

# THE ORIOLE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGY



OFFICIAL ORGAN OF  
THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER, 1937

## CONTENTS

A BIRD LOVER'S HOBBY, By Alice Giles.....	21
THE BIRDS OF ATHENS, CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA, PART II, By Thomas D. Burleigh.....	22
NOTES AND NEWS: Program of Second Biennial Meeting of The Georgia Ornithological Society, 25; A Late Spring Record of the Loon, 25; Yellow-crowned Night Herons in Atlanta in July, 25; White Ibis Nesting Abundantly in Camden County, Georgia, 26; Southern Robin Nesting at Waycross, Ware County, Georgia, 27.	
EDITORIAL.....	28

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VOL. II

SEPTEMBER, 1937

No. III

## A BIRD LOVER'S HOBBY

By Alice Giles

Isn't it fun to get an honest-to-goodness thrill out of one's hobby—one that stays with you? Never will I forget mine when I had at last succeeded, after days of work, in persuading a dainty little Tufted Titmouse to alight on my hand to get a shelled peanut out of my palm. I dared not even breathe for fear the least movement would make him vanish. His sharp little claws clung to my finger as he balanced himself to see if everything was O. K. before snatching the nut. Then away he flew. After this he fed regularly from my hand and it was not long before his mate and two little Carolina Chickadees, which seem to associate closely with the Titmice, had followed suit. The Chickadees seemed to prefer to light on my hand rather than on the shelf if I was at the window. During the following summer these little birds would follow me about the yard and beg for their food, alighting on my hand in the open.

The feeding of birds was started by the desire to get them to come nearer in order to study them more closely. This was done by placing shelves outside of our windows. A constant supply of food is kept on these shelves in order never to disappoint a hungry guest.

Interest was immediately aroused by noticing the different foods preferred. Cardinals were content to spend their time cracking and eating the kernels of sunflower seeds. Chickadees and Titmice fed on peanuts, shelled ones preferred, while the Carolina Wrens, which generally had the shelf to themselves on account of their rapier-like bills, spent their time around the dish containing peanut butter. This last dish was also a favorite with the Catbirds. Timothy, our White-breasted Nuthatch, seemed never to tire of hiding sunflower seeds under the bark of the oak trees only to have the other birds come along and pick them out. I often wondered if he ever missed them. The handsome Blue Jays, although arrogant, afforded lots of pleasure. They soon became experts at catching peanuts on the fly, these being flipped to them by hand from the window. One old fellow had a marvelous batting average, catching as many as nine peanuts out of ten. During the snows mixed grain placed on the shelves was especially enjoyed by a handsome Fox Sparrow.

Also pieces of suet were fastened on nails. A general treat for all was cracked hickory nuts and black walnuts.

A familiar whistle would bring the birds hurrying from the woods to the shelves because they had learned that that sound meant food. During the nesting season, we found the numbers decreased at the shelves. Also the birds became more shy, apparently feeling their responsibility as parents.

I have always considered these feathered friends in the light of "paying guests." The beauty of their songs, their interesting habits, and their service as insect destroyers amply repaid me for the time and trouble that was necessary to attract them to the feeding shelves.



## THE BIRDS OF ATHENS, CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA

By Thos. D. Burleigh.

## PART II.

**Nyroca affinis.** Lesser Scaup Duck.—This species was unquestionably the commonest duck found here in migration, flocks of varying size being frequently seen both in the spring and in the fall. The shallower lakes and ponds where food is secured are usually frozen over in December, and only once has this species been observed in January. The winter of 1926-27 was characterized by relatively mild weather that lasted until the middle of January, and this fact was taken advantage of by 17 Scaup Ducks that remained on the lake on the grounds of the Athens Country Club from the middle of December through January 15. Infrequent records during the summer months were probably due to crippled birds that had not recovered sufficiently after being injured in the fall to make the long flight North in the spring. Such records include a female seen on Lake Kirota June 21, 1926, and a male found on the Oconee River July 5, 1927. Dates for occurrence in the spring are March 8 (1927) and May 23 (1927 and 1928), and in the fall October 24 (1926) and December 20 (1925).

**Glaucionetta clangula americana.** American Golden-eye.—This species wintered here in rather small numbers, and was noted only at infrequent intervals. My latest record in the spring is that of a male seen March 11, 1926 on the city reservoir. In the fall the earliest record is that of two birds, females, seen November 25, 1926.

