

THE ORIOLE

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THE ORIOLE

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NOTES ON BIRDS OF GEORGIA BASED ON RECENT COLLECTIONS MADE IN THE STATE

By THOMAS D. BURLEIGH

In connection with a comprehensive publication on the bird life of Georgia, intensive field work has been carried on since September, 1945 over the larger part of the state. This has resulted in the accumulation of a large number of specimens representing both the breeding birds of Georgia and the transients as well, and has yielded information that in many cases has changed materially our knowledge of the present distribution of the various geographic races occurring in the state. It has also added several recognized races to the list now accredited to Georgia—races long suspected of being present in small numbers at least, but until now unverified by actual specimens. It will probably be several years before any detailed report will be ready for publication and in the meantime it is felt advisable that new information, as it is acquired, be made available to those interested. Accordingly, the following notes are offered at this time as the first in a series of taxonomic papers dealing with the present distribution of the bird life of Georgia.

Colaptes auratus borealis Ridgway. BOREAL FLICKER

A male taken at Atlanta on December 6, 1945 is typical of this far northern race, and is the first record for the occurrence of *borealis* in the state. Its wing measured 166 mm, and this is well above the average for this subspecies as given by Ridgway (*Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington*, Vol. 24, p. 31).

Four other specimens taken at Athens—males November 27, 1945 and February 23, 1946, females November 5, 1945 and February 18, 1946, are all referable to the Northern Flicker, *C. a. luteus*.

Myiarchus crinitus boreus Bangs. NORTHERN CRESTED FLYCATCHER

A small series of breeding birds taken in 1946 as far south as Carrollton and McDonough proved rather unexpectedly to be referable to this northern race, and it appears probable now that *boreus* is the breeding form at least as far south as the edge of the Coastal Plain. This differs radically from its status in the Georgia Check-List (1945) where it is admitted to the state list on the basis of one specimen and is assumed to be limited in its distribution during the summer months to the extreme northern counties. *Boreus* is readily distinguished from *crinitus* by its much smaller bill, this character being constant in the specimens taken on Yonah Mountain (White County) on June 28, at Athens (Clarke County) on May 24, May 26, and August 28, at Princeton

(Clarke County) on June 8, at Social Circle (Walton County) on June 13, at Atlanta (Fulton County) on August 1, at Stone Mountain (DeKalb County) on July 26, at Smyrna (Cobb County) June 17, at Carrollton (Carroll County) on July 18, and at McDonough (Henry County) on June 19. In addition to these breeding birds specimens that were apparently transients were taken at Yellow Bluff (Liberty County) on April 16, at Savannah (Chatham County) on April 18, at Nahunta (Brantley County) on April 30, and at Alma (Bacon County) on May 4.

The southern form probably occurs during the breeding season as far north as the Fall Line, but material is still lacking to determine this definitely. Specimens typical of *crinitus* have been taken at Hinesville (Liberty County) on April 16 and 26, at Pembroke (Bryan County) on April 19, at Metter (Candler County) on May 7, at Gibson (Glascok County) on June 29, and at Augusta (Richmond County) on May 7, 1933. This last locality possibly marks the extreme northern limits reached by *crinitus* in the state.

Sitta pusilla caniceps Bangs. GRAY-HEADED NUTHATCH

In common with other Florida subspecies, this race of the Brown-headed Nuthatch occurs in the Okefenokee Swamp, specimens taken at the edge of the Swamp south of Folkston on December 31, 1945 (two males and a female) being typical both with respect to the light crown and the smaller size. Specimens taken elsewhere, however, at Valdosta on November 20, 1929, at Brunswick on October 19, 1931, at Savannah on October 20, 1931, and at Richmond Hill on January 25, 1946 are intermediate in their characters. While noticeably lighter than those of birds from farther north in the state the color of the crown is variable, and without exception the measurements are those of *pusilla* rather than of *caniceps*.

Troglodytes troglodytes pullus (Burleigh). SOUTHERN WINTER WREN

In view of the indefinite status of this southern race of the Winter Wren as a transient and winter resident in Georgia, it was interesting to note that in a series of eighteen specimens taken over a period of ten years (from February 1, 1936 through January 11, 1946) nine, or an even fifty percent, were found referable to *pullus*. Six of these were from Athens (males December 8, 1928, October 11, 1945 and November 25, 1945, and females November 16, 1938, December 1, 1945 and December 8, 1945), two from Stone Mountain (females November 19, 1943 and December 10, 1944), and one from Atlanta (a male December 9, 1944).

Thryomanes bewickii altus Aldrich. APPALACHIAN BEWICK'S WREN

This recently described subspecies, distinguished from *Thryomanes b. bewickii* by its perceptibly darker plumage, nests in the extreme northern part of the state, a male taken at Blue Ridge (Fannin County) on May 29, 1945 being readily referable to *altus*. It also apparently occurs more commonly than typical *bewickii* as a transient elsewhere in Georgia, four specimens out of six that were critically examined being found to represent this race. These

were taken at Athens on October 2, 1928 and September 29, 1929, at Stone Mountain on November 19, 1943, and at Atlanta on February 1, 1946.

