

# THE ORIOLE

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NO. 1

# THE ORIOLE

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## ROOKERY DATA FROM SOUTH GEORGIA

MILTON N. HOPKINS, JR. AND PHILIP G. MURTON

During the spring and summer of 1968 an aerial search for heron rookeries initiated by Hopkins and Dopson (1967) was continued and somewhat enlarged by Hopkins. Squadron Leader Philip G. Murton, R. A. F., spent 14 weekends in the rookeries banding nestlings and making life history observations. Peter Murton accompanied the writers on three weekends and Wilson Baker assisted in banding young waders and Anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*) on a lengthy stay in the Spring Hill rookery on one weekend.

Portions of ten south Georgia counties were investigated or searched from the air, although we decided early in the summer to concentrate on parts of six of these (Figure 1). All flights originated from the Fitzgerald, Ben Hill County, airport and its more or less central location within the study area allowed us to reach the farthest points of the study area within 20 minutes. The aerial reconnaissance was restricted in size to the area under discussion in order that it might be thoroughly covered in one flight.

We felt that, with a fair degree of certainty, the rookeries described in this paper were the only active nesting colonies of waders and Anhingas in 1968 within this area.

## STUDY AREA

The search area covered intensively was in the shape of an isosceles triangle: the two near-equal sides formed a vertex just southeast of Douglas, Coffee County, and the length of each was approximately 50 miles; the 25 mile base line extended northeast from a point about 3 miles south of Rebecca, Turner County, to a point 3 miles northeast of Abbeville, Wilcox County. A "buffer zone" of approximately 5 miles in width was investigated on each side of this triangle on several occasions to attempt determining whether or not we were on the edge of a concentrated nesting area. No additional nesting colonies were found in this zone. It should be emphasized that the flights that brought about the discovery of new heron-



ries were not the only ones made; in fact on most weekends throughout the nesting season one or two hours were spent in the air recombining the study area. The study area contained five active heron rookeries. The present report briefly describes these in addition to visits to the Spring Hill rookery in Wheeler County discovered in 1967 (Hopkins and Dopson, 1967).

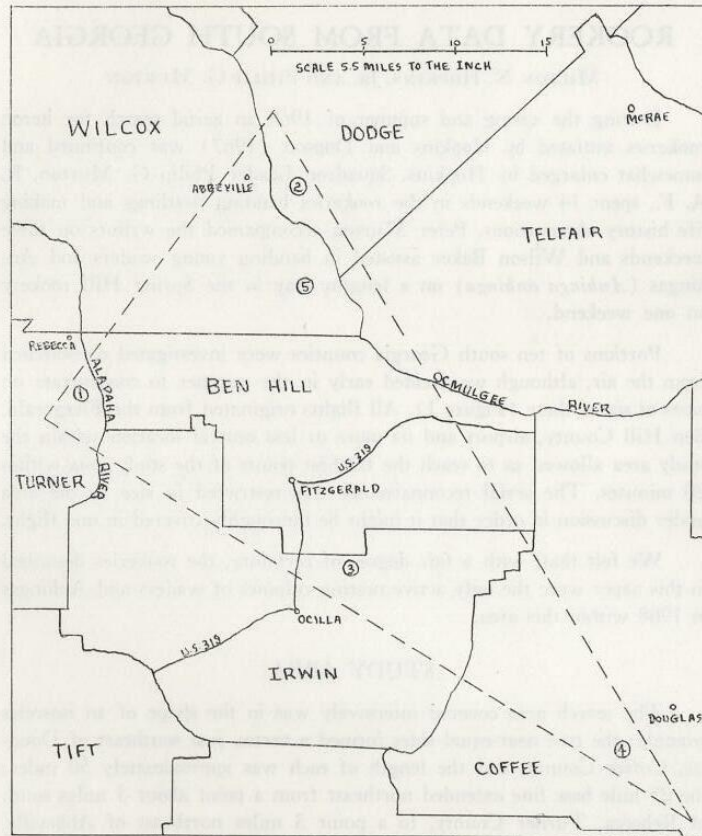


Figure 1. Locations of rookeries in which study was performed, spring and summer, 1968: (1) Rebecca, (2) Abbeville, (3) John B. D. Paulk, (4) Bear Creek, (5) Forest Glen.

