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BLUEBIRDS AT ARBUTUS

An old stub of an apple tree in the yard had a cavity that seemed attractive to a pair of bluebirds early in March 1946. Both birds went in and inspected the cavity several times each day. On March 10th the male had established singing perches on a grapevine and on telephone wires nearby. Daily observations netted no further information until March 26th when both birds defended the nesting cavity against starlings.

The nest was begun on March 30th when the female began carrying material into the cavity. The material, mainly dried grasses, was thrust into the hole until it was nearly filled. This pile was forced down and the nest itself built on top of the pile. Five days were required to complete the nest.

The first egg was laid on April 5th and one egg each succeeding day until four were laid. The female began incubating when the third egg was laid.

Incubation proceeded in a haphazard manner with the female off the nest frequently during the day until April 13th when she stayed on the nest until disturbed. One egg disappeared from the nest as there were only three left on the 21st of April. The first young hatched on April 24th and the other two the next day. The second young had hatched in the early morning and the third by late afternoon. An incubation period of sixteen days, counting from the day the last egg was laid to the day the last young was hatched. The egg shells had been carried away; no remains were found in or near the nest.

The male assisted in feeding the young and protecting the nest. Strangely enough, he paid no attention to a female cowbird that was feeding about the nesting tree on April 27th. Starlings were chased off as well as house sparrows. Early on the morning of May 10th the young left the nest and were found later in dense shrubbery fifty feet from the nest. They had spent seventeen days in the nest.

The adults were defending the nest site against starlings on May 20th. New nesting material was brought in on May 25th and a new

nest built on top of the old one. It was completed in two days. Two eggs were found in the nest late in the afternoon of May 29th. Both birds were very pugnacious at this time, fighting every small bird that came near the nesting area. A third egg was laid on May 30th early in the morning. Two young of the first brood were observed around the nest. They seemed able to feed themselves but occasionally begged food from the male. A fourth egg was laid early on May 31st. The male was very pugnacious, diving at anyone that came near the nest. He fought continuously with starlings and house sparrows but paid no attention to robins.

All four young hatched out on June 16th and 17th, the incubation period being between sixteen and seventeen days. On June 25th, while I was photographing the nest, one of the immature birds was observed carrying food to the nest and feeding the nestlings. Only two of the young from the first brood had been observed in the locality after incubation began on the second clutch of eggs and only one remained by the time the eggs hatched. Observations continued until the writer left for vacation on June 30th and the lone immature bird of the first nesting was still around in the nesting area. Returning on July 15th, I found the nest deserted.

Irving E. Hampe

NEST BUILDING BY THE OSPREY

On April 15, 1946 I observed a pair of ospreys building a nest in the top of a pine on Parson's Island off the Eastern Shore just south of Kent Island. The osprey would swoop low over a dead tree and come away with a branch clutched in its talons, would then fly toward its nest, hover over it as if waiting for the breeze to be just right and settle gently down, dropping the stick as it came close to the nest. If the stick landed on the nest, fine; if it fell on down to the ground, the osprey made no attempt to retrieve it, but flew off for another branch from the tree. Presumably it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to pick sticks up from the ground and consequently there is considerable debris stretching from the nest on down to the ground.

Alice H. Stokes

GANNET AT OCEAN CITY

On April 20th, while watching a flock of herring gulls on a long sand bar in the bay behind Ocean City, Maryland, I noted a gannet standing alone. These birds normally are seen offshore during stormy periods. This bird was spotted with oil on its breast and had probably come in to rest until it had gotten rid of it.

Allen W. Stokes

SNOWY OWLS IN THE WINTER OF 1945-46

In "The Season" for December 15, 1945-February 15, 1946, Haven Kolb mentions a lack of snowy owl records from Maryland although that was a "snowy owl winter." On February 9, 1946, I visited D. M. Oxenham, a Baltimore taxidermist, to inquire about these birds. His books showed that freshly-killed snowy owls had been brought to him for mounting as follows: two on December 9, 1945, one December 10, one December 12 and one December 27. That total of five, he said, compares with one to three ordinarily brought to him during a winter. Mr. Oxenham, unfortunately, had little information on where the owls were taken; the December 12 bird was shot on the Eastern Shore, he said, and one of the others was killed by flying into wires in Baltimore City; the Eastern Shore, Miller's Island and Bay Shore were uncertain localities for the other three.

Hervey Brackbill

THE SEASON

April 15, 1946 to June 15, 1946

Vegetation was already in such an advanced state of development when the period opened that observation of birds was becoming difficult. The latter half of April continued but did not greatly increase the warmth which had characterized the early part of spring. By the first of May most trees were rather fully leafed out, only a few, such as walnut and osage orange being still bare. But in May came a reversal of conditions so that the month averaged cooler than usual. More important than temperatures were the very frequent rains. The fall in several cases was excessive and rapid causing flash floods along small streams and washing hillsides badly. The effect on nesting birds, especially ground nesters must have been considerable though we have no direct evidence on that point. In the first half of June the weather was near normal except that no very high temperatures were recorded as is usual on several days in this period.

