

NOTES FROM EASTERN LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK.

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THE following notes have been selected for presentation in 'The Auk,' because I believe they possess general, rather than merely local, interest. They have been picked from a mass of data accumulated during the past year, on Southeastern Long Island, between Montauk Point and the eastern fourth of Shinnecock Bay, and south of Peconic Bay, a region long familiar to me. Familiarity with the region, however, makes it hard for me to decide, in many cases, where local interest ends and general interest begins. I have discarded many items which seemed to me of less than general appeal, although of considerable local interest, and I believe that those finally included here will be found to be worthy of public record.

For the fact that the records are almost without exception sight-records, I do not apologize; but I regret that I must, on that account, use many more words than I would need if I had skins which I might silently present as evidence. Verbal descriptions are not always convincing, and are usually foggy besides, but I have tried to give only such records as fulfill all of Mr. Griscom's excellent criteria for valid sight observations.

Larus marinus. BLACK-BACKED GULL.—This bird, in 1929, was a fairly common, non-breeding summer resident on Eastern Long Island, and was recorded 33 times during July and August.

Larus minutus. LITTLE GULL.—I have another record to add to the recent ones of this species (1929), in the New York City Region. On January 2 and 3, 1930, a single adult was seen at close range, and for long periods of time, at Georgica Pond, Easthampton, L. I. The bird was seen with other Gulls, on the mud-flats, and my eye was drawn to it at once by its distinctive manner of feeding. It was more active than any of the four other species of Gulls on the flats, for it walked rapidly over the mud with short, quick, steps, like a domestic Pigeon, pecking sharply first on one side, then on the other. It was restless, and was continually fluttering from the edge of one small pool to another. On the ground, it was a gray-mantled, white bird, about as large as a very stout Black-breasted Plover, with short, bright-red legs and a dark bill which was also short and thin. Its white tail and the white tips of its primaries were then fairly conspicuous. As soon as it flew, the sooty black under-

surfaces of its wings flashed out, and marked it out sharply from the other Gulls. Its flight was Tern-like and very buoyant, and was distinctly unlike that of the larger Bonaparte's Gulls with which it was associated. Its mantle was of a paler, softer, more ashen, shade than theirs, and its wings very clearly lacked all black markings, as well as the broad, white, triangular area on the first joint, so prominent a mark of the Bonaparte's Gull. On the ground, it was even smaller in my eyes than when it flew. The cheeks were marked with two vague dusky blotches, and there was a narrow black streak across the nape. The pattern of the under-wings was that of a Black-backed Gull's when seen from below, against a bright sky.

I watched it through an 8-power field-glass (prism type), and through a 25-power monocular telescope, at all sorts of ranges. Often I could have killed it, and twice I levelled a gun at its bill as it fluttered some 30 yards from me, but decided each time that it had better live. Its presence in America was so adequately recorded by other observers in the spring of 1929, that there seemed no need for any further evidence of its occurrence, and besides, I was myself quite satisfied with the identification I had made!

***Sterna caspia*.** CASPIAN TERN.—Recorded on May 9, 1929, at Bridgehampton, two birds. Also, four times in the summer, between September 24 and October 5. The last, a pair of birds that appeared at Mecox Bay on October 2 and remained until the fifth.

***Sterna forsteri*.** FORSTER'S TERN.—Recorded 39 times between July 16 and October 16. The largest number seen on any one day was 70, on August 18.

***Chlidonias nigra surinamensis*.** BLACK TERN.—One seen on June 6, at Georgica Pond, Easthampton.

***Rhynchops nigra*.** BLACK SKIMMER.—A young bird of this species appeared on the sand-flats of Georgia Pond, at Easthampton, on October 16. It seemed to have difficulty in alighting, as it toppled over on its side again and again, after much fluttering, butterfly like, above the sand. Several times it composed itself for a few seconds but always rose again and resumed its hovering over another spot. When pressed, it flew well and strongly, and at last went bounding away across the pond.

