

149. **Pandion haliaetus carolinensis.** OSPREY.—Apparently chiefly a transient, although Smith states that it is resident in the maritime section of our region. The only specimen we have seen was collected at Brownsville, October 28, 1909. Mrs. Bailey recorded it from the Rio Colorado in the spring of 1900, and Pearson found three on Moro Island, December 20, 1921. It might occur in winter.

150. **Tyto pratincola.** BARN OWL.—A fairly common permanent resident on the lower Rio Grande. Merrill, Sennett and Singley noted that it bred in holes in the banks of the river as well as in a belfry and in ruined buildings. Pearson records one that was captured at El Sauz Ranch early in December, 1921. There are six specimens from our region in the Sennett and Dwight Collections.

151. **Asio wilsonianus.** LONG-EARED OWL.—A single specimen in the Dwight Collection was taken at Brownsville, December 7, 1892. Another was shot by Smith near Brownsville, Jan. 4, 1912 ('Auk,' 1912, p. 255).

(*To be continued.*)

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## NOTES ON THE BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY OF TEXAS DURING MAY, 1924.

BY HERBERT FRIEDMANN.

*Plates XXV-XXIX.*

IN the course of my Cowbird studies conducted under a grant from the National Research Council I spent the month of May in the field at Brownsville, Texas and vicinity. While the main object of the trip was the Red-eyed Cowbird, and to a lesser extent the Dwarf Cowbird, numerous notes were made daily of the other birds as well, and these notes form the basis of the present paper.

The lower Rio Grande valley is a region of great ornithological interest because of the Mexican and Central American birds that occur there and nowhere else in the United States. Such are the Mexican Grebe, Mexican Cormorant, Mottled Duck, Chachalaca, Red-billed Pigeon, White-fronted Dove, Inca Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Couch's Kingbird, Derby Flycatcher, Green Jay, Varied Bunting, and Rio Grande Yellow-throat. Another point of interest in this region is the historical one, associated as it is with the names of many of our earlier ornithologists, particularly

with those of Sennett and Merrill. The work of these two men repeatedly forces itself on one's mind in the field with each specimen of Sennett's Thrasher, Sennett's Hooded Oriole, Sennett's Titmouse, Sennett's White-tailed Hawk, and Merrill's Parauque.

The country around Brownsville is largely sandy in nature and covered with a thick growth of cactus, (chiefly *Opuntias*), mesquite, and Spanish dagger, (*Yucca*)—a typical chapparal vegetation, while here and there numerous resacas, (blind, narrow, long, river-like lakes), intersect the otherwise dry landscape. Large tracts of the mesquite country are now cleared and under cultivation and these new lands are of great promise in the citrus fruit industry.

The coast of this part of Texas borders not on the Gulf of Mexico itself but on the Laguna de la Madre, a long, narrow, sheltered stretch of waters protected from the storms of the Gulf by a narrow sand-bar running in an almost due north and south direction for over 100 miles. In this laguna are several islands, one of which, Green Island, now an Audubon Society reservation, was visited for a few days.

During the entire stay in Texas the greatest possible assistance in the prosecution of field work was rendered by Mr. R. D. Camp, the game warden of Cameron County, who gave generously of his time and advice based on long years of familiarity with the country and the birds. For the first two weeks of May, I enjoyed the company and enthusiastic cooperation of Dr. A. H. Cordier of Kansas City, Mo.

The annotated list of birds observed follows:

1. ***Colymbus dominicus brachypterus***. MEXICAN GREBE.—This little Grebe was fairly common in some of the resacas but was rather difficult to observe because of its shyness and small size. Like all Grebes they are expert divers and very rarely allow a close approach. On May 27, Mr. Camp found three nests of this Grebe; two of them were empty, and one contained three eggs.

2. ***Podilymbus podiceps***. PIED-BILLED GREBE.—Not uncommon. Several were noted swimming in a large pond together with a great number of Coots.

3. ***Larus atricilla***. LAUGHING GULL.—Very abundant. By far the commonest water bird in the region. On May 31, at the bird reservation in Bahia Grande, Camp estimated the number of Laughing Gulls at around 4000. Countless nests were noted on two of the islands in this reservation.

4. ***Gelochelidon nilotica***. GULL-BILLED TERN.—Very abundant at



1. NEST OF SENNETT'S THRASHER.  
2. NEST OF LOMITA WREN.

Bahia Grande. It was by all odds the commonest species of Tern there, on May 31. The number was estimated at about 2000. The birds were nesting in large numbers and nests with eggs as well as young birds were very numerous.

5. *Sterna caspia imperator*. COUES' CASPIAN TERN.—Abundant. Many seen at various times during the month. About 1000 at Bahia Grande, May 31. The bright red beak and black crown make this large Tern very striking in appearance. They go about singly a great deal more than I expected.

6. *Sterna maxima*. ROYAL TERN.—Common, but less so than the preceding. At Bahia Grande there were around 500 of these birds breeding. This and the preceding species are very similar in their habits, but are easily identified in life by the color of the beak and the difference in the color of the forehead.

7. *Sterna sandvicensis acuflava*. CABOT'S TERN.—About 500 seen at Bahia Grande on May 31. Several seen flying over the Laguna de la Madre, May 11–13. They feed quite a little in the wet meadows as well as in the water.

8. *Sterna forsteri*. FORSTER'S TERN.—Not uncommon. About 100 in Bahia Grande May 31.

9. *Sterna antillarum*. LEAST TERN.—About 100 at Bahia Grande, May 31. Otherwise only one other specimen noted, a lone bird flying over Green Island on May 12.

10. *Chlidonias nigra surinamensis*. BLACK TERN.—Very common. Noted many times in good numbers. Although there are apparently no authentic breeding records for this bird in this region, the species doubtless breeds here. All the birds were in full breeding plumage. On two occasions flocks of this species were seen chasing Laughing Gulls and once they were noted pursuing a Reddish Egret.

11. *Rynchops nigra*. BLACK SKIMMER.—Common. These curious birds were first noted on Green Island on May 12, but later many were seen at various places. At Bahia Grande on May 31, there were found over 500 of them breeding. When resting on the beach all the members of the flock seem invariably to face in the same direction, giving the flock a wooden look from a distance. On several occasions they were watched skimming the surface of the water with the lower mandibles but were never seen to catch anything. They were never seen to plunge the way the Terns do.

12. *Anhinga anhinga*. WATER-TURKEY.—Uncommon. On May 7, Dr. Cordier and I saw two Water-turkeys flying overhead back of Fort Brown. This was the only time this species was noted.

13. *Phalacrocorax vigua mexicanus*. MEXICAN CORMORANT.—Common, being noted in flocks on many occasions during the month. At Bahia Grande on May 31, about 500 were found. Nothing particularly noteworthy was noticed about their habits.

14. *Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*. WHITE PELICAN.—Common.