Turdus migratorius nigrideus Aldrich and Nutt. NEWFOUNDLAND ROBIN

Being familiar with the abundance of this far northern race throughout its breeding range, I was confident that although heretofore unrecorded in the state, *nigrideus* must occur at least casually as a transient in Georgia. Accordingly, a careful study was made of the flocks of robins that were found about Athens throughout February and March in 1946, and this assumption of mine was soon verified. It was of interest to note that these Newfoundland Robins were never found in flocks, but as single birds, rarely two or three, associated with flocks of *migratorius*. When feeding in an open field or pasture *nigrideus* could, within reasonable range, be distinguished from both *migratorius* and *achrusterus* by its perceptibly darker back, this being especially noticeable in occasional individuals where wear had eliminated completely the brown tips covering the feathers of the back during the fall and winter months. In all, twelve specimens of *nigrideus* were taken at Athens and others were doubtless overlooked, so this race can be considered now as of regular occurrence in the state. These specimens collected were males on February 2, 9, 11, 16 and 22 and March 3, 10, 12, 19, 24 and 28, and a female on March 24.

Turdus migratorius achrusterus (Batchelder). SOUTHERN ROBIN

On the basis of actual specimens taken it would appear that the Robins nesting in the northern part of the state rarely winter within their breeding range. I did not succeed in recording this southern race anywhere in the northern counties in which I worked after early October or before the first of February, my earliest record in the spring being a female taken at Athens on February 4.

Hylocichla guttata guttata (Pallas). ALASKA HERMIT THRUSH

To determine the presence of any of the now recognized western races of the Hermit Thrush in Georgia during the winter months, a series of twenty-one of these *Hylocichla* were taken in various parts of the state between October 24, 1945 and April 11, 1946. Of this number, nine, or almost fifty percent, were found to represent the Alaskan race, *guttata*. All were males, and were collected at Athens (Clarke County) on November 25, 1945 and January 30, 1946, at Auburn (Barrow County) on November 28, 1945, at Atlanta (Fulton County) on December 6, 1945, at Madison (Morgan County) on December 18, 1945, at Comer (Madison County) on January 1, 1946, at Stone Mountain (DeKalb County) on January 20, 1946, at Lawrenceville (Gwinnett County) on February 28, 1946, and at Hinesville (Liberty County) on April 11, 1946. At first glance it might appear surprising that the Alaska Hermit Thrush, heretofore unrecorded in the state, should be present in such relatively large numbers, but when the migration route followed in the fall by such species as the Gray-cheeked Thrush and the Black-poll Warbler is taken into consideration, a logical explanation suggests itself. As is well known,

these two species nest in Alaska but are unknown on the Pacific Coast as transients south of their breeding range, migrating east to the Atlantic Coast before going south to their winter quarters in South America. This indicates a long established migration route across the North American continent, and if it is consistently followed year after year by the species mentioned above, it is not unreasonable to suppose that individuals of other species nesting within the same range likewise cross the continent in order to avoid the rigors of a northern winter. Admittedly definite proof of this is lacking, but the increasing number of records of western birds occurring in the eastern United States is a strong argument in its favor.

Hylocichla ustulata almae Oberholser. WESTERN OLIVE-BACKED THRUSH

During the fall migration of 1945 only five Olive-backed Thrushes were taken, but of this number two were found to be typical of the western race, *almae*. These were a male collected at Commerce (Jackson County) on October 10, and a female collected at Athens (Clarke County) on October 21. Additional specimens from other parts of the state are needed to determine more definitely the status of both *almae* and *swainsoni* as transients in Georgia.

Geothlypis trichas trichas (Linnaeus). MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT

The exact limits of *Geothlypis trichas trichas* as a breeding bird in the state are still imperfectly known, but it would appear now that this race occurs during the summer months only in the extreme northeastern counties. Specimens taken in 1945 at Blairsville (Union County) on May 26, and at Marble Hill (Pickens County) on May 28 are typical of *trichas*. This latter locality apparently marks the farthest south and west it now nests in Georgia. The specimen taken at Atlanta on May 24, 1933 and identified by Dr. Harry C. Oberholser as *trichas*, must have been a belated transient for a small series of breeding Yellowthroats taken in 1946 as far north as Cartersville (Bartow County) are all referable to *typhicola*. These include males collected at Cartersville on June 3, at Cumming (Forsyth County) on July 23, at Atlanta (Fulton County) on July 30, at Decatur (DeKalb County) on May 9 and 18, June 15 and 16, and July 7, and at Stone Mountain (DeKalb County) on May 15. Three other males taken at Atlanta on March 21 and 26 are likewise typical of *typhicola*, and possibly also represent the breeding population of this part of the state.

Richmondia cardinalis floridana (Ridgway). FLORIDA CARDINAL

This well marked race, characterized by its smaller size and more highly colored plumage, is apparently limited in its distribution to the extreme southeastern corner of the state. It is known to occur in the Okefenokee Swamp and specimens taken at St. Marys (Camden County)—two females on April 17—and at Darien (McIntosh County)—a male on April 25—were found to be referable to *floridana*. This latter locality marks its northern limits on the coast for males collected in Liberty County in 1946, at Yellow Bluff on

April 9, and at Midway on April 12, while intermediate in their characters, were closer to *cardinalis*. In size they approached *floridana*, but in color of both the back and underparts were almost typical of the northern race.

