

piper and five Western Sandpipers, the latter observed at close range while associating with Semi-palmated Sandpipers.—V. A. DEBES, 1209 Folsom Ave., Moore, Pa.

Egrets, and Little Blue Herons in Wisconsin.—To my knowledge there have been no authentic Wisconsin records of the Little Blue Heron since 1848. At that time Dr. P. R. Hoy collected one in Racine County and Thure Kumlein preserved the decomposed wing of another. The Egret (*Casmerodius egretta*) is reported as having been more or less common in the southern half of the state many years ago, but the last one observed was recorded by Professor Warner Taylor at Madison about 1925.

With the above facts in mind it was indeed interesting to learn on July 29 that four white birds of the Heron kind were observed at the Hustisford millpond. Investigation revealed them to be Little Blue Herons in the white plumage. I immediately published this fact in a state-wide newspaper, hoping that local sentiment thus created would react in the birds' favor. The result was that I had reports of the birds from many different localities, but so far none farther west of Milwaukee than Burlington, nor north of Pensaukee. Wherever possible I personally ran down all reports other than those from authentic sources.

At Burlington our informer took us to a roadside "pot hole," where we found two Egrets and four Little Blue Herons quietly feeding in company with Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, and American Bitterns. Suddenly all took wing but one Little Blue Heron whose attempt at a "take-off" ended in an awkward sprawl on the water. We released it from the vice-like grip of a small snapping turtle which had caught it by the foot. The bird was none the worse for its ordeal and was banded and liberated.

On the Fox river just south of Waukesha, Paul Jones took us to six Little Blue Herons and four Egrets. One Little Blue Heron was observed on Moose Lake, two on Lake Poygan, two at Pensaukee, three at Lake Winnebago, one at Big Muskego, and one was observed near the shore of Lake Michigan by Mr. Clarence Jung. Two of the Little Blue Herons that I collected proved to be males and two Egrets were females. It seems logical that this sudden influx or wandering northward, can either be attributed to a natural overflow from breeding grounds or to the devastating drought in southern states which has dried up many of the feeding areas. I find that most of the birds appeared about the middle of July. All of the Little Blue Herons observed were in the white plumage and none was in the intermediate stage. An unusual number of Wood Ducks have made their appearance in the Milwaukee area. In localities where they were formerly rare or at least quite uncommon they can now be numbered by dozens and in some cases hundreds. Mr. Jung and I first noticed this increase about the middle of May.—O. J. GROMME, *Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee, Wis.*

The Sarus Crane of Falmouth, Mass.—The Sarus Crane on the Whittamore estate at Quissett, Falmouth, Mass., which was the remaining

bird of a pair and which had remained on the estate for fifteen years or more and has several times been mentioned in the columns of 'The Auk,' proved this year to be a female, built a nest on a small island in Quisset harbor and laid two eggs. One of these was broken but the other I rescued and sent to the Museum of Comparative Zoology.

Since our native Cranes are becoming so scarce would it not be a good plan to interest someone in liberating some of these interesting birds in Florida or elsewhere in the United States where they would be afforded some protection and see if they would not become acclimated, and increase?—LOMBARD CARTER JONES, *Falmouth, Mass.*

Proper Name of the Virginia Rail.—Not long after the appearance of the 1910 edition of the A. O. U. Check-List Mr. Roy Q. Curtis called attention of the Committee to the fact that the name *Rallus virginianus* long applied to the Virginia Rail was in reality based on the Sora (*Porzana carolina*). For some reason no action on the matter was ever taken although Mr. Curtis' contention is undoubtedly correct.

Linnaeus based his name on the descriptions of Catesby and Brisson and as the latter in turn quoted Catesby as his authority this author becomes the sole source of the name.

Catesby's description and plate clearly refer to the Sora so that the name *Rallus virginianus* Linn., 1766 becomes a synonym of the earlier *Rallus carolinus* Linn., 1758, and the Virginia Rail is left without a name. Dr. C. W. Richmond however informs me that there is an available name in *Rallus limicola* Vieillot. (Nouv. Dict. Hist. Nat., Vol. 18, 1819, p. 558) and hereafter the bird must be known by that name. It is inconceivable how our earlier ornithologists ever identified Catesby's figure, with its short conical bill, as the Virginia Rail.—WITMER STONE, *Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia.*

A Rail Conundrum.—Early on the morning of April 27, 1930, I was "railing" over the broad expanse of fresh water marsh along the Whippany River, not far from Boonton, N. J., known as Troy Meadows. Upon a dry path I stood listening to a chorus of bird notes—the rolling whinney and frog-like *ker-wee* of the Soras; the sequenced grunts and paired *kaks* of the Virginia Rail a-wooing, and a mixture of whines and wails establishing the presence of a number of Florida Gallinules.

Suddenly, close to me—barely fifteen feet away—came a note which I had never heard. It was repeated several times. I wrote it *kik, kik, kik, kik, kik-keé er*, with the last notes slightly rasping but full and of a decidedly musical quality. It was, in fact, a song. As I looked toward the focus of these new sound waves a small bird crossed and re-crossed, quickly but in plain sight, over five feet of open marsh between tussocks. It was very close, and very black—much darker than the Virginia Rail still standing in the open, and I saw below the cocked tail on a dark-feathered background, narrow white bars. Light conditions could not have been better and I had no mental hesitation in calling the bird a Black Rail.