

and elaborated his notes from one kind of song to many others."¹ The same writer gives a similar instance of a House Sparrow: "Early in July, a male House Sparrow, which apparently lived near my bedroom, acquired a new note: it was seemingly a shout, and resembled the very rapid upwardly-slurred whistle, sounding like the word 'twit,' so frequently uttered in early spring by the male Chaffinch. The Sparrow repeated this cry every morning with the greatest persistence, and his manner of looking about during the performance indicated some pride in it. After ten days or so had elapsed he seemed to tire of the cry, and he gradually abandoned it. I never heard another House Sparrow utter this note."²

I had not supposed that it would be necessary to prove the existence of inventiveness among birds, and perhaps all this may be a work of supererogation, but as Mr. Hawkins has overlooked this phase of the subject, I have ventured to give these few instances.³ The imitative instinct being also granted, we have these two factors of invention and imitation acting through social, not biological, evolution to produce the variety and fix the forms and characters of bird-songs. Back of them is the song-impulse derived from the hormones which are secreted by the male sex glands; and working with them, as I believe, is sexual selection, "evolving, through both structural and psychological changes, beauty of tone and proficiency in execution."

West Roxbury, Mass.

SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF THE BRANCHPORT, N. Y., REGION IN 1922.

BY VERDI BURTCH.

Sterna caspia imperator. CASPIAN TERN.—This Tern can now be safely called a regular spring visitant on Lake Kenka at Branchport. It was first seen this year, May 1, when one appeared flying over the street with a lot of screaming Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. May 6, one

¹ 'The Evolution of Bird-Song.' London, 1896, pp. 148, 149.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

³ On the subject of "perceptual volition" in animals see C. Lloyd Morgan 'Animal Life and Intelligence,' pp. 458-463.

was seen and May 7 there were two with fourteen Common Terns flying around over "the basin." May 14, there were five over the lake. June 25, I heard the peculiar rasping cry of this Tern and saw two of them over the lake. Mr. C. F. Stone saw two Caspians July 21.

Sterna hirundo. COMMON TERN.—This Tern is now a regular spring visitor here and was first seen this year on May 7, when there were fourteen coursing over "the basin." After this they were seen daily, increasing in numbers to twenty, seen May 11. On this date I noticed two Terns at close range on the piles of an old boat dock. One of them was a typical Common Tern, the other appeared slightly larger, lighter colored and the bill was all red to the tip. I feel sure that this bird was an Arctic Tern but never having seen one before I cannot record it with certainty. After May 11, they diminished in number and were last seen May 21 (two only). July 21, two Common Terns were seen several times during the day.

Chlidonias nigra surinamensis. BLACK TERN.—The Black Tern is now a regular spring and late summer visitant here. The dates they were seen this year were: May 6, one; May 10, three came up the lake in the morning; May 12, two seen; May 21, one sat on an old snag at the edge of the marsh for a long time. Aug. 4, three seen, one was still in the black plumage, the other two were slaty with white on the head and neck. Aug. 20, three seen (one black).

Mareca penelope. EUROPEAN WIDGEON.—Mar. 7, I saw a mated pair of European Widgeons standing on the ice at the edge of "the Channel." In the distance I thought that they were Baldpates but as I approached them I could plainly see the cinnamon-red head and neck of the male and the lighter head and neck of the female. When they arose they flew towards me and the cream buff crowns of both birds were very conspicuous.

Aix sponsa. WOOD DUCK.—In the early 1900's the Wood Duck was fairly common in Potter Swamp, Yates Co., N. Y., and I found two or three nests nearly every spring. Then lumbering operations in the swamp took much of the large timber and this beautiful Duck has become rather rare. I was in the swamp many times in May and June this year but did not see even one and had about concluded that none had nested there this year.

Oct. 1, Mr. Henry Southerland and I visited the north end of Potter Swamp where we took an old boat and went up the creek. We had gone but a short distance when we found a dead female Wood Duck floating on the water. We had noticed several empty gun shells floating on the water and when I skinned the specimen I found several shot holes in the body.

There is no open season on the Wood Duck in New York State, nevertheless I believe that many are shot in Potter Swamp every autumn.

Charitonetta albeola. BUFFLEHEAD.—Apr. 6, a female Bufflehead was brought to me that had been caught on a set line that had been set for

bullheads. The hook had been baited with angle worms. When found the Bufflehead was hooked through the lower mandible and was struggling hard to keep its head above the water. I put a band (No. 43985) on its leg and let it go. This band was returned to the U. S. Biological Survey by Ralph White of Collingwood, Ontario, who stated that he had removed it from the leg of a duck that was caught in a herring net in the Georgian bay about Apr. 15.