Pipilo erythrophthalmus erythrophthalmus (Linnaeus). RED-EYED TOWHEE

The present status of this northern race of the Towhee is that of a winter resident throughout the state, but it would appear now that it is the breeding form in the extreme northeastern counties. Actually its range during the summer months coincides with that of the Maryland Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas trichas*, for south of the mountains it is replaced by *canaster*. This similarity in range is further brought out by the fact that, as with *trichas*, Pickens County is the farthest south and west it is now known to nest in Georgia. Specimens representing the breeding population and found to be typical of *erythrophthalmus*, have been taken in 1945 in Pickens County (a male at Jasper on May 28), and in 1946 in Habersham County (a male and a female at Clarksville on May 28), in White County (a male and a female on Yonah Mountain on June 28), and in Rabun County (a male at Tiger on June 25 and a male on Chestnut Mountain on June 26). Another male of this northern race, taken near Blue Ridge in Fannin County on April 17, 1945, was singing, and showed a decided interest in a female Towhee, so it too very probably represented the breeding population of this region of the state.

Pipilo erythrophthalmus rileyi Koelz. NORTHERN WHITE-EYED TOWHEE

Although doubt has been expressed as to the validity of *rileyi* it would appear now on the basis of a small series of both breeding and winter specimens from southeastern Georgia, that it is a race worthy of recognition. In measurements it is definitely larger than typical *alleni*, approaching *canaster* in this respect, and the females are easily recognized by their lighter brown coloration both above and on the throat. In the amount of white on the tail and in the wing *rileyi* is intermediate in its characters, having less than *canaster* and more than *alleni*, but its darker red flanks readily separate it from typical *canaster*. Specimens representing this recently described race were taken in 1945 in the Okefenokee Swamp (males December 29 and 30, and a female December 30), and in 1946 in Chatham County (two males on Tybee Island on January 27 and May 1), in Liberty County (males at Hinesville on January 23, April 17 and April 26, and at Allenhurst on April 10, and a female at Hinesville on January 26), in Pierce County (a male at Blackshear on May 3), in Long County (a male at Ludowici on April 4), in Bacon County (a female at Alma on May 4), in Tattnall County (a male at Glennville on April 5), in Evans County (a male at Claxton on April 28), in Telfair County (a male at McRae on April 27), and in Treutlen County (a male at Soperton on April 14). That *rileyi* is limited in its distribution in Georgia to the coastal region is evidenced by specimens taken in Candler County (at Metter) and in Toombs County (at Vidalia) that approach this race in the limited amount of white in the tail and wing but are referable to *canaster* because of their much paler flanks. The recognition of *rileyi* limits the range of *alleni*

to the Florida peninsula, and removes *alleni* from the list of races accredited to Georgia.

SAVANNAH SPARROW

In a series of forty-one Savannah Sparrows taken in various parts of Georgia from November 5, 1945 through May 8, 1946 four races were found to be represented. These can be summarized briefly as follows:

Passerculus sandwichensis savanna (Wilson). EASTERN SAVANNAH SPARROW

Ten specimens, or approximately twenty-five percent of the birds collected, were found referable to this race. They were taken in Clarke County (Athens), Oconee County (Bogart and Watkinsville), Franklin County (Lavonia), and DeKalb County (Decatur), on dates varying from November 16 (Bogart) to March 29 (Watkinsville).

Passerculus sandwichensis labradorius Howe. LABRADOR SAVANNAH SPARROW

On the basis of actual specimens taken this northern race is as common in the state as *savanna*, eight specimens being taken. They came from Clarke County (Athens), Franklin County (Lavonia) and Liberty County (Hinesville), on dates varying from December 26 (Athens) to May 8 (Athens).

Passerculus sandwichensis mediogriseus Aldrich. SOUTHEASTERN

SAVANNAH SPARROW

This recently described race is apparently far commoner as a transient and winter resident in Georgia than are the two preceeding twenty-one specimens, or slightly over fifty percent of the birds collected, being found typical of *mediogriseus*. They were taken in Clarke County (Athens), Wilkes County (Washington), and DeKalb County (Decatur), on dates varying from November 5 (Athens) to March 22 (Athens).

Passerculus sandwichensis oblitus Peters and Griscom. CHURCHILL

SAVANNAH SPARROW

This extremely dark Savannah Sparrow is apparently a rather scarce winter resident in the state, but two specimens being found to represent this well marked race. Both were females and were taken at Athens on January 13, and at Bogart on February 7.

Ammodramus saccinarius perpallidus (Coes). WESTERN

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

Although apparently uncommon during the winter months in the northern part of the state, the Grasshopper Sparrow can be found there at this season of the year in many of the fields that are overgrown with broomsedge. Being shy and rather secretive it must almost be stepped on before it makes its presence known and, consequently, is so easily overlooked that it may be commoner

than is generally supposed. The birds that nest in Georgia would appear to winter rarely, if at all, within their breeding range, for three specimens taken in 1946 that represented wintering individuals are all referable to *perpallidus*. All are males, and were collected in Troup County (LaGrange) on January 15, in Clarke County (Athens) on February 22, and in Oconee County (Watkinsville) on March 29.