Several flocks were seen at different times, the largest one containing over 200 birds, and the smallest one 11 birds. These birds probably breed somewhere near Brownsville although they are not definitely known to do so. They were very shy at all times and close inspection was out of the question. Although I examined many of the birds through 8x glasses I did not notice any with the knob on the bill.

15. *Pelecanus occidentalis*. BROWN PELICAN.—Uncommon. Noted but once, a flock of 11 flying over the Laguna de la Madre on May 10.

16. *Fregata aquila*. MAN-O'-WAR-BIRD.—Only one noted. On May 12, while camped on Green Island, a bird of this species perched on the mast of our boat.

17. *Lophodytes cucullatus*. HOODED MERGANSER.—One male noted May 7.

18. *Anas fulvigula maculosa*. MOTTLED DUCK.—One noted May 7.

19. *Chaulelasmus streperus*. GADWALL.—A pair seen swimming with a few Scaups and many Coots on May 7.

20. *Querquedula discors*. BLUE-WINGED TEAL.—Several noted during the month. Mr. Camp inclines to the opinion that the species may breed in southern Texas.

21. *Spatula clypeata*. SHOVELLER.—Common everywhere and surprisingly tame. They will let railroad trains go by close to them without flying or seeming to be the least frightened.

22. *Dafila acuta*. PINTAIL.—Uncommon. Observed only once.

23. *Marila affinis*. LESSER SCAUP.—Common in most of the resacas visited. By far the greater part were females, the ratio being about 15 females to 1 male seen.

24. *Erismatura jamaicensis*. RUDDY DUCK.—Uncommon. One pair noted.

25. *Ajaia ajaja*. ROSEATE SPOONBILL.—One of the most gratifying results of the trip was the finding that these beautiful birds are by no means uncommon in this part of southern Texas. At Bahia Grande on May 31, a flock of about 75-100 was seen feeding in the shallow water together with a flock of Wood Ibises. Mr. Camp has found as many as 1000 Spoonbills feeding here at a time recently and sees a good number almost every time he visits this spot. The birds are not known to breed anywhere in this immediate vicinity, but there is said to be a large colony a little south of here in Mexico.

26. *Mycteria americana*. WOOD IBIS.—Fairly common. Seen only at Bahia Grande and immediate vicinity. On May 31, four flocks were noted, one of 21, one of 7, one of 6, and one of 13 birds. The first flock (of 21 birds) was seen feeding with the Roseate Spoonbills mentioned above.

27. *Botaurus lentiginosus*. BITTERN.—Uncommon. Only one seen.

28. *Ixobrychus exilis*. LEAST BITTERN.—Fairly common. Several noted on different occasions.

29. *Ardea herodias wardi*. WARD'S HERON.—Very common. On Green Island, May 11 to 13, about 40 nests with eggs or young were found



1. NEST OF VERA CRUZ REDWING.  
2. NEST OF GRAY-TAILED CARDINAL.  
UPPER EGG THAT OF DWARF COWBIRD.

and many others that were empty. A pair of coyotes had been very destructive to all the nesting birds on the island and this bird was no exception. By far more destructive than the coyotes however, were the Great-tailed Grackles which broke and devoured countless eggs of this and other Herons. In their flight and general habits these birds are not different from the typical, northern Great Blue Herons.

30. **Casmerodius egretta.** EGRET.—Rather uncommon. The only ones seen were noted from a railroad train window at a spot about 15 miles out of Brownsville where 6 were noticed flying by.

31. **Egretta candidissima candidissima.** SNOWY EGRET.—Not uncommon. On Green Island on May 12, 4 flocks were noted, one of 4, one of 3, one of 7, and one of 11 birds. They were not yet nesting, but regularly breed on the island in fair numbers. They were very wary, but the color of the feet made it an easy matter to tell them in flight.

32. **Dichromanassa rufescens.** REDDISH EGRET.—Very common on Green Island where several hundreds were observed May 11-13. Several were also seen on the mainland at various times. These birds were the main object of the visit to the island and it was a matter of considerable disappointment to find them not yet nesting. The standing and perching attitudes of these otherwise graceful Herons are remarkably wooden and stiff. In fact from a distance a group of these birds, standing in the shallow water, looks like a flock of large decoys. On one occasion one of these birds was seen chased by a flock of Black Terns. On Green Island there was one old bird that always fed off by itself and drove off any other Egrets that came within twenty feet of it. It was always to be found in the same spot and was always alone. During the day most of the birds would desert the island and feed over a wide range of territory, and along towards dusk would return in groups of from 5 to 50, flying with slow, sedate beats of their wings, necks drawn back in typical Heron fashion. After dark the birds would remain in the tallest bushes where they passed the night and save for the occasional call of some individual that had been disturbed by something, the island was silent. A few birds in the white phase were noted on the island.

33. **Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis.** LOUISIANA HERON.—Very common. Many good-sized flocks seen everywhere and hardly a day went by but some would be seen. On Green Island they were very numerous, and on one of the islands in Bahia Grande, Camp found that many of them were nesting on the ground, a very unusual procedure for this species.

34. **Florida caerulea.** LITTLE BLUE HERON.—Uncommon. A flock of three were noted at Green Island by Dr. Cordier and myself on May 12, and the next morning four were seen. No others were noted anywhere else during the month.

35. **Butorides virescens virescens.** GREEN HERON.—Fairly common. Several were seen at various times, all singly.

36. **Nycticorax nycticorax naevius.** BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—Fairly common. On Green Island there was a breeding colony

of some 25 or 30 pairs. Several others were noted from time to time elsewhere as well.

37. **Porzana carolina.** SORA.—Not uncommon. Several were seen sneaking through the cat-tails in a resaca near Brownsville on May 7. In the same place a few days later a few more were noted.

38. **Ionornis martinicus.** PURPLE GALLINULE.—Uncommon. Only one noted, a bird shot by Camp on May 7. The bird was a female.

39. **Gallinula galeata.** FLORIDA GALLINULE.—Common in almost all the resacas. In some places it was possible to see several in the course of a few minutes. This bird is a common breeder in this region.

40. **Fulica americana.** COOT.—Extremely abundant. Every body of fairly open water was sure to be dotted with numbers of Coots. In some of the larger ponds and resacas there were literally hundreds of Coots, and the total number observed during the entire month, if it were possible to estimate it, would doubtless run high in the thousands. The Coots were rather tame, much more so than the Gallinules.

41. **Steganopus tricolor.** WILSON'S PHALAROPE.—Only one seen,—a female in beautiful spring plumage. It was watched "spinning" in a little pool of water on May 7. The bird kept turning around and around rapidly always remaining in the same spot. It kept this up for about 5 minutes and then suddenly stopped and remained quiet and still.

42. **Recurvirostra americana.** AVOCET.—Observed only at Bahia Grande on May 31, when Camp found six, one of which he collected. The birds were apparently breeding, thus forming the third consecutive season for the breeding of this species in the lower Rio Grande valley.