#### FOREST GLEN ROOKERY

In 1968 this rookery was first flown over on 19 May and on several subsequent weekends. It was first discovered and censused on foot in 1967. Its location is circled number 5 on Figure 1. It was not visited from the

ground in 1968 because a trip into it during the year before showed that it would be almost impossible to reach the nests in high pond cypresses (*Taxodium ascendens*) for the purpose of banding young. The area used for nesting was almost identical in size to that occupied in 1967. The numerical makeup of Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), Common Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) and Anhinga nests appeared to be very close to that found the previous year. More than 25 adult White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) were noted on one trip over the rookery and 100 plus Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) still used the adjacent area for roosting and resting.

#### REBECCA ROOKERY

This nesting colony was first discovered from the air on 29 June 1968. It was located in a limesink approximately 35 acres in size, 2.6 miles south of Rebecca, Turner County, and about two miles west of the Alapaha River. It is designated by the circled figure 1 on Figure 1. The nesting area was in a half-moon shape of about three acres extent on the southeast side of the circular limesink. The entire sink contained water, but duckweed (*Lemna* sp.) covered only the portion under the nesting trees. This duckweed appeared white in Kodachrome pictures taken from the air and served to delineate easily the actual nesting area used.

At least 1800 active nests were counted here, making this by far the largest of any of the rookeries in this area. These nests were approximately 95 per cent Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) and 5 per cent Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), with Anhinga nests numbering five and Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*) two nests and one brood of recently hatched young. Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*) were calling in the area and probably nesting although no nests were found.

Most of the heron nests were located in dense clumps of pond cypress and black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) trees and averaged 5.5 feet above the water. A few nests were located in water willows (*Decodon verticillatus*), a plant species that has not been found in any of the other rookeries. The depth of water beneath the nesting trees was less than three feet, although it was evident that this level was about two feet below the high water mark. A few Cattle Egret nests were located in small clumps of cypress trees standing out of the water. The Rebecca rookery was visited on July 6, 21, and on August 4 on foot. It was last observed from the air on September 1, and at this time there were still approximately 1,000 adults and young present.

#### ABBEVILLE ROOKERY

This rookery was first discovered from the air on 19 May 1968. It is in Dodge County approximately three miles southeast of Abbeville



(circled figure 2 on Figure 1.). The cypress pond area is about two miles east of the Ocmulgee River and was flown over several times in 1967 without finding a rookery. The active nesting area contained about two acres of swamp and was in the northwest corner of a 75 acre cypress pond. All of the 527 counted nests were in small pond cypresses and averaged 5 feet above the surface of the water. Nearly all of these trees had large amounts of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) hanging from them. This moss has not been present in any appreciable amount in any of the other rookeries visited. In many cases some of it was used in nest construction. There was also old beaver sign present here. This mammal has not been noted in other rookery sites and its absence is probably due to stagnant water.

The rookery was approximately 85 per cent Cattle Egret and 15 per cent Little Blue Heron with one nest of the Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) and four of the Anhinga. A buzzard roost in the southeast end of the cypress pond had varying numbers of individuals in it, mostly Black Vultures, numbering up to 150 birds on one occasion.

Both adult and young White Ibis and a solitary Wood Ibis (*Mycateria americana*) were seen in trips into the rookery on May 27, June 15, and on July 4. On this July 4th we were in the rookery shortly after day-break. At this time few adults were present and the quiet and stillness of the place was impressively pronounced. The area had experienced a heavy thundershower the night before, and most of the young herons were standing wet in their nests. It was evident that the continued squawking, cackling, whistling, and peeping noises associated with all previous trips into the rookeries was a result of the adult-young relationship at feeding times, because at 0800 to 0830 when many of the adults had returned, the noises associated with heron rookeries again became apparent.

