

# THE ORIOLE

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



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Vol. XIX

SEPTEMBER, 1954

No. 3

# THE ORIOLE

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## NEW INFORMATION ON THE WHITE- CROWNED SPARROW IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA

By ROBERT A. NORRIS

The White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) has been found wintering in small numbers in Georgia, a majority of the observations having been made in the Piedmont region. Previous to 1952, the only records from the Coastal Plain were one collected near Savannah (Tomkins, 1940) and four near Tifton (Norris, 1944, 1946; Gaulding, 1945). Recent findings, however, suggest that with respect to the White-crown's presence in southern Georgia, the second half of this century will be far more exciting than the first. These findings consist of flocks of White-crowned Sparrows, totaling no less than 30 individuals, which I noted in the vicinity of Tifton, Tift County, between February 28 and April 24, 1952. Fourteen specimens were collected and preserved. Certain details on several phases of the biology of these birds were recorded, and I think it desirable to report these with a view to augmenting what little has been published on *Zonotrichia leucophrys* as a winter resident in Georgia.

*Occurrence and environment.*—In sparse old-field and road-edge vegetation (habitat 1), two miles west of Tifton, White-crowns were found on February 28 and 29 and March 1, two being seen on the first date and flocks of ten and seven, respectively, on the two succeeding days. As field work did not begin until late February, there is no reason to believe the birds had not wintered in the area. (Previous records from Tifton are in October and January.) The area in which these sparrows were noted was only three or four acres in extent. It was bisected by a secondary road, and at its east border was a stream with dense weedy and shrubby vegetation. Some members of the flock sought refuge in this riparian growth when hard pressed on February 29, but on each of the three days my initial observations of the sparrows were made in the open country fully 200 yards from the stream. In this open habitat a small house, a woodshed, and several woodpiles were present, providing the only potential "heavy cover" for the birds. There was one small, leafless oak into which the seven birds of March 1 settled when disturbed from feeding on the ground.

Most of the remainder of the sparrows, at least 20 individuals of which half were collected, were found between March 8 and April 24, inclusive, at a T-type secondary road intersection (habitat 2), one mile northwest of Tifton and approximately one mile from the first location. The only others, all immatures, were seen about one-quarter mile from this intersection; one of these was collected (on

March 17) and the rest observed as follows: April 3, one; April 12, two; April 14, one. On one side of the T-intersection was an oat field, partly shaded by evenly spaced pecan trees; on another side, a fallow field with scattered pine saplings; and on the third, more extensive side, a house and freshly plowed field. Fairly heavy cover, including honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), was growing on and alongside fences which bordered the oat patch and the fallow ground. The birds occurred in a loose group or groups and seemed confined, as suggested by intermittent observations, to an area surely no greater than that of habitat 1. They were always on or near the ground except for three individuals on April 23 which were perched as high as 35 feet in pecan trees. One of these, singing in a subdued manner, proved upon collection to be an immature male.

The White-crowns did not flock with other species, in either habitat, although some were seen in brief, probably random, association with Palm Warblers and with Vesper and Song Sparrows. White-throated Sparrows, the only congeners of the White-crowns in the region, were occasionally glimpsed at the intersection, but they did not occupy habitat 1. My observations, both this spring and in past years, suggest that White-crowned Sparrows on their wintering ground may be found in more open country with less cover and also farther from water than is typically the case with White-throated Sparrows.

*Winter status, 1951-52, in other southern states.*—Lowery and Newman (1952) report that "White-crowned Sparrows are usually unexplainably scarce in Louisiana in winter, but this year they were common even on the coast, at Cameron, La., and Newman recorded 1 to 11 individuals near Baton Rouge on numerous dates between Feb. 18 and the end of the period [March 31, 1952]." Brookfield and Bennett (1952) cite records of occurrence of White-crowns from Lake Jackson, Leon County, Florida, on December 23 and 31, 1951, there being few previous records for the species in the state (Dennis, 1950). The species was reported "more often than usual" from the Piedmont belt of the Carolinas (Chamberlain and Chamberlain, 1952). It is evident, then, that in 1951-52 White-crowned Sparrows wintered in greater numbers than usual in several parts of south-central and southeastern United States.

