

THE ORIOLE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGY



OFFICIAL ORGAN OF
THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MARCH, 1937

CONTENTS

PROGRAM, GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, FIRST BIENNIAL MEETING.....	1
UNSCIENTIFIC NOTES, By Charles Newton Elliott.....	2
NOTES ON ANHINGAS SEEN AT THE KINGS' POND, By Anna Stowell Bassett.....	4
NOTES AND NEWS: Migration Extremes from Atlanta Area, p. 5; Notes from Milledgeville, p. 6; Audubon Representative to Lecture in Milledgeville and Atlanta, p. 7; Double-crested Cormorant near Atlanta, p. 7.	
COMMUNICATIONS	7

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VOL. II

MARCH, 1937

No. I

A Quarterly Journal of Georgia Ornithology: Official Organ of the
Georgia Ornithological Society

GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

First Biennial Meeting

GEORGIA STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, MILLEDGEVILLE, GA.

April 3 and 4, 1937

Mrs. Sam Anderson, Chairman

The first regular meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society will be held at the Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville, Georgia, April 3rd and 4th, 1937, the Milledgeville Audubon Society being host. The program is as follows:

SATURDAY, APRIL 3rd

Upon arrival, registration at G. S. C. W., Parks Hall Porch

12:30 P. M. Executive Committee meeting and luncheon at Fort Wolkinson.

3:00 P. M. Showing of films and slides, Arts Building, Room 19.

1. Dr. Wallace Rogers.
2. Miss Berma Jarrard.
3. Mr. Earle R. Greene.

7:00 P. M. Informal Dinner, G. S. C. W., Tea Room.

Toastmaster—Mr. Lucien Harris.

8:00 P. M. Lecture—Mr. Herbert L. Stoddard.

Bird-banding in Georgia—Mr. Harold S. Peters.

SUNDAY, APRIL 4th

8:00 A. M. Field Trip. Meet on Parks Hall Porch.

Miss Mabel T. Rogers in charge.

Members are urged to exhibit at this meeting any bird photographs they have made in the state. These may be left with Miss Kittsinger when registering.

UNSCIENTIFIC NOTES

BUT IN WHICH SOMETHING IS PROVED

By Charles Newton Elliott.

If you are a man with domestic troubles; if your wife occasionally jerks you out at night when you had planned a peaceful evening at home with your slippers and pipe and new book, or makes you wash the dishes when the evening paper is waiting, you may be interested in one tiny father bird who also had his troubles.

The Least Sandpiper was not unknown to me, but somehow I had listed him in my group of dull, uninteresting birds (if any bird can be dull or uninteresting) and beyond identifying one occasionally, I had never thought much about this particular species. I knew that they were the smallest of the sandpipers, being only five or six inches from stem to stern, and that they were likely to be overlooked by the average person. I also knew that the Least Sandpiper bred within the shadow of the North Pole had spent his winter on some white beach under an equatorial sun, but many birds do that.

Thomas D. Burleigh, Biologist, whose official connection is with the U. S. Biological Survey, and who during the past seventeen years has done more unselfish and intelligent work on the birds of Georgia and the southern states than any other living man, introduced me to the family life of the Least Sandpiper. He showed me a most interesting story.

There seems to be no question as to who wears the pants in that family. All data collected shows that the male bird is really the domestic member, while his mate is a flighty, happy, go-lucky little creature, whose main desires in life seem definitely to be those of the average tourist.

These tiny birds return north together in early spring. They go back to a frozen land of snow patches and ice and frigid winds. The father bird selects a home site and makes a nest. He is not a good housekeeper and his home consists of a shallow depression in the ground, lined with a few leaves or small bits of grass where those materials are available. Sometimes he selects the moss-covered top of a rock and makes a depression in the moss to hold the three or four small, pear-shaped and beautifully marked eggs.

The female bird does give him one consideration. Simply because it is biologically impossible for him to do so, she lays the eggs. Then she kisses him good-bye and blithely flies away to the southland, where food and water and sunshine are abundant, knowing that she will meet her husband, or the husband of someone else when the domestic work within the Arctic Circle is done. Dr. Burleigh says that the female Least Sandpiper always appear in Asheville, North Carolina, around the first week in July. They are plump and dressed in their finest spring clothes. On their southward trek, they are usually in little groups or alone.