Melospiza georgiana ericrypta Oberholser. NORTHERN SWAMP SPARROW

In a series of forty-two Swamp Sparrows taken in the northern half of the state from October 10, 1945 through April 23, 1946 sixteen, or a little over one-third, were found to represent *ericrypta*. They came from ten counties, and as far apart as Talbot County near the Alabama line, and Hart County on the South Carolina line, so this race can be considered as fairly common and of general distribution in northern Georgia during the winter months. Actual localities where these specimens were collected were Hart County (Hartwell), Clarke County (Athens), Oglethorpe County (Crawford), Jackson County (Commerce), Oconee County (Bogart and Watkinsville), Gwinnett County (Dacula), DeKalb County (Decatur and Lithonia), Fulton County (Atlanta), Wilkinson County (Irwinton), and Talbot County (Talbotton).

A single specimen from the coast, a female taken on Tybee Island, in Chatham County, on January 27, 1946 is also referable to *ericrypta*.

SONG SPARROW

In a series of fifty-two Song Sparrows taken in the northern half of the state from October 10, 1945 through March 20, 1946 four races were found to be represented. A thorough revision of the eastern races of *Melospiza melodia* will be necessary before other than a tentative identification of some of these specimens can be made. However, it is felt desirable to summarize briefly at this time the facts that have been brought out by a critical examination of this series of Song Sparrows.

Melospiza melodia melodia (Wilson). EASTERN SONG SPARROW

Typical *melodia* is possibly largely confined to the coast region during the winter months for but six specimens were found to represent this race. They were males taken at Princeton (Clarke County) on November 19, 1945, at Comer (Madison County) on January 11, 1946, and at Athens (Clarke County) on February 22 and March 10, 1946, and females taken at Talbotton (Talbot County) on November 1, 1945 and at Crawford (Oglethorpe County) on November 7, 1945.

Melospiza melodia euphonia Wetmore. MISSISSIPPI SONG SPARROW

Thirty-five specimens, or two-thirds of the total number collected, were found referable to this race, so *euphonia* must be considered a common transient and winter resident in at least the northern half of Georgia. Actual localities represented were Hart County (Hartwell), Elbert County (Dewey

Rose), Union County (Blairsville), Jackson County (Commerce, Jefferson and Center), Madison County (Pocatalago and Ila), Clarke County (Athens and White Hall), Wilkes County (Washington), Morgan County (Madison), Oconee County (Bogart), Walton County (Monroe), Barrow County (Auburn), DeKalb County (Decatur), Fulton County (Atlanta), and Troup County (LaGrange).

Melospiza melodia juddi Bishop. DAKOTA SONG SPARROW

Although not typical, the nine specimens listed below, all taken in 1946, are tentatively referred to this race. Some taxonomists consider *beata* as distinct from *juddi*, and should this distinction be generally accepted *beata* will be the race to which these specimens should be referred rather than *juddi*. They are males taken at Dacula (Gwinnett County) on February 12, at Ila (Madison County) on February 13, at Athens (Clarke County) on February 19 and March 9, at Lithonia (DeKalb County) on February 25, and at Decatur (DeKalb County) on February 27, and females taken at Irwinton (Wilkinson County) on January 29, at Dacula on February 12, and at Decatur on February 15.

Two other specimens from Center (Jackson County) and Bethlehem (Barrow County) apparently represent an undescribed race, and cannot be given a name at this time.

Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta, Georgia

GENERAL NOTES

INTERESTING RECORDS FROM RABUN COUNTY, GEORGIA.—On May 10-11, 1947, sixty-one members and guests of the G. O. S. met at Camp Ray on Lake Burton in Rabun County for the spring meeting. During this time observations of the bird life were made at the camp, along the roads to Clayton and Dillard, and on Rabun Bald (El. 4600 ft.). A total of 97 species was observed, the more interesting of which are recorded below.

Sharp-shinned Hawk.—May 11, a male seen by W. W. Griffin, *et al*, as it swooped on several Rough-winged Swallows feeding over Lake Burton.

Black-billed Cuckoo.—May 10, pair observed by Odum *et al*, bird with large brood patch collected by the writer.

Least Flycatcher.—Two birds calling from different territories in vicinity of Jones Tourist Camp, but no pairs were seen. A few others were heard along the highway toward Dillard.

White-breasted Nuthatch.—May 11, one bird collected and several others seen by the writer and Jimmy Major on a high ridge north of Lake Rabun.

Red-breasted Nuthatch.—A single bird seen by the writer and Major on the same ridge, May 11.

Blue-headed Vireo.—A nest under construction was observed by the group.

Worm-eating Warbler.—A single bird noted by the writer and Major on a high ridge near the lake, May 11.

Golden-winged Warbler.—Several birds seen on Rabun Bald.

Yellow Warbler.—A nest 65 feet up was found by Odum and shown to the group.