*Racial identity.*—All the Tifton specimens except one proved to be of the nominate race, *Zonotrichia l. leucophrys*, the exception being the small (25-gram) female taken March 1 (see table), which proved referable to Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow, *Z. l. gambelii*. Both these females came from the aforementioned flock of seven. The subspecies *gambelii*, characterized by pale lores instead of dark ones, breeds in northwestern North America, from Montana to the Mackenzie region and Alaska, and as a population migrates greater distances than any other race of White-crown. Although this is the first definite record of its occurrence in Georgia, the record is not surprising inasmuch as this race has been found in many of the eastern and midwestern states. The present record just fills one more gap and adds one more bit of evidence that *gambelii* has far-reaching eastward, as well as southward, migration routes. But it plainly occurs in smaller numbers than the race *leucophrys* in Geor-

gia, for a total of more than 22 of the latter (counting the 1952 specimens) are now known from the State. Thomas D. Burleigh and I are responsible for subspecific identification of the present series of 14 specimens, and Allen J. Duvall has corroborated our determination of the example of *gambelii*. The birds are now deposited at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley.

*Sex and age of specimens.*—There are eight females, five males, and one bird of undetermined sex in the series. If we add to this two males taken near Tifton February 25, 1946, we obtain practically an even sex ratio. This sample is small but does suggest that no strikingly unbalanced sex ratio obtains in wintering White-crowns in southern Georgia. Such preliminary evidence is worth recording, I believe, because partial segregation of the sexes has been reported for winter-resident *gambelii* in California (Emlen, 1943), with males outnumbering females as much as 3:1 at localities on the west side of the Sierra Nevada and females predominating 2:1 on the east side. So far as I know, sex segregation in wintering population of *Z. l. leucophrys* has not been demonstrated.

Only one among the 30 or more birds observed in 1952 was an adult with black head stripes (the heavier male taken March 17). The others were less than one year old and were in "brown livery," or were in advanced molt (as in the late-April specimens) and even then had only partially acquired the conspicuous headdress of the adult. This great preponderance of young stands in contrast to the age ratio in a flock at Athens, Clarke County, Georgia, observed almost daily through the winter of 1943-44, which, as best could be determined, comprised seven adults and four immature birds (Petrides and Petrides, 1944). That immatures go farther south than adults is a possibility, but present data from Georgia and other southern states are too scanty to warrant further comment on this matter.

DATA ON SPECIMENS OF *Zonotrichia leucophrys* COLLECTED IN  
1952 NEAR TIFTON, GEORGIA

Date	Sex	Wt. (Gms.)	Gonadal Enlarge- ment	Molt	Parasites
Feb. 28	F	28.3	None	Well started	Blood negative
Feb. 29	F	23.7	None	Started	—
March 1	F	25.2	None	Absent	—
March 1	F	27.7	None	Absent	—
March 8	F	27.3	None	Absent	—
March 14	M	29.6	None	Well started	Blood negative
March 17	M	30.9	None	Well started	Blood negative
March 17	F	30.0	None	Well started	Blood with <i>Leucocytozoon</i> sp.
March 17	M	31.2	2 mm.	Well started	Blood negative; nematodes in body cavity
March 19	?	25.6	—	Absent	Blood with <i>Leucocytozoon</i> sp. and <i>Plasmodium</i> sp.
April 1	M	30.9	2 mm.	Well started	Blood with <i>Leucocytozoon</i> sp.
April 23	M	29.0	2 mm.	Half completed	—
April 23	F	27.2	5.5 mm.	Half completed	Blood with <i>Leucocytozoon</i> sp.
April 24	F	29.3	4.5 mm.	Half completed	Blood negative

*Food, parasites, and disease.*—Several stomachs of March- and April-collected White-crowned Sparrows contained vegetal food and tiny sand grains, with only traces of insects. In habitat 2 the birds fed on oats to such an extent that the alimentary contents, including the feces, of most of the specimens were of a decidedly greenish color. Even after the harvest in April there was plenty of this grain scattered over the ground and readily accessible to the sparrows.

