

HENSLOW'S SPARROW AS AN OHIO BIRD.

BY W. F. HENNINGER.

Plate XVIII.

AUDUBON took this sparrow at Newport, Kentucky, opposite Cincinnati, and states: "It is accidental in Ohio." It was not taken in Ohio for years and Audubon's statement was considered an error. But time has shown him to have been correct in this statement as in many other instances, where others failed and the sharp-eyed master succeeded. Dr. Wheaton, in 1882, included this bird in his Ohio List on this statement of Audubon. Neither he nor Oliver Davie knew anything of this species as an Ohio bird. Their opinion that it would be found in southern and western Ohio as a breeder has never been proved. In the meantime Jones and Dawson were working up the northern part of the State and took a specimen in 1894 near Oberlin in Lorain County, and Dawson in his book 'Birds of Ohio,' follows it up with the remark: "they undoubtedly bred there." On September 25, 1906, I met two migrating Henslow's Sparrows (Wilson Bull., Dec., 1906, p. 136) near Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio. In 1907 and 1908, Mr. E. W. Vickers of Ellsworth Station and Geo. L. Fordyce of Youngstown recorded an invasion of this sparrow in Mahoning County, Ohio (Wilson Bull., Sept., 1908, pp. 150-152).

To these records I now add two more. On October 8, 1894, I took what I thought to be a specimen of this bird at South Webster, Scioto County, migrating with other sparrows, and as I knew the species in my home State (Missouri) I was about sure of the identification. Unfortunately I lost the specimen and consequently never reported anything about it as my hypothetical list of Southern Ohio Birds (Wilson Bull., Sept., 1902) was already too large. In 1904, I took a nest and 4 eggs of this species near Tiffin, Seneca County, and have kept this note back since then, partly because I wanted more evidence and a still better confirmation of my record before rushing into print, and partly because I had packed the eggs away where I could not conveniently get at them. Recently when



HENSLOW'S SPARROW. TIFFIN, O., JUNE 3, 1904.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW. TIFFIN, O., JUNE 3, 1984.

going over my collection I concluded that the time had come to make this record public.

For the benefit of other ornithologists I will relate the circumstances in detail. One of my young parishioners at Tiffin, a farmer, told me they were going to mow a rather swampy meadow of clover on June 3 and said: "Those birds you showed me on May 28 on that 7½ acre patch are nesting there, I believe." So I took my camera outfit and tramped along the Big Four R. R. tracks three miles northeast of Tiffin, jumped across a big ditch and slowly worked my way over several swampy meadows to the above mentioned clover field. It was very wet and every ten feet a furrow about six inches deep had been run through it lengthwise. Bobolinks were all around us and a beautiful nest of the Meadowlark with 6 eggs was photographed at once. There were no Swamp, Song nor Field Sparrows near, but there were Grasshopper Sparrows, and we found two of their nests of five and four eggs. Almost in the center of the meadow we flushed a sparrow from her nest of four eggs, but I could not get a satisfactory view of it as it was running through the grass, and unfortunately I had no gun with me. We heard the faint note *tse seēp* (thus it sounds to my ear) several times, but try as we could we never again caught or flushed the bird on the nest, although I was well nigh positive the species was Henslow's Sparrow. The nest was sunk into the ground at the base of a grass tussock near one of the furrows and arched over. In taking the picture I did not use the tripod but simply placed the camera on a higher grass tussock nearby. The day wore on, but that sparrow was not to be caught; the next day I had to leave town, and when the twilight was falling, I collected the nest and eggs and it has rested in my collection since that day.

Recently I wrote a letter to Mr. J. Claire Wood of Detroit, Mich., a fellow member of the Wilson Club, who had taken the eggs and nest of this bird in Michigan in 1905 (Auk, Vol. XXII, p. 416), and he was so kind as to send me his set of four (now three) eggs of this bird for comparison. His set and mine agree perfectly in color pattern — a wreath of reddish and lavender specks at the dull end with numerous small reddish specks over the body of the egg on a greenish ground color. The greenish tint of the ground color is more pronounced in his eggs than in mine, while mine are more

uniform in their coloration, all agreeing with one of his eggs. His nest agreed with mine also in location. His set (3 eggs) measures 18.54×13.46 ; 18.80×13.46 ; 18.54×13.72 mm. My set (4 eggs) measures 18.54×13.75 ; 18.25×13.75 ; 18×13.50 ; 18.75×14 . They look like a large edition of Field Sparrow eggs, but bear no resemblance to any other sparrow eggs in Ohio. In form they are oblong oval, the Grasshopper Sparrow's eggs are ovate squatty in shape with a polished white ground color.

Thus it will be seen that even though I did not capture the bird, there is no doubt whatever that I found *the first authentic nest and eggs of Henslow's Sparrow in Ohio*, and that Jones and Dawson were correct in their view that Henslow's Sparrow is a rare and irregular breeder in Ohio. To show the difference I have also added a photograph of the Grasshopper Sparrow's nest and eggs. Both pictures are simply loaned to 'The Auk,' and republication in any other work will be strictly dealt with according to law. I am under great obligations to Mr. J. Claire Wood for his kindness and help. And finally I have no doubt that Henslow's Sparrow will be found in many other places in Ohio by careful and competent observers.

GENERAL NOTES.

Black Brant (*Branta nigricans*) in Massachusetts.—As this bird is one of the very rarest in Massachusetts, and also is but a rare straggler on any part of the Atlantic coast, every instance of its being taken should be placed on record. I heard of one of these Brant being killed some years ago at Chatham, and upon further investigation found the bird in the collection of Mr. W. A. Carey of Boston. It was shot on April 15, 1902, and was one of a flock of seven Brant, and the only one killed. That spring there was an unusually small number of Brant at Chatham, and the party at the Monomoy Brant Club, the week that Mr. Carey was there, killed but very few birds. Curiously enough this was the only one that he himself shot. I supposed that it had been reported long ago and was much surprised to find that it had been overlooked, though a number of people knew of its existence. This is only the second record for the State, the other being one reported by C. B. Cory as killed in the spring of 1883, also at