Black-throated Blue Warbler.—Nearly absent from the Lake Burton region, but was the commonest species on Rabun Bald.

Redstart.—A nest of this species seven feet up in a crotch was seen by the group.

Rusty Blackbird.—A single singing male was noted by the writer in a large field north of Dillard.

Blue Grosbeak.—Reported from Clayton by Belger and from Camp Ray area by Carusos.

Pine Siskin.—One bird seen by Odum on Rabun Bald.

White-throated Sparrow.—A small group of females was seen near Dillard.—DAVID W. JOHNSTON, *Department of Zoology, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.*

OWLS NEW TO THE ATHENS LIST.—Although presumed to occur in the vicinity of Athens neither the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo v. virginianus*) nor the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba pratincola*) has been officially credited to the avifauna of this region since neither species is listed in Thomas D. Burleigh's extensive paper on "The Birds of Athens, etc." (*Occasional Paper No. 1 G. O. S.*) or in notes published subsequently. The Great Horned Owl has been seen and heard by several observers in recent years and this season (1947) two nests were reported to me by Dan Quillian, a student at the University and member of the G. O. S. I visited one of these nests on February 23 at which time the female was incubating. The nest was located in a crotch of a large loblolly pine in a rather open pine forest which, however, was adjacent to rather heavy timber to which the birds retreated when disturbed. The other nest was reported to contain two young birds when found.

There have been rather frequent reports of Barn Owls near Athens including one bird that was supposedly shot within the town. However, the only positive record is that of a specimen found dead along the Southern Railroad tracks north of town by Robert Norris and myself.—EUGENE P. ODUM, *University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.*

FISH CROW AND TENNESSEE WARBLER AT ATHENS.—On the morning of April 10, 1947, while afield with Dr. A. A. Allen of Cornell University, who was recording bird songs, Dr. E. P. Odum, the ornithology class, and the writer observed two Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) flying over the Oconee River about one mile south of Athens. The birds were calling loudly as they flew in a southerly direction; suddenly they turned east and flew in the direction

of the Savannah River. This is apparently the first occurrence of the Fish Crow in the upper Piedmont Region of Georgia.

Burleigh (*The Birds of Athens, Clarke County, Georgia*, 1938, p. 24) lists the Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) as "exceedingly scarce in the spring and rarely seen", and presents three dates of its occurrence in May. It seems noteworthy to mention that a bird of this species was seen in song on May 7, 1947 on the Oconee River by the writer, and when collected it proved to be a male. The specimen is now in the museum at the University of Georgia.—DAVID W. JOHNSTON, *Department of Zoology, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.*

THE DICKCISSEL BREEDING NEAR ATLANTA.—On May 25, 1947 while covering a large open vetch field in the South River Section near Constitution in DeKalb County, Georgia, the writer collected an adult female Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) as it flushed from the thick cover. The presence of a distinct incubation patch indicated a nearby nest. Sure enough, a short investigation near the spot from which the bird had flushed yielded a nest and five clear blue eggs. The nest, deeply cupped and constructed of dried grasses lined with small rootlets, was situated in a thick clump of vetch approximately six inches above the ground. In order that there be no doubt as to the identification, the nest and eggs were collected and were later taken to Thomas D. Burleigh for preparation. The task of blowing the eggs was made more difficult by the fact that they were already well incubated, yet Mr. Burleigh accomplished the job with unerring skill. At the present time the specimen, bearing my original number 304, and the nest and eggs remain in my collection at Emory University.

This is apparently the first occurrence of this species in the Atlanta region, although it is known to breed regularly near Augusta and has been found sporadically near Athens and at Rising Fawn, Dade County, Georgia. Observers should look closely for the bird in the future as it may be attempting to re-establish in its long lost territory east of the Alleghenies.—WILLIAM W. GRIFFIN, *135 Peachtree Way, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia.*

DICKCISSEL AT ATHENS.—On May 18, 1947, Dave Johnston and I discovered a small colony of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) in grain fields north of town. At least three males and two females were observed at that time. Territory establishment appeared to be well underway since each male appeared to be isolated and to have several singing posts which were visited in rotation. The next day my ornithology class visited the area and everyone obtained good views of the males. During the following week the grain fields were mowed and the birds shifted to other fields nearby except for one pair that remained in a small swampy area which remained uncut. This pair acted as though nesting was underway but no nest was found. Unfortunately, pressure of other work prevented any of us from continuing further observation except for a brief visit on May 31 which revealed that the birds were still singing in the area.

Dickcissels have been reported nesting in Georgia and other eastern states only sporadically and locally during the past few years. This species is most abundant in the tall grass prairie region of the middle west and in common with some other grassland species apparently invaded the east with creation of large areas of cultivated grassland by man. Perhaps one reason why the species has not been more successful in the east is the fact that its cultivated habitat is decidedly temporary being subject to mowing or conversion to other crops during the nesting season. In Georgia the only known stable colony of recent date is the one at Augusta. Dickcissels have been known to nest at Athens in only one previous year, 1925, although there are other records of individuals seen in the spring (See Burleigh, *Occasional Paper, No. 1, G. O. S.*).—EUGENE P. ODUM, *Athens, Ga.*

EDITOR'S NOTE.—After receiving reports of the Dickcissel breeding at Athens and Atlanta this summer, the writer on June 15, 1947, made a survey of the breeding colony at Augusta. Four singing males, several females and at least one brood of fully grown young were found. It is encouraging that this colony is not only holding its own but shows an increase over last summer (1946) when only two pairs were located.—J. FRED DENTON.