Blood smears from hearts and/or lungs of nine of the specimens were prepared shortly after the birds had succumbed. Five were negative for parasites and four were positive (table), each of the latter showing infections by the protozoan, *Leucocytozoon* sp., and one showing a double infection, with the malarial parasite, *Plasmodium* sp., present as well as *Leucocytozoon*. Dr. Octavio E. Sousa of the Department of Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, kindly provided identifications of the blood protozoa.

As to the multicellular parasites, a few dried-out Mallophaga were seen on skins, but none was taken from the birds in the flesh. A heavy helminth infection was found in the adult collected March 17, there being about 20 large filarid nematodes, *Diplotriaena* sp., in the abdominal cavity and mesenteries. For the identification of these worms I am grateful to Dr. Everett E. Wehr of the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland.

The individual infected with *Plasmodium* also had tumors on the feet. On the right foot there was a large one on the heel, a smaller one on the third toe (these being preserved), and still another at the distal end of the tarsus; there was another small growth on the hallux of the left foot. Heeding a request by Dr. Gordon M. Meade (1946), I sent him a piece of this abnormal tissue, which he reported (letter) was very much like that type of tumor resulting from the virus infection of *Epithelioma contagiosum*. Dr. Meade added that in order definitely to establish specific identity it is necessary to make transinoculation with fresh, triturated tumor material into another bird. He commented, further, that it was "interesting that so many of the birds which have this infection seem to come from the southern states. . . ." It is worth pointing out that the individual with these tumors plus the blood infection was rather small and had not begun its prenuptial molt.

*Weights and gonad size (table).*—The birds obtained early in the season were only slightly fat and those collected later were moderately fat. An upward trend in weight from February to April is noticeable but not striking; the data are too few to say more about this. The specimens were collected between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., and mostly after 3 p.m., so there was little weight fluctuation due to diurnal rhythm. Each was weighed less than two hours after death. Three males, March 17 to April 23, had only slightly enlarged testes (2 mm. long). There was no sign of ovarian development until April 23-24, at which time enlargement was perceptible in two birds (with ovaries 4.5 and 5.5 mm. long, although follicles were still minute). The word "None" in the table indicates that very little, if any, gonadal enlargement had taken place.

*Spring molt.*—Molting was in progress in all except four of the

specimens. These four were obtained from March 1 to March 19 (see table) and included the Gambel's Sparrow. The others were molting extensively or were beginning to. The bird of February 28 was renewing feathers on the chin, throat, occiput, nape, scapulars, breast, and legs. Its two central retrices, or "deck-feathers," were being replaced. The example taken the next day was somewhat less advanced. White-crowns taken between March 14 and April 1, inclusive, showed feather renewal comparable to the first-collected individual; on some of these, ensheathed feathers were found, additionally, along the spinal tract, atop the head, on the belly and sides, and among the lesser and middle (outer) wing-coverts. The adult's molt pattern was similar to that of the March-taken immatures, but this bird had few feather replacements on the head. It may be that adults regularly molt fewer head feathers in spring than do immatures. As one might expect, molt had progressed still further in the late-April specimens (one of which was preserved in alcohol); it was manifest in the various regions mentioned above, also in the tertials and in both upper and lower tail-coverts. About the only areas not involved in this extensive prenuptial molt, as displayed by the several specimens, were the alulae, the primaries, secondaries and their greater (outer) coverts, the ten outside tail-feathers, and some of the feathers of the "wing lining."

Such molt as this, involving most of the contour feathers, was suspected as occurring in *Z. l. leucophrys* by Law (1929:209), on the basis of four relatively fresh-plumaged specimens from Ontario (taken May 6 to May 30), the only material of this race that was available to him. But this was not the impression of Dwight (1900:195), who stated that the first spring molt "involves chiefly the head and chin and a few scattering feathers elsewhere," with little evidence of such molt in adults. These differences are not necessarily irreconcilable, however, for it is possible that some populations of the race *leucophrys* have more nearly complete prenuptial molts than do others. This possibility is suggested by the fact that variation in extent of spring molt is marked in northern versus southern populations of White-crowned Sparrows along the Pacific seaboard (Blanchard, 1941:281). The former race (*pugetensis*) exhibits extensive feather renewal, whereas the latter (*nuttalli*) shows only slight renewal, with many individuals retaining brown-striped heads throughout their first breeding season.