**Charitonetta albeola.** Buffle-head.—This species was an extremely scarce migrant here, and rarely observed more than once or twice either in the spring or in the fall. My extreme records for occurrence in the spring are February 4 (1923) and March 20 (1926), and in the fall November 6 (1927) and November 27 (1928).

**Clangula hyemalis.** Old Squaw.—I have but three records for the occurrence of this species here. One bird, a female, appeared on the lake on the grounds of the Athens Country Club December 19, 1926, and remained there for almost a month, being last seen January 16, 1927, when the lake, except for one small area, was frozen over. Three months later, on April 10, another female, possibly the same bird, was seen with other ducks on the city reservoir. On December 20, 1929 a female was taken as it rested with other ducks on the city reservoir.

**Erismatura jamaicensis rubida.** Ruddy Duck.—This species was a fairly common migrant here, and observed at frequent intervals both in the spring and fall. My extreme dates for spring migration are March 9 (1928) and May 27 (1926), and for the fall migration October 29 (1925) and December 15 (1926).

**Lophodytes cucullatus.** Hooded Merganser.—I noted this species only during the late fall and early spring, but as the river rarely freezes over it is possible that it winters sparingly. My extreme dates for occurrence in the spring are February 9 (1928) and March 22 (1928), and in the fall November 10 (1926) and December 6 (1925).

**Mergus serrator.** Red-breasted Merganser.—This species was a rather scarce migrant, and decidedly irregular in its appearance. Only once has it been noted in any numbers. On April 9, 1927, during a period of rain and fog, small flocks were found on all bodies of water of any size about Athens, and the following day sixteen of these birds, in a compact group, were seen on the city reservoir. My only other record for the spring mi-

gration is that of two birds seen March 18, 1925, while in the fall it has been noted on November 4 and December 3, 1927, and on November 7 and November 16, 1929.

**Cathartes aura septentrionalis.** Turkey vulture.—Resident, and common throughout the year. A characteristic nest found April 24, 1927, held two slightly-incubated eggs, the eggs lying on fragments of rotten wood near the center of an old hollow pine stub lying on the ground at the edge of a short stretch of woods. The stub was fairly well concealed by the surrounding underbrush, and by a thick growth of vines covering the ground, and was 18 feet in length, with the eggs six feet from the larger entrance. The female was incubating, and left rather reluctantly, standing over her eggs with head lowered and watching my movements intently until I touched her with a light cane. Then she scrambled out of the smaller entrance away from me, flew to a dead limb of a pine fifty yards away and regurgitated a quite ample breakfast. Other breeding records, in situations similar to this, are a nest found May 22, 1925 that held two well-incubated eggs, and one that, on April 17, 1933, held two fresh eggs.

**Coragyps atratus atratus.** Black Vulture.—Likewise resident, and common throughout the year. My earliest breeding record is a nest found March 24, 1929 that held two slightly incubated eggs, the eggs lying on fragments of dead leaves at the foot of a large partly decayed yellow poplar at the edge of a clearing in woods bordering Sandy Creek. The female was incubating, and proved a little timid, flying into a nearby tree as I approached and uttering several times a low grunt. Another nest, in the hollow butt of a recently uprooted tree, held two fresh eggs when found April 21, 1923.

**Accipiter velox.** Sharp-shinned Hawk.—This species was a fairly plentiful winter resident, being most numerous in October and but infrequently seen after the middle of February. My extreme dates for occurrence are October 9 (1927) and February 27 (1921).

**Accipiter cooperi.** Cooper's Hawk.—Resident, and at one time fairly plentiful throughout the year. The gradual cutting of many of the larger stretches of woods, however, has reduced so materially suitable nesting sites that this species is now rather scarce during the summer months. My earliest breeding record is that of a nest found April 19, 1924 with four fresh eggs. It was 60 feet from the ground in a crotch of a loblolly pine on a hillside covered with open pine woods, and was substantially built of sticks and twigs, the slight hollow being thickly lined with large flakes of pine bark. Another nest found May 10, 1923, was likewise in a large loblolly pine in open pine woods, and held on that date four half-incubated eggs.

**Buteo borealis borealis.** Eastern Red-tailed Hawk.—For several years a pair of these birds nested in a stretch of thick woods near Whitehall, but with the cutting of this timber in 1926 they disappeared, and it is doubtful if this species now breeds about Athens. The nest, when first found April 19, 1921, held three newly hatched young, and was 70 feet from the ground in a crotch of a large shortleaf pine. It was substantially built of sticks and coarse twigs, with a slight lining of fresh oak leaves. Two years later, on April 4, 1923, this same nest had been repaired and was again being used, it holding on that date two fresh eggs.

