

SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF THE BRANCHPORT,
N. Y. REGION IN 1926.

BY VERDI BURTCHE.

Cygnus columbianus. WHISTLING SWAN.—In the morning of April 4, 1926 I saw five Whistling Swans in Lake Keuka by the mouth of the inlet at Branchport. Here they spent the entire day in the shallow water around the inlet and by the sand bar. Twenty-one Canada Geese came in about noon and at 1 P. M. were still resting with heads under their wings and the Swans were swimming along side of them. Later the Geese came over into the harbor (inside the bar) and came out on the ice and the Swans came in along the ice but did not get out onto it. The Swans left the lake just as it was getting dark, flying west over the hills and the Geese left shortly after seven o'clock next morning.

Somateria spectabilis. KING EIDER.—Sunday April 25 was cloudy and misty in the morning, with a cold south wind and thermometer at 50 Fahr. At the lake I found a small flock of American Scaup Ducks resting near shore and among them was a larger, buffy-brown colored Duck, that, when it raised its head made me think "Eider." After giving it close study through 8-power binoculars I went home and consulted my books and was then certain that it was a female Eider, but both Eaton and Forbush say that as a rule the females of the King and the American Eider cannot be distinguished one from the other in the field. At 1 P. M. there were 16 American Scaups (8 pairs), a pair of Buffleheads, 2 male Baldpates, a male European Widgeon and the Eider resting on the water close in shore and in the lee of a clump of cat-tails. I was by an old boat house within about four rods of them and had them under observation for more than an hour. The Eider was noticeably larger than the other Ducks, kept her head under her wing most of the time, just paddling enough to keep from drifting away from the shelter of the cat-tails. Her color was a deep buff or tan-brown, the back barred with black, cheeks and a line on the sides of neck a little lighter. I could plainly see the feathering on the sides of bill when she raised her head. Once she roused up, uttered a soft cooing note, stretched up and flapped her wings, when I saw the secondaries and they appeared to be grayish. I gave it much study and at the time was satisfied that it was a female King Eider. The next morning it and the Baldpates and Widgeon had gone.

I attended the A. O. U. meeting at Ottawa October, 1926 and while there saw the mounted specimens of the females of both King and American Eiders and now am certain that the Eider I saw was a female King Eider.

Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola. NORTHERN PILEATED WOODPECKER.—May 9, Mr. W. A. Tuttle and I were walking up Flint Creek in Potter Swamp, Yates Co., N. Y. when a Pileated Woodpecker came flying

down the creek and passed directly over our heads and then on down the creek and out of sight. We followed but could not locate it again. This was the first Pileated Woodpecker ever recorded here though Dr. Eaton says that he heard one in this same swamp last year.

Gallinago delicata. WILSON'S SNIPE.—At 6 P. M. May 16, we had come out into the road that crosses Potter Swamp and were resting and talking over our afternoon with the birds in the swamp when we kept hearing a peculiar sound that reminded me of the call of a hen turkey, *querk querk querk querk*, and repeated many times but we were unable to locate it. I had seen a bird perched on the top of a large dead stub about 30 feet from the ground and some 100 rods down the edge of the swamp that I took to be a Grackle. I had just trained my glass on it when it flew up, hovered a few seconds then dropped into the grasses in the swamp and I was surprised to see that it was a Wilson's Snipe. Then the sound ceased.

After I arrived home I went down to the marsh to set my bird traps. The twilight was just beginning and here I heard this same, *querk querk querk querk*, quite near by and then saw a Wilson's Snipe out on the mud in plain sight and not more than two rods from me. Using my binoculars I could plainly see its bill move in time with the song or call. I stood and watched it and the song or call was repeated over and over until I moved forwards when he (?) flew a couple of rods and lit in a patch of burned cat-tails and kept right on repeating, *querk querk querk querk, querk querk querk querk*.

Perhaps this is a common performance in the nesting season but I can find in only two works on birds, what might be reference to this trait. Nelson in his 'Report on Natural History Collections Made in Alaska' page 100 writes "The first of June 1879 while at the Yukon mouth, several of these birds were heard uttering a loud peculiar note, which may be represented by the syllables yak, yak, yak, yak in quick energetic explosive syllables. This note was uttered singly or repeated several times and appears to be a kind of call-note of the male during the breeding season. At the time the bird utters its note it flies along within a short distance of the ground with a peculiar jerky movement of the body and wings as every note is uttered."

This does not agree with the performance of my birds as one was standing quietly on the top of a stub 30 feet from the ground and the other one was standing still in one place on the ground.

This description of Dawson's in his 'Birds of California,' page 1218, seems more like it: "As we cast about for a possible camping site, my attention is arrested by a solicitous bird who is 'yelping' from the ground. The notes are dissyllables, pe chep' pe chep' endlessly iterative, and uttered earnestly for minutes at a time. I can see the bird's mandibles playing rythmically and he sways his head slowly from side to side as he pipes."

The note uttered by my bird was a single syllable ("querk") uttered in series of fours and repeated again and again for minutes at a time and although I could see "the birds mandibles playing rythmically" he did not sway his head.

Podilymbus podiceps. PIED-BILLED GREBE.—May 30, way out in the marsh in water well above my knees and in the thin cat-tails I surprised a Pied-billed Grebe at her nest. She left in such a hurry that I saw only a splash in the water, and then the nest. There were pieces of egg shell in and around the nest and one egg, that was partly covered and warm. The Grebe kept well hidden from me and uttered, a *yap yap*, like the bark of a puppy. Keeping very still and watching intently through the cat-tails I soon saw her moving stealthily around and a downy, striped-faced young one was trying to climb on her back. She kept up the barking almost continuously while I was in the near vicinity of the nest.

A series of splashes around and near me, I thought at first to be made by the male Grebe and that he was trying to divert my attention and lead me from the nest but I soon saw that the splashes were made by carp of which there are many in these waters. I saw only the one young Grebe and I have wondered if the carp would pick them up. The young ones must keep to the cat-tails while they are in the downy stage as I did not see them in the open water until about August first. After August fourth I saw a pair of Pied-billed Grebes with three half-grown young in the water weeds in the shallow water nearly every day through August and September.

Uria lomvia lomvia. BRÜNNICH'S MURRE.—Dec. 13 a trapper told me of finding a strange bird (dead) on the edge of the shore ice on the marsh. I went down and found an adult Brünnich's Murre in fine plumage. Crows or Gulls had pecked a small hole in the left flank, from which some of the entrals had been removed. The Murre was almost black above and pure white below, legs and feet sooty flesh color above and sooty below, inside of mouth light yellow. In none of my books, do I find given the color of legs and feet and of the inside of the mouth. This specimen is now in the collection of Dr. E. H. Eaton at Hobart College, Geneva, N. Y.

Branchport, N. Y.