The father bird, left alone in the Arctic wasteland, makes a fairly presentable attempt at raising a family. He keeps the eggs warm under his body until each young bird pecks through the thin shell into the wan Arctic sunlight. Then he scurries about, finding bugs and worms and insects for his babies of white and black and brown. He raises them through the fledgling stage, warns them about the enemies who would relish a fat little morsel of a sandpiper, and when their feathers are long and heavy enough, he teaches them to fly.

Toward the latter part of August, almost two months after the groups of female sandpipers have made their appearance in Asheville, the remain-

der of the Least Sandpiper family straggles in . . . the young birds and the males. The plumage of the father bird is ragged and unkempt. He is thin from the strain and responsibility of raising a brood and bringing them south. But male like, he flies on to the tropics in search of his mate, in order that he may return north with her to perform the thankless task the next year.

And speaking of Sandpipers, I am reminded of one that Dr. Irvine Phinizy and I collected near the city of Augusta. If you do not know Dr. Phinizy, you should. He is a delightful person to be in the field with, and as enthusiastic an ornithologist as I have ever known. We have taken a number of trips together and I can truthfully say that each one of those trips is outstanding in my memory.

On that particular afternoon, however, Irvine called over the telephone.

"I've just located a rare sandpiper," he said. "I saw him on one of the ponds above Augusta, Dr. Murphy wants him. Suppose we go up and collect him."

"What kind of Sandpiper is it?" I asked, fumbling for Chapman, Allen or Nellie Blanchard. I was not particular. I always kept a number of bird books on my desk.

"Stilt," he replies.

I quickly thumbed through the pages to the Stilt Sandpiper. I saw that it was not common, that it appeared only as a straggler, and that its breeding range was in northern North America and that it wintered in South America.

"That'll be a good record," I said. "Pick me up in thirty minutes."

I went by and bought some shot cartridges for my twenty-two rifle. Those kind of cartridges do not help the barrel of any rifle, but I wanted an undamaged skin.

The pond where we found the bird was just the sort of place in which I would have expected to find a Stilt Sandpiper . . . one of those perpetual lakes which has neither inlet or outlet, but which always manages to remain full of water. Around its shores were sand beaches and the tidal type of land. The bird was where Dr. Phinizy had left him, on a narrow strip of sand beach. Irvine studied him through the glasses while I thumbed through an identification key.

"That's him, all right. Let's get close enough to be certain of killing him."

I slid a shot cartridge into the rifle, while we walked down to the edge of the lake. Though we approached within twenty feet of the bird, he paid not the slightest bit of attention to us. I took careful aim and fired. The bird whistled. He jumped, startled, into the air and left that immediate vicinity. We thought he was gone, but after circling several times, he settled on the upper end of the lake.

Since we had driven him out of his favorite feeding ground, I built a blind from dead limbs and brush and weeds, within fifteen feet of the beach, and sat down to wait. Irvine walked around the lake shore and drove the bird back to me. I aimed carefully and shot again . . . without apparent damage. This time the Sandpiper flew across the lake to one of the mud flats.

Then a strange game of hide and seek began. We chased that bird for an hour. I wriggled on my face through the muck, waded along the edge of the lake and lay breathless against the ground, while Irvine circled the lake again and again, trying to drive the bird within range of my rifle. Darkness found us muddy and exhausted.

That evening we reported to Dr. Murphy.

"Get that bird," he said.

The next morning we were back on the job, but instead of being armed

with the tiny twenty-two rifle, I had my twelve gauge shot gun and number eight shot. We found the Sandpiper feeding in his favorite spot on the sand bar. I walked within thirty steps and let him have a full load of number eights.

He wasn't much to look at when we retrieved him, but we had our bird and our record. We carried him back to Dr. Murphy. He took the blood and water besmattered specimen in his hand and gave it a cursory glance. Then he looked at us with that eternal twinkle in his eye.

"This is no Stilt Sandpiper," he said. "It's a Yellow-legs in juvenile plumage."

He added, as if to ease our embarrassment and disappointment, "They do look alike, though."

He selected specimens of both birds out of his cabinet and proceeded to show us then how the body of the bird we had brought in was larger than that of the Stilt Sandpiper and that its legs were bright yellow, and not greenish yellow, as the Stilt would have had.

