

Destruction of Birds in South Carolina. Notes which I made at the time of two notable storms which destroyed great quantities of birds seem worthy of publication. One was the great storm of August 27, 1893, and the other the blizzard of February 13 and 14, 1899.

The storm of 1893 blew generally from northeast. Reaching the point where I then was, a hundred miles inland near the Savannah River, which divides Georgia from South Carolina, during the day of August 27, it blew with fury far into the night. Next morning when the wind lay, adjoining fields were white with seabirds. They covered the ground. These birds must have been blown there from the North Carolina and Virginia coasts. They remained in the vicinity for a day or two, then all disappeared. The shore line, from Virginia and Maryland to the tip of Florida was strewn with wreckage and dead birds. As no investigation was made and no report submitted by anybody, so far as I know, actual damage is a matter of surmise, only it was great and deplorable. The toll taken of human life was grievous, and the American Red Cross took charge of the situation about Beaufort, S. C., buried the dead, fed the starving and housed the homeless.

The destruction of birds was mainly confined to seabirds and migrants, the resident land birds suffering little, if at all.

Strangely enough, some species of birds were actually gainers by the storm, for the ruin of rice crops left hundreds of thousands of bushels of rice in the fields on which ducks feasted and fattened. Freshets sometimes render the same service to wild Geese by destroying corn fields and leaving rotten corn for winter fare.

The blizzard began on Saturday, February 13, and continued to snow fast and furious through Sunday and part of Monday. Tuesday morning broke clear. The snow ceased falling and the worst was over.

Then evidences of destruction to wild life could be ascertained. In one field, along a ditch-bank for half a mile, there was a string of dead Doves. Larks were frozen in fields, even Crows were found dead. Myrtle thickets were strewn with dead Sparrows. Flickers and other Woodpeckers were frozen. A family of raccoons was found frozen in a hollow tree, about the last animal one would expect to succumb to cold. Little Ground Doves, Bluebirds, Mockingbirds, Cardinals were found dead all around. In short, it was the most complete destruction of bird life throughout a big region that I have ever known or heard of. For many years no Bluebird or Ground Dove was seen in the State, and only scattered individuals remained of the vast flocks of Mourning Doves. It was my opinion that thirst and hunger had more to do with killing birds than cold.

Next day a freshet came down river as the thaw set in and I took a boat for the port town. On arriving there just before nightfall I saw a negro boy chase a bird across the street. The bird came down and the boy killed it with a stick. On asking what species of bird it was, for it was too dark to make out, the boat captain told me it was a Woodcock.

After supper I visited the town market and saw strings of wheelbarrows loaded with Woodcock; all they could haul. The birds were so weak that they had fallen victims to men and boys with sticks. All were unfit for market and had to be thrown away.

How many of these noble game birds perished in this way and at the hands of gunners, I cannot say; but that the number ran far into the thousands at this one place, there is not room for doubt. Indeed the number offered to that market ran into the thousands. Woodcock came perilously nigh to total extinction.

Wild Turkeys and Partridges suffered little; probably Ducks escaped with minimum loss; but wild life as a whole received a staggering blow.—
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RECENT LITERATURE.

Griscom's 'Birds of the New York City Region.'—As is well known Mr. Ludlow Griscom has for some years been studying the possibilities of sight identification with the idea of eliminating so far as possible errors in field observations. He is not alone in this work as its importance is at once recognized by all students of living birds, but he has taken a leading part in it, and results are beginning to show in the mention in our books of field marks by which a bird at some distance may be recognized, in addition to the older type of description based upon specimens which can only be used satisfactorily when the bird is in the hand. Mr. Griscom has also been making an intensive study of the bird life about New York City and the little volume before us¹ combines the results of both of these investigations. It is one of the handbook series of the American Museum of Natural History and is published by that institution in cooperation with the Linnaean Society of New York, taking the place of similar Museum publications on the local avifauna by Dr. F. M. Chapman, published in 1894 and 1906.

Mr. Griscom's method of treatment is admirable. An introductory paragraph presents some general facts concerning each species, often with pertinent points regarding its identification in the field. Then follow several more detailed paragraphs on its occurrence on Long Island, in other portions of New York within the area covered, and in the northern portions of New Jersey. These again are subdivided for several localities where intensive studies have been carried on by the author or some of his collaborators. For Orient, Mastic and Long Beach, Long Island; the Bronx region and Central Park, and sometimes Staten Island, New York;

¹ *Birds of the New York City Region.* By Ludlow Griscom, Assistant Curator of Ornithology. With the cooperation of the Linnaean Society of New York. The American Museum of Natural History Handbook Series, No. 9. New York, Published by the Museum. 1923. pp. 1-400, 6 plates, 30 figures and a map. Price \$1.00, post paid \$1.05.