Clangula hyemalis. OLD-SQUAW.—Apr. 13, I noted a lone female Old-squaw diving in "the basin" and as she appeared to stay under water longer than the average duck I began to time her, taking first time just as she came up. She was up 7 seconds then down 35 seconds, up 5 seconds, down 35 seconds, this time coming up way inshore and she swam out before diving again. After the first time down she was up 5 seconds, down 35 seconds, up 5 seconds, down 45 seconds, up 5 seconds, down 45 seconds, up 10 seconds when I left off timing and watched her movements through 8-power binoculars. At the beginning of every dive she raised her wings from her side and went under the water with them raised slightly above her back. It was done very quickly but I watched closely and many times and am absolutely sure that the wings were raised before each dive.

Erismatura jamaicensis. RUDDY DUCK.—Noted a pair in "the basin" every day from Mar. 21 to Mar. 26.

Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina. EVENING GROSBEEK.—The Evening Grosbeak is now a regular visitant here, appearing at least once a year, usually in the spring (March to the middle of May). This year a single bird was noted Mar. 1, and Mar. 5 a lone female was feeding on the maple seeds in the street nearly all day. Mar. 8, a female was feeding on the fruit of a black thorn in my back yard. May 3, saw a pair, in a spruce in a neighbor's yard.

Passerherbulus nelsoni nelsoni. NELSON'S SPARROW.—Oct. 9, I was tramping around in the marsh when a Nelson's Sparrow flew up and lit in some cat-tails just ahead of me. I had an unobstructed view of it for several seconds and noted the well defined white stripes down the back, the dark brown median stripe and the deep buff sides and neck.

Melospiza lincolni lincolni. LINCOLN'S SPARROW.—During my bird banding in connection with the Biological Survey, I caught several Lincoln's Sparrows. The trap was set in the edge of a young orchard where the grass was uncut and it was about 15 feet from a tangle of choke-cherry, elm saplings and woodbine. Aug. 9, two were caught and banded, Nos. 17915 and 17916. Aug. 10, one banded, No. 17919. Aug. 12, one banded, No. 17922. Aug. 20, No. 17916 was taken again and a new one banded, No. 17924. Aug. 21, No. 17924 was taken again and two more were caught (one a very small bird). I was out of bands so could not band these. I was rather surprised to get these birds so early in the season as I am not aware that the Lincoln's Sparrow nests in this locality. I found them nesting in a sphagnum and tamarac bog in the Adirondacks near Old Forge

in June, 1920. I know of no such country around this region but of course they may nest in an altogether different environment here.

Dendroica palmarum palmarum. PALM WARBLER.—April 23, as I was crossing a piece of wet ground, a Palm Warbler flew up from in front of me to a low branch of a willow where it sat bowing for a moment, then went into a thick bunch of pussy willows and was not seen again. This is my first record for Palm Warbler at Branchport.

Thryothorus l. ludovicianus. CAROLINA WREN.—May 21, about 6:30 A.M., a friend came to me and told me that there was a strange bird singing in a back lot up the street, so I hurried back with him and soon was listening to a bird-song that I had never heard before. We soon located the singer in the top of a small cherry tree and knew at once that it was a Carolina Wren. It must have been around this same place for at least a week as the people who lived there had been telling me of hearing a strange bird; I was busy at the time and did not look it up. It was around until the 24th and I heard it every day singing from the top of a big willow near the street, I am sorry that I did not take time to look for its mate as I feel sure that it had one and that they were nest building. Perhaps a cat caught one of them and the other left the locality.

Cistothorus stellaris. SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN.—From my house to and through the marsh to the lake is a well-worn path which I travel two or three times a day during the fall migrations. Oct. 10, about 9 A.M., when I was traversing the path a very small bird flew up and lit again into a patch of very thick grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*). Immediately it climbed up on top of the grass and scolded and it was so close that I easily identified it as a Short-billed Marsh Wren. It scolded and played around within six feet of me for several minutes, then disappeared. At 1:30 P.M. I went down to the marsh again and found the Wren farther down the path. I first heard it scold, then it came out in the open on top of the broken-down grass, made little clicking notes and sang a very soft sweet song. It was so close and in the open that I wished for my camera and went to the house after it. But when I got back it had moved farther on into the cat-tails. A pair of Long-billed Marsh Wrens came out and sang and "did stunts," I "squeaked" and the Short-billed came out where I had a fine chance to compare it with the Long-billed and note its smaller size, the streaked crown and lighter, grayer look, then it dropped down in the grass and I could trace its movements by seeing the grass tremble. It came along towards me in the thin grass, coming within 18 inches of my feet and looked up at me. It was there at my feet about a minute, then worked up into the grass and weeds and away. Oct. 11, I did not see it until I was leaving the marsh when it flew up from the path and lit in a pile of posts where it sang and played peek-a-boo with me but I could not call it out into the open. Next day I was unable to flush it at all and it was not seen or heard again.

Branchport, N. Y.