43. **Himantopus mexicanus.** BLACK-NECKED STILT.—Fairly common. About a dozen birds seen. Two pairs were found with newly finished, but empty, nests on May 6, and later on these birds were always found in the same general locality, but the nests were never found.

44. **Limnodromus griseus scolopaceus.** LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER.—Uncommon. One bird, probably of this subspecies was noted on the beach at Point Isabel on May 10. The subspecific identification of the bird was based entirely on geographical grounds.

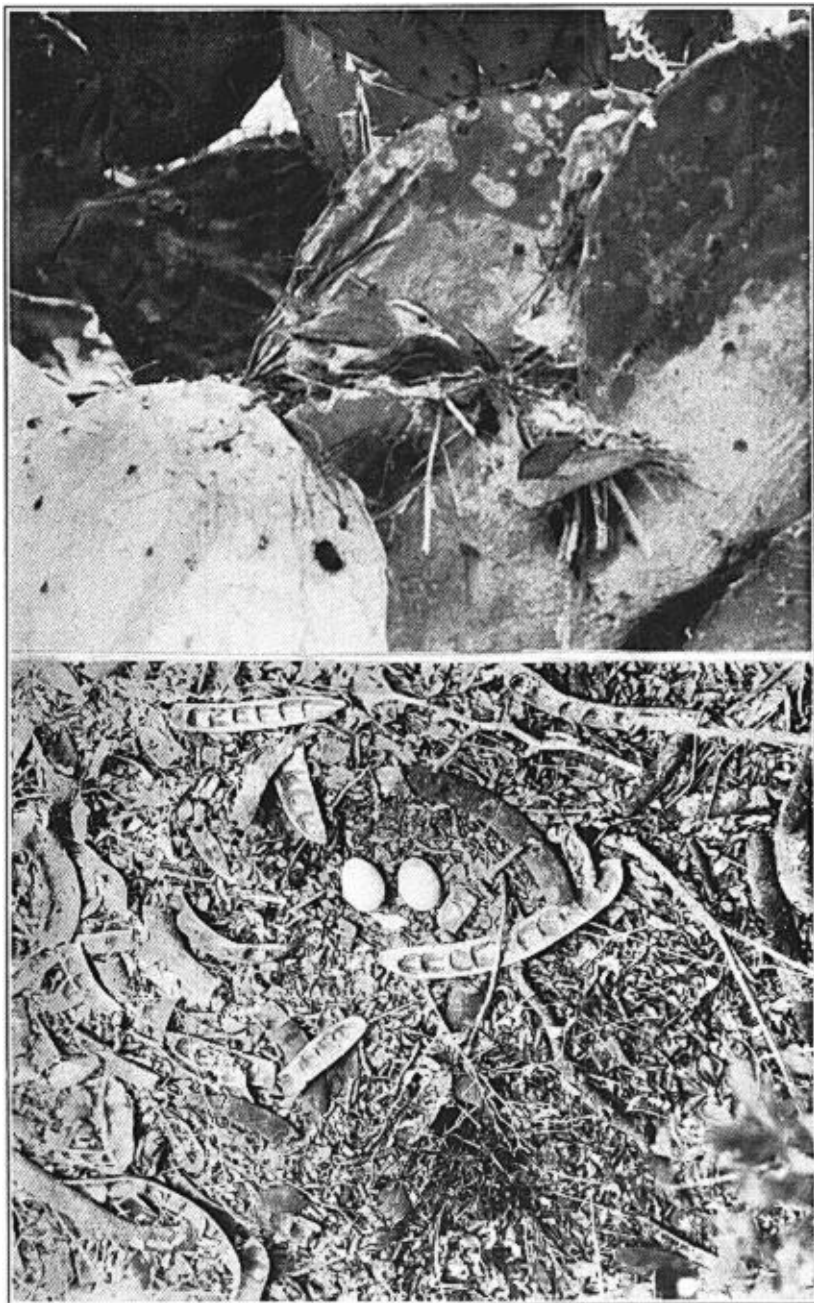
45. **Micropalama himantopus.** STILT SANDPIPER.—Only one specimen observed. At a distance this species resembles the Summer Yellow-legs, but the barred underparts and the color of the legs render it easy of identification.

46. **Pisobia minutilla.** LEAST SANDPIPER.—Not uncommon. As many as 7 or 8 could be seen together at times, but no large flocks such as are common on the Atlantic coast were seen. A small group of these Sandpipers stayed in a certain spot for several days and when chased off always returned to the same place although there were many other spots near by just as suitable.

47. **Crocethia alba.** SANDERLING.—Several seen on the beach at Point Isabel on May 10.

48. **Totanus flavipes.** YELLOW-LEGS.—Not uncommon. Two of





1. TEXAS WREN NEAR ITS NEST IN AN OPUNTIA.  
2. EGGS OF MERRILL'S PARAUQUE.

these birds remained in a small marshy spot the whole month and was still there the last time that spot was visited. They refused to leave the place and acted just as though they had a nest there. Of course the species is not known to breed anywhere so far south and this made the action of the birds all the more puzzling.

49. **Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus.** WESTERN WILLET.—Very common in all the grassy plains and sometimes in rather dry locations fairly distant from water. The striking wing pattern of this otherwise plain colored bird is very obviously a marking of the "flash" type like the white rump of a Flicker, for as soon as the bird closes its wings it disappears into the monotonous gray of its background. The birds were almost all in pairs. Nests with eggs reported by several people during the last two weeks of May.

50. **Actitis macularia.** SPOTTED SANDPIPER.—Uncommon. One was noted on Green Island, May 12, and two near Point Isabel, May 13.

51. **Numenius americanus.** LONG-BILLED CURLEW. Very common in the wet grassy plains between Brownsville and Point Isabel, becoming less common towards the end of the month. When flying they draw back the neck, Heron fashion, and look more like large Plover with enormously long bills than like the long-billed brownish Willets.

52. **Numenius hudsonicus.** HUDSONIAN CURLEW.—Uncommon. A flock of four was seen near some of the preceding species on May 14.

53. **Oxyechus vociferus vociferus.** KILLDEER.—Uncommon. This species doubtless breeds here, as a pair seen acted very much as though they had a nest. The broken-wing ruse was used several times by one of the birds and both showed great concern whenever anyone went near the place where the nest probably was. A search failed to reveal any nest however.

54. **Charadrius semipalmatus.** SEMIPALMATED PLOVER.—Uncommon. Only once observed, on the beach at Point Isabel.

55. **Pagolla wilsonia.** WILSON'S PLOVER.—Only one specimen seen, a bird shot by Camp.

56. **Podasocys montanus.** MOUNTAIN PLOVER.—One seen. This bird is apparently rare here.

57. **Arenaria interpres morinella.** RUDDY TURNSTONE.—One seen on the beach at Point Isabel, May 10.

58. **Colinus virginianus texanus.** TEXAS BOB-WHITE.—Common. Many coveys seen at various times during the month.

