

NESTING OF THE FLORIDA GALLINULE.

BY VERDI BURTCH.

Plates XI-XII.

IN the spring of 1916 the water was very high in the marsh at Branchport, N. Y., and nearly all of the early nests of Red-winged Blackbirds and Florida Gallinules were submerged and destroyed. One pair of Gallinules had completed their nest near the margin of the marsh and only a short distance from my house. Six eggs had been layed when a rise of the water covered the nest causing it to disintegrate, letting the eggs through the bottom of it where I found them resting on the mud below.

Soon after this, June 11, and a beautiful moonlight night, I was pushing my boat through the flags when I found a Gallinule's nest containing one egg. It was in the same locality as the first mentioned nest and I have no doubt that it was constructed by the same birds. On the 16th, it rained very hard all day and all night and when I visited the nest next day I found it under water. The five eggs which it now contained were nearly under water and the female Gallinule was swimming around close to the nest. Thinking that she might desert the nest if I disturbed her I passed quickly on. The next day there were six eggs in the nest and I was surprised to find that the Gallinules had added new green flags to the nest raising it, *eggs and all* at least ten inches higher. The eggs were now about ten inches above the water and no more eggs were laid but the nest was made more compact and substantial.

July 1, I erected a blind about ten feet from the nest and at 8.50 A. M. next day I concealed myself therein. Both Gallinules were heard when I first arrived then were still until 9.15 when there was a splash in the water near by and the female appeared for a moment then went away again. At 9.30 she cackled *cut, cut, cut-cut-cut-cut-cut* and at 9.40 she came to within ten feet of the nest, sounded alarm note then made a complete circle around the blind and went on the nest at 9.50 unobserved by me. There she sat pulling the growing flags to and around her and at 10.15



FLORIDA GALLINULE.

2. ARRANGING NEST.



1. SETTLING ON NEST.

the male called *kr-r-r-r-k*, *kr-r-r-r-k*, and she answered, *krup'*. The nest was exposed to the hot sun, as I had cut some of the flags away, and she stood in the nest with her feathers ruffled, panting and trying to pull the flags around her, and frequently uttered a low *ku ku ku*.

At 10.50 she went to the edge of the nest and drank some water, arranged her feathers a few minutes then slid into the water and swimming rapidly away met and passed the male as he came swimming towards the nest. He did not go on the nest at once but maneuvered around until 11 o'clock, then as he was going on I released the shutter of my camera and he jumped back and scolded. Again he cautiously approached and then retired again. Once again he came and was all settled on the nest at 11.10. However he appeared rather suspicious, stretching out his neck and swaying his head from side to side, his dark red eyes shining and his tail flipping as he scrutinized the blind.

At 11.30 the female called *kr-r-r-r-k* from way out in front and was answered from the nest by the male. At 11.40 she uttered conversational notes then the creak and was answered by the male with explosive base notes in a low tone. She kept up the conversational notes until the male called rather impatiently. Then she appeared at 11.45 and they changed places, she going on to the nest immediately after he had left it. I remained in the blind until 12.15 when my movements alarmed her and she left the nest.

July 3, we had another hard rain and when I visited the blind the afternoon of the 4th, more green flags had been added to the nest raising it several inches higher.

July 5, I arrived at the blind at 1.30 P. M. The female Gallinule was seen back of the nest at 1.40. The wind was blowing hard flapping the cover of the blind, which seemed to bother her and she came on cautiously, advancing and retiring again several times, then she gave a sharp *cak'* and swam rapidly to the nest. Behind her came the male following her up close to the nest when she went on and settled down, then he retired. She spent much of the time while she was on the nest in arranging the nest materials and trying to pull the growing flags around her.

At 2.40 she was peering ahead into the water, the nest began to move and a turtle appeared close beside the nest. She stood up



1. DISTURBED BY A TURTLE.



2. RESUMING POSITION AGAIN.

FLORIDA GALLINULE.

backing to the edge of the nest where she raised her wings threateningly and uttered the creaking note in a frightened tone. The turtle soon disappeared but she remained at the side of the nest creaking softly for several minutes, then peering ahead she cautiously settled down to brood.

Next day I found the nest all mussed up with three of the eggs remaining in it and two more in the water on one side. I was in the blind nearly an hour and although I heard Gallinules near several times none came to the nest.

On examination the nest appeared to have become water soaked one side disintegrating so that the weight of the Gallinule had caused it to sink and spill the eggs. Or perhaps a turtle had tried to climb upon the nest. However this does not seem probable as the eggs had not been destroyed.

Incubation was almost complete in some of the eggs and there would have been young in the nest inside of two days and I had hoped to be in the blind at this interesting time.

NOTES ON NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

II.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

LIKE the first installment¹ the present paper is made up of various notes on North American birds. A few of the birds treated below belong to species or genera which are much in need of revision, and the notes on such have been withheld for years in the expectation that time and opportunity would avail for thorough study of these groups. But since this does not appear possible in the near future, these comments are now presented in this form in the hope that they may be of at least some assistance to ornithologists.

¹ For the first paper of this series see 'The Auk,' XXXIV, April, 1917, pp. 191-196.