

# THE ORIOLE

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



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# THE ORIOLE

## EDITOR

Milton N. Hopkins, Jr., 202 W. Roanoke Drive, Fitzgerald, Georgia

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## ABSENCE OF THE BLUE JAY ON SOME OF GEORGIA'S COASTAL ISLANDS

by

IVAN R. TOMKINS

In Burleigh (1958) it is stated that the Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata cristata*) occurs all over Georgia, except the extreme northeastern corner. It is relatively easy to delineate the range of this flamboyant bird, for it is not shy and may be seen or heard anywhere that it is common. This bird accepts many different foods and nesting sites of various kinds. It may be found in deep swamps, agricultural lands, villages, and in city parks where there are trees. In short, its habitat needs reach over a wide spectrum. In the coastal region generally, it appears to be resident all year long, but observers have long known that it is entirely missing on some of the outer islands, the "barrier islands" that front on the ocean all along the Georgia coast, with extensive saline marshes between them and the mainland and its nearby islands. So the matter of tabulating existing knowledge of the presence or absence of the jay on the coastal islands is not original with me, but the report is desirable as the range of the species may be changing all the time.

The barrier islands may be studied on U.S.C. & G.S. Charts 1241 and 1242. There are also aerial photographs at the U. of Ga. Marine Institute on Sapelo Island, and for some of the islands in the U.S. Corps of Engineers Office in Savannah. Some of the larger islands are said to be of Pleistocene age, others are Recent (in litt. Dr. V. J. Henry).

In one short tabulation, these outer islands will be listed, from north to south, with the available data concerning the Blue Jay.

| Island       | Status of Blue Jay |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Tybee        | A few, since 1958  |
| Little Tybee | None—scant habitat |



|                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Wassaw            | None                      |
| Ossabaw           | No information            |
| St. Catherine's   | No information            |
| Blackbeard        | None                      |
| Sapelo            | None                      |
| Little St. Simon  | No information            |
| St. Simon         | Abundant                  |
| Jekyll            | Abundant                  |
| Little Cumberland | None                      |
| Cumberland        | One record, Sprunt (1936) |

Tybee: Since about 1949, I have visited all or a part of this island hundreds of times. The first Blue Jay was seen in April 28, 1958, and a few have been found at all seasons since. There are now a half dozen resident pairs, concentrated on the north end, where there are still Slash Pines and Live Oaks.

Cockspur Island: (Fort Pulaski Nat'l Monument) is about a mile across South Channel to the westward and has developed a forest with suitable jay habitat in the last 40 years, but no jays have been seen there yet.

Wassaw: On May 20, 1963, six of us walked over nearly all of the southern half, making a general list of the flora and fauna. No jays were seen or heard, even though their absence was noted and discussed. Mr. Hermann Coolidge, who has long familiarity with Wassaw agrees with our findings.

Blackbeard: Mr. E. O. Mellinger, in his official capacity with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visits Blackbeard often, and informs me that the Blue Jay is not resident there.

Sapelo: The species was not listed by Teal (1959). This island has been pretty thoroughly worked since the establishment of the Marine Institute there, and the bird has not been recorded, even on the recent Christmas Counts, when most of the collaborators were on the lookout for it.

Little Cumberland: Dr. George W. Sciple and I spent most of March 10, 1963, on this wild dune island, which is abundantly forested. We were both well aware of all the birds seen and heard, but found no jays. Again on May 20, 1963, Miss Clermont Lee, Mr. & Mrs. E. O. Mellinger, and I traveled over a great deal of the island, listing birds, reptiles, amphibia, plants, etc. We found no jays and concluded that there was no resident population.

Cumberland: Sprunt (1936) listed the "Florida Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata florincola*)," in his bird list, but without comment. The nomenclature he used was then current.

In summation, no theory about the distribution of the Blue Jay, can be offered with present knowledge. It is an interesting parallel that certain land mammals are also missing on some of these islands.

The Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) is not native on Tybee (recently introduced), Wassaw, Ossabaw, Blackbeard, Sapelo (introduced), or Little Cumberland. The Cottontail is still not resident on Tybee, Wassaw, Blackbeard, Sapelo, and Little Cumberland. Of course the marshes may have prevented the spread of these land animals, when it would offer less of a barrier to the more mobile Blue Jay.

Acknowledgements are due to Messrs. Ingram Richardson and Brailford Nightingale for allowing access to, and furnishing transportation on, Little Cumberland; to Dr. V. J. Henry, Director of the Sapelo Marine Institute; and to Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Mellinger, Mrs. Fred Swanberg, Miss Clermont Lee, Mr. and Mrs. George Swank, Dr. George W. Sciple, Mr. Hermann Coolidge, and to Dr. Herbert W. Kale, II, all of whom helped in one way or another.

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- Sprunt, Alex, Jr. 1936. Some Observations on the Bird Life of Cumberland Island, Georgia. Oriole, Vol. 1, 1-6.
- Teal, J. M. 1959. Birds of Sapelo Island and Vicinity. Oriole, Vol. XXIV, 1-14 & 18-20.

1231 East 50th St.  
Savannah, Ga.  
March 18, 1965.



## GENERAL NOTES

## WESTERN KINGBIRD IN ATLANTA AREA

All authorities seem to agree that the western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) occasionally wanders eastward in migration, although the normal limits of its breeding grounds are western Texas and western Iowa. Burleigh's "Georgia Birds" gives the first record for the State as 1938, with one record for Atlanta in 1949.

On April 30, 1965, the western kingbird was reported by Chris Floyd, a young and reliable observer. The local was the U. S. Honor Farm on Panthersville Road in DeKalb County.

On May 2nd, Mr. and Mrs. Elbridge Freeborn and the writer visited the spot and found the bird perched on a power line, probably 100 feet above an open field. It flew off on our approach, and we never saw it again, but the black tail and yellowish underparts were quite visible. The white outer tail feathers were not seen.

The area supported at least a dozen eastern kingbirds, all of which perched on low fences less than six feet off the ground.

—Louis C. Fink, 688 North Parkwood Road, Decatur, Georgia 30030

## GLOSSY IBIS IN ATLANTA

The 238th species has been added to the all-time list of birds in the Atlanta area. On May 15, 1965, Chris Floyd found a glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) feeding in a small mud flat near South River adjacent to the U. S. Honor Farm on Panthersville Road in DeKalb County. Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Einhorn saw the bird that afternoon. The sighting was checked the next morning by the writer and by Vaughn Morrison, who has considerable experience with Florida birds. The ibis was an adult, with rich chestnut plumage.

While the glossy ibis is widely distributed in the eastern hemisphere, it seems to occur in the western hemisphere only in the West Indies, Florida and the Gulf Coast. A few wander north and the bird has bred in the Carolinas. Burleigh describes it as a rare transient on the coast of Georgia and of accidental occurrence in the interior of the State.

The Griffin-Parks list of Atlanta birds included 236 species when published. The alder flycatcher was added as a nesting species a few years ago, and the glossy ibis now brings the total to 238.

—Louis C. Fink, 688 North Parkwood Road, Decatur, Georgia 30030

BANDED ROYAL TERN RECOVERED  
AT SAPELO, ISLAND, GEORGIA

A skeleton of a bird of this species along with perhaps two dozen more was picked up on the southwestern shore of Nanny Goat beach, Sapelo Island, Georgia on January 2, 1965 by C. William Dopson and the writer. Only one of the birds' remains bore a band. It was number 615-23378 and according to the Fish and Wildlife Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel Maryland the bird was a Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*). It was banded on August 19, 1964 as a young bird by Cape Romain NWR at McClellanville, South Carolina.