Warblers were reported in good numbers but observation was hampered by the advanced state of the foliage. There were apparently waves about May 5 and again May 12 and 13, though many migrants were still passing through on the following week-end. The bulk of the myrtle warblers went through in April. It had been reported to the writer that palm warblers had been scarce in spring during the past two years but he saw about as many this year as in his last previous spring here, 1943. Little was reported concerning the lingering of winter birds but swamp sparrows were still present at Loch Raven May 13, (Kolb) and white throats at Halethorpe May 19, (Hampe).

Hampe reported a flock of about 20 bluejays flying north over the Patapsco State Park on May 12. It is interesting to note that Kolb saw 14 flying north at Loch Raven the next morning. Again,

Hampe found large numbers of chipping sparrows at Halethorpe April 27, and Kolb noted the same thing at Govans April 29. These examples indicate the kind of movements which might be better detected if we had more observers reporting to this department each month.

There are a few interesting data on summer resident birds: mourning dove, one young and one egg at Towson, April 28 (MOS trip); pewee, nest begun at Fairbanks, Anne Arundel Co., June 9 (Bond); crow nest with incubating bird at Towson April 28 (MOS trip); brown thrasher, nest with five eggs at Patapsco State Park May 12 (Hampe); mockingbird, young at Overlea June 1 (Mrs. Moorefield); robin, nest with 1 egg at Halethorpe May 11, later destroyed by a storm (Hampe); robin, young birds first noted on lawns in Govans May 30 (Kolb); starling, young out of the nest in Govans May 22 (Kolb); red-eyed vireo, one nest building at Loch Raven June 1; Maryland yellowthroat, nest and four eggs in Govans, May 22; yellow-breasted chat, four newly hatched young at Loch Raven June 1; field sparrow, nest with three eggs in Govans May 22 (Kolb).

Miscellaneous notes: Miss Gephart reports a robin at her home in Mt. Washington using the same nest for the third consecutive year. Gilbert Klingel reports least terns common on May 26 all along the Chesapeake shore of Calvert Co. Cedar waxwings were common at Loch Raven from May 25 to the middle of June; nesting was suspected but not proven (Kolb). A sparrow hawk nested along the Patapsco near Halethorpe (Hampe).

H. Kolb

ABSTRACT OF MEETINGS

June 14, 1946

Mr. Crowder presided. The speaker for the evening was Mr. Allen Stokes. He gave an interesting address on field techniques in life history studies. Using detailed knowledge he had accumulated in his study of the goldfinch in Wisconsin he brought out a number of general points with respect to the nesting of passerine birds. The usual number of interesting observations from the past month occupied the discussion period. Mr. Stokes gave a brief report on the breeding bird census at Lake Roland. There were 18 members and one visitor present.

July 12, 1946

A picnic meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert P. Strack. Before dark we had an opportunity to see their attractive garden with its arrangements for attracting birds. The evening was devoted to informal conversation and a bird quiz. Miss Heaps played a splendid series of records of bird songs. There were 14 members and one visitor present.

NOTES AND NEWS

We welcome to our Society the following new members who have joined us during July and August:

Clyde Selwyn Hartlove, 2545 W. Lafayette Ave. (16)
Mrs. Carl F. Nicoll, Smith Ave., Route 6, Towson
Miss Nadine A. Piersol, 4810 Anntana Ave. (6)
Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Goldberg, 621 St. Johns Rd. (10)

The Executive Council has been preparing a fine program of meetings and field trips for the coming season. Regular activities resume in September and it is hoped that as many members as possible will avail themselves of these opportunities to learn more about our birds. A complete descriptive circular detailing the schedule until June 1947 is planned for the near future.

Through the Wilson Bulletin we learn that Dr. Alexander F. Skutch has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1946. Dr. Skutch is a native of Baltimore and a graduate of Johns Hopkins University. While engaged in botanical studies in Central America he was attracted to the bird life and has published numerous studies on the life histories of the birds of that region. While preparing a book on the subject he will be at the University of Michigan. Although Dr. Skutch calls Costa Rica his home, his family still resides in Baltimore and Maryland bird students may take considerable pleasure in contemplating his fine work.

In our March-April number Mr. Brackbill urged the opening of a new department in our journal devoted to brief observations at feeding stations and bird baths. Entirely from his own observations Mr. Brackbill presented one page along that line. So far the response to his efforts have not been great but we expect to continue with the idea this fall. As business at your feeding station picks up during the autumn months be on the look-out for incidents in which others would be interested. If you cannot write them up yourself, at least give us the details orally and the editors will do their best to publish them.

H.K.