NOTES ON INTERESTING NESTS NEAR ATLANTA IN 1946.—During the spring and summer of 1946 several species of birds were found nesting in the Atlanta, Georgia, region, the nests of which the writers feel worthy of record.

Eastern Green Heron: *Butorides virescens virescens*.—On May 18 the junior writer and Terry A. McGowan discovered five occupied nests of this species in a small swampy area near the south fork of Peachtree Creek off Clairmont Road in DeKalb County. On that date two nests contained 4 eggs each, one nest contained 5 eggs, one nest contained 3 eggs and one newly hatched young, and one contained 4 downy young. Two young birds just out of the nest and barely able to fly, one of which was caught, were climbing about the branches near an unoccupied nest, indicating that six pairs nested in the area during the season. On June 1 the senior writer returned to find that all nests were empty with the exception of one which contained 4 downy young, although 11 young birds were counted in the branches near the empty nests. Parent birds kept up a continuous squawking from nearby trees. All of the above nests were located from 2 to 7 feet above standing water in black willow (*Salix nigra*) or buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). The curious feature of them was that they were all within an area less than 75 feet in diameter. Four other empty nests, probably from the previous seasons, were within the same area. This species is generally a solitary nester, yet the proximity of the above nests to each other strongly suggested a colonial nesting tendency common to other herons.

Eastern Least Bittern: *Ixobrychus exilis exilis*.—On May 18 Major and McGowan found a nest of this species in the same swampy area described above. On that date the nest contained three eggs. On June 1 Griffin found the eggs to be addled although the female bird was seen in the vicinity of the nest.

Ants had cracked the eggs and were destroying them on June 9, at which time no adult birds were seen in the area by Griffin. The nest was located about one foot above the water in a clump of rushes (*Juncus sp.*) and buttonbush and was a bulky structure about 14 inches in diameter constructed entirely of interwoven rushes. This swamp is located only a few hundred yards from the pond where the species was found breeding in 1944 and 1945 by Major and Johnston (*Oriole*, 9: 36, 1944; 10: 56, 1945).

King Rail: *Rallus elegans elegans*.—On May 5 while wading through a stretch of open marsh in the headwaters of the Flint River in Clayton County, Georgia, the writers flushed a rail of this species. After several minutes search a nest was found containing thirteen eggs. The nest was constructed of grasses and sedges and was located in a clump of cattails (*Typha latifolia*) and unidentified sedge about four inches above the water. While examining and photographing the nest, both birds of the pair could be heard nearby in the marsh. One adult approached to within 15 feet of us and attempted to attract our attention by uttering high pitched "chuck" notes, splashing water, and quivering its drooped wings and spread tail. Although this species is probably a fairly common breeding bird in fresh water marshes throughout Georgia, very few actual nests are mentioned in the literature, this being the third for the Atlanta area.

Prothonotary Warbler: *Protonotaria citrea citrea*.—A nest of this species was found by the senior writer in a hole in a dead stub of black willow in the swampy area in DeKalb County previously mentioned. The nest when found on June 1 contained young birds, and judging by the frequency of feeding by the parents they were nearly ready to leave the nest. The number of young was undetermined; the nesting cavity was approximately 10 feet above the water. Prothonotary Warblers are known by the writers to breed along the Flint River headquarters in Clayton County and along the Chattahoochee River in certain places, and they may be expected to occur in other spots where suitable habitat exists. The only previous nest recorded from the region, however, was found by Earle R. Greene near South River in Fulton County (Greene, *The Birds of the Atlanta, Georgia, Area*, 1933).—WILLIAM W. GRIFFIN, 135 Peachtree Way, and JAMES C. MAJOR, 984 Forrest Road, Atlanta, Ga.

KING RAIL NESTING IN DEKALB COUNTY NEAR ATLANTA.—On May 18, 1947 a nest of the King Rail (*Rallus elegans elegans*) was found near the U. S. Prison "Honor Farm" some five miles southeast of Atlanta. This nest was made mostly of coarse marsh grasses and was placed in a clump of live grasses about four inches above the ground level. The nest contained nine eggs, two or three appearing cracked. They were warm to the touch. The color was light brown with irregular chocolate splotches. A bird (female?) was heard calling nearby and was flushed a few hundred feet away from the nest. It was clearly seen in flight by both observers. The nest was photographed by Bell at the time.

The nest site was in a small muddy pasture with considerable marsh grass

in irregular clumps, blackberries and groups of other shrubs without much standing water at the time.—GLENN W. BELL and RAY C. WERNER, Atlanta, Georgia.