***Phalacrocorax carbo*.** COMMON CORMORANT.—An immature bird was seen on July 31, with four Double-crested Cormorants; two, both immature birds, were seen on August 25, with Double-crested Cormorants; one immature example and an adult, seen with Double-crested Cormorants, on September 1, and four on September 2. All these birds were seen perched in rows upon the stakes of "fish-traps," in Gardiner's Bay, and although seen at long range, were well identified. I do not include several other probable records, when the standard control afforded by the smaller and commoner Double-crested Cormorant was not available.

***Phalacrocorax a. auritus*.** DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT.—This species like the Black-backed Gull, has become a fairly common, non-breeding, summer resident on Gardiner's Bay. It was noted throughout the summer, usually in numbers of from 10 to 50 or 60 per day.

Anatidae. Of various species were noted more frequently during the summer of 1929 than might be expected. No birds that did not prove themselves able to fly are included in the following list.

1. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.—Many records throughout the summer, the largest number seen in one day being 10, on August 9th and 18th.

2. MALLARD.—Recorded from July 31 to August 6, and from August 8 to August 12. Occasionally others were seen throughout August, with Black Duck.

3. BLACK DUCK.

4. BLUE-WINGED TEAL.—Two at Easthampton, on July 31.

5. PINTAIL.—Many records, from July 19 until the arrival of migrants, in September.

6. WOOD DUCK.—Occasionally in July, August, and September.

7. CANVASBACK.—Three on August 2, at Shinnecock Bay; one, on August 9, at Montauk.

8. SCAUP (probably GREATER SCAUP).—27 flew into Georgica Pond, at Easthampton, on July 24. Others almost daily throughout the summer.

9. SCOTERS.—Of all three species, were seen daily throughout the summer, chiefly in Gardiner's Bay. In varying numbers, to 180 in one day. A few of these were crippled birds, but many were not.

10. RUDDY DUCK.—Recorded on July 27, two, in Georgica Pond; these, and at least 8 other individuals, observed almost daily until the arrival of migrants.

Casmerodius egretta. AMERICAN EGRET.—Recorded on 19 occasions, many different individuals; the first were seen on July 25, at Montauk, the last on September 28, at Easthampton.

Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis. LOUISIANA HERON.—Among the Southern Herons that appeared in the Northeastern States this summer was at least one Louisiana Heron, which appeared at Georgica Pond, Easthampton, L. I., on August 9. It was seen again on the 10th, but not thereafter. Its attenuated figure, blue-black wings, and the sharp line of demarcation between the dark breast and white belly were all familiar field marks of the bird, for I am well acquainted with it.

Florida caerulea. LITTLE BLUE HERON.—Eastern Long Island was invaded this summer by "White Herons" from the south, in common with other northeastern States, and the Little Blue Heron was first seen by me on Montauk Point, July 26 and last seen on September 24th. During mid-August, almost every pond held one or two of them. The greatest number seen in any one day was 41. No adults were seen, and no Snowy Egrets, although I looked for them very carefully.

Nyctanassa violacea. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—An immature bird of this species was discovered in a fresh-water cat-tail swamp near Bridgehampton, on September 2, and was seen every day thereafter until September 13th. I had many opportunities to study it at close range, and occasionally in direct comparison with Black-crowned Night Herons. I was always impressed by its thinner, longer, neck, rounder

head, and flatter body, when comparing it with the common species. It frequently was found in a dry pasture, grown up with Golden-rod and Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus*) about 500 yards from its favorite swamp, to which it always fled when disturbed. I saw it attacked twice by Marsh Hawks.

Coturnicops noveboracensis. YELLOW RAIL.—Knowing nothing of the real status of this bird, except that it is generally regarded as rare, I can do no more than record my first sight of it, and hope that the record will be of some point. I flushed one from between my feet, at Mecox Bay, on September 2, in short grass at the edge of a cattail bed. It fluttered only a few yards, and dropped down into the short grass again, whereupon I rushed up to the spot of its disappearance as quickly as I could, but I never saw it again. The cover did not seem adequate to hide a bee, but this silly Rail had no trouble in effacing itself completely.

Gallinula chloropus cachinnans. FLORIDA GALLINULE.—Of late years this bird has been growing steadily commoner on Eastern Long Island, where formerly it was rare. The height of its fall migration near Easthampton occurred on October 10th this year, when 23 birds were observed, the first having appeared on September 18, and the last one disappearing on October 25.

