

SUMMARY OF BIRD NOTES FROM PINELLAS
COUNTY, FLORIDA.

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As the east coast of Florida continues to be developed by real estate interests with extensive building and the subsequent destruction of many suitable breeding grounds for birds, increasing interest is being centered on the bird life of the west coast of the state. This region has long been a rich field for study and already several papers have been published on observations made there.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to summarize the recently¹ published notes as they relate to Pinellas County and second, to record observations made by me in Pinellas County during a residence at Dunedin, from January 15 to May 3, 1929.

Mr. William G. Fargo made an extensive study of this section during the winters of 1923-24-25-26 from January to April or May of each year, principally around Pass-a-Grille but including both Pinellas and Pasco Counties. Mr. Fargo (1926) in his article "Notes on Birds of Pinellas and Pasco Counties, Florida," gives a complete description of the topography of this section and lists 184 species with annotations. Five of these species (Cabot's Tern, Great Horned Owl, Painted Bunting, Whip-poor-will and Brown-headed Nuthatch) are credited to Bent, and the Yellow Palm Warbler is included on the records of Scott (1890). The Florida Grackle is listed as locally common throughout the state but not observed in Pinellas County. Apparently the Scott's Seaside Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow are recorded in the list only for Pasco County, but this is not definitely stated.

¹ Of the earlier published writings the papers by Mr. W. E. D. Scott must be carefully considered by anyone undertaking to publish a catalogue of the birds of Pinellas County. Under the title "A Summary of Observations on the Birds of the Gulf Coast of Florida" (*The Auk*, Vol. V, 1888, pp. 373-379; Vol. VI, 1889, pp. 13-18, 152-160, 245-252, 318-326; Vol. VII, 1890, pp. 14-22, 114-120). Mr. Scott records 262 species of birds observed or collected between Cedar Keys and Key West, on the Gulf Coast. This list, which was recorded during the winter of 1879-80 and practically all the time between the spring of 1886 to August 1, 1888, contains 213 species of birds observed within Pinellas County (then Hillsboro County). Twenty-seven species of this total are neither recorded in any of the recent lists nor included in my notes below.

Additional notes by Mr. Fargo (1928) under the same title, cover the first half of 1927. Three species are added (Oyster-catcher, Pigeon Hawk and Nelson's Sparrow) to his list of 181 originally credited to Pinellas County, and the Blue-winged Teal is recorded for Pasco County. Notes on six others are included of which three (Cabot's Tern, Yellow Palm Warbler and Brown-headed Nuthatch) had previously been included, based upon the observations of others, but had since been seen by Fargo. A Pinellas County record for the Scott's Seaside Sparrow is given. Mr. Fargo (1928) records the capture of a Southern Robin on March 5, 1928, at Pass-a-Grille. Therefore the published lists of birds from Pinellas County by Mr. Fargo up to and including 1928 contain a total of 186 species.

Messrs. A. C. Bent and Manton Copeland (1927) give their observations on birds seen in Pinellas County from November 10 to April 30, 1924-25. This paper "Notes on Florida Birds" contains 165 species of which fifteen do not relate to this county and twelve are based on observations of Fargo. Besides the five species referred to in Fargo's paper above, five others contained in this list were not recorded by Fargo. These are: Common Tern, Cory's Least Bittern, King Rail, Florida Sparrow Hawk and Florida Nighthawk. The Florida Grackle is included without any definite county record, and different sub-specific forms are given for the Crow and Chickadee than Fargo recognized in his papers. Discussion of these is included in my notes below.

Mr. Clifford H. Pangburn (1919) records 135 species of birds observed within Pinellas County between January 22 and April 29, 1918. Description of the country adjacent to St. Petersburg is given and twenty species are included in this list which were not recorded by Fargo or Bent and Copeland. These are: Red-throated Loon, Franklin's Gull, American Merganser, Mallard, Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Canvas-back, Greater Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Zenaida Dove, Chimney Swift, Henslow's Sparrow, Florida Grackle, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Bank Swallow, Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, Ovenbird and Pipit. Mr. Pangburn classed all Willets he observed as *C. s. inornatus*, the Dowitchers were all recorded as *M. g. scolopaceus* and the Palm Warblers were called *D. p. hypochrysea*, all quite improbable conclusions.

During the three and a half months that I lived in Dunedin I observed a total of 158 species of birds. Of these, eight have not been recorded in any recent Pinellas County notes and are indicated in the text with an asterisk. Observations of interest or affecting the status of several others are included.