The nature of prenuptial molt in the nominate race *leucophrys*, as exemplified by the specimens from Tifton, was essentially the same as that detailed by Michener and Michener (1943:115,116) for Gambel's Sparrow, based on several hundred adults and immatures trapped at Pasadena, California. The fact that four of my sparrows were not molting merely points to variation in the time of inception of the process. The Micheners found that whereas most individuals were molting by March 1, some non-molters were trapped later and one, an immature, as late as April 3. Approximately two months are required for completion of the molt in *gambelii*, which means that some individuals almost certainly are still molting in migration and possibly even after reaching their breeding ground (*ibid.*:114). Assuming a comparable duration of spring molt in *Z. l.*

*leucophrys*, we may be fairly certain that non-molting birds such as my mid-March specimens would show similar overlap between periods of molt and migration.

## SUMMARY

Thirty or more White-crowned Sparrows were found near Tifton, Tift County, Georgia, between February 28 and April 24, 1952. Fourteen specimens were collected. There were few previous records for the Georgia Coastal Plain. In 1951-52 the species wintered in greater numbers than usual in several parts of the southern United States. The Tifton birds, mainly in two groups about one mile apart, frequented (1) open, old-field vegetation with little heavy cover and (2) fence-rows adjoining an oat field. They appeared to associate with other species only casually. All specimens were *Zonotrichia l. leucophrys* except one, which was *Z. l. gambeli*; this was the first record of the latter race for Georgia. Both sexes were well represented in the series. Among the 30-odd individuals noted, only one was adult (more than one year old). Several stomachs contained vegetal remains, oats being the main food in the second habitat. Parasites included blood protozoans, *Leucocytozoon* and *Plasmodium* sp., and filarid nematodes, *Diplotriaena* sp. One bird had foot disease, apparently due to the virus *Epithelioma contagiosum*. Weights showed a slight up-trend from early March to late April. Gonadal enlargement was not apparent until after mid-March. All specimens save four were molting extensively or were beginning to; this spring molt involved most of the contour feathers of head and body, but not retrices and remiges ("deck-feathers" and tertials excepted) and was essentially as has been described for Gambel's Sparrow. There was evidence of overlap between the end of spring molt and the advent of migration.

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## GENERAL NOTES

## NESTING OF THE HORNED LARK IN THE ATLANTA AREA.

—As predicted by Odum (*Oriole*, 8: 6-8, 1943) the Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) has extended its breeding range into Georgia as shown by Griffin and others (see Griffin, *Oriole*, 16: 8-10, 1951 and Denton, *Oriole*, 18: 43, 1953). However until the present summer, 1954, the species has been a rare winter visitant in the Atlanta area. This statement is based upon the record of the thirteen Christmas Bird Counts since 1940 and upon the present writer's personal experience in the field.

It was, therefore, with surprise that the present writer observed the Horned Lark at both the Municipal Airport and at the Fulton County Airport. The observation was made at the Municipal Airport on June 13, at which time three birds, two males and one female, were seen. No search for a nest was possible at this place. The birds were first seen at the Fulton County Airport on February 14. The following is an account of the nesting activities at this location.

During March, April, and May, the birds, generally three in number, were observed closely by various groups from the Atlanta Bird Club. In April and May a pair of the birds gave repeated evidence of nesting; this included the flight song of the male. However, no nest was found until June 5, at which time a nest with two eggs was located. The third egg which completed the clutch was laid two days later. On the same date that the nest was found six different Horned Larks were observed on the field, some of which were thought to be immatures.