59. **Ortalis vetula mccalli.** CHACHALACA.—Fairly common in the thickest, most inaccessible parts of the mesquite "woods." These birds are probably the shyest of all the birds in southern Texas and are extremely difficult to observe. On May 18, in what is known locally as the "palm grove," a typical Florida everglade type of forest, one was heard giving its ordinary call note. The next day, at Jagou's ranch, a place several miles from Brownsville, one was also heard in the mesquite thickets, but was not seen. Three days later at a place nearer to Brownsville I

spent a few hours stalking Chachalacas and was rewarded with a moment's view of two birds. They perch in the trees and remain motionless until they get ready to fly and then go so quickly that the observer usually only then discovers where they were. Five others were heard giving the true Chachalaca call or what amounts to the real song of this bird. A lone Chachalaca sounds like a small flock of harsh grating Geese, each honking out of time with all the rest. There is a peculiar quality in the song, if it may so be called, of this bird that makes it sound as though several birds were uttering it at various distances from the listener and even in slightly different directions from him.

60. **Columba flavirostris.** RED-BILLED PIGEON.—Not uncommon in wooded places. This bird is entirely a woodland species, never occurring in the open chapparal as do the Mourning, Mexican Ground, and Inca Doves. They are peculiar in that they lay but one egg, a large white one rather larger than the average in relation to the size of the bird. A nest with a single egg was found May 7.

61. **Zenaidura macroura marginella.** WESTERN MOURNING DOVE.—Very common, nesting chiefly in the Prickly Pear Cactus. The incubating birds were very tame and a photograph was taken without any blind or previous preparations. Twenty-three occupied nests were found.

62. **Leptotila fulviventris brachyptera.** WHITE-FRONTED DOVE.—Not uncommon in a few places, but otherwise rather scarce. Like the Red-billed Pigeon, this bird is a woodland bird, but sometimes feeds in fairly open places. At Jagou's ranch a couple of these Doves had become very tame and used to feed in the yard with the Chickens. In the woods at this ranch two nests were found, each with two eggs, on May 19. The nests were each about 7 feet from the ground on horizontal limbs and were of the usual crude construction of Dove's nests in general.

63. **Melopelia asiatica trudeaui.** WHITE-WINGED DOVE.—Fairly common. These Doves are found both in the open chapparal and in the edges of woods. At times they are very noisy and their cooing is the most noticeable sound in some places. Three nests with two eggs each were located, all in trees in thin woods. When perching on a twig or feeding on the ground they look a good deal like the Mourning Dove, but as soon as they begin to fly their identity is revealed by the conspicuous white markings on the wings.

64. **Chaemepelia passerina pallescens.** MEXICAN GROUND DOVE.—Very abundant. This small Dove is one of the most characteristic birds of the cactus, mesquite country. It nests abundantly in the Prickly Pears, usually at least four feet from the ground but sometimes even lower. This bird has never been recorded as a victim of the Dwarf Cowbird, but Camp told me that he had found a victimized nest of this Dove, and on May 23, I found a nest with the usual two Dove's eggs and one egg of *Molothrus ater obscurus*. All in all a dozen nests of this Dove were found.

65. **Scardafella inca.** INCA DOVE.—The least common of all the

Doves. Strange to say the few specimens observed were all seen in the backyards in the town of Brownsville, and although they were looked for elsewhere none were noted. They undoubtedly do occur in the surrounding country, but the fact that none were seen indicates their scarcity.

66. **Cathartes aura septentrionalis.** TURKEY VULTURE.—Common but less so than the following species.

67. **Coragyps urubu.** BLACK VULTURE.—Much commoner than the preceding bird. Flocks were noticed frequently, particularly in the cattle areas. The shorter tail and more frequent wing beats serve to tell this bird from the preceding at almost any distance within the range of vision.

68. **Accipiter cooperi.** COOPER'S HAWK.—Uncommon. Only one noted, a dead bird on Green Island, May 12. The bird had been shot by one of the wardens some days before.

69. **Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi.** HARRIS'S HAWK.—Fairly common. These Hawks are very terrestrial, resembling Marsh Hawks in this respect. When on the ground they bear a general resemblance at a distance to Black Vultures, but as soon as they rise the white rump dispels any doubt as to their identity.

70. **Buteo albicaudatus sennetti.** SENNETT'S WHITE-TAILED HAWK.—Not uncommon. On May 14 Dr. Cordier and I examined and photographed a nest of this bird containing three well grown young. The nest was in the top of a Spanish dagger about eight feet tall. While working at the nest Dr. Cordier saw one of the old birds fly towards him and circle around about a sixth of a mile away. It had what appeared to be a lizard in its talons. When it stopped coming toward the nest the bird dropped the lizard but swooped down after it and caught it in the air. It then did this a second time and finally dropped it a third time and made no attempt to catch it. Both the other times it caught the lizard with its claws. The old birds scream very much like Red-tailed Hawks. One of the adult birds seemed to be fond of perching on telegraph poles, probably because they provided higher perches than did the tallest yuccas or mesquite trees.

71. **Falco columbarius columbarius.** PIGEON HAWK.—Rare. A badly mutilated dead bird was seen on Green Island on May 11, but it had evidently been dead quite some time.

72. **Falco fusco-caerulescens.** APLOMADO FALCON.—Uncommon. Only one bird seen. An old nest of this species was found by Camp. The nest was in a yucca about seven feet high.

73. **Cerchneis sparveria sparveria.** SPARROW HAWK.—Uncommon. A few individuals were noted during the month.

74. **Polyborus cheriway.** AUDUBON'S CARACARA.—Not uncommon generally, at times said to be very common. Several were seen and one nest found. The nest was in a yucca about eight feet high, and was apparently just recently evacuated by the young. The old birds are rather given to perching on telegraph poles, and from these positions they have an appearance more ferocious than their natures would justify. They seem to be rather timid and feed to a large extent on carrion.

75. **Otus asio mccalli.** TEXAS SCREECH OWL.—Not uncommon. A family of two adults and four fully-fledged young were seen in a tree near the Brownsville railroad depot on May 9. All were in the gray phase.

76. **Crotophaga sulcirostris.** GROOVE-BILLED ANI.—Fairly common in some places. These birds are found in dense thickets, usually in moist woods or not far from water, and sometimes in thinly wooded swamps. Their call note is quite peculiar, consisting of two syllables, the first accented and slightly lower than the second which is somewhat clearer and less throaty. The call is more or less similar in sound to a hic-cough, but cat-like. Some of the birds seen were apparently in pairs and some in small flocks.

77. **Geococcyx californianus.** ROAD-RUNNER.—Less common than the preceding but inhabiting a very different type of country. This is pre-eminently a bird of the cactus and dry sandy country in general. One was seen perching on a fence post.

78. **Coccyzus americanus americanus.** YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO.—Common in the wooded districts. These birds were either heard or seen almost daily.

79. **Coccyzus erythrophthalmus.** BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO.—Rare. One bird collected by Camp, May 16, is the only record.

80. **Ceryle americana septentrionalis.** TEXAS KINGFISHER.—Not uncommon. Several were seen at intervals during the month.