#### SPRING HILL ROOKERY

This Wheeler County nesting area was visited and described by Hopkins and Dopson in 1967. It was outside the study area concentrated on in 1968, but data are presented here for a two year comparison. In 1968 it was visited on foot on June 8, July 5 and 20. On June 8 it contained 837 active nests of the following species: Cattle Egret—493, Little Blue Heron—328, Common Egret—16, Anhinga—4, and Green Heron—3. On subsequent visits several additional nests of Green Herons and Anhingas were located. Common Egret nests averaged 20 feet above the surface of the water. One Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*) contained five active Common Egret nests. Adult Common Egrets were much more wary than the smaller herons and did not remain within the rookery as we moved and worked beneath the trees.

From the air during flights over this area a large free-flowing well was noted. All of its flow was going into this swamp. A rookery such as the Spring Hill site gives one the impression that it is probably very old from the standpoint of wader occupancy due to its permanent water supply. This condition is sharply contrasted with the limesink region southwest of here where heron nesting sites periodically go dry. A large amount of mortality was noted in this colony on one visit when 25 young and one adult were found dead in nests. Another adult in an extremely emaciated condition was found tangled in nylon fishing line.

#### JOHN B. D. PAULK MILLPOND

This small rookery was first located from the air on 19 May 1968. It is designated by a circled 3 on Figure 1. This millpond is over 125 years old and consequently has many appearances of natural cypress ponds in the area. It contains dense clumps of cypress trees interspersed with patches of open water. It covers about 75 acres. We visited the area on foot on 27 May and found that the nesting area covered only one quarter of an acre. The forty active nests averaged six feet above the surface of the water and were in pond cypress and tupelo (*Nyssa* sp.) Nests included Cattle Egret—35, Little Blue Heron—5, and Anhinga—3. The site was again visited on 22 June. At this time all of the nests, with the exception of one Anhinga with four young, had been abandoned or destroyed. The site was the smallest in nesting area and in number of nests that we have investigated. The pond is frequented by fishermen and human disturbance could have accounted for the rookery's failure. White Ibises were seen feeding here in May, and at least fourteen adult Anhingas were seen on our first visit along with one Wood Ibis.

#### BEAR CREEK ROOKERY

This nesting colony was first located from the air on 4 July 1968 (circled number 4 on Figure 1.). It is located in the northern end of Hilliard's Lake, about five miles west-southwest of Douglas, Coffee County. The rookery is divided into two sections which are separated by 100 yards of water. It is located in a 50 acre man-made pond within a lake complex of approximately 200 acres of water surrounded by pastures. The lake is fed by Bear Creek. Hopkins first visited the area on foot on 8 July and tallied 405 Cattle Egret, 21 Little Blue Heron, and 4 Anhinga nests.

The rookery was again visited by Philip Murton, Peter Murton, and Hopkins on 11 August for the purpose of banding nestlings. The nests were higher above the water than in any other rookery that we have visited, averaging eight feet. The water beneath the nests also averaged deeper, being about six feet deep.



## DISCUSSION

Theoretically the longest distance a heron might have to fly to reach a rookery area from its feeding grounds in the triangular area studied here (Figure 1) would be about 50 miles. From the center of the area, however, the distance would be less than 25 miles. Only a few specific observations connected with these flight distances were noted for it took a great deal of circling and flying high above the moving herons as they made their leisurely flights to and from the nest areas. On one occasion a group of Cattle Egrets was followed from Fitzgerald to the Rebecca rookery, a distance of 16 miles. Another group was followed 11 miles as they flew in a southeasterly direction to the Bear Creek rookery. Usually these groups contained 3 to 10 birds. A 10 mile flight by several Cattle Egrets was measured as late as September 1 when the birds moved toward the Rebecca rookery along the course of the Alapaha River. Whereas feeding flights away from rookeries in this area might be of a wandering nature, most return flights are straight-line ones.