The total list of birds, therefore, recently recorded from Pinellas County is 217. (Fargo, 186; Bent and Copeland, 5; Pangburn, 20, and Du Mont, 8.) With the 27 species of Scott (see foot-note) the total recorded for all time is 246.

Colymbus auritus. HORNED GREBE.—Common winter resident. A flock of thirty-two seen on Tampa Bay, February 18. A few of these birds observed regularly on Oldsmar Bay until April 22. Three of the flock of eight seen on that date were in full breeding plumage.

Larus philadelphia. BONAPARTE'S GULL.—Observed from several points around Tampa Bay from January 16 to March 16. Maximum of twelve seen on the latter date. Bent and Copeland classed this Gull as rare on the west coast.

Hydroprogne caspia imperator. CASPIAN TERN.—Fairly common winter resident. A few of these birds were to be found regularly with the flocks of Royal Terns observed along the Clearwater Beach causeway. Flocks of twenty-six on January 24, and thirty on March 3, were seen at Pass-a-Grille on Boca Ciega Bay; fourteen were noted five miles south of Safety Harbor on Old Tampa Bay, March 24, and my latest date is of a single bird at Pass-a-Grille, April 21. This would seem to indicate a decided increase of this species when compared to the occurrences of it in 1924 as recorded by Bent and Copeland, and in 1926 by Fargo.

Sterna forsteri. FORSTER'S TERN.—A common winter resident. This species was recorded on twenty-seven field trips between January 16 and May 3. Large flocks were observed as follows: February 2, twenty-seven, Old Tampa Bay, south of Safety Harbor; February 5, twenty-three, at the same locality; February 23, forty, Oldsmar Bay, near Safety Harbor Bridge, and April 20, twelve, at the same place.

Sterna hirundo. COMMON TERN.—One bird observed on three successive days at Clearwater Beach, January 25 to 27. Fargo did not record this species and it apparently is an uncommon or irregular migrant on this coast.

***Sterna dougalli.** ROSEATE TERN.—A single bird observed among a flock of terns at Dunedin Isles, May 2. The longer outer tail feathers, generally whiter tone of the plumage and the distinguishing flight were noted.

Guara alba. WHITE IBIS.—On April 27, I visited the Holmes Pond rookery (which is two and one half miles south-east of Dunedin on State Highway, No. 34) and found at least two hundred and twenty-five White Ibises. Bent and Copeland estimated the colony contained sixty-seventy-

five pairs in 1925 and Fargo recorded the number as fifty pairs in 1926. Fargo also refers to a large colony south of Tarpon Springs. This rookery, two miles south of the town, is locally known as Floating Island. The boggy nesting area is about two acres in extent. On April 21, I estimated the number of White Ibises to be one thousand but judging from the abundance of nests this estimate is undoubtedly low. In addition I found as many as thirty-two species of birds on and around the island including Ward's Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, American Egret, Louisiana Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Florida Cormorant and Anhinga. The protection given these birds, nesting as they do on a practically unapproachable floating island together with the attitude of the people in considering it a sanctuary are, no doubt, the factors responsible for the rapid increase of all species.

Mycteria americana. WOOD IBIS.—On April 22, a flock of twenty-eight was seen flying over the Memorial Highway east of Tampa Shores (Oldsmar). They alighted in a cypress swamp about a half mile north and two miles east of the town. Fifteen Wood Ibises seen three days later, April 25, at a little cypress clump one and one quarter miles west and south of the Safety Harbor Bridge, must have been part of the same flock. In a letter written to me on May 20, Mr. J. D. Posten of Dunedin said that the Wood Ibises were evidently nesting four miles east of Dunedin as he had seen them there on several occasions during the month of May.

Egretta thula thula. SNOWY EGRET.—Rather numerous resident. A few of these birds were seen on almost every field trip and large flocks were noted as follows: February 23, seventeen feeding in Stevenson's Creek (at low tide). This creek is about half-way between Clearwater and Dunedin and the birds were all within 150 yards of the highway; February 25, a flock of twenty-five around an artesian well, six miles east of Tampa Shores and not over fifty feet from the Memorial Highway. This and the next two records, which refer to the same place, are in Hillsborough County; February 26, thirty-five (by count), at the artesian well, and March 11, a flock of twenty-five.