"This," said Dr. Murphy, "is exactly why I consider collecting important. You two fellows are well up on your birds. I know that, and if you had been unable to collect this specimen, I would have no doubt taken your word that you had seen a Stilt Sandpiper. Seeing this bird as you saw him, I might have made the same mistake. And there are a great many birds in the field which cannot be identified positively without having the bird in hand. That is why very little should be published on birds without actual specimens to back up the records."

And he is right.

NOTES ON ANHINGAS SEEN AT THE KINGS' POND

By Anna Stowell Bassett.

[Eds. Note: Kings' Pond is a twenty-acre body of water on the Colonels' Island plantation of the late Audley F. Maxwell King in Liberty County, Georgia. A most excellent description of this pond by Mrs. Bassett is to be found in "A Tribute to a Bird Lover" in the July Oriole.—D. E. E.]

Beginning in August, 1931, and ending in August, 1932, I visited the Kings' Pond at least once every month. Anhingas were seen in the pond every month. Before that time, they were seen there occasionally, although commonly seen in another pond thirty miles away—dry this year.

We found about thirty nests in 1932. All of them distinguishable by the green leafed twigs used in their construction. The nests were usually built too high to be accessible.

* * * *

May 17, we found six nests, two of which contained eggs and were within reach. The egg we examined was long in proportion to its thickness with a lime-like coating over its pale blue covering.

May 30, there were fourteen nests.

June 25, we looked at the two nests that contained eggs on May 17. One nest was empty and the other seemed to be until a slight movement betrayed the young ones hiding there. The baby bird taken from the nest was a long-necked, pot-bellied youngster with big, webbed feet. Portions of its body were covered with light-colored down, very close and heavy like felt. As it was lifted from the nest its defense was the evacuation of a profuse and watery discharge. After it was photographed it seemed to

feel no need of further hiding. With its nest-mate it showed itself plainly in the nest.

July 13, these two birds were out of the nest and quite handsome with newly acquired black wings and tail feathers. Their bodies were covered with very heavy down, cream-colored on the body, deepening to a beautiful yellow on the upper breast and neck. Even the feet were covered with down. As the boat approached, they hung their heads, moved their long necks slowly from side to side and regurgitated their food.

July 13, we found nine new nests, one of which contained newly hatched young, one of which we examined. It was entirely naked, almost black with a bit of green in color. There was a little yellow on top of the head. It fitted nicely into the palm of my hand where it lay quietly looking out of weak-looking, newly opened eyes. Its bill was short, in no way resembling the form of that of the adult birds. Older birds were feathered and spreading their ragged-looking wings to dry.

August 7, the tiny baby Anhingas of July 14, were out of the nest with wing and tail quills several inches long. They disgorged their food as we drew near. We found several new nests, some contained one, others two, and four of them had three young birds each.

When we approached a nest containing very young birds, the parent would slide off the nest and drop like a plummet into the water and make off, marking the course underneath the water by a path of fine bubbles.

We saw several fully fledged young birds alight on the water after a short flight. They swam for several feet with most of the neck above water before submerging. Young anhingas cling to the home nest location until well grown. We saw one Anhinga hanging dead, from a small cedar tree; it was hooked near the base of the bill, on a broken stick.

We also saw a bird having difficulty in swallowing a cat-fish which was lodged about half way down its throat. After several minutes of persistent effort, it dislodged the fish, tossed it deftly in the air, caught it and swallowed it head first. We watched the fish's slow descent of the long neck. When the bolus merged with its body the bird flew away. It was so intent on swallowing the fish that it did not notice our very near approach. We found these birds most interesting. They are very beautiful as they stand drying their out-stretched wings, or soar overhead.

June 3, 1933, Mr. King showed us an unusually large Anhinga's nest containing six eggs. The nest was so low that one could see the inside of it from the boat. The eggs were discolored, probably stained from the leaves.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Editors wish to call attention to an unfortunate typographical error in the December, 1936, Oriole. On page 31 of Mr. Howell's "A Reconnaissance of the Summer Bird Life of Georgia", line 37 should read: "this should be called *Quiscalus quiscula stonei*", rather than, "this should not be called . . .".

Migration Extremes from Atlanta Area—The following table lists the migration extremes for the waterfowl of the Atlanta area. They are a compilation from the field notes of Norman Giles, Jr., Nelson Spratt, Jr., and Don Eyles; from the "Bird of the Atlanta Area" by Earle R. Greene; and the specimens in the Emory University LaPrade collection. The period covered ranges from about 1928 to 1936. Some little material is from a period preceding the above. Water conditions made 1932 a banner year

for Atlanta water-fowl observers, since then drainage projects, etc., have kept down the number of interesting records.