81. **Dryobates scalaris bairdi.** TEXAS WOODPECKER.—Common. In its actions and notes this bird is very similar to the Downy Woodpecker of the northern states. Two nests were found both in dead stumps; one nest was in a hole about four feet from the ground and the other at an altitude of ten feet.

82. **Centurus aurifrons.** GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER.—Common. This bird is an inhabitant of open country, nesting in fence posts, telegraph poles and trees in meadows, etc. It was not observed at all in forested country. Two nests were examined and both had young birds in them. Along the railroad tracks on the road from Brownsville to Point Isabel almost every telegraph pole had a hole in it made, according to Camp, by Golden-fronted Woodpeckers.

83. **Nyctidromus albicollis merrilli.** MERRILL'S PARAUQUE. Not uncommon. On May 9, a bird of this species was flushed from its "nest." The two eggs, creamy buff in color with light lavender-brown spots were laid on the ground, the only pretense at a nest being a few rearranged leaves and straws. On May 19, at Jagou's ranch several were heard and one was seen.

84. **Chordeiles virginianus henryi.** WESTERN NIGHTHAWK.—Only one specimen was positively identified, a bird collected by Camp, on May 22. Several others, probably of this species, were seen at the same time. In life this bird looks very similar to the following species, but the difference in the darkness of the coloring, particularly of the underparts is a fairly good field mark.

85. **Chordeiles acutipennis texensis.** TEXAS NIGHTHAWK.—Common. On May 9, two eggs of this species were found laid on the bare ground with no pretense of a nest. This bird was seen booming a great deal towards the latter part of the month. The aerial evolutions that go with the booming are the same as in the other species, the local race of which, however, was not observed booming.

86. **Archilochus colubris.** RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD.—On Green Island, May 11–13, this species was very numerous darting among the flowers of the opuntias. The distribution of the sexes seemed about equal. The birds were probably migrants as there seemed to be no pairing off among them. At Brownsville, and on the mainland in general, not many of these Hummingbirds were noted.

87. **Archilochus alexandri.** BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD.—Uncommon. The only one seen was observed with several of the preceding species at Green Island, on May 12. The bird was a male.

88. **Muscivora forficata.** SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER.—Fairly common. These graceful birds have a disposition, not in keeping with the beauty of their plumage, for they are pugnacious and frequently harrass Hawks, Ravens, and even small Herons at times. They seem to prefer low perches to high ones, a very unusual thing for a fly-catching species. The only notes heard were little, explosive *dzeep* sounds, much like those of the Kingbird in quality.

89. **Tyrannus tyrannus.** KINGBIRD.—Very common on Green Island, May 11–13, where they occurred in large flocks. They were all probably migrating birds. On the mainland several were seen at different times, but they were not very numerous.

90. **Tyrannus melancholicus couchi.** COUCH'S KINGBIRD.—Fairly common, chiefly around edges of woods and in mesquite country. These birds seem to be less active than the preceding species and also less pugnacious.

91. **Pitangus sulphuratus derbianus.** DERBY FLYCATCHER.—Not uncommon. Several individuals were seen from time to time and two nests were found. The first of these was noted at Jagou's ranch on May 19. It was high up in a tall tree and all around it were bunches of Spanish moss, but none of the moss was actually on or suspended from the nest. The position of the nest was such that it was impossible to climb to it to examine the contents. One of the old birds was heard calling near by.

The second nest was collected by Camp on May 29, and contained four eggs. It was built on top of an old nest of a Mexican Cormorant in a dead tree standing in shallow water. I was previously familiar with another race of this bird, *P. s. bolivianus* in life in Argentina and was struck by the close resemblance in the notes of the two. In fact the first Derby Flycatcher was first identified by its note before the bird itself was seen.

92. **Myiarchus magister nelsoni.** MEXICAN CRESTED FLYCATCHER.—Fairly common. This bird is more a bird of the open than the Crested

Flycatcher of the northern states, and nests commonly in fence posts bordering open fields. It also seems to be more silent as not a note was heard from one of them during the whole month. Two nests, each with five eggs were found. Both were in stumps used as fence posts.

93. **Sayornis phoebe.** PHOEBE.—Uncommon. A few were seen in Green Island, May 12. No others were noted elsewhere.

94. **Myiochanes virens.** WOOD PEWEE.—Several were heard singing, but only one bird was seen during the month.

95. **Empidonax trailli trailli.** TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER.—A small greenish Flycatcher was seen on Green Island on May 11, and it gave a note like that of the Alder Flycatcher, and probably belongs to this race. Later a couple more were seen in the same day and place.

96. **Otocoris alpestris giraudi.** TEXAS HORNED LARK.—A Horned Lark was seen on a road between Brownsville and Point Isabel, on May 14. On geographical grounds solely rests the subspecific identification here given.

97. **Xanthoura luxuosa glaucescens.** GREEN JAY.—Fairly common. About a dozen seen during the month. A nest with four young about four days old was found on May 9. The nest was in a crotch of a sapling about seven feet up and was built of small twigs, straws, plant fibers, etc. The young were still blind but the primary and secondary quills were beginning to sprout and were dull bluish in color. The top of the head and the spinal tract, (both the skin and the neosoptiles), were greenish gray in color. The adult birds are very shy at the nest and it was hopeless to try and photograph them.

98. **Corvus cryptoleucus.** WHITE-NECKED RAVEN.—These small Ravens were rather uncommon, only three being noted. The white in the neck of course never shows in the field and at a distance they look like crows.

99. **Molothrus ater ater.** COWBIRD.—Inasmuch as all observations and notes made on all three Cowbirds will be used for later publication and are too bulky to be inserted in an annotated list, a brief summary will suffice here.

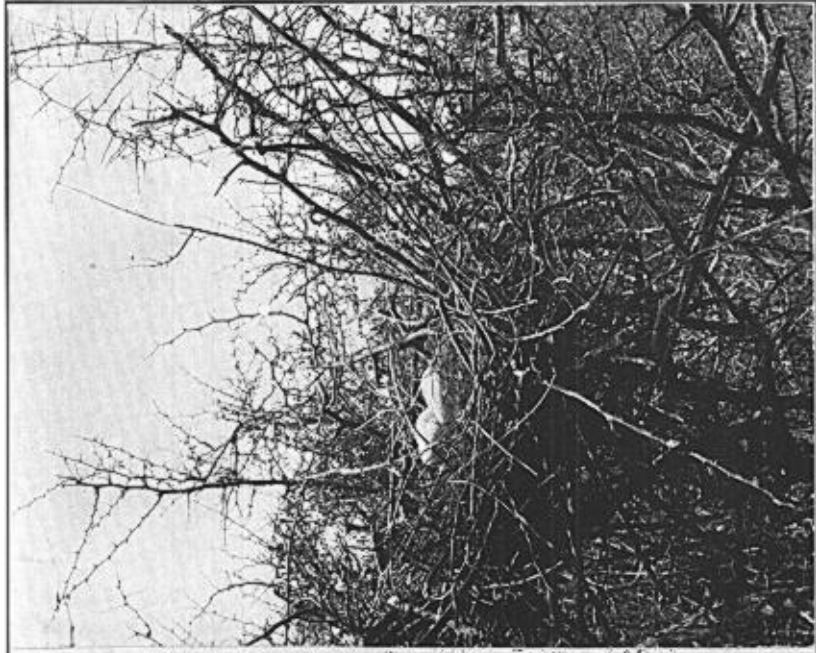
The typical form of the Cowbird was seen a few times together with some of the next race around the horse corrals at Fort Brown. Camp believes that both races breed here, but if this should be demonstrated and the two found breeding side by side in the same area, it would be necessary to recognize the Dwarf Cowbird as a separate species. Probably *M. a. ater* does not breed here, but only winters here. Some *obscurus* eggs are nearly as large as some straight *ater* eggs.