The heights of flights were noted many times from the air and from the ground as we approached and left these rookeries. Both the Cattle Egret and Little Blue Heron flew at elevations below 300 feet and probably averaged 200 feet above the ground surface. At this altitude a bird could perceive very little of the "lay of the land" so the homing instinct over the fairly long distances is remarkably well developed. Several times individual Cattle Egrets and one adult White Ibis were seen at altitudes of 1200 and 1500 feet. No flocks were seen above 500 feet.

No evidence of predation in any of the rookeries has been observed, although it was evident that shotgun shooting at departing and returning herons took place at one time at the Spring Hill rookery. The fact that most rookeries are in secluded, almost inaccessible swamps that require a good amount of physical discomfort to enter them has discouraged nearly all human interference.

A number of heron rookeries described in ornithological literature have been in existence for many years. We had surmised that this was probably the case with the local sites on our first trips in 1967. However, a dry fall in 1967, a dry winter in 1967-68, and a severe drought in the spring of 1968 caused two of the 1967 rookery sites to dry up. The Mosquito Creek and Bowen's Mill sites had no water under the nesting trees and were not used in 1968. Some of the Bowen's Mill birds undoubtedly used the Abbeville rookery which was only 12 miles away. The Abbeville rookery was not occupied in 1967, for Hopkins and Dopson searched this area and particular pond well.

Interspecific nest site preferences were evident in most of the colonies. Meanley (1955) mentions this in connection with nesting associates of the Little Blue Heron in eastern Arkansas. In the Spring Hill rookery the southern periphery was almost "solid" Cattle Egret, the Green Herons were on the north end fairly well isolated from the main body, Anhingas were usually in the interior of all colonies, along with Cattle Egrets, and Little Blue Herons tended to nest nearest dry land or if out in the rookeries then they were in small groups to themselves. Only blue phase Little Blue Herons were seen nesting, both in 1967 and 1968. White phase Little Blue Herons have been seen in small numbers in several of the nesting colonies, but have not been observed copulating, sitting on eggs, brooding young, or feeding young.

As mentioned in the 1967 report, an aerial search is that and that only, for numbers seen from the air are misleading. This fact was rather forcefully brought to attention in the Paulk Millpond rookery. On the first flight over this site a conservative estimate of 200 adult Cattle Egrets and Little Blue Herons was noted, but on-the-spot censusing showed only 40 nests a few weeks later.

Although Cattle Egrets and Little Blue Herons nest in the same colonies the peak of nesting activity in most cases for the Little Blue Heron in this area is probably in the last week of May and for the Cattle Egret about the third week of June. In other words the Little Blue Heron begins nesting approximately three weeks ahead of the Cattle Egret. These assumptions are based for the most part on Murton's banding data (Table 1) and on-the-spot observations in all of the rookeries. The availability of young whose legs are large enough to hold the correct size band, the contents or lack of contents in the nests, and the percentages of eggs versus young, were also good timetable indicators.

## ROOKERY BANDING

Murton entered the rookeries on 14 occasions primarily for the purpose of banding nestling herons, anhingas, and other rookery associated birds. Stays within the rookeries averaged 3½ hours each while some lasted five hours. In the larger colonies such as Rebecca and Spring Hill we were rarely able to band all birds that were available due to the time limit (nightfall in a few cases). Table 1 summarizes places, dates, time spent on each trip, and total species banded. Two trips were made to the John B. D. Paulk millpond, but only one brood of anhingas was banded there.

We relied heavily on Dusi (196?) for identification of young waders, especially in the differentiation of young Cattle Egrets and



TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF DATA FROM ROOKERY BANDING, 1968.