Ivan R. Tomkins had tentatively identified the remains of the bird as belonging to this species. He states that the banding location is approximately 162 air miles from the recovery point. It is thought that this large number of birds and the accompanying debris was probably brought ashore by one of the severe fall hurricanes in the fall of 1964.

—Milton Hopkins, Jr. Osierfield, Georgia, August 8, 1965

RING-NECKED DUCK IN SUMMER  
IN HOUSTON COUNTY, GEORGIA

The morning of July 10, 1965 Tom and Hedvig Cater scanned a wet weather pond in an open field near Houston Lake, Houston County, Georgia. With the amount of rainfall so far this year there is a good stand of reeds and marsh grasses on at least one-half of the pond's perimeter. We have frequently seen ducks of a variety of species here during the normal duck seasons.

This day we first noted six immature Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) feeding near a shallow portion of the pond and five Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*) swimming and diving in the open water.

Then a group of ducks came into view. With a 25x telescope we saw one adult male Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) swimming at a short distance from the others which were seven in number. They were all the same size and shape as the male but brownish in color. On two of them I could make out the distinct eye-ring and the light line which trails behind the eye as in the female Ring-necked Duck.

The next afternoon we returned, hoping to get a closer look. From the road we could see two of the brown ducks and hoping to get a closer look in spite of the reeds we drove through the field to another side. We



could not see the brown ducks but the male Ring-neck swam into open water and afforded an excellent view through the telescope.

In Georgia Ring-necked Ducks are common transients and common winter residents locally, generally seen from October through April. Extremes for Georgia, October 3, 1943 in Grady County and May 20, 1952 in Thomas County (Burleigh). The extremes are comparable in Louisiana and Alabama.

Tomkins states in "Bird Life of the Savannah River Delta" that "a few non-breeding individuals remain in the summer" (in Georgia). In Alabama the Ring-necked Duck "occasionally summers" in the Tennessee Valley region and in the Piedmont summered at Whatley's Lake in 1953 and 1954 (Imhof). In "Louisiana Birds" Table 3, page 511, seems to indicate it has been seen at some time during each week of the summer months. Lowery states "The few individuals that rarely spend the summer here and there in the state are probably wounded birds that were unable to migrate when the time came for them to do so."

—Hedvig Cater, 315 Davis Dr. North, Warner Robins, Ga. July 14, 1965

## FROM THE FIELD

On April 17, 1965 Tom and Hedvig Cater accompanied Brooke Meanley to the Big Indian Creek area in Houston County. They noted a Swainson's Warbler singing in the flood plain of this creek in an area where the understory consisted primarily of palmetto instead of cane. In this area the Kentucky Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler were also heard singing. Brooke Meanley spent several days in the flood plain of the Ocmulgee River on the east side near Macon in a cane brake habitat during this same period and through the courtesy of Hedvig Cater the following interesting records of his are presented. He noted the Short-billed Marsh Wren on April 14 (1), April 18 (5), Swainson's Warbler each day from April 12 through April 19, Worm-eating Warbler each day from April 13 to April 16, Cerulean Warbler April 14 (12), and April 16 (1), Northern Waterthrush April 16 (1), Rusty Blackbird April 19 (3). Nests located were White-eyed Vireo with one egg and Hooded Warbler with one egg, both on April 19.

Dr. T. P. Haines, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia sent the following note by letter. "Today (April 22, 1965) I was wading down a stream in southern Jones County and a small bird dropped to the ground just beside me and wandered as if hurt, into the shallow water. Since I did not follow the bird at first close enough for good identification I investigated the tangled overhang thinking that she had a nest there. I found the nest containing three eggs. I continued down the stream with the bird feigning injury for 25 yards or more. The bird did not fly until it had arrived at a bend in the stream and a considerable clearing where the tributary stream entered a larger stream. Then the bird quietly disappeared, having successfully led me away from the nest. The bird was a Louisiana Waterthrush. The nesting site was typical as was the habitat as mentioned in Burleigh's "Georgia Birds." The feigning reaction is not mentioned in Burleigh. Perhaps this is well known but this is the first experience that I have had with a nesting waterthrush. It is a nesting record for Jones County."