Rallus elegans elegans. KING RAIL.—One observed at Floating Island, January 19; two in a fresh water pond one mile south of Wall Springs, March 3; one at the same place, March 24, and two again on April 21. Not recorded by Fargo.

Porzana carolina. SORA.—One seen in the same marsh where the King Rail was observed—south of Wall Springs, January 19, and another at Floating Island on April 21.

Ionornis martinicus. PURPLE GALLINULE.—Four seen, April 21, at Floating Island, south of Tarpon Springs and three at Holmes Pond on April 27. This species was not listed by either Fargo or Pangburn.

Phaeopus hudsonicus. HUDSONIAN CURLEW.—A pair of Curlews was observed along the causeway to Clearwater Beach, April 24. It was low tide and the birds were probing in holes in the sand for fiddler crabs. Each time that a crab was found it was taken to a nearby pool of water and

very carefully rinsed before being eaten. Three of these birds were seen at the same place on April 26 and 27. It is interesting to note that Scott (1889) recorded only the Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius a. americanus*).

Colinus virginianus floridanus. FLORIDA BOB-WHITE.—This was a common resident and I found it to be equally as numerous in the residential sections as in the surrounding wood-lands—no doubt the result of permanent protection in the county. A flock of seven birds fed in our yard almost daily.

***Elanoides forficatus forficatus.** SWALLOW-TAILED KITE.—On April 6 one of these Kites was seen flying or rather sailing at a great height over the town of Dunedin. Forbush (1927) refers to this habit of soaring but it was the first time I had seen such a performance. The white under-parts, long forked tail and cut-back appearance of the wings were easily made out with binoculars.

Buteo borealis umbrinus. FLORIDA RED-TAILED HAWK.—Probably all of the previous records for the Red-tailed Hawk from this section are referable to this subspecies. It is a fairly common resident and all that I saw appeared to be intermediate between *borealis* and *harlani*. A very dark female observed on January 22, four miles east of Ozone, seemed dark enough to be *harlani*. In regard to the status of the latter race in Florida Harry C. Oberholser wrote me on February 9, as follows: "Apparently, all the records of the Harlan Hawk (*Buteo b. harlani*), for western Florida are really mis-identifications for the Florida Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo borealis umbrinus*) as the latter, in general color, particularly in life, much resembles the bird known as the Harlan Hawk."

Falco columbarius columbarius. PIGEON HAWK.—A male seen near a small cypress swamp, six miles east of Dunedin on April 30. This species was included by Fargo in his second paper but not recorded by Pangburn, Bent and Copeland or Scott (1889).

Falco sparverius. SPARROW HAWK.—I agree with Bent and Copeland that *sparverius* is a common winter resident migrating by the first of April and that *paulus* is the resident breeding form. Fargo listed only *sparverius* and stated that *paulus* was not taken although several smaller, darker birds were collected. All of the Sparrow Hawks that I saw during the latter half of April seemed to have shorter wings and tail. No doubt more collecting is needed to determine its true status in the county.

***Crotophaga ani.** ANI.—A single bird observed on January 24, 26 and February 17 among the mangroves surrounding a small pond at Pass-a-Grille, directly east of the Don Ce-sar Hotel. See Du Mont (1929). This bird was collected by Fargo (1929) on February 25, 1929.

Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus. RED-HEADED WOODPECKER.—Very common—the most abundant woodpecker. Observed on practically every field trip and a maximum of thirty seen on March 3 between Tarpon Springs and Pass-a-Grille. The fact that Scott (1890) did not have any Pinellas County records and that Pangburn saw only two of these birds during three months shows the variability of this species.

Chordeiles minor minor. NIGHTHAWK.—One picked up on the Dunedin-Tampa Road, which had been hit by an auto, April 29. The largest wave of Nighthawks was between April 17 and 20, and a few migrants were noted after that date but in reduced numbers. Fargo states that it was seldom seen in Pinellas County. He does not record *chapmani*. Bent and Copeland refer all of their observations to *chapmani* as does Pangburn.

Chordeiles minor chapmani. FLORIDA NIGHTHAWK.—A moderately common summer resident. One taken April 7. Others seen before April (the date when the flight of *minor* started) probably all belonged to this subspecies. The theory that the local breeding birds arrive in a locality several days in advance of the migrants which breed farther north seems to be proven in this case.