DATE	PLACE	TIME IN	TIME OUT	Green Cattle L.B. COMMON				Totals
				Heron	Egret	Heron	Egret	
5-27	Abbeville	1200	1500	1	1	94		96
6-8	Spring Hill	1330	1630	7	40	63	1	111
6-15	Abbeville	1330	1600		37	48	1	86
6-22	Spring Hill	0930	1500	2	217	43	5	268
6-30	Rebecca	0815	1200		123	22	4	149
7-4	Abbeville	0700	1030		169	9	5	183
7-5	Spring Hill	1400	1900	3	216	15	3	242
7-6	Rebecca	0800	1200		176	13		189
7-20	Spring Hill	1500	1730		105	5	2	112
7-21	Rebecca	0745	1115		187	2	4	193
8-4	Rebecca	1000	1200		120			120
8-11	Bear Creek	1700	1900		50		11	66
TOTALS				13	1441	314	9	1810

young Little Blue Herons. Table 2 is a clutch size summary representing data on clutch sizes of 1142 active nests "processed" in the Abbeville, Spring Hill, Rebecca, and Bear Creek rookeries. It is intended to show numerically the results of examination of 1142 nests and represents the number of eggs or young in a nest or a combination of the two. By "nests processed" we mean that at least one bird was banded from the nest and that its contents were recorded. Table 3 shows the distribution of nests for each of the four rookeries. In the rookery banding table (Table 1) results of season long banding in 1968 are shown. The total figure of 1810 individual birds banded represents all birds on which a Fish and Wildlife Service band was placed. The total differs from

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF DATA ON SIZE OF CLUTCHES FOR FIVE SPECIES OF ROOKERY-NESTING BIRDS, 1968.

CLUTCH SIZE* →	1	2	3	4	TOTALS
ANHINGA	1	9	7	1	18
CATTLE EGRET	302	568	77	5	952
GREEN HERON	1	2	2	2	7
LITTLE BLUE HERON	32	56	59	13	160
COMMON EGRET	1	3	1	—	5
TOTAL					1142

\* Clutch size indicates eggs and young per nest or a combination of the two.

the 1142 in Table 2 for the reason that as nestlings approached flying age they quite often flew a few feet from their nest trees or climbed out of a nest and were caught for banding. All young waders and anhingas were very adept at climbing, using both their toes and claws, mandibles, and necks. Toe-nails at this stage, especially in the anhinga, were much sharper than in earlier or later stages.

To further clarify our statements concerning clutch sizes in Table 2 it might be said that it represents average clutch sizes for the species in question based on numbers of young in undisturbed nests that remained in the nests as we approached, thereby indicating that they were probably the legitimate and original occupants of that nest. It is necessary to say this for the fact is that there was much "nest swapping" by young birds as they fluttered and climbed to adjacent nests. Young birds doing this usually returned to the nests of their hatching place in a few minutes or were fed on nearby limbs by the parent birds.



TABLE 3. NUMBER OF NESTS OF FIVE SPECIES OF ROOKERY-NESTING BIRDS EXAMINED, 1968

SPECIES	ROOKERY LOCATIONS				TOTALS
	ABBEVILLE	SPRING HILL	REBECCA	BEAR CREEK	
ANHINGA	3	4	5	6	18
CATTLE EGRET	136	384	413	19	952
GREEN HERON	1	6	—	—	7
LITTLE BLUE HERON	72	71	17	—	160
COMMON EGRET	—	5	—	—	5
TOTALS	212	470	435	25	1142
VISITATION DATES	27 May 15 June 4 July	8-22 June 5-20 July	30 June 6-21 July 4 August	11 August	

In summation, Table 2 on clutch sizes, interpreted in percentages, indicates that the Cattle Egret had a clutch size of 1 in 32 per cent of 1142 nests processed, 2 in 60 per cent of the total, 3 in 8 per cent of the total, and 4 in 0.5 per cent of the total.

For the Little Blue Heron we found a clutch size of 1 in 20 per cent of 1142 nests, 2 in 35 per cent of the total, 3 in 37 per cent of the total, and 4 in 8 per cent of total numbers.