Milton Hopkins, Jr. has noted a pair of Coots on a farm pond at Osierfield, Irwin County, Georgia all summer. Their presence could possibly be explained by one of the birds having only one wing. No evidence of nesting has been observed.

Kenneth H. Dubke of Chattanooga, Tennessee reports the sight observation of a female Mourning Warbler just over the Tennessee line in Georgia on April 18, 1965.



## NEWS AND COMMENTS

## HERON DISPERSAL STUDY

Dr. Andrew J. Meyerriecks, Department of Zoology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, is currently studying the movements of young herons in Florida. His work is being done in cooperation with the Encephalitis Research Center of Tampa, a division of the State Board of Health. All of the herons and egrets found in the United States breed in Florida and occur in goodly numbers. A fascinating aspect of the life history of herons is that the young ones, newly fledged, engage in dramatic dispersal movements. Strangely enough, detailed information is lacking in the movements of these young herons in Florida and nearby states.

Dr. Meyerriecks is banding each young heron with a standard government aluminum band placed on its right leg, and then the bird has some of its feathers dyed a bright color. Each heronry is assigned a special color code so that observers can tell where the young heron was born. If you see a strangely marked heron or egret of any kind, please send this information to the address below: DATE: PLACE: SPECIES OF HERON (if known): HOW BIRD WAS COLORED (for example, on the right wing only, left wing only, belly, both wings, and so on). Please give us your name and address so that we may tell you where your heron came from. Your help will be greatly appreciated and will contribute to the success of this project.

Heron Project  
Encephalitis Research Center  
4001 Tampa Bay Boulevard  
Tampa, Florida 33614

Ed. Note: Inadvertently the pagination for *The Oriole*, Vol. XXIX was carried consecutively into Vol. XXX. To avoid more confusion page numbers will continue through the present volume in consecutive order.

## RECENT LITERATURE

THE BIRDS OF CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS, 1965, by Dr. Norman P. Hill, Introduction by Roger Tory Peterson, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 425 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10016, 364 pp., \$6.00.

Ludlow Griscom conceived this book, and his journals, kept for 20 years, have been used by Dr. Hill. The author notes that he has tried to present as complete a picture as possible of the avifauna of Cape Cod for the 30 years prior to 1961, and his "Systematic List" describes the status of 354 species, with 30 more shown as hypothetical. He minimizes the concept of subspecies, unless the subspecies can be recognized in the field; published references to subspecies are noted.

For the Georgian who may be visiting the Cape, the book includes a splendid description of the area, with special reference to accessible shore areas, swampy places, and bayberry-beach plum thickets. There is an interesting ornithological history of the area, starting with the Vikings in 1,000 A.D.

The Systematic List (which makes up the bulk of the book) has some variations from standard texts. The presence of a skin in a museum collection is spelled out. The abundance of a species is described for each of the four seasons, and arrival and departure dates are given for the migrants. When the author feels there are distinct populations, such as breeding birds and vagrants, he gives details for each population. Relative abundance is frequently pin-pointed by citing the number of individuals seen on an average day's trip.

Finally, the distribution of each species is described—in terms of geographic locations on the Cape as well as in terms of habitat-types. The entry for each species concludes with its history, including such matters as market-shooting, protection, and changes in weather or the condition of the land itself over the years.

There is not a word about identification of birds, nor does the book have any pictures of birds. It does have ten excellent drawings of vegetation by Marcia G. Norman, twelve photographs of areas by Allen H. Morgan, Dr. Hill and Edwin W. Teale, and endpaper maps by Bernice A. Hill. —Louis C. Fink



LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN THRUSHES, KINGLETS, AND THEIR ALLIES, 1964, by Arthur Cleveland Bent, Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick St., New York, N. Y., 452 pp., \$2.75.