Sometime during the second week of incubation the nest was broken up—how, it is not known. On June 19, the female was observed building a new nest, this time some fifty feet nearer a hangar than was the first nest. Whether by accident or design this second choice of a site provided more protection against the numerous crows present on the field than did the first site.

This second attempt at nesting was successful. Young birds were found in the nest on July 5. Thus, the total time from the beginning of nest construction to the hatching of the eggs was something less than seventeen days.

The actual construction of the nest was the work of the female alone. She first excavated a cup-like depression about four inches in diameter. She then brought pebbles and constructed a dike-like rim around the nest, after which the whole was lined with grasses. There were no clay balls, of which some writers speak, in evidence. In both cases the nests were constructed under a fleshy weed about a foot high. The first nest was located in relatively thick grass, while the second was on almost bare ground. In both cases the nest was near a runway.

While, as indicated above, the male did not take part in the construction of the nest, he did take his turn in incubation. Generally when one bird was on the nest the other was nowhere in sight.

On June 19, two adult birds, not the nesting pair, were observed with an immature. Thus, there is a definite record of two nests and it is reasonable to suppose there was a third.

During the time recorded above, the nesting activities were closely observed by Ray Werner, Dr. Wallace Rogers, and the writer. Dr. Rogers made colored movies of the entire nesting cycle. While the entire film is excellent, the clarity with which the detail of nest construction is shown is nothing short of remarkable.—RUFUS B. GODWIN, 1901 Windemere Drive, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER AT AUGUSTA, RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA.**—On Saturday afternoon, January 23, 1954, Paul A. and Glenna Schwalbe located and satisfactorily identified an adult male White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta deglandi*) on the Savannah River about half a mile above the Augusta pumping station. The lone bird which was relatively unafraid was feeding in the rapids close to the Georgia bank. The bill and white wing patch were readily seen as it rode the ripples between dives. Occasionally it would raise its wings above its back thus better displaying the white wing patch. Several times after drifting a ways down stream in the current it made short flights back to its original feeding area permitting a perfect view of the wing pattern in flight. After returning home that night the Schwalbes telephoned me about the bird. Early the next morning Paul and I went to the same spot and found the bird again feeding in the rapids about 40 yards from the Georgia shore (the river is nearly half a mile wide at this point). All of the field marks and behavior mentioned above were observed again as we quietly watched the bird hoping it would come close enough to shore to collect. However, it never came within range of my small shotgun. Finally in desperation the bird was fired at with a .22

caliber rifle. The shot missed and the bird swam out into the river out of range. The next morning I returned to the area with a more adequate collecting gun. To my disappointment the bird could not be found. The river had dropped 1½ feet since the previous morning apparently making the area no longer attractive for feeding.

This is the first reported occurrence of the White-winged Scoter anywhere in Georgia. Birds undoubtedly occur occasionally off the coast in winter but the occurrence of one in the interior is most unexpected.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.

**FURTHER RECORDS OF THE PHOEBE SUMMERING NEAR THE FALL LINE IN GEORGIA.**—In a previous note (*Oriole* 16: 19-21, 1951) the writer presented results of a search for Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) summering south of their accepted range in Eastern Georgia. The present note presents the results of a further search made during May 1953.

On May 14 a nest was found under a concrete bridge over a small creek crossing Georgia Highway 16 six miles east of Eatonton, Putnam County. At that time the female was incubating an undetermined number of eggs. The nest was somewhat unusual in that it was plastered against the smooth vertical side of a concrete beam with no support from below except a small nest of a dirt-dobber wasp. On a ledge at the junction of two beams under the same bridge was an unoccupied nest which had been used previously this season or last.

On May 28 all bridges between Augusta and Milledgeville (U. S. Highway 78 and Georgia 12, 16 and 22) were checked for Phoebes. None were found except at the Oconee River bridge on Georgia 22 within the town of Jewell, Warren-Hancock County line. Here a single silent bird was observed perched on a low bare limb of a tree at the edge of the cleared right of way on the west side of the river. A few minutes later it flew to the high rocky bank under the east end of the bridge and disappeared from view. After crossing the bridge I flushed the bird from where it had disappeared but no nest could be found in the bank or about the bridge overhead. The fact that no nest was found does not rule out entirely the possibility that there was a nest since the bridge was too big and high for a complete search and the ruins of an old stone dam and mill-house and the abutments of the old bridge offered additional nesting sites.