It would be highly problematical to guess what percentage or even what average number of young were reproduced from these nests. Undoubtedly the smaller clutches of young fare better with respect to food than the clutches containing three or four birds, for almost invariably one young bird among these 3 and 4 clutch size nests was a runt and probably continued to receive less and less of its proportionate share of food as its nest mates grew stronger. To this date (June, 1969) no returns have been received for banded rookery birds.

### SUMMARY

The rookeries intensively studied in the 500 square miles of this mid-south Georgia area contained at least 3,000 pairs of nesting herons and anhingas. There appeared to be very little competition for food or nesting sites between the Cattle Egret and Little Blue Heron. The aerial search for heron rookeries instigated by Hopkins and Dopson in south Georgia in 1967 was continued in 1968 by Hopkins. Three additional nesting sites were found. One is outside the area searched in 1967 (Bear Creek) and the other two are probably new for the area. Squadron Leader Philip G. Murton, R.A.F., went into these rookeries on 14 weekends and spent many hours ringing nestlings. He was successful in ringing over 1800 of these birds. Milton N. Hopkins, Jr., R.F.D. 5, Fitzgerald, Georgia; Squadron Leader Philip G. Murton, R.A.F., 17 Cheshire Road, R.A.F. Innsworth, Gloucester, England.

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- Hopkins, Milton N., and Dopson, William. 1967. An Aerial Search for Rookeries in South Central Georgia. The Oriole, 32:39-45.
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## GENERAL NOTES

**BLACK TERN AT LAKE CHATUGE**—On July 24, 1965, I encountered a Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) on Lake Chatuge, Towns County, Georgia. This lake is bisected by the boundary between Georgia and North Carolina. When the bird was first seen it was sitting on the buoy which marked the state line in the middle of the lake. The bird was still in breeding plumage with a very dark head and neck.

This appears to be the earliest Fall record for this species for the interior of Georgia, the first record for this county, and the second record for the Highland region of the state (Burleigh, *Georgia Birds*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1958). Robert W. Loftin, 1664 Foresta Court, Chamblee, Georgia 30341.

**MANDARIN DUCK SHOT NEAR THOMASVILLE**—On 15 December 1968 a Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*) was shot on Greenwood Plantation near Thomasville, Georgia. The hunter who shot the bird gave it to John M. Gaver, Jr., who brought it to me in Aiken, S. C., for identification. It was a male in alternate plumage. The bird was reported to be flying with a group of Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) into a wooded pond.

Although the bird was almost certainly an escape, it is reported because: (1) it is always possible for a migratory bird to be displaced far from its normal range; (2) there have been many reports of exotic ducks recently, and usually close to population centers, where game farms are common. Any or all of these could be escapes (eg. Baikal Teal, Tufted Duck, Barnacle Goose); (3) a change in status is possible for any species, whether introduced (Mute Swan) or native (Fulvous Tree Duck, Ring-necked Duck). In addition, the Mandarin Duck has become established in England. The specimen has been mounted and is in Mr. Gaver's possession. William Post, Department of Zoology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina 27607.

**WINTERING BROAD-WINGED HAWK IN ATLANTA**—On January 12, 1968, I was looking over a flock of 50 juncos, with which were associated a few song sparrows and white-throated sparrows. The location was the tennis court in the recreation area on Mason Hill Road, west of Clairmont Road. I was hoping to see another white-crowned sparrow, which I had found on two succeeding Sundays at the near-by Candler Lake on the grounds of Emory University. The University, the recreation area, and the abandoned reservoir across Clairmont Road provide several hundred acres of mature hardwoods, all in DeKalb County.

A Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) flew a dozen feet over my head, zoomed quickly upward, and perched on a tree about 30 feet from the ground. He sat quietly for about five minutes, then moved off leisurely. The white bands on the tail, equal in width to the black bands, were clearly visible. This appears to be one of the few records of this bird in winter above the Fall Line. Louis C. Fink, 620 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

**DICKCISSEL WINTERS IN ATLANTA AREA**—Following a report of a Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) having been seen at the feeders of Mr. and Mrs. Sandy Wilbur in Decatur, Ga., Bob Manns and I went to the Wilbur home on January 12, 1969, to see the bird, which was a male. The Wilburs stated that they had first noticed the bird on Christmas Day and that it had been appearing regularly. It was observed by several members of the Atlanta Bird Club. In late February, the yellow area on the breast and the black bib became more intensified. The bird's visits became less frequent and sporadic and it was last noted on April 2.

