

Sora Breeding in Mississippi.—In a report dated July 6, 1927, United States Deputy Game Warden Clifton E. Mosley reported the Sora (*Porzana carolina*) breeding in 1926, near Greenwood, Mississippi.

Upon writing to Mr. Mosley regarding this occurrence, he supplied the following verbatim quotations from his notebook: "June 5th, 1926—Ten miles east of Greenwood in Carroll County, Mississippi, I observed a bird of the rail species which proves to be a perfect stranger to me. Under a cluster of low heavy willow bushes on the ground in a low marshy place this bird has a nest constructed of wire grass (or swamp grass) weeds and strips of cattail blades. Color of bird—brownish slate with equally divided stripes of yellow on back, and stripes of same color, pointing downward on sides—yellow blunt bill shaped very much like that of a chicken. Size looks to be about that of a broiler chicken, in fact its movements and looks while on nest remind one very much of a chicken nesting. Very gentle. No count of eggs or sight of same as I did not disturb the bird."

"June 11, 1926.—Returned to the place of the Sora's nest having been convinced that the species is a Sora Rail when referring to Reed's 'North American Birds' and illustrations in bulletins of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture—I find the female with, I would judge, a dozen young birds, like young quails, just a few yards from the nest."

Mr. Mosley has checked his identification with a Sora that in April 1927, was picked up on the main street of Greenwood (apparently a flood refuge) and concludes that he can "make the positive statement that a Sora hatched 10 miles east of Greenwood, Mississippi."

This is much farther south than any other breeding record for this species that has come to my attention. In U. S. National Museum 'Bulletin 135' (Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds, by A. C. Bent), page 313, the writer outlined the breeding range of this bird as extending south to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, etc.—FREDERICK C. LINCOLN, *Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

The Red Plumage Coloration of the Little Brown and Sand-Hill Cranes, *Grus canadensis* and *Grus mexicanus*.—For some time I have been puzzled by the brick red coloration of these two species. Some birds are strongly red on back, wings, crown and neck, while others are clear dull lead blue with or without traces of red. The color seems perfectly natural in pattern and distribution but after examining a considerable series it does not seem to be correlated with age, season, sex or geography nor are any new or incoming red feathers to be discovered on adult birds while new bluish ones are comparatively common.

Acting on the suggestion given by Mr. F. H. Kennard (Auk, XXXV, 1918, 123-132) I had a selection of feathers from some mature specimens in our collections tested by Mr. R. T. C. Fabry, analyst to the Department of Mines. His report is as follows:

"The feathers were all treated in the same manner, being boiled in a very dilute hydrochloric acid and the resulting solution tested for iron.

"No. 15438 color due to ferric oxide.

"No. 15544 color due to ferric oxide.

"No. 20. There is only a very small trace of ferric oxide here, the test solution answering to the reaction for iron only after prolonged standing. It will be noticed in this case the brown coloration has not been entirely removed by boiling with dilute acid as is the case in the other specimens. I am inclined to believe, therefore, that in the case of specimen No. 20 there may be a reddish organic pigment in the feathers irrespective of coloration due to ferric oxide.

"In each case after treatment with acid the feather was washed and dried and is returned herewith for the purposes of comparison with untreated specimens."

As Mr. Fabry infers, in the specimens where ferric oxide was markedly present the strong reddish color has almost completely disappeared and the feathers have come through the ordeal almost pure lead blue. The single specimen (No. 20) in which this did not occur, was a worn, faded wing covert from well down on the side of the folded wing, and but slightly rufescent. It is evident therefore that most of the rusty color on these birds is adventitious just as it is on Ducks and similar birds that are exposed to iron impregnated waters.

It is interesting that the downy young of these latter species just out of the egg are largely the same shade of red as this iron stain and the same color is present in the first autumn plumage. A feather and some down were therefore extracted from a juvenile Sandhill Crane, well advanced in autumn plumage but with remains of down still adherent (U. S. Nat. Mus. 77502, Cold Springs, Colo., July 16) and tested as above. This bird has the back, and the neck as far as the crown, strongly red. Mr. Fabry reports:

"The said feather was treated with acids and the resulting solution tested for iron in the usual way. There was only a very slight trace of iron shown after prolonged treatment with acid, and I am therefore inclined to believe that at any rate, the bulk of the color in this particular specimen, is of organic origin and not due to extraneous iron stain."

This feather and down show very little change in color under the treatment. It has bleached somewhat but the red remains strong and bright and I am convinced that it is natural and not adventitious.

It thus appears what while the downy young and first year juvenile of these Cranes are naturally heavily washed with dull brick red, the adult is inherently solidly dull slate or lead blue but is often stained with an iron deposit of approximately the same shade and appearance as the red of the juvenile and from which it can certainly be told only by chemical examination.

It is curious that not only are these colors, of unlike origin and composition, alike in appearance, but their distribution upon the bird is strangely similar. They are heaviest on the mantle, extending to the breast and up

the neck to the crown, but generally absent from the abdomen and face. It is rather puzzling to understand how this stain is deposited on the upper instead of the under surfaces that would seem to be most exposed to contact with ground water. In the Ducks and Geese the stain usually gathers on the head, face and under parts of the body while the back remains almost free from it. The explanation of the difference probably lies in the habits of the two groups of birds.—P. A. TAVERNER, *National Museum of Canada, Ottawa.*

Cranes Crossing Bering Strait.—As a member of the Stoll-McCracken Expedition to the Arctic I had the interesting experience of seeing Little Brown Cranes (*Grus canadensis*), crossing Bering Strait on the southward migration. One flock of about twenty birds was observed on August 27, 1928, a bright day, though with a cold northwest wind, following a storm during which much new snow fell on the Siberian side. Two more flocks of twelve and twenty birds, were seen on August 30; wind south. The intervening days had been stormy and East Cape was again covered with new snow. All of the birds were flying southeast in the direction of the Diomedes and Cape Prince of Wales, crossing the strait at its narrowest portion.

Cranes were also seen at the delta of the Agiapuk river, near Teller, July 21 of the same year, and a flying flock was observed from the vessel at the anchorage, near Teller, on September 10. They were reported numerous near the Bluestone river, by prospectors, about the same time.

An Eskimo from the Little Diomedede said that they pass in the direction of East Cape, Siberia, at "the beginning of summer," returning in the fall. They do not stop, according to him, at the Diomedes.

This corresponds with the migration dates as given by Bent (*Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*—U. S. National Museum Bulletin 135).—F. L. JACQUES, *American Museum of Natural History, New York City.*

The Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula thula*) at Avalon, N. J.—An unusual bird rewarded an automobile trip to New Jersey coastal points on September 23, 1928. While driving over the salt marshes back of Avalon, Cape May County, a large number of white Herons was observed. There were a few Egrets (*Casmerodius egretta*) and a large number of immature Little Blues (*Florida caerulea caerulea*). Close inspection of a nearby flock of six of the latter showed that one individual was more agile and had a thinner, entirely black, bill. Finally, when it took wing, it showed clearly its black legs and yellow feet in contrast to the dark olive legs and feet of its companions. At the close range afforded it was easily identified as a Snowy Egret, the first, I believe, to be recorded from New Jersey for many years.

Edward S. Weyl and William H. Yoder accompanied the writer and the bird was studied by all of us with binoculars.—PHILIP A. LIVINGSTON, *Narberth, Pa.*