Chaetura pelagica. CHIMNEY SWIFT.—Fairly common summer resident. First noted at Dunedin, March 25, and from six to twelve birds were observed daily flying overhead. Common in Tampa. Pangburn considered this bird abundant in 1918. It would seem, then, that this species was omitted in the lists of Fargo, Bent and Copeland through a mistake rather than lack of observations. It seems unlikely that such a species would have been entirely absent during the past few years.

Tyrannus dominicensis dominicensis. GRAY KINGBIRD.—Fairly common summer resident. Seven birds were seen at Wall Springs, April 21. The movement of these Kingbirds up the gulf coast appeared to be rather slow and scattered, not at all like the warbler waves. Only one pair noted in Sarasota County, fifty-two miles south of Wall Springs on April 20; by the 28th they were so numerous that I was able to count twenty-six while driving over a six mile stretch of road along the shore between Sarasota and Bradenton.

Aphelocoma cyanea. FLORIDA JAY.—A pair observed near Indian Rocks on January 18. Single birds were seen on March 8 and 31, along the Dunedin-Tampa Road near Tampa Shores. In Pasco County a small number of these Jays were found at Port Richey.

Corvus brachyrhynchos pascuus. FLORIDA CROW.—Uncommon resident. Increasingly numerous toward the interior of the state. Fargo listed this species as *C. b. brachyrhynchos*, while Bent and Copeland, in their paper, follow the 'A. O. U. Check-List' in recognizing the Florida subspecies *C. b. pascuus*. Scott (1890) listed the Crow as *floridanus* (= *pascuus*), and Pangburn, although failing to find this bird, said that it would seem that *C. b. pascuus* must occur in the county. Owing to the fact that all of these records are from central Florida, well within the range of *pascuus*, I believe they should be referred to this subspecies.

Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus. EASTERN RED-WINGED BLACK-BIRD.—A common winter resident leaving for the north by the middle of March. A flock of about two hundred and fifty was fed daily on Shearer's Island and a few of these remained until the first week in April. Specimens which I collected in January were compared with the measurements and

descriptions given by Messrs. Howell and van Rossem (1928) in their Study of the Red-winged Blackbirds of the Southeastern United States. In following the classification given in their paper, *predatorius* of Fargo is equivalent to *phoeniceus*, as now revived for the Eastern Red-wing.

Agelaius phoeniceus mearnsi. FLORIDA RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.—A few are permanent residents. The bulk of the breeding birds winter farther south and arrive in Pinellas County about the middle of April. I found this species abundant in Collier County in January. The records of *A. p. floridanus* of Pangburn, Bent and Copeland, and *A. p. phoeniceus* of Fargo, must now be referred to *A. p. mearnsi*, the subspecies from central Florida recently described by Howell and van Rossem. The song of this bird seems to differ consistently from that of the eastern bird. An extra descending note is added at the end which makes the song of the Florida bird *conk-a-ree-a*. This was called to my attention first by the late Maunsell S. Crosby.

Euphagus carolinus. RUSTY BLACKBIRD.—Three of these birds seen in a cypress swamp southwest of Safety Harbor Bridge, January 19.

Quiscalus quiscula quiscula. FLORIDA GRACKLE.—A common resident in several localities within Pinellas County. This bird was observed almost daily in our yard in Dunedin and its numbers remained rather constant. The Florida Grackle is listed by Fargo but no record given for Pinellas County. Messrs. Bent and Copeland recorded it as "a decidedly local resident and not very common—seen in a few inland towns in small numbers." Pangburn found it to be a common bird about the lawns of St. Petersburg.

***Ammodramus savannarum australis.** GRASSHOPPER SPARROW.—One male collected near the Dunedin Isles Golf Club, January 25; another seen near the same place, February 7; three observed among the flocks of sparrows staying in a field two miles southeast of Ozone, March 3, and two seen there again on March 24.

Passerherbulus maritimus peninsulæ. SCOTT'S SEASIDE SPARROW.—Three of these birds were observed at Wall Springs (three miles south of Tarpon Springs, the type locality), January 19. Fargo (1928) collected two of these sparrows at Indian Pass, twenty miles south, one on January 24 and one on the 29th. This, according to Fargo, is the first time this bird has been collected south of the type locality. Griscom and Nichols (1920) in their Revision of the Seaside Sparrows record no January specimens of *peninsulæ*, but the fact that they examined specimens which had been collected during six different months of the year proves that the birds are permanent residents.