Burleigh (1958, *Georgia Birds*, U. of Okla. Press, Norman) indicates that this species is a fairly common summer resident at Augusta, but is otherwise a local and rather erratic summer resident in the northern part of the state and an extremely scarce transient south of its breeding range. The Dickcissel had never been reported in the Atlanta area, even as a transient, prior to 1947 when Wm. Griffin found a nest in the South River area near Constitution, DeKalb County. Four years later, in 1951, Richard Parks located a small breeding colony at the U. S. Prison Honor Farm a few miles to the east of the original sighting.

Messrs. Griffin and Parks have advised they are unaware of any subsequent records of nesting birds or sightings of transients although a few birds have been found in the vicinity of airport ceilometers. It would appear that this is the first Dickcissel recorded in the Atlanta area in the winter. It would be interesting to learn whether there have been any other records of this species in Georgia this winter. C. M. Einhorn, 1340 Holly Lane, N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30329.



## RECENT LITERATURE

POCKET CHECK-LIST OF GEORGIA BIRDS, revised by J. Fred Denton and Milton N. Hopkins, Jr., 1969. Published by the Georgia Ornithological Society, 57 pp., paperback. \$0.75. Orders should be addressed to: Louis C. Fink, 620 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

The first edition of the *Pocket Check-list of Georgia Birds* was prepared by Ivan R. Tomkins and published in April, 1960. It summarized and added somewhat to the information on status and distribution of birds in Georgia presented in *Georgia Birds* by T. D. Burleigh (U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla.) which appeared in 1958 and covered available knowledge through 1956. This latest edition of the Check-list summarizes, brings up to date, and presents in one publication the available information through 1968 on status and ranges for all species of birds known to occur in Georgia. Since the information in Burleigh's book is now 13 years old and that in the previous *Check-list* is nine years old, it will be obvious that this latest edition of the *Check-list* is simply indispensable to anyone doing serious birding in Georgia. L.B.D., Jr.

THE INLAND ISLAND, by Josephine W. Johnson; Illustrations in black and white by Mel Klapholz; 159 pages; \$5.00. Simon and Schuster, New York.

This is a month-by-month report on nature as seen on a fairly isolated farm, apparently in Ohio. The author, who won a Pulitzer Prize for her first novel, has a remarkably fresh outlook: speaking about a hawk overhead, she writes, "The cruel curved beak is empty. Cruel and curved? Have you seen the beak of a brown creeper? There's a scythe—a scimitar! Think how it looks to the small bark beetles. Hammered steel to them."

Many of her observations concern birds, which she calls "beautiful and endlessly rewarding." But there is no false sentiment. "I am a bird watcher—a deeply interested observer. Not a bird lover. Their beaks are too sharp and their round eyes cold."

Pileated woodpeckers look like "huge cockroaches with red crests." House finches look "like English sparrows dipped in dye. Not a very good dye job, either."

Miss Johnson observes other forms of nature, too—trees, mammals, reptiles and especially insects. In a few pages, she gives the life-cycle of a lady-bug, and it is gripping.

From nature, Miss Johnson considers Man—and finds him unpleasant. She feels the United States has "ravaged" Viet Nam. She can find no God to pray to. "We are dying, she writes, "of decaying flags . . . and venomous religions. There is nothing in all of nature that can compare to this enormous dying of the nation's soul."

This reviewer gets the feeling that Miss Johnson ought to leave her inland island and come to the mainland where millions of good people do believe, do have faith, do try to help their fellow-man. In all of her book, there is no indication that she has lifted a finger for anybody except herself. Louis C. Fink.



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