

BREEDING HABITS OF THE SOLITARY SANDPIPER
(*TOTANUS SOLITARIUS*).

BY C. K. CLARKE, M. D.

EARLY this spring I became aware of the fact that at least one pair of Sandpipers, different from the Spotted Sandpipers, which breed commonly on Simcoe Island, had taken up their residence there.

Although the habits of the Bartramian Sandpiper formed the chief subject of investigation, time after time I was attracted by a pair of small Sandpipers, invariably to be found perched on the fence posts in a certain locality. Just what the birds were could not at first be satisfactorily determined, and for a time I was inclined to think that they might prove to be Buff-breasted Sandpipers. As it was evident that they were likely to breed, I returned time and again to the island, generally carrying a gun, so that the birds might be secured if the nest was found. At last, when accompanied by the Rev. C. J. Young, the birds flushed in the usual locality, and a depression in the ground, nicely rounded, was found and marked. I returned in a week's time fully expecting to take a set of eggs, but the birds had evidently deserted the place, and were no where to be seen. It was a disappointment, as by this time it had become tolerably certain that the visitors were Solitary Sandpipers.

On June 10, Mr. Edwin Beaupre and I went for a last look at the birds breeding on the island, but had given up all hope of finding the strange Sandpiper. We flushed a Bartramian Sandpiper, and were examining the nest containing three fresh eggs, when the little stranger rose within four or five feet of us, and there, in plain view not two yards from the Bartramian's nest, were the eggs. The Sandpiper flew a short distance without uttering a sound, and sat on a fence post watching us. Unfortunately the gun had been left at home, but we had two pairs of good marine glasses and were able to examine the bird at close range as it perched on the fence. There was no longer

any doubt about its identity, and it was easily classified as the Solitary Sandpiper. We watched it for some time, as it flew about, but its silence was remarkable, and in marked contrast to the noisy demonstrations of the Bartramian Sandpiper which had been disturbed. A glance at the eggs showed that we had a rarity. In the first place the number, five, in a Sandpiper's nest was a new experience, and the peculiar coloring and markings were interesting. The eggs when collected had the peculiar dark reddish ground color so frequently noticed in fresh specimens of the Bartramian Sandpiper, but like them soon lost this characteristic tint. Faint purple shell markings gave a pleasing contrast, but the grotesque brown figurings, somewhat similar in shape to those found on the eggs of the Purple Grackle, remain as the striking feature. These grotesque markings exist on three of the specimens. A comparison made with a large series of the eggs of the Spotted Sandpiper reveals the following differences: Solitary Sandpiper's differ from them in shape, size, ground color and markings.

In the eggs of the Spotted Sandpiper the markings are generally much thicker at the upper ends; in the eggs of the Solitary Sandpiper the reverse is the case. The variations in shape in the set of the Solitary Sandpiper found, are somewhat remarkable as the measurements show. Incubation was well advanced, thus showing that the Bartramian had not been the first to commence nest building. The location of the nest was in a hilly field probably seventy-five yards from Lake Ontario. The measurements of the eggs are as follows:— $1.39 \times .95$, inches, $1.32 \times .94$, $1.30 \times .97$, $1.30 \times .94$, $1.29 \times .95$.