***Zonotrichia albicollis.** WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.—One seen on Shearer's Island, March 24. (This island, shown on the maps as Hog Island, is about four miles long and is located across the bay west from Dunedin Isles. Due to constant protection given all wild-life on the island by Mr. Shearer, its owner and only inhabitant, birds have been found to concentrate on it during the winter months.)

Spizella pusilla pusilla. FIELD SPARROW.—Two birds found among a flock of sparrows in a field two miles south-east of Ozona, February 17. Besides this species there were Savannah, Vesper, Grasshopper, Pine-woods, and Swamp Sparrows all seen more or less regularly there during February and March. The pair of Field Sparrows was again seen on March 3. Not recorded by Bent and Copeland.

Pipilo e. erythrophthalmus. TOWHEE.—Both *erythrophthalmus* and *alleni* were found commonly all winter and with a little practice the two subspecies could be distinguished by their notes. On April 7 there was quite a pronounced flight of *erythrophthalmus* and a scattered flock of twenty-eight was seen near New Port Richey, Pasco County.

****Guiraca caerulea caerulea.*** BLUE GROSBEAK.—A pair found on April 21 at the same place that the Ani had been found—Pass-a-Grille, east of the Don Ce-sar Hotel.

Bombycilla cedrorum. CEDAR WAXWING.—Four birds seen in a live-oak tree in Dunedin, February 23; three in the same locality on February 28; a flock of thirty-five seen, April 15, flying over MacFarlane Park in West Tampa, Hillsborough County, and eight flying over the grounds of the West Tampa Junior High School, April 30.

****Vireosylva gilva gilva.*** WARBLING VIREO.—Three birds seen under favorable conditions, April 18. These Vireos were feeding in the trees of our yard in Dunedin and evidently were migrating with a large wave of Warblers.

****Lanivireo flavifrons.*** YELLOW-THROATED VIREO.—A single bird observed in Clearwater, near Stevenson's Creek, on March 17.

Lanivireo solitarius solitarius. BLUE-HEADED VIREO.—One collected at Dunedin Isles on February 7, was referable to this subspecies. Single birds were seen in our yard at Dunedin on January 19 and March 23. A Vireo observed near Coachman on March 17 may have been *L. s. alticola* because it seemed darker on the head and back. Pangburn records two observations of the Blue-headed Vireo in 1918. Fargo found *alticola* on one occasion but neither he nor Bent and Copeland observed *solitarius*.

Vireo griseus griseus. WHITE-EYED VIREO.—One observed west of Lake Butler, February 17. Fargo states that this bird appears late in March or early April. I also found this species in Collier County during January and in Polk County on March 2.

Vermivora celata celata. ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER.—Two found along with some other wintering warblers three and a half miles east of Ozona on January 19. One was feeding in a live-oak tree across from the Library in Clearwater, February 4. Because of the difficulty in identifying this species in the field it can easily be overlooked. The field characteristic which I find most helpful in identifying this bird is the *chip* given while feeding. In my experience the eye-ring and faint streaks on the breast have been of very poor aid as compared to the small size, greenish-yellow of the rump and the chipping note referred to above. This species was not recorded by Fargo or Bent and Copeland.

Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea. YELLOW PALM WARBLER.—Although I looked over hundreds of the Palm Warblers which winter in Florida I found this subspecies on only two occasions. Both times seen south of the Library in Clearwater, two on February 6 and one on the next day, February 7.

Anthus spinoletta rubescens. PIPIT.—A flock of twenty-nine was seen on the golf course of the Tarpon Springs Country Club, February 17. Noted almost daily between February 8 and March 11 on the grounds of the West Tampa Junior High School, of West Tampa, Hillsborough County. Two birds only seen by Pangburn in 1918.

Sitta pusilla. BROWN-HEADED NUTCRACKER.—A pair was found nesting in a pine, about fifty yards west of the school building in Tampa Shores. First noted on April 22.

Penthestes c. carolinensis. CHICKADEE.—Rare resident. Two seen, three and a half miles east of Ozona, January 19. I believe that *P. c. carolinensis* of Fargo's list is equivalent to *P. c. impiger* of Bent and Copeland and that the Chickadee for this part of Florida is referable to the latter subspecies based on geographical probability. As there is no indication in any of the papers that these birds were collected, and since my only record was based on a sight identification, there is a need for securing some specimens from this section to determine its true status.

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