The southern limits of the breeding range of the Phoebe in Georgia west of Macon still remains undetermined. Persons traveling between Macon and Columbus or along routes slightly north of that might profitably examine bridges in May and June for Phoebe nests. It should be emphasized that to satisfactorily examine a possible nesting site at this time of year it is necessary to climb under the bridge and look for birds and nests. In my experience the male Phoebes like many other species become much quieter and inconspicuous during nesting. They seldom call *phoebe* and spend much of their time sitting quietly on some obscure perch where they will go unnoticed if one just stops and listens at the bridge.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.

**WATER BIRDS AT IDA CASON GARDENS.**—The Ida Cason Gardens located on Route 27 south of Chipley, Georgia, with several hundred acres of artificial lakes, is an interesting place to study water-birds. Mountain Creek Lake, covering 175 acres, has many quiet coves that afford protection to over-wintering ducks, herons, and grebes.

Three Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) (with clipped wings) have been successful decoys for wintering geese of the same species. Through winter months the size of flocks vary from 12 to 35 birds. During the winter of 1952-53 both the Common and Lesser Canada Geese were seen. At the usual migration time in February of 1954, the wintering flocks of geese left the Gardens. Late in March five came in, and seemed so at home immediately that it was assumed they had been winter residents, and had returned. These five birds were still present with the resident birds on August 11. (The Gardens management assure me that the wings of these birds have not been clipped. They can be observed in normal flight as they move from lake to lake within the area.)

On November 20, 1952, I identified a Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) in immature plumage grazing with the flock of Canada Geese. On December 7, Alexander Sprunt, Jr. accompanied a group to the area and confirmed my identification of the goose, now undergoing a change of plumage. When last seen on May 17, 1953, the bird was in full adult plumage.

Other water and shore-birds observed in the Mountain Creek area are: Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Green Heron, American and Snowy Egrets, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, Mallard, Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Osprey, Coot, Wilson's Snipe.—GRACE M. WHITEMAN, 801 Third Avenue, West Point, Georgia.

**THE PASSENGER PIGEON NEAR ATLANTA IN FORMER TIMES.**—Although it is a common assumption that the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) ranged throughout Georgia before its extinction, there are relatively few published accounts of its occurrence. The following observations are therefore presented in an effort to shed some light on the former status of the species in the Atlanta region as well as to encourage readers to examine the older residents of their communities on the subject while first hand knowledge is still available.

In 1947 I interviewed the late Mr. Walter McElreath of Atlanta. Mr. McElreath recalled his early years in Cobb County, Georgia, nine miles west of Marietta in an area near Lost Mountain. He remembered clearly the Passenger Pigeon and was familiar with it as distinguished from the Mourning Dove. Literally thousands of pigeons were seen by him prior to 1880. He particularly remembered the large flocks coming in to roost in a woodland near his home during the fall when cotton was being picked. He estimated that at this season the roost near his home probably contained up to 10,000 birds during the years from about 1877 to 1880 or 1881. He was unable to recall definitely the last year in which pigeons were

seen, but he remembered that the decline was sometime in the early eighties and was rather sudden.

In 1948 I discussed Passenger Pigeons with Mr. James Whitley, a resident of the Vinings area of Cobb County since 1873. Mr. Whitley informed me that he clearly remembered several instances when his older brother, William Thomas Whitley, brought in "wild pigeon" from hunts in the Chattahoochee River—Vinings region. Mr. Whitley stated that he was too young to hunt at that time—in the early eighties—but that it was somewhat of an occasion when pigeon were bagged by his brother. This would seem to indicate that the species was rather scarce at this time. By the time Mr. Whitley had reached the age for shouldering a firearm the pigeons were no longer to be found and he never shot one himself. The distinction between the "wild pigeon" and the "dove" was, of course, well known. I might add that Mr. Whitley still lives near Vinings and in the same house built by his grandfather in the year 1842.—WILLIAM W. GRIFFIN, 3232 Pine Ridge Road, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia.

