Einhorn, 1340 Holly Lane, N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30329.

RECENT LITERATURE

MEMOIRS OF A NATURALIST, by Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla. 284 pages, four color plates, numerous black and white photographs, index. $6.95.

With the publication in 1931 of *The Bobwhite Quail: Its Habits, Preservation, and Increase,* Herbert L. Stoddard established a reputation which he has maintained undiminished as one of the outstanding ornithologists, naturalists, and wildlife managers in this nation. His memoirs are a fascinating account of his personal experiences over the years of a long and scientifically productive life, including accounts of his childhood in Florida, youth in the northern and central midwest, and more than 40 years in southwest Georgia. They provide certain insights into the strong character of one man and, through these, into the character of a kind of biologist which — regretably — seems to be becoming a truly "rare bird". The book is interesting in itself, but should be particularly so to any person who would like to know more about the people who have helped develop ornithology and natural history in Georgia. L.B.D., Jr.

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