

photographed it. The image on the print is very small but absolutely characteristic. The bird is on a high, dead tree and the pose is unmistakable. The picture was sent to the writer by Mrs. Bassett.

Upon inquiry for recent records to Messrs. Eugene Murphey of Augusta, Ga., and Arthur H. Howell of the Biological Survey, the writer received news from Dr. Murphey that he knew of no record of the Spoonbill since 1869. Mr. Howell wrote as follows: "the Roseate Spoonbill apparently occurs in Georgia only as a rare and accidental visitor. Hoxie reported one at Savannah in the fall of 1911 (details lacking). Wright and Harper, in 'The Auk' for 1913, p. 503, mention finding feathers of this species in the Okefinokee Swamp."—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *R.F.D. 1, Charleston, S. C.*

The Whistling Swan in South Carolina.—On January 22, 1936, Messrs. Edward M. Moore, Robert P. Allen and the writer saw a specimen of *Cygnus columbianus* in House Pond, Bull's Island, a part of the Cape Romain Federal Migratory Bird Refuge, S. C. It was an immature bird, and had been seen for some days previously on Caper's Island, just to the south, by Mr. E. K. Moore.

The bird appeared to be rather lethargic and allowed close approach. Maneuvering in a duck boat, the writer secured two pictures at about thirty feet, and the Swan took flight at even closer range, when another exposure was secured. It was seen to close its eyes several times while being watched, and occasionally emitted a low, whining note. Other than the visitation along this coast in late 1932, when Swans were seen on several plantations (Auk, vol. L, p. 208), this is the only record since 1917 when a single bird was seen near Mt. Pleasant by the late Arthur T. Wayne. It is an excessively rare bird on the South Carolina coast. The flight was strong and well sustained when the bird finally arose from the water.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *R.F.D. 1, Charleston, S. C.*

The Whistling Swan in Connecticut.—On November 5, 1935, while I was watching water birds at the Penfield Reef, Fairfield, Conn., a flock of nine Whistling Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) flew by. The birds were not high up, and according to my judgment, only about 250 feet away from me at the nearest point. The shape of the heads and bills could be made out easily to determine that the birds were not Mute Swans.

The call of the birds first attracted my attention to them. The sounds consisted of several short notes, not very loud, on two different pitches, about a major third apart. I determined the pitches to be F# and A# in the third octave above middle C. The quality suggested that of a reed instrument such as a clarinet or oboe.

This was at about 8.30 in the morning when the tide, though receding, was still fairly high. Several hours later, the same day, when the tide was low, I was on a beach in Milford, just east of the mouth of the Housatonic River. Five more Whistling Swans were standing on a sand flat, far out from the shore, and this time I used a telescope of 20x to identify them. Their long necks were stretched up almost straight, and the Herring Gulls near them looked like pygmies in comparison.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *Fairfield, Conn.*

The Blue and the Lesser Snow Goose at Niagara Falls.—During the period October 26 to 31, 1935, the Niagara River area was favored by a remarkable, and apparently unprecedented visitation of large flocks of Blue Geese (*Chen caerulescens*), accompanied by a sprinkling of Lesser Snow Geese (*Chen h. hyperborea*).

This visitation of such unusually large numbers of migratory waterfowl naturally

called forth an equally unusual amount of publicity, and for a day or two such startling headlines as "Myriads of Wild Geese Battling Against Death Above Falls at Niagara," "Hundreds of Wild Geese Killed in Niagara in Losing Fight with River," "Airplanes to roar over Niagara to Scare Birds Off" etc., followed by long accounts of the occurrence in all its aspects, appeared in various newspapers, over a wide area.

From these newspaper accounts, from personal observations, and from numerous inquiries among friends and other eye-witnesses, we have sifted the following information which we believe to represent the true facts of this most interesting visitation of two species of Geese, which previously could only be considered as the rarest of stragglers to the Niagara district.

The Niagara River episode would appear to have started at Fort Erie for we have it on the authority of several Canadian Customs officers at that point that the river area near Fort Erie seemed to be full of Geese on the night of October 26-27 and that many of the inhabitants of the town were kept awake nearly all night by the noise of the flocks as they apparently passed down the river.

