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FIELD NOTES

Another Inland Colony of the Least Tern

Lohrer and Lohrer (1973. Inland Nesting of the Least Tern in Florida. *Fla. Field Nat.*, 1:3-5) have called attention to the rarity of inland nests of the Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) in Florida. On 12 June 1973, Mrs. P. A. Frank showed me a small colony of Least Terns nesting at an abandoned strip mine near the intersection of Atlantic and Southside Boulevards in Jacksonville, about 15 miles from the coast. Since the soil there is ancient beach sand exposed by mining, the habitat strongly resembles ocean dunes. There is a small marsh nearby where the terns feed.

On 12 June the colony contained 3 nests, each with 2 eggs. On 14 June one nest contained 2 young. Based on an incubation period of 20 or 21 days, this clutch must have been laid on 22, 23, or 24 May. A fourth nest was found on 19 June with 2 eggs. Three nests were subsequently destroyed, probably by children. One young was seen on 21 and 24 June, but could not be located on 29 June or 3 July. Adults were still present and excited on 3 July, so at least one young tern may have survived. —Robert W. Loftin, Univ. of North Florida, Box 17074, Jacksonville, Fla. 32216.

Singing Female Orchard Orioles: A Word of Caution in Identifications

On 22 April, 1939, on the University of Alabama campus (Tuscaloosa), I heard a song so similar to that of the Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) that I looked for that rarity with confidence. To my surprise, the singer proved to be a female Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*). The bird showed no trace of the black throat patch of the one-year-old male, and the song was quite different from that of the male, bearing some resemblance to that of a male Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*).

In recent years I have mentioned to other field workers that female Orchard Orioles sometimes sing, but none thus far had previous knowledge of the fact. For the most part this phenomenon has been overlooked in the literature. Saunders (1935) did not mention it, but Bent (1958:203) stated tersely, “. . . sometimes females sing a little.”

The fact that I have recorded song by only 5 female Orchard Orioles illustrates the unusual nature of the phenomenon. In the 1950's one sang

intermittently near my residence in northwest Tallahassee from spring to mid-summer. This indicates that the practice is persistent in at least some females. Others I have heard were at Lake Bradford (near Tallahassee), June 29, 1957; at St. Marks, July 4, 1959; and in northwestern Walton County, May or June, 1970. The records in late June and July raise the question of the bird's being a juvenal male, but in each case the song was typical of the female's.

The strong similarity of the female Orchard Oriole's song to that of the Warbling Vireo has led me to wonder about the validity of certain Florida records attributed to the latter species. Two of these were reported on dates remarkably late for comparable latitudes farther west. One was seen and heard singing at St. Marks on May 26, 1916 (Pennock, 1920; also cited in *Florida Bird Life*). E.E. Furnans, et al., reported 2 on a summer bird count at Pensacola, June 12, 1971, but the published reference (Edscorn, 1972) to one "singing male," unless a typographical error, does not agree with the actual number reported. In any case, this record (like the one at St. Marks) was a visual as well as an auditory one, thus tending to substantiate the identification by song. The third record occurred in Wakulla County on the more normal migration date of April 18, 1959 (Karl and Marion Zerbe, Mrs. F.H. Stoutamire), but in this case the singing bird was not seen (Stevenson, 1959). Although singing is comparatively rare in female Orchard Orioles, surely a singing Warbling Vireo in Florida is even more unusual. Therefore observers in the breeding range of the Orchard Oriole should be especially careful in basing their identifications of Warbling Vireos chiefly on song.

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