

NOTES FROM THE AOU MEETING IN AUGUST 1960

By Dorothy L. Bordner

The AOU meeting in Ann Arbor was the usual full and interesting session. I must confess that the art and museum exhibits and the presence of the Wilson Society library and other libraries were so tempting that I played hooky from the papers sessions part of the time to do some sketching and some research on a summer project which I undertook for a non-ornithologist friend of mine.

Dr. J. Bruce Falls of the University of Toronto reported on a study carried out in Algonquin Park on the determination of territorial boundaries using tape-recorded songs. The size of territory was determined by the amount of reaction the resident birds gave to the taped songs of birds of the same species. Songs of birds not resident in the area provoked a much greater reaction than the songs of neighbors. (This use of tape-recorded songs interested me very much because I would like to see the method tried to attract birds to bird banding traps and nets. We have often thought that a record of the Evening Grosbeak food call or of a good Evening Grosbeak fight would get results - although what we would do with more E.G.'s I don't know.)

After giving a brief history of the problem, Dr. George J. Wallace of Michigan State brought the Robin versus insecticide story up to date with a report on the 1960 season. Weekly counts were made on the campus area. On April 18, 36 Robins were found. This was the largest count and the first dying Robin was found later that day. From this date the number dropped weekly until only three were found. Less than half a dozen were found in the whole residential area surrounding the study area. Twelve active nests were found during the season - ten of which were failures and the other two contained two young each. At least 80 other species of birds in addition to Robins have been found dead of DDT poisoning. Michigan State now has the equipment to analyze the dead birds found. The process is quite complicated and time consuming. An explanation and demonstration of the equipment was included on the Saturday field trip. Oven eggs have shown a small amount of DDT in them.

Mrs. Eleanor Dater gave a descriptive paper on the esophageal diverticulum of the Common Redpoll illustrated with some unusually close-up color slides. This was the result of observing swellings on birds filled with food.

Dr. R. A. McCabe of the University of Wisconsin reported on selection of colored nest boxes by House Wrens. Oil cans were used as nest boxes. Five were fastened in a row with each painted a different color: red, green, yellow, blue and white. The colors were permuted at the various locations to prevent position errors from affecting the results. Red and green were the preferred colors with no significant difference between

the two. It was suggested that brown might be tried if the experiment were repeated, since this color would more nearly match the natural conditions.

Dr. Paul Hahn of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, gave a fascinating account of his search for specimens of some extinct North American birds. A start in 1918 looking for Passenger Pigeons developed into looking for many extinct species throughout North America and Europe. He has been responsible for acquiring many specimens for museums and still hopes to learn of more, hidden away gathering dust. As of August 1960, he has found the following numbers of specimens in museums and private collections:

Great Auk	77
Labrador Duck	54
Eskimo Curlew	354
Passenger Pigeon	1417
Carolina Parakeet	680
Ivory-billed Woodpecker	421
Whooping Crane (not extinct!)	289

Mrs. Betty Carnes showed slides and demonstrated an inexpensive Kodak camera that might be of interest to banders who wish to take close-ups of captive birds. The slides produced are super slide size. It is extremely easy to handle since it has no gadgets to set. The main advantage of the camera is the great depth of field for close-ups. One setting gives a range of sharp focus of 7 to 14 inches and the other setting gives 14 to 20+ inches. The camera is not versatile since it can be used only for flash lighted close-ups, therefore, all pictures would have direct front lighting. The cost is about \$41 and the camera can be obtained only through dental supply houses.

State College, Pennsylvania

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