

GENERAL NOTES.

The American Egret (*Herodias egretta*) in the Catskill Mountains.— On July 18, 1906, I saw at East Windham, New York, three of these birds on the topmost branches of a tree near a hemlock swamp and secured one of them, and another on the following day. Both birds were young females, and undoubtedly, according to a peculiar habit of the family to wander northward during the latter part of the summer, were erratic visitors in this locality. Upon inquiry among several inhabitants, I was informed that this species had never been seen by them in this locality before, nor had they bred there, and that the flock consisted of six birds on July 16, two days before my arrival.— J. A. WEBER, *New York City*.

A Second Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*) at Portland, Maine.— A female of this species was shot at Thompsons Point, Portland, Me., April 11, 1906. It passed into the hands of Mr. Thomas James, foreman of the W. D. Hinds taxidermy establishment, and was obtained from him by Mr. Walter Rich, who very kindly gave it to the writer. The other specimen, also a female, was taken April 13, 1901, and recorded by Dr. H. H. Brock who now has it (Brock, *Auk*, XIX, p. 285).— ARTHUR H. NORTON, *Museum of Natural History, Portland, Me.*

A Late Spring Record for the Yellow Rail (*Porzana noveboracensis*) in Massachusetts, with Remarks on the 'Ornithological Mystery.'— On May 26, 1906, Mr. John J. Haley had the good fortune to secure a female Yellow Rail, which was found and retrieved alive by his dog while working over a fresh water meadow in Dedham. The bird was given to Mr. G. E. Browne, an experienced taxidermist, and he tells me that he found an egg started in the oviduct of the bird which he believed would have been laid in three or four days.

This instance, though not a positive breeding record, is of additional interest inasmuch as it may throw some light on the 'Ornithological Mystery' or 'Kicker' (Brewster, *Auk*, XVIII, Oct., 1901, pages 321 to 328). I had always supposed that the identity of the 'Kicker' was disclosed by Mr. J. H. Ames, *Auk*, XIX, Jan. 1902, page 94, where he describes the notes of a Yellow Rail, which he had in captivity, as identical with those of the 'Kicker' which Mr. Brewster had heard in Massachusetts, but Dr. Charles W. Townsend, in his 'Birds of Essex County,' published in 1905, refers to the 'Ornithological Mystery' as the Little Black Rail, after talking with Mr. Brewster about a bird that he heard in July, 1903.

To anyone not familiar with the 'Kicker' and acquainted only with the material published on the subject, this non-acceptance of Mr. Ames's solution seems to require some explanation. Mr. Brewster tells me that

the identicalness of the Yellow Rail and the 'Kicker' did not impress him after reading Mr. Ames's article for two reasons: first, that the Yellow Rail's notes were heard in the autumn, and second, that it uttered its cries when disturbed or irritated by the presence of persons in the room or by the light of the lamp. He also says, "nothing is more certain to my mind than that what I have heard is the spontaneous love song of the 'Kicker,' and that it is uttered chiefly if not solely during the season of reproduction. Assuming (what is quite possible, of course) that it may be occasionally produced in autumn, I do not consider it likely that it would be ever given under conditions such as Mr. Ames describes."

In discussing the probable identity of the 'Ornithological Mystery' Mr. Brewster dismisses the Yellow Rail with the statement: "There are no good reasons for suspecting that the Yellow Rail ever breeds in any part of New England." However, now that it has been found in Massachusetts at a corresponding date to some of the 'Kickers,' and under conditions which may possibly indicate its breeding in the vicinity, it may at least be considered in determining the identity of the latter. Theoretically it seems hardly probable that two different species of birds could utter exactly the same notes, regardless of season. This combined with the fact that the notes of the Little Black Rail as heard in the south, where its calls have been identified, do not bear a close resemblance to the notes of the 'Kicker' would seem to point towards the Yellow Rail as a solution of the mystery.

With the exception of gunners, few persons have met the Yellow Rail, and comparatively little is known of the bird during the breeding season. Mr. Edward A. Preble has described their notes in 'North American Fauna' (No. 22, page 93) and has written me as follows about the birds which he heard near York Factory, Hudson Bay: "The notes I heard were a succession of chips or clucks somewhat similar to the alarm notes of a Brown Thrasher, but less sharp. Stated in 'kiks' it would be 'kik-kik, kik kik kik.' Sometimes an additional 'kik' was given, making the last bar consist of four instead of three notes. I did not hear the 'crow' alluded to by Mr. Brewster, but it is quite possible I did not hear the full song, as my observation covered only a part of one day. In spite of this discrepancy I have been of the opinion that the notes described by Mr. Brewster were those of the Yellow Rail."

The secretive habits of both these Rails as well as the difficulty of observing or securing them in the spring makes one record at this season of exceptional value, and the above instance seems worthy of some consideration until more is known of the breeding range of *Porzana noveboracensis*.— F. B. McKECHNIE, *Ponkapog, Mass.*

The White-rumped Sandpiper in Wayne Co., Michigan.— I added the White-rumped Sandpiper (*Actodromas fuscicollis*) to the county list by securing a specimen May 20, 1906, on P. C. 50, Ecorse Township. This was badly shot and could not be saved so I returned June 3 and