CAPE MAY WARBLERS NUMEROUS IN SPRING MIGRATION.—Cape May Warblers (*Dendroica tigrina*) seemed very abundant this spring. On May 4, 1947, at my home on Wildwood Road, N. E., I saw a number of males and, as it was Sunday, I checked several times during the day. I had never seen this species around my property although it is a common migrant in the area.

The birds fed continuously and sang regularly in oak, tulip poplar and pine trees all day, often coming down to a height of 5-10 feet when the striking plumage (male) was easily seen. I had opportunity to learn the song which was very soft, sometimes almost a whisper. The notes sounded like *SWEE*, *SWEE*, *SWEE*, *sweet*, *sweet* usually repeated four or five times with no special emphasis, often the last notes lighter as stated, almost a whisper song. Singing was continuous most of the day. It was a treat to see this warbler at close range.—RAY C. WERNER, Atlanta, Georgia.

A NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE AND HABITS OF THE CERULEAN WARBLER AT AUGUSTA.—In an earlier paper (1944, *Oriole*, 9:30-31) I reported the first record of the Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) in Richmond County, Georgia. During the past fall (1946) when opportunity occurred I searched especially for this species with the idea not only of obtaining additional records but also of learning something of its status, the circumstances of its occurrence and its habits while in the Augusta area. The effort was not without success for records of this warbler in Richmond County were obtained on August 21, August 31 and September 14. Specimens were collected on the first two occasions. On August 21 this species was particularly numerous in the flocks of migrating warblers, equaling or out-numbering the abundant Parulas.

The status of the Cerulean Warbler in the Augusta area is still rather indefinite. However, it is my opinion that the bird is a regular and fairly common fall migrant here and can be recorded any fall if looked for in suitable habitat when weather conditions are favorable. Since that is probably true of other localities along the Fall Line and in the upper Coastal Plain, the absence of records from this area suggests that the bird has been overlooked. A brief description of the circumstances accompanying its occurrence and of its habits at Augusta may help others in locating this warbler.

Undoubtedly the majority of the Cerulean Warblers that pass south in fall through the Augusta area pass over without stopping. Only when adverse weather forces them to land are they to be found. The weather condition forcing such a descent is a heavy pre-dawn thunder shower. All three mornings last fall when the birds were found were preceded by such thunder storms.

At Augusta the birds have been found only in stretches of timber along the bank of the Savannah River, possibly indicating that they follow the course of

the river in migration. Here they feed in the tops of the tallest trees, cottonwoods, sycamores, water oak, etc., where they are very inconspicuous among the thick foliage which in many cases is draped with Spanish moss. Unless particularly searched for their presence is not likely to be noted.

By the time Cerulean Warblers reach Augusta in fall the habitat in which they have been found is swarming with Parula Warblers, the majority of which are young of the year. Here the Ceruleans mix with the Parulas, and since there is a great deal of similarity in the appearance of the Ceruleans and immature Parulas, it is only by careful scrutiny of each bird that the Ceruleans can be detected. The one reliable character by which the two species can be separated when feeding high overhead is the yellowish patches on the breast of the immature Parulas. These patches are always acquired by the time the Ceruleans reach Augusta.

While at Augusta in fall Cerulean Warblers sing very little, only an occasional song having been heard. On the other hand, the Parulas with which they associate keep up a continuous buzz of song. The similarity in the quality of the songs of the two species and the great variability in the songs of the Parulas, particularly the immatures, makes it practically impossible to detect the occasional song of the Cerulean. Nevertheless, they can be found if searched for in the right habitat at the right time.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Rd., Augusta, Ga.

PIED-BILLED GREBES AND PURPLE GALLINULES NESTING ABUNDANTLY IN BAKER AND DOUGHERTY COUNTIES, GEORGIA.—There are large numbers of shallow ponds west of the Flint River and south of Albany, Georgia, that fluctuate greatly in water levels. For one to several years they may be dry, or with only a little water in deep "alligator holes", then for a few years they may be full or partly so. When holding water they may be grown up with Maiden Cane, Yellow or White Waterlilies, Lotus, Water Shield and other aquatic vegetations to such an extent that little open water occurs. These ponds vary in size from an acre or less to some of over a hundred acres in extent.

On June 3, 1947, one of these (Alligator Pond) in Baker County and three (Big Cypress, Hurricane and one unnamed) in Dougherty County were examined by boat for bird life with interesting results, both for what was seen and what could not be found. All of the ponds were completely filled, as they were last year.

Pied-billed Grebe: *Podilymbus podiceps podiceps* (Linnaeus).—These little grebes were nesting abundantly in the more open ponds, or those with only a scant growth of Maiden Cane. They were not found in ponds with heavy mats of Waterlilies or Lotus. Three nests with eggs (4, 4 and 7) and many empty ones, and several broods of young were seen in Alligator Pond. Several nests (empty) and at least six broods of young were seen on "unnamed" pond by the headquarters buildings on Maridor Plantation in Dougherty County. Judging from the numerous ponds examined with glasses from the car in both counties, hundreds of the little grebes are nesting in the section this year.

Anhinga, or Water-turkey: *Anhinga anhinga leucogaster* (Vieillot).—About a dozen pairs of Water-turkeys were found nesting in cypress trees on Big Cypress Pond in Dougherty County. Most of them contained young, from little fellows only a few days old, to some nearly grown that dived into the water from their nests as the boat approached.