**WINTER HABITAT OF THE ROBIN IN CENTRAL GEORGIA.** The recent discussion by Speirs (*Wilson Bulletin*, 65: 175, 1953) of winter distribution of American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) suggests a review of observations of this species in its winter range. From October 1951 to October 1953, while living in Houston County, I found Robins very numerous during the winter months. Usually they were feeding in floodplain forests at the tops of sycamores and other trees and in the brush. Frequently we found groups of 30 to 50 individuals working through the forests. Mass movements took place at dawn and dusk, with hundreds of Robins flying in or out of swamp forest areas. Near Elberta, at the northern edge of Houston County, the dusk flight was away from the Ocmulgee River, but four miles farther south, near Warner Robins, the dusk flight was toward the river. Occasionally Robins were found feeding in the upland oak-pine woods. In January and February, during the period of heavy rains, and after the coldest winter weather had passed, thousands of Robins could be found feeding on the ground on lawns. These birds, however, always withdrew at dusk toward the Ocmulgee River. My impression is that the chief habitat of wintering Robins in this region is the swamp forest of the river bottomlands.—NATHANIEL R. WHITNEY, JR., 4350 Meadowood Drive, Rapid City, South Dakota.

**FURTHER NOTES ON THE DICKCISSEL IN HOUSTON COUNTY.**—After finding the Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) in Houston County once in 1952 (*Oriole*, 18: 9, 1953), I attempted to learn more of its status in 1953. Therefore, began watching the same area on April 19, but did not find Dickcissels until May 10, when I noted three singing males in a five-acre field about 200 yards north of last year's site, and about five miles west (not east as erroneously stated in my previous note) of Elberta. I returned to the same area on May 17, 24, and June 7, finding singing males each time, but found none on June 21. On all visits after the first, I found only two males in the five-acre field, but on May

24 I found another pair 100 yards further west in another field. On each visit I looked for nests but was unable to find them.

The vegetation of the field was an almost pure stand of a legume which I was unable to identify, but would describe as a bush pea. It appeared to be a crop plant, and yet was growing in a thick cover that appeared natural. Most plants reached a height of 20 to 24 inches. A few other tall herbaceous plants were scattered through the field. The most numerous bird species nesting in the field was the Redwing (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), with a population consisting of at least two males and five females. In searching for nests of the Dickcissels, I located four of the Redwings. One Grasshopper Sparrow was noted singing in an adjacent tall-grass pasture on two visits, and occasional Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*), Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*), and Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) fed in the field.

The presence of the birds, showing apparent territorial behavior, for a month suggests that they were breeding in the area. Unfortunately, I could not confirm this with direct observations of nests or young. The species should be expected in fields of alfalfa and similar crops throughout the central Georgia region, and probably will increase in abundance as cattle-raising with its clover and alfalfa planting becomes more widespread. Even now, however, small local colonies such as this one are probably scattered through the region.—NATHANIEL R. WHITNEY, JR., 4350 Meadowwood Drive, Rapid City, South Dakota.

**OCCURRENCE OF THE RING-BILLED GULL NEAR AUGUSTA, GEORGIA.**—The Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) at present is considered a rare transient in the interior of the state. However, evidence already accumulating suggests that with increasing numbers of large reservoirs to attract it this gull will be observed in the interior more commonly in the future. At Augusta the first record of this gull's occurrence was a female collected April 9, 1938, and reported by Murphey (*Oriole*, 3:18, 1938). Since then four additional occurrences in the vicinity have been noted by the writer. A single adult was seen April 25, 1943, at the brickyard ponds; a female in second year plumage was collected May 3, 1945, just southeast of the city; an adult was watched as it fed in the sluice which connects the industrial canal with the river near the city stockade June 4, 1949, and three adults were seen resting on driftwood at the Little River Bridge across the Clark's Hill Reservoir, Columbia County, May 3, 1953.—J. FRED DENTON, 1510 Pendleton Road, Augusta, Georgia.