At daybreak on the 27th the birds were found in an immense flock, variously estimated at from 4,000 to 10,000, resting on the water among the swift currents, a short distance below the village of Chippawa on the Canadian side of the river. All day long, on Sunday, October 27, this large flock, described by one local eye-witness, Mr. J. H. Rasmussen, as a long ribbon of birds nearly as wide as the adjacent park boulevard, was watched by many people as it rode the swift but smooth currents to the edge of the rapids, where on reaching the rushing curving waters, rank on rank in rapid succession would leap into the air and fly back half a mile or more up the river only to join on to the tail of the column and repeat the performance in a seemingly endless round. Mr. Rasmussen informed us that the Geese when drifting down the river were all facing toward the falls, and that they apparently made no attempt to turn and rise from the water until they reached the first white-capped wave of the rapids. This same eye-witness informed us that during the hour in which he watched the flock on Sunday afternoon, he only saw one bird fail to rise at the edge of the rough water. This bird was carried over the first whitecap and quickly disappeared in the foaming waters of the rapids.

The biggest mortality undoubtedly occurred during the night when many of the birds paid the penalty of their dangerous game with Niagara's currents. These birds, doubtless becoming confused by mist, or the glare of the powerful searchlights on the falls, failed to take wing as they approached the edge of the rapids and being drawn into the rough water found themselves unable to rise, and were consequently carried down through the swirling rushing waters and over the Horseshoe Falls. Such birds, to the number of 200 or more, were later fished out of the water below the falls by men, boys and dogs. One man, William Hill, with his two sons, spending all night in a boat in the river below the Horseshoe Falls, obtained 47 Blue Geese from among the casualties.

The majority of the Geese going over the falls were found to be dead when retrieved from the lower river, but about twenty-five to thirty of the birds were rescued alive, and these under the direction of Sgt. T. Corliss of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were placed in the care of Mr. J. E. Calvert on the Larkin farms at Queenston. One of these live birds was an immature Lesser Snow Goose, the others were apparently all Blues, both young and adult, being represented. Nearly all day on Monday, October 28, Geese were being fished out of the lower river from all along the banks as far down as the Whirlpool.

One lone bird, a white-headed adult Blue Goose was observed resting on a rock

jutting out into the water on the U.S.A. side of the river between the Upper and the Lower International bridges. This bird was being shot at by an unseen marksman, but in spite of the bullets hitting the water within a few feet of it, the bird refused to move, being apparently too exhausted to take wing after its unequal struggle with Niagara's falls and rapids.

All of the casualties personally examined, both live and dead birds, with the exception of the previously mentioned immature Lesser Snow, were Blue Geese (*Chen caerulescens*). Other varieties were reported by several people as occurring in the river at this time, but there would appear to be no definite evidence to prove the presence in the river of any other species beyond the two mentioned.

Early in the morning of October 28, the large flock of Geese in the Upper River moved over toward the shallows and reefs south of Goat Island, N. Y.; while during the greater part of that day numerous small flocks broke away from the main body and departed; many of these in a northwesterly direction over Canadian territory, and apparently toward the western end of Lake Ontario. On the same day, Mr. J. E. Calvert of Queenston informed me that he had, that afternoon, seen large numbers of Geese near the mouth of the river at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

On October 29, the writer saw a flock of about forty Geese drifting slowly down the river from the vicinity of Navy Island toward the Goat Island shallows: This flock was joined by two small parties, of seven and five birds respectively, which were first seen flying from the west over Canadian territory toward the river. This combined flock of fifty or more birds was carefully observed through 8x glasses. Three were adult Snow Geese and the balance were undoubtedly Blues. In addition to the small flock, great numbers of what appeared to be Geese were noted at this time in the shallow waters far south of Goat Island, but the distance was too great for definite distinction, even with the aid of glasses.

By noon on October 31, after the morning mists had cleared away, there were no signs of Geese in the Upper Niagara River, but about 10.30 a.m., while mists were still somewhat thick, Geese, apparently Blues and Snows, in some numbers, were heard passing over down-town Niagara Falls, Ontario.