Ward's Heron: *Ardea herodias wardi* Ridgway.—A dozen occupied nests of this large heron were noted, most containing young of large size. Nests ranged from 20 to 70 feet above the water, all in cypress trees, and in the same trees or nearby the Water-turkey nests on Big Cypress Pond.

Purple Gallinule: *Porphyrio martinica* (Linnaeus).—This was the most abundant water bird, with the possible exception of the Pied-billed Grebe. Unlike the grebes, however, they were confined to ponds with large areas grown up to Yellow or White Waterlily. Alligator Pond contained not less (and probably many more) than a dozen pairs, and many nests were being started. They were even more numerous on Big Cypress, where one nest with five eggs was found, and many in course of construction. One with three eggs was noted on Hurricane, and one with a single egg on "unnamed" pond. It is evident that the bird is an abundant nester in the section this year, and that nesting was just getting under way.

One Florida Gallinule and one Coot was noted on "unnamed" pond. As Coots had been noted with the glasses in considerable numbers on Alligator Pond the preceding year throughout the nesting season, they were conspicuous by their absence this year. Burleigh had reported the species nesting near Albany on July 16, 1929, perhaps on this same pond, which is conspicuous from the Albany-Newton Highway.

A few American Egrets and Little Blue Herons were noted feeding about several of the ponds, and one nest with five eggs of the Green Heron was found. Ring-bills were nesting sparingly around most of the larger ponds and the same was true of the Florida Grackle. Yellow-breasted Chats were in full voice in the bushy margins of Big Cypress Pond. Fine nesting cover for rails was carefully searched around several of the ponds without any success whatever, although conditions appear very suitable for the King Rail.

If time permits a more thorough search of many more of the larger ponds of both counties will be made while they are full, for they are in many respects unique.—HERBERT L. STODDARD, Thomasville, Georgia.

RED-WINGS FEEDING ON THE SEEDS OF LOBLOLLY AND SLASH PINE.—While taking the Christmas Bird Count on the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, December 22, 1946, I noted a flock of approximately 200 Red-wings (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) alight in the tops of three loblolly pines (*Pinus taeda*) near the Falling Creek bridge on the Round Oak-Juliette road. In the course of observing them for possible other species, I saw that the birds were feeding on pine seed which they secured from the partly opened cones. As I approached the flock, the birds took wing and flew to nearby pines where they resumed feeding.

When returning from a trip into the Okefenokee Swamp, March 11, 1947,

I observed three Red-wings perched in a slash pine (*Pinus caribaea*) along the Suwanee Canal one-half mile from the boat landing. Closer observation revealed that they were eating the seed from the clustered cones. These observations together with those of Denton (1947 *Oriole* 12:10) reveal that Red-wings feed regularly on seeds of three native pines, namely: loblolly, slash and long-leafed (*Pinus palustris*).—RAYMOND J. FLEETWOOD, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Folkston, Georgia.*

NEWS

SPRING MEETING.—The tenth anniversary and 1947 spring meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society was held at Camp Ray on Lake Burton near Clayton, Georgia, May 10-11. Sixty-one persons attended. Saturday afternoon was devoted to registration and short field trips. At 7:30 p. m. the group assembled in Clayton at the Nicholson House for dinner. Mayor and Mrs. C. L. Derrick and Mr. and Mrs. Cross, editors of the local paper, were guests of Mrs. Nicholson.

After the delightful dinner the President called the meeting to order. Mayor Derrick welcomed the G. O. S. to Clayton after which the Secretary read greetings from Mrs. H. M. Oliver, Atlanta; Harold E. Jones, Rome; Earle R. Greene, New Orleans; George R. Mayfield, Nashville, Tenn.; and J. Fred Denton and Thomas D. Burleigh, sojourning in Newfoundland.

Miss Malvina Trussel, chairman of the Place and Policies Committee, read the suggestions outlined by letter February 17, 1947. In response to the third suggestion it was moved and carried that a committee be appointed to consider revising the By-laws of the G. O. S. (published in *The Oriole* 2:16-17). The President appointed to the committee Miss Blanche Tait, Chairman; Mrs. Hugh Harris, Mrs. John Dyer, Mrs. R. E. Hamilton (or Harold E. Jones) and Eugene P. Odum.

The program was under the supervision of William (Bill) Griffin. Bill introduced Mrs. Hugh Harris who gave a chronological record of the ten years' growth and progress of the G. O. S. Eight of the 22 organizers were present. After Mrs. Harris's review Bill led the group through an original quiz program.

Sunday morning two field trips were held. From 6-8:30 birds were observed in the vicinity of Camp Ray where 95 species were seen. After breakfast at 9 most of the group journeyed to Rabun Bald where the remainder of the morning was spent. Two additional species were seen. At noon members departed for home.

FALL MEETING.—The fall meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society will be held in Atlanta, Georgia. The date is tentatively set for October 11-12. This will be our annual business meeting, but considerable time will be devoted to observing birds. Let's all keep this date in mind and begin making plans to attend the meeting.