**Buteo lineatus lineatus.** Northern Red-shouldered Hawk.—It is only during early February that this northern race can be recognized with any certainty, although specimens taken during winter months might possibly



be found referable to the form. On February 1, 1925 red-shouldered hawks were almost plentiful, being frequently observed in stretches of woods bordering the Oconee River, and as very few were seen a few days later there is little question but that a definite northward movement had been witnessed.

**Buteo lineatus alleni.** Florida Red-shouldered Hawk.—Lack of suitable nesting sites limited the distribution of this species here, and while observed in small numbers throughout the year, it was found breeding only in Sandy Creek bottoms. A nest found there on May 1, 1923, in a stretch of swampy woods, held three well-incubated eggs, and was 55 feet from the ground in a crotch of a large loblolly pine. It was well built of sticks and coarse twigs, the hollow in the top being thickly lined with corn husks and dry pine needles, and with a green spray of oak leaves at one edge. The following year, on March 22, the female was flushed from this same nest that held, despite the early date, two fresh eggs.

**Buteo platypterus platypterus.** Broad-winged Hawk.—This species can be found here in small numbers throughout the summer months, and while it possibly nests I have no definite breeding records. My extreme dates for occurrence are March 27 (1921) and September 15 (1926).

**Circus hudsonius.** Marsh Hawk.—This species was a fairly plentiful winter resident, being frequently seen then about the open fields and pastures. Average dates for arrival and departure are September 11 (1926) and April 22 (1928), extreme records of occurrence being August 10 (1925) and May 22 (1928). At dusk, on January 17, 1929, eight of these birds were seen in the open Sandy Creek bottoms where they apparently had assembled to spend the night.

**Pandion haliaetus carolinensis.** Osprey.—I found this species a somewhat scarce migrant, and only observed at infrequent intervals along the Oconee River or about the few scattered lakes. My extreme dates for occurrence in the spring are April 9, (1927) and May 21 (1926), and in the fall August 16 (1928) and September 27 (1926).

**Falco columbarius columbarius.** Eastern Pigeon Hawk.—My one record for the occurrence of this species here is that of a single bird seen February 25, 1928, flying by low overhead.

**Falco sparverius sparverius.** Eastern Sparrow Hawk.—Resident, but more frequently seen during the winter months when one or two can be observed daily. A nest found April 16, 1926, held five fresh eggs, and was 45 feet from the ground in an old Flicker's hole in a decayed red oak stub at the edge of a short stretch of woods. A breeding male taken May 21, 1929 proved typical of this northern race.

## NOTES AND NEWS

Below is printed the program of the second biennial meeting of the G. O. S. A separate copy of the program together with blanks for making reservations has already been sent to all members. If you have not already made your reservations please use the enclosed blank and mail it at once.

### GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

#### Second Biennial Meeting

Armstrong Junior College—Savannah, Ga.

October 9 and 10, 1937

Mrs. V. H. Bassett, Chairman

Saturday, October 9th

Registration, upon arrival, at Armstrong Junior College.

4:30 P. M.—Business Session.

6:30 P. M.—Informal Dinner—Grill Room, Armstrong College.

8:00 P. M.—Lecture, Dr. R. J. Longstreet, Florida Audubon Society, Moving Pictures, Announcements.

Sunday, October 10th

8:00 A. M.—Field Trip, Mr. Ivan Tomkins, Leader.

The Georgia Ornithological Society has been fortunate in getting Dr. R. J. Longstreet of Daytona Beach, Florida, as the principal speaker at the fall meeting of the society which is to be held in Savannah on October 9th. Dr. Longstreet is one of the outstanding ornithologists in the State of Florida and has been untiring and unselfish in his work for the protection of Florida birds as well as promoting public interest and knowledge of them. He is one of the authors of "Florida Bird Life" which is a manual published by the state for the use of the teachers of Florida.

He has made two trips to the Dry Tortugas where he made some interesting motion pictures of the life of the birds found on several of the islands. These will be shown at the meeting in Savannah.

**A Late Spring Record of the Loon**—On June 11, 1937 Mr. W. L. McAttee of the U. S. Biological Survey, Mr. E. V. Komarek and the writer saw a Loon (*Gavia immer immer*) in full breeding plumage in a small swamp area and roadside ditch on Highway 38 about seven miles west of Hinesville in Liberty County, Georgia. The bird appeared to be in good physical condition and gave its weird laughing call several times as we chased it to see whether it could take off from the inadequate water surface afforded. This it appeared unable to accomplish under the prevailing conditions, though it beat along the surface for a considerable distance in an attempt to take wing.