In addition to the foregoing observations, the following information supplied by various local eye-witnesses would appear to be of distinct interest. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these was an account given to us by Major R. W. S. Fordham, Mr. Howard Fox and Mr. George Allen of Niagara Falls, who state that on Sunday morning Oct. 27, while at the Niagara Falls Riding Club, situated on the river boulevard about two miles above Navy Island, they watched a small flock of Geese, variously estimated at from thirty to fifty birds, grazing in an oat stubble field about a quarter of a mile from the river bank. This flock, believed from their descriptions to contain a large percentage of adult Blue Geese, remained in the vicinity feeding and flying around at intervals for a period of from two to three hours, and although when feeding they appeared to have a sentinel, the birds were exceedingly tame, and the horsemen were allowed a very close approach.

Referring again to the large flock of birds observed in the upper river on Sunday, October 27, eye-witnesses are at some variance in their estimate of the numbers of Geese resting on the river at this time. Mr. Roy Muma, local game warden, estimated that there were not less than 10,000 birds, 5% of which appeared to be adult Snow Geese, contained in the long ribbon of birds, thirty feet wide, and stretching a half mile up the river from the beginning of the upper rapids. This estimate is closely agreed to by Chief C. Bradley of the Queen Victoria Park Police who states that the big flock, for a time, was only about 300 yards out from the Canadian shore.

Other observers have given us estimates which varied from 4,000 minimum to 25,000 maximum. Personally we are inclined to believe that the true figures lie somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000, of which numbers some 200 to 250 met their death by going over Niagara's cataract.

Notwithstanding a great deal of speculation and discussion on the part of local eye-witnesses, newspaper correspondents, and others, regarding the possibility of scaring the birds away from the vicinity of the dangerous waters of the Niagara, nothing effective was done, because nothing apparently worth while could be done to get the birds away from the treacherous waters. Very fortunately a suggestion by someone to use the powerful illuminating lights at the falls to scare the birds away from the rapids was not acted upon for we have it on the authority of Mr. William Rapelje, chief operator of the lights, that they did not depart from their usual procedure on the night in question. He is of the opinion, which we heartily endorse, that any special playing of the lights on the upper rapids would have acted as a further fatal source of attraction, and confusion, to the already bewildered birds.—R. W. SHEPPARD, 1805 Mouland Avenue, Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Blue and Lesser Snow Geese Near Vineland, Ontario.—Although wild Geese had been seen and reported, in this region, for a couple of days previously, they were not observed in exceedingly large numbers until the morning of October 28, 1935. when Mrs. Gerald Nicklin, the wife of the postmaster at Jordan Harbour, telephoned me, about 8.15 a.m., to ask me to come to the lake immediately, if I wished to see thousands of Geese.

No time was lost in getting to the scene of action—about four miles from my home. In the lake, about half or three quarters of a mile from the shore, was a great flock of wild Geese, appearing like a long seething black line on the water. Before my arrival some gunners had fired, killing one bird, and wounding another, a white one, which was swimming by itself, widely separated from the main pack. The dead Goose was a small slate gray bird, of a brownish shade on its head, weighing an estimated four pounds. The bill and feet were black. It was an immature Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). Meanwhile a skiff had been rowed out to the wounded bird, which was captured, and was almost certainly a Lesser Snow Goose (*Chen hyperborea hyperborea*). Mr. Nicklin gave me the following particulars—length twenty-four inches; colour white, except flight feathers which were black, bill pink, inner part black; feet pink.

The great flock, whose numbers one could not estimate from the shore, had all this time been swimming eastward. After picking up the wounded bird, the skiff worked its way down toward the flock, apparently with the object of driving the Geese back to the gunners on shore. They were not very successful in doing this, but did succeed in agitating the great congregation of Geese, and from it large flocks would rise, some to settle again among those on the water, and others, consisting of perhaps three or four hundred birds, to fly westward along the lake and toward the gunners at the mouth of Twenty Mile Creek.

An idea of the great numbers that were present may be gained, from the impression that was received of the resemblance between the sight of these many minor flocks boiling out of the large one and the painted back-ground of the Passenger Pigeon group at the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology. And with all this disturbance, the appearance of the main flock was little altered. Many white Geese were plainly visible. Mr. Nicklin estimated them as perhaps one to fifty dark (Blue) Geese.

As the flocks flew past us, headed over the mouth of the Twenty Mile Creek, the