100. **Molothrus ater obscurus.** DWARF COWBIRD.—Common, especially around the cavalry stables at Fort Brown. Its eggs were found in the nests of the following species:—Mexican Ground Dove, Sennett's Hooded Oriole, Audubon's Oriole, Gray-tailed Cardinal, Long-tailed Chat, and Verdin, while Camp informed me that he has found eggs of this Cow-



1. NEST OF MEXICAN CRESTED FLYCATCHER.

2. NEST OF WARD'S HERON.





bird commonly in the nests of the Black-throated Sparrow and Small White-eyed Vireo, and also in nests of the Sennett's and Curve-billed Thrashers. Of these birds, the following have never been recorded as victims of the Cowbird:—Mexican Ground Dove, Audubon's Oriole, Black-throated Sparrow, both Thrashers, and the Verdin, bringing the total list of victims of *M. ater* and its races up to 190.

101. **Tangavius aeneus involucratus.** RED-EYED COWBIRD.—Fairly common. Many more males were seen than females. This bird is very different from the other Cowbirds in its courtship habits and also in its eggs. Inasmuch as no detailed description of the courting antics of the Red-eye has been written since the time of Merrill, some 45 years ago, it may be well to describe it here.

On May 6, a pair of Red-eyes was found in a field and the male watched displaying to the female. He ruffled up the feathers of his cape or mantle first and then all the feathers both on the upperparts and the underparts, brought his tail stiffly forward and under, arched his wings slightly, (not more than half as far as it was possible to arch them), and instead of bowing over forwards as does the male of the ordinary Cowbird, merely bent his head so that his bill was touching the feathers of his breast for its full extent. Then he suddenly bounced up and down four times, each bounce taking him about an inch from the ground. While bouncing up and down he gave a series of three very deep, guttural, yet bubbling sounds, and then a set of two short and one long squeaky, thin, high notes quite similar to the song of the ordinary Cowbird but wheezier, more throaty and shorter. Occasionally he did bow forward a little, but nothing like the extent to which *M. ater* does. In fact in its courtship this species is midway between the *Molothrus* group and the Rice Grackle (*Cassidix oryzivora*) of Central and South America. In its habit of bouncing up and down it resembles two Argentine species (*Molothrus bonariensis* and *Molothrus brevisrostris*) more than it does *M. ater*.

Its eggs, unusual in color for a Cowbird's, pale blue without any spots, were found in nests of the following species:—Audubon's Oriole, Sennett's Hooded Oriole, and Texas Wren, while Camp informed me that this Cowbird also lays in nests of Gray-tailed Cardinals and from another party it was learned that their eggs have been found in nests of the Western Mockingbird and Sennett's Thrasher. Of these the following are new to the list of victims of the Red-eyed:—Western Mockingbird, Sennett's Thrasher, and Texas Wren. The last named nest was found by Dr. Cordier on May 6, and contained three eggs of the Red-eyed Cowbird and none of the Wren's. The Wren was incubating and the next day all three eggs hatched. Two days later the young were destroyed by a skunk. The total list of the victims of *Tangavius aeneus* and its races now numbers 16. This bird is very partial to nests of the Orioles, at Brownsville to *Icterus cucullatus sennetti*.

102. **Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus.** YELLOW-HEADED BLACK-BIRD.—Several were seen with the Cowbirds and Grackles around the

cavalry stables at Fort Brown early in the month, but all were gone by the 10th of May, both sexes were noted.

103. **Agelaius phoeniceus richmondi.** VERA CRUZ RED-WING.—Red-wings, probably of this race were very common. They act and sing just like the northern ones but apparently never nest in the cat-tails or even in bushes or trees standing in the water. Some 15 nests were examined and all were in bushes or trees in dry locations and varied from within five feet of the ground to over twenty feet above it. In all his years of field work in this region Camp has never found a Red-wing's nest built over the water.

104. **Sturnella magna hoopesi.** RIO GRANDE MEADOWLARK.—Uncommon near Brownsville, but fairly common in a large moist piece of grassy prairie about 15 miles out towards Point Isabel. They were very shy and consequently little was learned of their habits. They fly like the ordinary form of this species, having the Starling-like gliding habit and also they have the buzzy rattling note of the typical subspecies.

105. **Icterus melanocephalus auduboni.** AUDUBON'S ORIOLE.—Fairly common. These Orioles are woodland birds, not much given to nesting in trees in open places as does the following species. Only two nests were found. One contained two eggs of the Oriole and one of the Red-eyed Cowbird, and the other was deserted and contained one egg of the Red-eyed Cowbird and one of the Dwarf Cowbird and none of the Oriole. The nest in this species is not pensile.

106. **Icterus cucullatus sennetti.** SENNETT'S ORIOLE.—Very common, nesting almost entirely in the palms and bananas, close to houses at times; in fact they seem not to mind human presence at all. According to the stories the local boys tell, the male helps build the nest. Whether this is so or not, it certainly is true that the male does help to feed the young from the day they are hatched. The nests are sewn on to the under side of the palm or banana leaves and are much shallower than those of the Baltimore Oriole, but are deeper than the nests of the Orchard Oriole. Sixteen nests were found, one of which had an egg of *Molothrus ater obscurus* and two of the Oriole and three contained eggs of *Tangavius a. involucreatus*.

107. **Icterus spurius.** ORCHARD ORIOLE.—Uncommon. Only one seen.

108. **Icterus bullocki.** BULLOCK'S ORIOLE.—Uncommon. Only one seen.

109. **Megaquiscalus major macrourus.** GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE.—Abundant everywhere. These birds are very destructive to the large colonies of breeding birds in this part of Texas as they destroy countless numbers of eggs. In strong light the throats of the females look very yellowish, almost as yellow as the head of a female Yellow-head Blackbird. The notes are very harsh and suggest the sound of the crackling of twigs, agreeing in this respect with some of the big Oropendulas of South America. A great many nests, (35-40), were examined and in more than half were found dead young or even the old birds dead and partly decayed. What

caused this scourge among the Grackles could not be determined, but it was not exactly annoying to find that something was putting a check on the numbers of these nest-robbers and egg-thieves.