Species	Earliest Spring	Latest Spring	Earliest Fall	Latest Fall
Loon	Apr. 2, 31	May 18, 32	Sept. 30, 28	Nov. 28, 29
Holboell's Grebe	Feb. 22, 30	Mar. 9, 30	Nov. 4, 32	
Horned Grebe		Feb. 15, 33	Nov. 20, 32	
Pied-billed Grebe		May 22, 32	July 16, 32	
Great Blue Heron		Irregular throughout the year		
American Egret	May 20, 28		July 25, 35	Sept. 29, 29
Louisiana Heron			Aug. 10, 32	Aug. 19, 23
Little Blue Heron	Mar. 26, 32	May 28, 32	July 3, 32	Sept. 23, 31
Green Heron	Mar. 23, 06			Oct. 20, 32
Bl.-cr. Night Heron	Mar. 19, 32	May 12, 32		
American Bittern	Mar. 20, 32	May 15, 32	Sept. 4, 31	Nov. 3, 05
Canada Goose		May 22, 32	Nov. 5, 32	
Mallard		Apr. 3, 32	Dec. 24, 32	
Black Duck		Apr. 18, 30	Sept. 11, 32	
Baldpate	Feb. 25, 32	Apr. 5, 31		
Pintail	Feb. 24, 32	Apr. 8, 34		
Blue-winged Teal	Mar. 29, 31	May 3, 31	Sept. 14, 30	Oct. 15, 30
Shoveller	Feb. 28, 32	Apr. 26, 32	Oct. 29, 32	Nov. 9, 32
Redhead		Jan. 18, 33	Nov. 13, 27	
Ring-necked Duck		May 21, 32	Oct. 28, 32	
Canvasback		Apr. 11, 33	Nov. 20, 32	
Scaup Duck		June 7, 32	Oct. 19, 30	
Golden-eye		Mar. 18, 33	Nov. 26, 31	
Buffle-head		Dec. 12 and 13, 1931		
Ruddy Duck		May 20, 23	Oct. 27, 32	
Hooded Merganser		Irregular throughout the year		
Red-br. Merganser	Mar. 28, 06	May 7, 31	Nov. 22, 31	Nov. 26, 31
Broad-winged Hawk	Mar. 30, 29			Oct. 2, 35
Marsh Hawk		May 15, 32	Aug. 24, 30	
Osprey	Mar. 30, 32	Apr. 18, 32	Oct. 20, 22	
King Rail	Mar. 16, 30			Aug. 26, 33
Coot		June 4, 31	Oct. 13, 32	
Semipld. Plover	Apr. 30, 32	May 27, 32	July 22, 31	Sept. 5, 32
Black-bellied Plover			Aug. 26, 32	
Woodcock		Apr. 30, 32		
Wilson's Snipe		May 12, 32	Aug. 25, 32	
Upland Plover	Apr. 9, 31-2	Apr. 20, 30		
Spotted Sandpiper	Apr. 10, 31	May 27, 32	July 12, 32	Oct. 29, 31
Solitary Sandpiper	Mar. 16, 33	May 22, 32	July 8, 32	Oct. 20, 32
Greater Yellowlegs	Mar. 16, 33	May 16, 32		
Yellowlegs	Mar. 15, 31	May 18, 32	Aug. 11, 32	Sept. 18, 32
Pectoral Sandpiper	Mar. 15, 31	Apr. 26, 32	Aug. 9, 32	Oct. 21, 32
Least Sandpiper	Apr. 26, 32	May 28, 32	July 16, 32	Sept. 11, 32
Dewitcher			Aug. 25, 32	Aug. 27, 32
Semipld. Sandpiper	May 5, 29	May 27, 32	Aug. 25, 32	Sept. 18, 32
Herring Gull	Mar. 28, 31		Nov. 16, 30	Nov. 20, 30
Ring-billed Gull	May 1, 32			
Bonaparte's Gull	Apr. 18, 32	Apr. 22, 32	Nov. 27, 30	Dec. 11, 32
Black Tern			Aug. 5, 28	Sept. 15, 23

—Don Eyles, Biology Department, Emory University, Emory University, Georgia.