Steganopus tricolor. WILSON'S PHALAROPE.—Two of these large, and mincingly restless Phalaropes were observed at Shinnecock Bay, on September 14 and 15, during a severe southwesterly storm. This is well out of their normal range.

Pisobia bairdi. BAIRD'S SANDPIPER.—I have seven sight records of this Sandpiper, which seems to be less rare than it is supposed to be. It was seen first on August 4, last on September 15. Two birds were seen on two separate occasions. The total number for the year was nine birds. I learned to recognize this species in the field several years ago, and have never considered it particularly difficult to identify in life since then, when I frequently substantiated my diagnosis by collecting the bird. I no longer need to do that. The strong wash of tawny-buff across the upper breast and face of Baird's Sandpiper is characteristic, in connection with its medium-small size, and is better seen at a moderate distance than when the bird is just at the limit of near-vision through a glass. I consider it to be as easy a bird to identify in life as the Savannah Sparrow, which nobody hesitates to name at a glance.

Limosa haemastica. HUDSONIAN GODWIT.—This bird seems to be rare enough in the Atlantic States to merit record in 'The Auk' whenever it is seen. A fine specimen was seen, and carefully identified, on October 16, at Shinnecock Bay, where it was resting in the salt-marsh with Greater Yellowlegs and a late-lingering Stilt Sandpiper.

Numenius americanus. LONG-BILLED CURLEW.—Another shore-bird whose rarity in the Atlantic States makes the record of every occurrence worthy of note. This year it appeared on Long Island at least twice, both times at Mecox Bay. I had perfect opportunities to observe

it each time, but no Hudsonian Curlews were present for control comparison. In so striking a species, this does not invalidate the record, it seems to me. I am familiar with the bird, having seen it before on Long Island, and in California, where it is common. My other Long Island records have already been published in 'The Auk,' Vol. XLI, No. 2, p. 352, with one exception, a bird seen on October 15, 1924, at Bridgehampton, L. I.

Centurus carolinus. RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.—This vivid Woodpecker was discovered near Easthampton on July 15, by my brother, John L. Helmuth, who knows the bird well. I myself found the bird later in the same day, with two Downy Woodpeckers and a number of Prairie Warblers, in a dry patch of scrub-oak woods, not far from the spot where it was first seen. On September 2, while looking through a dense thicket on Montauk, I heard the unmistakable notes of a Red-bellied Woodpecker on the other side of the thicket, and after extraordinary difficulties with some cat-briar tangles, I found the bird on the trunk of a large Post Oak. Its silky red head and vividly striped back looked exotic and out of place against the drab Long Island scenery. It seems likely that this was the same bird seen earlier in the summer.

Tyrannus verticalis. ARKANSAS KINGBIRD.—Any Kingbird seen as late in the summer as October fourth seemed to me worth investigating, and the one I found on the edge of a thicket at Montauk Point on that date well repaid a careful examination, for it proved to be a good example of the Western (Arkansas) Kingbird. I am familiar with the species, and also with Cassin's Kingbird, and I felt that the bird in the small cherry-tree was one of these two as soon as I saw it, even at long range, and in silhouette. It displayed its white-edged tail-feathers well, and presented its burly shape to my examination from every angle. The bird was in the same tree several hours later, but was not found anywhere next day.

Junco hyemalis. SLATE-COLORED JUNCO.—A Slate-colored Junco becomes important when seen in mid-summer. A single bird of this species was found on the edge of Gardiner's Bay (Hither Woods, Montauk), on July 16, and was seen from time to time, in the same locality, until July 25, when it disappeared.

Baeolophus bicolor. TUFTED TIT.—If I may be permitted to add a record from the year 1928, I wish to state the occurrence of a pair of Tufted Tits at Easthampton, in a Pitch Pine woods, on December 7. They were seen with Chickadees and Nuthatches, and my attention was called to them by their loud, and characteristic whistles, and harsh Chickadee-like calls. One of them was seen on the next day, in a heavy snow-storm, but not thereafter. Its occurrence on Eastern Long Island is almost accidental.