110. ***Amphispiza bilineata bilineata***. BLACK-THROATED SPARROW.—Common. This is a bird of the open country, nesting in low, but very dense bushes. Its song is very reminiscent of that of the Song Sparrow, and is quite remarkable in its volume for the size of the bird. The Black-throated Sparrow is an early nester and, according to Camp is the commonest victim of the Dwarf Cowbird early in the season before many other birds are nesting. In spite of the frequency with which this bird is victimized it has never been recorded as a Molothrine victim. The western desert race *Amphispiza bilineata deserticola* is known to be parasitized, but this race was formerly not known to be affected by the Cowbird. Three nests were found, all empty.

111. ***Arremonops rufivirgatus***. TEXAS SPARROW.—Common. These little greenish Sparrows are birds of the underbrush and are not easy to keep in sight. Their call-note is a smacking, somewhat explosive *tchp*. Five nests were found, all in prickly pear cacti. Of these, two nests contained two eggs each, one had three, and two had four apiece. The eggs are pure white without any markings, are rather frail for Sparrow eggs, being intermediate in strength between an ordinary Sparrow egg such as a Song Sparrow's egg and a Phoebe's egg.

112. ***Cardinalis cardinalis canicaudus***. GRAY-TAILED CARDINAL.—Very common. The notes are similar to those of the northern Cardinal as are also the eggs and the nest. Three nests were found of which two contained eggs of the Dwarf Cowbird in addition to the rightful eggs.

113. ***Passerina versicolor versicolor***. VARIED BUNTING.—Uncommon. Only one specimen was observed, a bird in beautiful plumage was seen feeding in the city dump at Brownsville on May 7.

114. ***Passerina ciris***. PAINTED BUNTING.—Uncommon. Only one seen.

115. ***Sporophila morelleti sharpei***. SHARPE'S SEEDEATER.—Uncommon. One of each sex seen, but not on the same date.

116. ***Piranga hepatica***. HEPATIC Tanager.—Rare. On May 8, Camp shot a bird of this species, the first he had ever found at Brownsville. The bird was badly shot and was in too poor condition to skin, so it was put in alcohol and is now in Camp's collection at Brownsville.

117. ***Hirundo erythrogastra***. BARN SWALLOW.—Very numerous over the Laguna de la Madre on May 10 and quite common on Green Island the next two days. Not very many were seen on the mainland.

118. ***Iridoprocne bicolor***. TREE SWALLOW.—The remarks on the preceding species apply to this one as well.

119. ***Bombycilla cedrorum***. CEDAR WAXWING.—This bird occurred in some very large flocks, all of them probably not resident birds. Some of the flocks must have contained 150 to 200 birds, and I got seven with one shot.

120. **Vireo griseus micrus.** SMALL WHITE-EYED VIREO.—Common. This Vireo sings and acts just like the typical form in the northern states. Its nest is harder to find than most Vireos' because of the density of the foliage of the places in which it nests and also because the nests are placed towards the inside of the mesquite clumps instead of on out-hanging branches as are the nests of the Red-eyed Vireo. According to Camp this bird is very commonly parasitized by the Dwarf Cowbird. Only four nests were found, of which two were empty and the other two had three eggs each.

121. **Mniotilta varia.** BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER.—Several seen on Green Island, May 11 and 12. Two were noted on the mainland.

122. **Vermivora ruficapilla ruficapilla.** NASHVILLE WARBLER.—Noted in migration. Not seen after May 10.

123. **Vermivora peregrina.** TENNESSEE WARBLER.—Uncommon. Noted only on May 9, one bird.

124. **Dendroica aestiva aestiva.** YELLOW WARBLER.—Several seen on Green Island in a big flight of Warblers on May 12.

125. **Dendroica coronata.** MYRTLE WARBLER.—Two fine males seen on Green Island on May 12 were the only ones noted, except for a small flight on May 9.

126. **Dendroica magnolia.** MAGNOLIA WARBLER.—First seen May 7 when several were noted. Next and last seen May 12 on Green Island when only one was observed.

127. **Dendroica cerulea.** CERULEAN WARBLER.—Only one seen, on May 8.

128. **Dendroica pensylvanica.** CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER.—Several seen from May 7 to 12.

129. **Dendroica castanea.** BAY-BREASTED WARBLER.—Seen on Green Island on May 12.

130. **Dendroica striata.** BLACK-POLL WARBLER.—Several seen on Green Island on May 11 to 13. Also a few on the mainland on May 8.

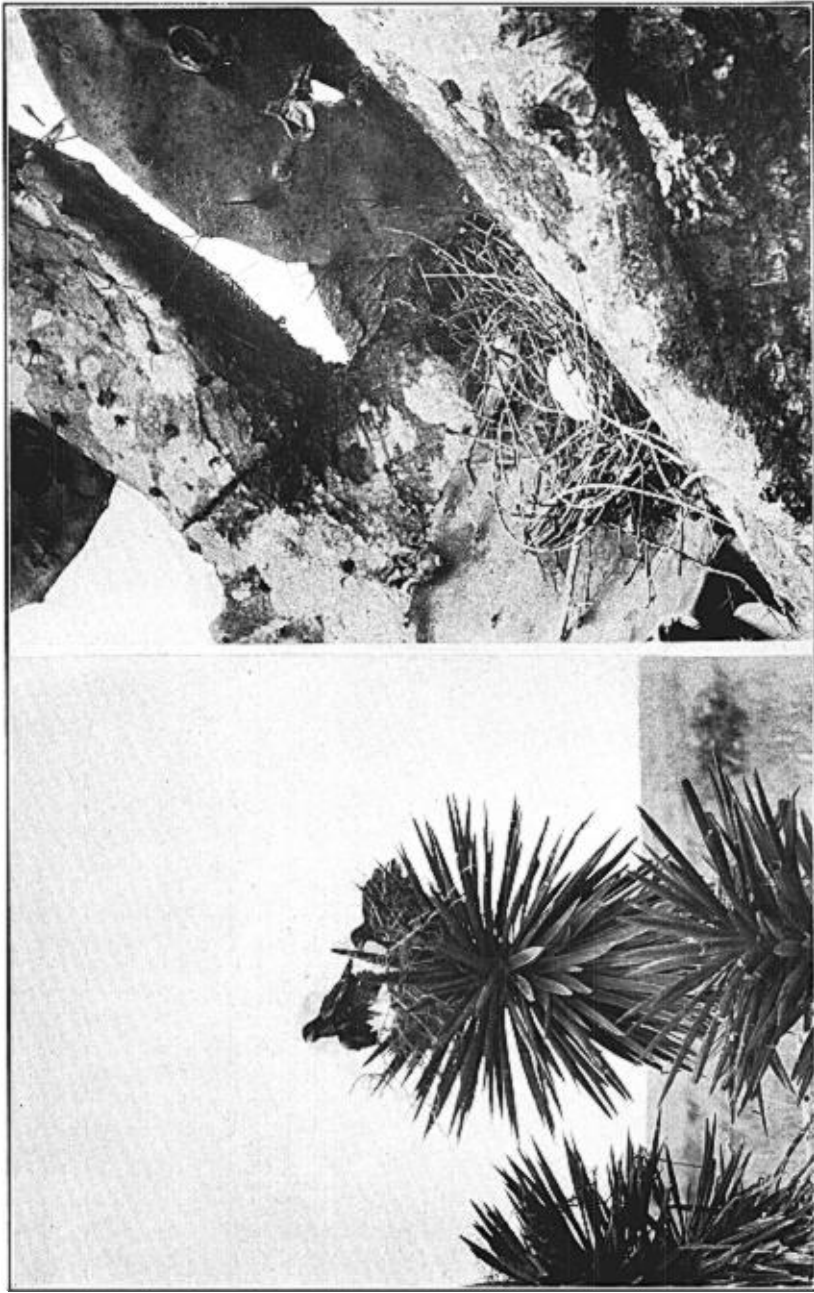
131. **Dendroica fusca.** BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.—Several noted on Green Island on May 12, and on the mainland on May 8.