Notes from Milledgeville.—The first spring migrant for 1937 was re-

corded on March 6, when Miss Blanche Tait observed a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Other recent observations of interest include Bachman's Sparrows singing at sunset on March 10th, and numerous flocks of Purple Finches and Goldfinches, the latter singing at least two weeks earlier than usual. A partial albino Robin has been observed with interest by several members of the Milledgeville Audubon Society. Its breast is almost normal in color, its head dark, but its back is a grayish cream color.—Miss Mabel T. Rogers, Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville, Georgia.

Audubon Representative to Lecture in Milledgeville and Atlanta.—Mr. Alden H. Hadley, Field Representative of the National Association of Audubon Societies, will give an illustrated lecture entitled "Wanderings of a Bird-lover in the South" to the Milledgeville Audubon Society on the evening of April 5th. At 1:30 P. M. on April 6th he will lecture to Bass Junior High biology students in Atlanta. This lecture is sponsored by the Arthur A. Allen Junior Audubon Society. On the evening of April 6th Mr. Hadley will address members of the Atlanta Bird Club in the Bass auditorium.

Double-crested Cormorant near Atlanta.—The writer had the pleasure of examining the head and foot of a Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax a. auritus*) shot on the Chattahoochee River about eight miles from Palmetto, Georgia, in Coweta County. The specimen was taken on October 31, 1936, and was one of a flock of about twenty. The birds were also in the vicinity on October 30th. The writer is indebted to Mr. Maurice Abercrombie for the privilege of examining this bird.—Don Eyles, Biology Department, Emory University, Emory University, Ga.

COMMUNICATIONS

March 11, 1937.

Mr. Herbert L. Stoddard,
Sherwood Plantation,
Thomasville, Georgia.

Dear Mr. Stoddard:

At the Annual Meeting of the Florida Audubon Society at Winter Park last week, the Executive Committee and the group as a whole offered the cooperation of our Society in accordance with the motion and resolution given below:

MOTION:

A motion was made and passed that a letter of congratulation be sent the newly founded Georgia Ornithological Society.

RESOLUTION:

We extend our hearty felicitations to the newly organized Georgia Ornithological Society and assure its membership of our close cooperation in all matters which may be of mutual interest and concern.

Yours very truly,

C. R. MASON, President.

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MISS MABEL T. ROGERS, Milledgeville

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EDITORIAL

Georgia has much to offer both the serious student of birds and those mainly attracted by their song and beauty. With its attractive and little frequented coastal and mountain areas, its great river swamps and extensive forests of hardwood and pine, as well as its more populous and cultivated middle country, it offers an exceptionally varied bird habitat with resulting variety and wealth of bird life.

So no bird student within the State need feel that the opportunities of the home area have been exhausted; there is much to be learned about even the distribution of the many species within the State. And the really comprehensive life history studies of single species, such as those of S. Prentiss Baldwin and his associates on the House Wren, Margaret Nice on the Song Sparrow and the few intensive studies of game species so far carried on in the country but serve to accentuate the fact that this comparatively new type of study is still in the pioneer stages and open to everyone living where birds occur.

While considerable serious work has been done in a few localities, a great deal remains to be done everywhere if the much needed "Birds of Georgia" is to materialize, and a comprehensive state list is the greatest need. Georgia is one of the few states which has no such list. True, there is an excellent list of the birds of the Atlanta area, and this area as well as the Savannah and Milledgeville areas have been centers of ornithological study and interest. But vast areas have been studied little if at all.

With the organization this year of the Georgia Ornithological Society, a statewide organization to be devoted to the study of Georgia bird life, the gathering of dependable information on the birds of the State should be greatly stimulated and those interested in these creatures greatly increased. And it should be clear that a great increase in both the scientific and popular interest is needed if the birds and their habitat are to be safeguarded at this time when the changes in habitat are coming so rapidly.

Unlike most new organizations of its kind, the Society is starting out with a most attractive quarterly journal (thanks to the Atlanta Bird Club and the young founders of the publication) which, however, will need all the support that can be extended by the small group at present interested, if it is to continue and thrive.

With fuller knowledge of the bird life of the State and vastly more people interested, should come more general appreciation and better protection both to the birds and their habitat, an obligation to succeeding generations. The new Society has a splendid opportunity for constructive work in the gathering and spreading of such knowledge, and will welcome to its ranks all of those interested in any branch of the ornithological field.

HERBERT L. STODDARD.

March 4, 1937.