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THE ORIOLE

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GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY Founded December 13, 1929

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BIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM COASTAL MCINTOSH COUNTY, GEORGIA

DAVID W. JOHNSTON and JAMES C. MAJOR

Aside from the Savannah area the avifauna of the Georgia coastal region is relatively little-known, and any opportunity to study this region should be considered a distinct privilege. Such was the case when, from March 17-23, 1950, the writers were afforded the opportunity of making interesting ornithological observations in a little-worked area of the coast. Our headquarters were at Valona, a small fishing village on the mainland opposite the south end of Sapelo Island in McIntosh County. We were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Durant, and our observations, particularly those by boat, were possible only through their efforts and through the able assistance of their sons, Frank and Charles.

Early spring migrants had just begun to arrive, and many winter birds were still present in some numbers. The weather for the most part was fair and warm, though on two days our observations were impeded by rain. All of the birds collected have been deposited in the University of Georgia Museum, and we are indebted to Allen J. Duvall, Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C., for the confirmation of identification of the Jaeger collected.

GANNET. *Moris bassana*.

Having previously consulted *Birds of Georgia* (Greene, *et al.*, 1945) we were aware of the possibility of at least observing these unusual birds off the coast. Accordingly on March 18, we went out in a shrimp boat through Doboy Sound into the Atlantic Ocean opposite the south end of Sapelo Island. About two miles offshore we began to see Gannets, approximately one-half of which were immatures in the striped plumage. At least 30-40 birds were seen in one hour's time. We were well-armed for collecting, but the slow-moving shrimp boat scarcely was able to approach within gunshot before the birds flew. At length two immatures were shot and opposite the middle of Sapelo two adults were taken. Of these four birds, the two adults were skinned by the writers while Frank

Durant prepared one of the immatures. All the birds were males. They were heavily parasitized externally by lice and internally by several tape-worms. The following afternoon we again went out Doboy Sound oceanward, but this time stopped off at the Sapelo Island dock due to rainy windy weather. Several adult Gannets were observed in the sound as we approached the dock, and their presence up in the sound was attributed to inclement weather at sea.

Previously no Gannets had been collected in Georgia, though many competent observers had seen the birds off the coast in winter, and the presence of this species on the State List was based upon these sight observations. Our records then are the only extant specimens from the State.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW. *Numenius americanus*.

On Tuesday, March 22, we went out on the shrimp boat, and this time stopped on Wolf Island which is a narrow sandy strip and tidal marsh just south of Sapelo across Doboy Sound. Shorebirds were rather plentiful along the northeastern shores of the island, and included Pectoral and Least Sandpipers, Oyster-catchers, Skimmers, Forster's and Royal Terns, Willets, Laughing Gulls, etc. While observing these birds, we were quite surprised to see a single Long-billed Curlew. Its absurdly long down-curved bill was the most conspicuous fieldmark to us, though we also noted its large size as compared with nearby Willets and Godwits, cinnamon wing-linings, and call notes. We obtained excellent views of the bird, though later in the day rain interrupted further observations. On April 8, Frank and Charles Durant were on Wolf Island again, and reported that this species of Curlew was still present on the north end of the island.

This Curlew (including its two subspecies) has been collected and observed at various points along the Georgia coast. In fact the only Georgia birds representing the northern race *N. a. parvus* were from Sapelo Island in the 1880's. In recent years only an occasional bird has been seen. Tomkins reports no Georgia records since 1931, but Woodward (*Oriole*, 14: 5, 1949) lists several March and April 1947-8 birds on Little St. Simons and Sea Islands. Stoddard (personal correspondence) reports seeing a wary individual about one-half mile from the Jekyll Island dock on April 24, 1948.

MARBLED GODWIT. *Limosa fedoa*.

The Curlew above on March 22 was in company with some 15-20 Marbled Godwits. One male was collected by Johnston.

According to *Birds of Georgia* (Green, *et al.*, 1945) this species has been recorded only from the Savannah River entrance, but since the publication of the book sight records from other portions of the coast are to be found in the literature. Woodward (*ibid*, p. 6) has records of this species in company with Long-billed Curlews and Jenkins (*Oriole*, 14: 22, 1949) has a June, 1948, record from Sapelo Island. Certainly this species, then, is more common along the coast than previously believed.

PARASITIC JAEGER. *Stercorarius parasiticus*.

On March 18, about the time the adult Gannets were taken, we occasionally got a glimpse of two or three "black and white" gull-like birds which would approach the stern of the boat and then fly off some distance. At length, Frank Durant shot one of these birds which was later prepared by Johnston. It turned out to be an immature male. We recognized the bird as a Jaeger, and our tentative identification as the present species has been confirmed by Duvall.