132. **Dendroica virens.** BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER.—Common on Green Island on May 11 to 13. Several noted near Brownsville during the first half of the month.

133. **Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis.** GRINNELL'S WATER THRUSH.—A few birds were noticed at the edge of a large resaca near Brownsville on May 27. One was collected and is now in the collection of R. D. Camp.

134. **Chamaethlypis poliocephala.** RIO GRANDE YELLOWTHROAT.—Two Yellowthroats, probably of this species, were seen on Green Island on May 12. The two birds, apparently a pair, stayed in one spot all day and acted as though they either had or planned to have a nest there. No notes were heard.

135. **Icteria virens longicauda.** LONG-TAILED CHAT.—Common,



1. YOUNG SENNETT'S WHITE-TAILED HAWKS IN NEST.  
2. NEST OF MEXICAN GROUND DOVE.

similar in all its actions and notes to the typical form of this species in the northern states. It is very frequently victimized by the Dwarf Cowbird. Of four nests found, one contained two eggs of the owner and one of the Dwarf Cowbird, one contained three eggs of the Chat and one of the Cowbird, and the other two contained three Cowbird eggs apiece and none of the Chats.'

136. **Wilsonia canadensis.** CANADA WARBLER.—A few seen during the second week of the month.

137. **Setophaga ruticilla.** REDSTART.—Several seen on Green Island on May 12, all in female plumage. One of these was collected by Camp and found to be a male. Inasmuch as males of this species are known to breed occasionally in immature plumage, it looks as though these birds were the last of the species to pass through in their northward migration. This is in keeping with the idea that old birds arrive before younger birds in their nesting grounds.

138. **Mimus polyglottos leucopterus.** WESTERN MOCKINGBIRD.—Extremely abundant. In the field this bird resembles in every respect the eastern form. Some forty-five nests were found, some in bushes or small trees, some in the prickly pears, and one was found on top of a fence post. This bird is now known to be victimized by the Red-eyed Cowbird. The abundance of its nests and the rather open places in which they are built makes this bird's relative freedom from the Cowbirds (both species) very puzzling. The solution probably lies in the pugnacious nature of the Mockingbird and its ability to drive off intruders from its nest.

139. **Dumetella carolinensis.** CATBIRD.—Two were seen on Green Island on May 12. This species is not known to breed here.

140. **Toxostoma longirostre sennetti.** SENNETT'S THRASHER.—Very common in the cactus and mesquite country. Its notes are similar to those of the Brown Thrasher but the alarm call seems to be slightly higher and sharper. Twenty-five nests were found with eggs or young. The dates for these nests are pretty evenly scattered through the month. Camp informed me that he had taken the egg of the Red-eyed Cowbird from a nest of this species in the past, and on May 18 he found a nest of this thrasher with two eggs of the owner and one of the Red-eyed Cowbird.

141. **Toxostoma curvirostre curvirostre.** CURVE-BILLED THRASHER.—Common, but locally (at Brownsville) not as common as the last. Three nests with eggs were found. This bird is more an inhabitant of open fields than the preceding and is locally called Field Thrasher.

142. **Heleodytes brunneicapillus couesi.** CACTUS WREN.—Common. This large wren is a rather early nester for fully-fledged young were seen flying around by May 15, and of ten nests found all but one had recently been vacated by the young birds. The other contained four eggs, all well incubated. In appearance this bird is quite unlike any of the others of its family in this country, but in its song and scolding chatter it at once proclaims its affiliations with Wrens in general.

143. **Thryothorus ludovicianus lomitensis.** LOMITA WREN.—

Rather uncommon. The few that were observed seemed similar to the ordinary Carolina Wren in every way. A nest with five eggs was found on May 8.

144. **Thryomanes bewicki cryptus.** TEXAS WREN.—Common. This is typically a bird of the prickly pear. It was never seen very far from this plant but one nest was found in a mesquite bush. This nest was unusual in several respects. In the first place it was obviously not built by the Wrens as it was entirely different from the regular type of structure this bird makes. Secondly when found by Dr. Cordier on May 6, it contained three eggs of the Red-eyed Cowbird and none of the Wren's although the female Wren was sitting close. The next day all three eggs hatched and two days later the nest and young were destroyed by a skunk. The damaged nest was then collected. This forms the first record of this bird being parasitized by the Red-eyed Cowbird.

145. **Baeolophus atricristatus sennetti.** SENNETT'S TITMOUSE.—Fairly common, nesting largely in holes in fence posts and stumps. Like the Cactus Wren, this bird is an early breeder and full grown young were seen on the wing by the middle of May.

146. **Auriparus flaviceps flaviceps.** VERDIN.—Fairly common. This little bird looks and acts more like a Kinglet than a Titmouse although it is classed with the latter. The only notes heard were little *tsip* sounds. Five nests were found, three of them empty, one with four eggs, and one with four eggs of the Verdin and one of the Dwarf Cowbird. The entrance to the last nest had been considerably enlarged, probably by the Cowbird when laying in the nest. The Verdin has never before been recorded as a victim of the Dwarf Cowbird (or of any Cowbird).

147. **Polioptila caerulea caerulea.** BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.—Uncommon. Observed on only one occasion.

32 Garden Place,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

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## SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF THE BRANCHPORT, N. Y. REGION, 1923.

BY VERDI BURTCHE.

Plate XXX.

**Gavia stellata.** RED-THROATED LOON.—I saw one of these birds in the winter plumage on the east branch of Lake Keuka, April 22, and another one in company with several Common Loons on the west branch near Branchport May 13. I have but one previous record of this Loon for this locality.

**Sterna caspia imperator.** COUES' CASPIAN TERN.—Two Caspian Terns were here on the lake the morning of May 13, but left soon and were