The bird was nowhere to be seen on my return journey two weeks later and may have succeeded in escaping from an area unsuited to its requirements, with the aid of a favorable wind.—Herbert L. Stoddard, Beachton, Georgia.

**Yellow-crowned Night Herons in Atlanta in July**—On July 20, 1937 an immature Night Heron was reported to the writer as being present at a small lake on Lakeside Drive in Northeast Atlanta.

This bird was observed by the writer and Mr. Nelson Spratt, Jr., on the date given above and later by Mr. Ray Werner. All the observers agreed that it fitted the description of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea violacea*) rather than that of the Black-crowned Night Heron. The field marks as observed were in accord with those given in Peterson's Field Guide. The Guide states, when speaking of the Yellow-crowned, that in flight "the entire foot and a short space of the bare leg extends clear of the end of the tail—a very good field character that is not shared with the Black-crowned."

On Monday of the next week, July 26, a Mrs. J. C. Banks called the Biology Department at Emory University and reported that someone had



shot a strange bird on Westview Drive in the Southwest part of the city. The writer was not able to get out and see this specimen until the next evening, but did secure the bird at that time. It was examined carefully and compared with the full description as given in Forbush's Birds of Massachusetts. It was evidently an immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Unfortunately the specimen could not be preserved as it had already begun to decay when received.—Norman Giles, Jr., Biology Department, Emory University, Emory University, Ga.

**White Ibis Nesting Abundantly in Camden County Georgia**—Although the White Ibis (*Guara alba*) nests abundantly in parts of Florida and to some extent in Georgia and other Southeastern States, no such extensive nesting area as has just been discovered and examined in Camden County has been recorded within the borders of the State in recent years.

On July 11th large numbers of adults were noted flying both in an easterly and westerly direction over the Coastal Highway between Woodbine and White Oak on the north side of the Satilla River, early in the day. Returning just before sundown it was evident that a very large colony was located to the east, as literally hundreds of the birds were pouring in. They seemed headed for a dense wet jungle area where Towers (or Thoud) Swamp joins salt water marsh.

At the first opportunity on July 25th, accompanied by two local men as guides, we entered the Swamp after a mile or more journey through flat pine woods. After walking through mud and water and being well cut up by sawgrass which here grew nine or ten feet high, we found ourselves in the midst of hundreds of nests and thousands of the White Ibis, the "rookery" being in a jungle largely of willow, with some myrtle mixed in. None of the nests were occupied, the droves of young being large enough to pack in groups in the tops of the willows or circle above as we moved about.

The majority of the adults were apparently away feeding at this time (late forenoon), though they kept coming in singly and in small groups. Grunts, groans, and a peculiar whistling trill were continually heard as the young were being fed, or as they harassed the adults in anticipation of food.

The limbs and exposed portions of the hummocky swamp floor were covered with the reddish deposits of crustaceans which appear to furnish the principal food of the birds, while the limbs and tops of the willows looked as though torn by a hurricane so severe was the use by the Ibises.

A few other birds such as Night Herons, Anhingas, Vultures, and Crows were seen or heard about the Swamp, and a few of the Night Herons apparently nested among the Ibises. Although the nesting area is known to be extensive, the short time we were able to be there and the density of undergrowth and high water condition prevailing, prevented an estimate of the number of birds and nests. Nevertheless we covered sufficient area to know that a great many, probably up to fifteen thousand at least occupied the densely populated central area we investigated. In the densely populated area (which extended for an unknown distance) the nests were on the hummocks on the swamp floor and up to the tops of the willows some fifteen feet higher, frequently being placed so closely as to almost touch.

As we emerged from the Swamp proper we saw hundreds of the young high in the air as in practice flight, with a few adults scattered among them like instructors in the fine art of flying.

We were told by several citizens of the County that this year is the first time "White Curlew" had nested there for many years. As these Ibises are known to shift colony locations frequently, either due to dis-

turbance or changing food conditions, it is hoped that adequate protection may be given this colony, and that in another year its size and Ibis population can be more accurately determined.—Herbert L. Stoddard and Earle R. Greene.