The present volume contains 51 plates with 78 black and white photographs and treats 58 species and subspecies. It has a bibliography of 458 titles and is an unabridged republication of Smithsonian U. S. N. M. Bulletin No. 196 originally published in 1949.

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN NUTHATCHES, WRENS, THRASHERS, AND THEIR ALLIES, 1964, by Arthur Cleveland Bent, Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick St. New York, N. Y. 475 pp., \$2.75.

This is another republication in an unabridged form containing accounts treating 104 species and subspecies in this group. It was first published by the Smithsonian Institution as USNM Bull. No. 195 in 1948. It is illustrated with 90 plates containing 142 black and white photographs and has a bibliography of 527 items.

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES, TANAGERS, AND THEIR ALLIES, 1965, by Arthur Cleveland Bent, Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick St., New York, N. Y., 549 pp., \$2.75.

One of the most interesting species accounts contained in this volume treats the Bobolink. This account tells of planters in the Savannah, Georgia area attempting to keep the "rice bird" from their rice plantings by use of "bird minders." It relates that some large planters paid as much as \$1,000 per spring season to hire human bird minders to attempt keeping the Bobolinks from eating their rice.

The introduction and spread of the English or House Sparrow is also well-documented in this volume. It treats 60 species and subspecies, contains 37 plates with 55 black and white photographs, and has a bibliography of 492 items.

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN WAGTAILS, SHRIKES, VIREOS, AND THEIR ALLIES, 1965, by Arthur Cleveland Bent, Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick St., New York, N. Y., 400 pp., \$2.75.

This is an unabridged republication of Smithsonian Institution U. S. National Museum Bulletin No. 197. It contains species and subspecies accounts of 49 birds and is illustrated with 48 plates containing 72 black and white photographs. It has a bibliography of 385 entries.

The above four short notices of "Bent's Life Histories" complete the announcements of this series in *The Oriole*. Space did not permit a "scratching of the surface" in presenting a review of the contents of any of the numbers. Dover Publications began in 1962 with these republications and now has for sale the complete 17 vol. set, six of which are in two parts. The single volumes sell for \$2.75 each and the two volume sets for \$5.00. —Milton Hopkins, Jr.

INTRODUCTORY ORNITHOLOGY, 1964, by George R. Grubie, William C. Brown Company, 135 South Locust Street, Dubuque, Iowa, 294 pp., \$4.75.

This text is intended to serve as an introduction to the principles of ornithology and for indoor laboratory work in a one-semester course at the college level. It contains chapters with the following titled contents: External features of birds, the distribution of birds, birds and their environment, bird migration, life history-part 1, life history part 2, bird song, the economic value of birds, history of American ornithology and bird art, methods in ornithology, attracting birds, Appendix A, which is an illustrated key to the orders and families of birds of America north of Mexico, and Appendix B which covers some suggested problems in ornithology.

Appendix A provides space for the student to record diagnostic features of the families of birds and a map for recording their world distribution. The author suggests using actual study skins for diagnostic features and suggests referring to the literature for latest range delineations.

Appendix B, suggested problems in ornithology, is short but well stated. The author suggests realistic life history problems, territory studies, ecological problems, and others with a few hints as to how to go about them that should prove invaluable to the student in ornithology who has the inclination but not the knowledge of what is known about certain species.—Milton Hopkins, Jr.



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**FOOTNOTES**—Avoid footnotes by incorporating such material in the text.

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**REFERENCES**—When there are fewer than 3 references insert them in parentheses where needed in the text by author, journal, volume, pagination, and year of publication. Three or more references are grouped alphabetically by authors last names under "literature cited".

**TABLES**—Prepare tables in keeping with size of *THE ORIOLE*. A good table should be understandable without reference to the text.

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