The only previous Georgia record for this species (see, Greene, *et al.*, *Birds of Georgia*, 1945) was a bird taken by Dan Henderson near Augusta on November 7, 1936, and this individual was listed as accidental or a straggler. Our brief experience with this species leads us to the belief that it is probably not uncommon along the Georgia coast, at least offshore. Records for this bird, though, as in the present case, might be limited to observations from boats. Hence, it could be easily missed by the ordinary shore observations.

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GENERAL NOTES

UNUSUAL BIRD RECORDS AFTER THE LABOR DAY STORM.—For four days after Labor Day, 1950, the wind blew hard from the northeast, due to a hurricane that lingered near Tampa, Florida. There was about eighteen inches of rainfall during those four days. On the first day after the blow that it was possible to get in the field, Saturday, September 9, the group of birds on the partially flooded City Dump, three miles east of the city, was looked over for unusual species.

There were several Black-bellied Plovers (*Squatarola squatarola*) and Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*), some miles inland from the usual range; three Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*) and one Northern Phalarope (*Lobipes lobatus*) that normally migrate to seaward of

this locality; three Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*); and several Stilt (*Micropalama himantopus*) and White-rumped Sandpipers (*Erolia fuscicollis*), as well as the usual aggregation of peeps and small plovers.

Some weeks later, October 1, to be exact, the remains of two Bridled Terns (*Sterna anaethetus melanoptera*) and one Noddy Tern (*Anous stolidus stolidus*) were found on the north end of Tybee Island. These appear to represent additions to the Georgia List, and it is believed that they were blown around the perimeter of the hurricane from the east and south. The condition of the remains indicated that the birds had been dead some weeks. Mr. Allen J. Duvall of the Fish and Wildlife Service furnished the identification.—IVAN R. TOMKINS, 2131 East 50th Street, Savannah, Georgia.

THE PAINTED BUNTING SUMMERING AT WAYNESBORO, GEORGIA.—H. V. Autry reported to me that while doing field work for the State Department of Entomology in the vicinity of Waynesboro, Burke County, Georgia, early in May he had noted a male Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) about a mile from town. On May 28, 1949, I stopped briefly in Waynesboro to attempt to determine the status of this bird there. On the eastern edge of town in a park-like area known as the old race track I found two singing males established on territories. Later, I found a third male in first year plumage established in a plum thicket on the golf course at the southern edge of town.

The Painted Bunting is a fairly common summer resident at Augusta but is strictly limited to a narrow strip of habitat along the Savannah River. That the range of the species is continuous along the river to the coast is known from records at various places either on the Georgia or South Carolina side. However, the finding of the birds at Waynesboro which is some 17 miles from the river and separated from it by the Briar Creek swamp was unexpected. A thorough check would probably reveal that its range is more extensive than thought and that it breeds at Sardis, Hilltonia, Sylvania and possibly Millen.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.

FURTHER BREEDING OF THE BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER IN GEORGIA.—On July 4, 1950, the writer observed an adult female Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*) feeding two well-developed young at Woody's Gap in north Georgia. The site of observation was on the boundary between Union and Lumpkin Counties at an elevation of 3150 feet. The birds were in young Virginia pines, and, due to overhanging clouds, could be approached within five feet. Unfortunately the steady stream of tourists prevented collection of a

specimen. This location connects previous breeding records for this species at Burnt Mountain by Odum (*Oriole*, 10: 51, 1945) and on Tray Mountain by Mrs. Dorothy Neal (personal correspondence).—DAVID W. JOHNSTON, Dept. of Biology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

NORTHERN PHALAROPE IN AUGUSTA.—On May 9, 1950, while on a field trip to the local brick-yard ponds near Augusta in Richmond County, Georgia, I noticed a small sandpiper-like bird alight upon the water and commence feeding. I collected the bird and took it to J. Fred Denton who has identified it as the Northern Phalarope (*Lobipes lobatus*). The specimen, an adult male, was made into a study skin by Dr. Denton and now remains in my possession.

I believe that this constitutes the third record for Georgia for this species, and this is the first occurrence near Augusta. — CLARENCE A. BELGER, 539 Tubman Street, Augusta, Georgia.

BLUE GROSBEAK BREEDING AT HELEN, WHITE COUNTY, GEORGIA.—The Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) is a fairly common breeding bird throughout most of the State but it is very scarce or entirely absent from southeast Georgia and from the mountain region. Up to the present there are no breeding records from the plateaus north of the Blue Ridge and very few from the upper Piedmont near the mountains. In order to better delimit the range of this species in the northern section of the state the following observations are recorded. On June 8, 1949, a nest of this Grosbeak was discovered in a scrub peach tree in a yard within the city limits of Helen (alt. 1300 ft.). It held two young birds which left the nest of their own accord that afternoon. In the Nacoochee Valley which extends southward from Helen adult Blue Grosbeaks, often accompanied by young birds, have been seen frequently during the breeding season the last several years. — J. FRED DENTON, Augusta, Georgia, and DOROTHY P. NEAL, Demorest, Georgia.

