

GENERAL NOTES

Leach's Petrel off coast of Venezuela.—On April 1, 1937, we sailed from Port au Spain, Trinidad, and after passing through the famous Dragon's Mouth, steamed westward at half speed about fifteen miles off the Venezuelan coast, aiming to reach Carupano at daybreak the next morning. About 11 p. m. a passenger rushed into the library and informed me that a strange bird was flopping about on the deck. I had no difficulty in catching a Leach's Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), alive and uninjured, which promptly ejected an oily fluid from the mouth. The bird was carefully examined; the strikingly forked tail and only lightly black-tipped tail coverts definitely eliminated the possibility of *Oceanodroma castro*. It appeared both bewildered and attracted by the steamer's lights. Twice in succession I tossed it gently overboard, and after flying out of the circle of light from the steamer, it promptly came back and flopped on the deck all over again. The third time I carefully folded the wings in the normal position of 'at rest,' and grasping it firmly in my fist, threw the bird head first with all my force as if it were a baseball. This treatment cured the petrel of its attraction for the steamer's lights, as it shot out of the illuminated area, and disappeared for good into the blackness of the tropical night. According to Murphy's 'Oceanic Birds of South America,' Leach's Petrel has been recorded off the Guianas and Trinidad, but this is apparently the first record from the more 'inside' Caribbean area.—LUDLOW GRISCOM, *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass.*

Little Blue Heron trapped by a clam.—A Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) in white plumage, was taken on Matanzas Inlet, Florida, with one toe securely held between the closed valves of a large clam. Caught in such a trap, the bird was captured without difficulty. From this illustration it is easy to understand one reason, and perhaps the chief reason, why so often shorebirds are seen hopping about on one leg. So caught, they must struggle and flutter until they free themselves, leaving the broken member behind. This is a menace to which they are frequently exposed.—JOHN B. SEMPLE, *Sewickley, Penn.*

Little Blue Heron on salt water.—In 'The Auk,' for October, 1936, page 440, in discussing the feeding habits of some of Ardeidae, Mr. E. A. McIlhenny, of Avery Island, Louisiana, concludes his interesting observations with this statement: "The other varieties of herons and egrets go to the tidal flats for food, but the Little Blue never hunts its food in salt water." The natural inference from the context is that Mr. McIlhenny is speaking only for Louisiana, but even so, one would consider it safer to pronounce the statement as a rule that sometimes has exceptions. This statement leads the writer to make the following comments in view of the fact that there are others who seem to have the strongly rooted idea that this species shuns salt water and the ocean. It has been a source of intense surprise to me that some of this country's foremost and most capable ornithologists have definitely precluded this heron from salt-water sections both as a feeder and as a nester. Such statements as the following appear in the literature: "It is rarely if ever common along the sea beaches of the coast"; "I have never found it breeding anywhere near salt water." While it is true that the Little Blue Heron favors inland ponds and swamps, it is by no means confined to such. The writer's life has been spent in coastal South Carolina, where the species is a permanent resident and where, if in no other section, it not only feeds commonly and consistently on "de salt," as the negroes put it, but breeds abundantly as well.

The great salt marshes, estuaries and creeks from at least the vicinity of Georgetown, South Carolina, down to Jacksonville, Florida, are frequented by Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) the year round. I have seen the bird not only feeding in the gullies left on the ocean beaches by the ebbing tide, but actually in the surf itself, wading as deep as the belly, and retreating before the incoming waves much as do some of the sandpipers. This habit is shared by the Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula thula*). Within a distance of thirty miles north and ten miles south of the city of Charleston, there are four rookeries of herons nesting either on barrier islands, marsh hammocks, or wooded sloughs within from a stone's throw of the ocean to a mile or two from it. In all of these rookeries the Little Blue Heron is present; in some, many hundreds of pairs nest annually. The most striking of these is a small oyster bank in Bull's Bay, of only an acre or so in extent and boasting a growth of salt-water myrtle (*Baccharis* sp.) about eighteen inches high. Among this small vegetation there have been as many as two to three hundred nests of this species. The bank is about two miles from the mainland, entirely surrounded by waters of the Bay and is virtually in the ocean itself.

It is hardly to be supposed that South Carolina and Georgia are the only sections of the Little Blue Heron's range where it resorts regularly to salt water, but such seems to be the case. The writer works a good deal in Florida and has noted that the species is certainly uncommon about salt water in that State, though it is met with in such situations. Compared with the Louisiana and Snowy Herons it is uncommon. It nests on the barrier islands of the Georgia coast as well as on the South Carolina shoreline. And so, in view of the belief which seems to be so prevalent that it is not a salt-water bird, it may be well to record the above for, in some sections of its range, it is as much at home among the marshes and the islands as are the other small herons.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *R. F. D. No. 1, Charleston, S. C.*

Nesting of the Flamingo in the United States.—The question of whether the Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) ever nested in the United States has long been a moot one. There seems to be no authentic record in the literature of its ever having done so; therefore, the following is of very considerable interest.

In the writer's work for the Audubon Association, he frequently gets into the Florida Keys and has talked with many of the 'old-timers.' Some of these men know the country and the birds as well as any ornithologist who ever visited the region, and when they make a statement as to occurrence, it is definite. In 'The Auk' for April, 1937, page 207, the writer lists the occurrence of the Dovekie (*Alle alle*) in the Keys during December 1936. One of the observers of this remarkable occurrence was Judge E. R. Lowe of Tavernier. Later this year, the writer ascertained that this gentleman was possessed of information regarding the actual nesting of the Flamingo, and secured the following from him. In the spring of 1901, Judge Lowe was stationed at the Key West Barracks and, during the latter part of March of that year, or early April, he secured leave to cruise among the Keys. While he and two companions were camped on Sugarloaf Key (Lower Keys), he was investigating his surroundings, and one morning, "walked back over a sand ridge and saw, across a pond, on an island, a number of large pinkish birds, about forty or fifty, many of which were standing straddle of what I took to be whitish stumps . . . at that time I did not know it was unusual for Flamingoes to nest in the Keys, and to me it was just another tropical bird."

The "stumps" were of course, the characteristic mud nests of this species, and many of the birds were sitting upon them. Those standing "straddle" probably saw Mr. Lowe appear over the ridge and were just arising from the nests. It is