**Southern Robin Nesting at Waycross, Ware County, Georgia.** [Note—Mr. Flagg's article was accompanied by a photograph showing the nest and one of the adult birds on the limb of the pine tree. After the birds had left, the nest was taken down and preserved. The nest was seen by me on July 15 and again on July 23, after the birds had left, but Mrs. Mize stated that she saw an adult bird take food to the nest for about a week during its occupancy. As this is probably the "furthestest south" record of a nesting Robin in the southeastern states it is especially interesting. They have been known to nest in northern Georgia for some years, then about Atlanta in Fulton and DeKalb Counties where they finally became more or less abundant. Mr. J. Fred Denton states that at Athens in Clarke County they are a "very common breeding bird" and that at Macon in Bibb County he recorded adults and young just out of the nest in August, 1932. Mr. Flagg's record in Ware County is probably a case of a species pushing southward, as is thought concerning the Song Sparrow for instance, or possibly means that more bird students and the added interest in ornithology throughout our state are producing data of which we were formerly unaware.—Earle R. Greene.]

Robins were common in this section all winter and spring until May 22 when a flock of eight to ten birds were last seen feeding together in a small city park. On June 1st I discovered a Southern Robin (*Turdus migratorius achrosterus*) on the nest at the home of Mrs. P. H. Mize, across the street from the above mentioned park. The bird was seen on the nest most of the time from the 1st through the 19th during my somewhat irregular visits. Because of the inaccessibility of the nest young birds could not be seen. However Mrs. Mize reports that on the 15th about 1 P. M. "both birds were away from the nest and one finally returned with a worm" which seems to indicate that incubation had been completed. Since this time I have occasionally seen or heard robins in other parts of the city the last date being the 11th of July. The nest was placed near the end of a horizontal limb about twenty feet high in a pine tree, both tree and nest being very close to a well traveled sidewalk and street.—Homer H. Flagg, 910 Elizabeth Street, Waycross, Ga.

As our editors are naturally reticent concerning their personal activities it is believed that the readers of The Oriole who are not already acquainted with the facts will be interested in knowing that Norman Giles, Jr., who was awarded the Beck Scholarship, leaves this month for Harvard University to do graduate work in biology. The entire membership of the G. O. S. wishes him much success in his chosen field, while regretting his necessary absence from our state. Don Eyles has just returned to Atlanta, having spent the summer as Student Technician at Fort Pulaski National Monument, Cockspur Island, Savannah, Georgia, making a study of the bird life of the area. He has compiled this into an excellent report which we hope will be published by the National Park Service.—Earle R. Greene.

The members of the G. O. S. who do not already know will be interested to learn that the A. O. U. is meeting in Charleston, S. C., in November. This is only the second time that this organization, which is the foremost group of bird students in the United States, has met in the South. It is hoped that Georgia will have a good representation at the meeting which is scheduled for November 15-18.



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## EDITORIAL

The September issue of The Oriole appears as the fall migration gets into full swing throughout Georgia. The southward migration of birds is not so concentrated as the northward, and extends over a much longer period. It actually begins in our state in July when the earliest returning swallows and shorebirds appear, soon to be followed by the earlier warblers in August. Now we are right in the midst of this southward movement—numerous species of warblers fill every woodland stretch; Nighthawks may be seen in loose flocks—southward bound, sometimes even during the brightest mid-day hours; soon waterfowl will be appearing on our lakes and rivers. If you really want to hear bird migration in progress stay outdoors for an hour on some clear autumn night and listen to the bird notes which come out of the darkness above. Often it is even possible to identify the voices of familiar species. Now is the time to get out in the field. And we earnestly desire that the members of the G. O. S. will do this and then write up their observations for The Oriole. To make this a real Georgia bird magazine we need your active support, for it is your magazine, and merits your contribution of notes and articles. Anything of interest is desired. We do not expect or want all our material to be of a strictly scientific nature. Birds are active, living creatures and are always doing interesting things. What have you observed lately?

Not only do we want to hear from you, but we are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible this October at the Savannah meeting of the G. O. S. This gathering should certainly be something to look forward to. The program, which appears earlier in this issue, gives promise of being just as good as the one at Milledgeville, which is saying a great deal. Savannah is an excellent territory for bird observations. And for many of us landlubbers the Savannah field trip will provide fine opportunity to renew acquaintances with many interesting waterfowl, and make some new ones too. Not only will we renew our bird acquaintances, but also our bird student acquaintances. There's no place where more actual good fellowship and interesting conversation can be found than at a gathering of bird students. Surely you don't want to miss this one. Be sure and reserve the date now, October 9th and 10th, and plan to attend. We are all anticipating the welcome which our Savannah members are preparing for us, and we know it will be well worth your presence.

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Mr. James Silver, Regional Director, United States Biological Survey, in charge of refugees in the Southeastern States has recently moved to Atlanta and established offices in the Glenn Building.