THE CHIPPING SPARROW BREEDING IN JENKINS COUNTY, GEORGIA.—While studying birds with a party from the University of Georgia at Birdsville Plantation near Millen, Jenkins County, Georgia, on May 21, 1949, several Chipping Sparrows (*Spizella passerina*) were noted in the pines about a tenant house. As I wandered about the yard looking for a possible nest one of the adults became very excited as I approached a small pear tree. I expected to find a nest there but instead flushed a bob-tailed fledgling which was just able to fly to the bottom limb of a nearby pine. A further search failed to reveal the nest so the young bird, a male, was collected to substantiate the record.

Except for the possible breeding of this species at Camp Stewart in Liberty County (see Grimm, *Oriole* 11: 27-42, 1946), this is the first time Chipping Sparrows have been found breeding south of Augusta in eastern Georgia. In South Carolina this species has been found nesting near the coast in Beaufort County (see Chamberlain and Sprunt, *South Carolina Bird Life*, 1949), so it would not be surprising to find it breeding sparingly to Savannah in eastern Georgia. — J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.

THE OCCURRENCE OF THE PINE WARBLER IN A CYPRESS SWAMP. — As one becomes familiar with a bird from repeated observations of it, he comes to associate that bird with the particular habitat in which it belongs. So through the years I have come to associate the Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) with the extensive tracts of pine forests so characteristic of Georgia. To find this warbler in anything but pine woods (and associated edge types) seemed not the remotest possibility. Yet on November 26, 1949, I encountered two of these warblers deep in a gum-cypress swamp far removed from their nearest normal habitat. The sky was heavily overcast so that visibility in the swamp was very poor. As the two birds worked along with a loose flock of Chickadees, Titmice, Kinglets and a Blue-headed Vireo, they posed quite a problem in identification, particularly since they were in dull plumage and their identity was not suspected. It was only after one of them was collected that I realized they were Pine Warblers. From whence they came and why I shall never know—and I will never cease to be amazed when I find Pine Warblers in a cypress swamp.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.

NEWS AND COMMENTS

FALL MEETING, 1950. — The twenty-third semi-annual meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society was held in Dalton, Georgia, on October 21 and 22, 1950, with a total registration of sixty-five members and guests. Members assembled and registered in the lobby of the Hotel Dalton. An afternoon session was held with President J. Fred Denton presiding. A nominating committee, composed of Mrs. Tom Cater, Mrs. Lucille Rotchford, and Mrs. J. C. Oliver, was appointed to nominate a Treasurer and a Regional Vice-President for the LaGrange-Columbus area. The following breeding reports were given: Song Sparrow at Mill-edgeville by Katherine Weaver, Horned Lark in Floyd County by George Sciple, and House Wren at Athens by Eugene P. Odum. Ivan Tomkins?

notes on the nesting of the Black-necked Stilt at Savannah were read by Fred Denton.

After a short recess, the President called the business meeting to order and asked for committee reports. Dr. Odum reported for the Publications Committee that Robert Norris' paper "Distribution and Population of Summer Birds of Southwestern Georgia" had gone to press. The Membership Committee Chairman, Mr. Werner, reported that fifteen or twenty new members had been added. Mrs. Charles Neal reported that an invitation had been received to hold the spring meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society at Albany, Georgia. A motion was made and passed to accept the invitation. The nominating committee reported that Mrs. Lucille Rotchford had consented to take the office of Treasurer as an emergency measure for the remainder of the term. Mrs. J. H. Whitman of West Point, Georgia, was nominated as Regional Vice-President for the Columbus-LaGrange area. Upon motion by Mr. Werner, the nominations were closed and the slate declared elected. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved after corrections.

At seven o'clock dinner was served in the dining room of the Hotel Dalton. The President expressed appreciation to the local ladies responsible for the beautiful table and other arrangements for the meeting, then presented Mrs. Tyler, retiring president of the Bird and Garden Club who welcomed the Georgia Ornithological Society to Dalton. Mrs. Tyler presented the new President, Mrs. Bandy, who added a word of welcome. Miss Blanche Gardner of the Bird and Garden Club brought to the attention of the Society the notes of Gerhard Alexander who observed birds near Dalton one hundred years ago.

Mr. R. E. Hamilton introduced the speaker for the evening, Mr. Arthur Stupka, Chief Naturalist at Great Smoky National Park. Showing colored slides, Mr. Stupka gave a most interesting and informative description of the park.

At seven o'clock Sunday morning the members divided into two groups for field trips, one going to the Thread Mill Lake and the other to Lake Frances. A final count showed that a total of sixty-six species was seen.

NEWS OF MEMBERS. — We regret to announce that William W. Griffin, co-editor of the *Oriole*, has been called to active duty with the U. S. Marine Corps. Bill, who holds the rank of Captain, is stationed at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, with the Second Marine Division. He will be missed by his many friends, and we look forward to his early return to the State.

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