

### GENERAL NOTES

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron nesting in Salem County, New Jersey.**—On April 30, 1939, in a large swampy deciduous woods at Alloway, Salem County, New Jersey, with Mr. Cornelius McFadden, I found a Yellow-crowned Night Heron's (*Nyctanassa violacea*) nest. It held five fresh eggs and was about 45 feet from the ground in a large black-oak tree with wide-spreading boughs, and as far out from the trunk near the end of a horizontal branch. The female flushed reluctantly at our approach and flew about thirty yards, perched in a treetop where her mate joined her, and both birds watched me in silence as I climbed an adjacent tree to inspect their nest. This was the only heron nest of any species in the woods and on a subsequent visit, May 10, with several ornithologists, it could not be found.

While there are several breeding records of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Cape May County, always in colonies of the Black-crowned, this is the only record for southwestern Jersey and for Salem County, and the only solitary one ever found in the State.—RICHARD F. MILLER, 2627 N. Second St., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**The American Bittern as a Stake-driver.**—I have for many years been familiar with the 'song' of the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) and I long ago discarded the notion that there was anything mysterious in the fact that it sounded sometimes like an old-fashioned pump and sometimes like driving a stake, having learned by experience that, in my case at least, the difference was a mere matter of distance. Some writers have supposed that individual Bitterns differed, some being pumpers and others stake-drivers. I am confident that this is not the case. Others, even while recognizing that a stake-driver becomes a pumper upon approach, have curiously failed to notice which of the Bittern's three notes it is that carries farthest and have said that it was the last one, whereas I have always found it to be the middle one—the *ka* of the *oong-ka-choonk*. No less careful an observer than William Brewster fell into this error when in his 'Voices of a New England Marsh' (Bird-lore, 4: 43-56, 1902), as quoted by Bent in 'Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds' (and also by Forbush in 'Birds of Massachusetts'), he wrote, "All three syllables may be usually heard up to a distance of about 400 yards, beyond which the middle one is lost and the remaining two sound like the words *pump-up* or *plum-pudd'n* while at distances greater than a half mile the terminal syllable alone is audible, and closely resembles the sound produced by an axe stroke on the head of a wooden stake." Similarly another excellent observer, Dr. Charles W. Townsend, in 'Birds of Essex County, Massachusetts' (1905), says, "When the bird is a long way off . . . one hears only the final syllable, which resembles the driving of a stake in a bog." On the other hand, Bradford Torrey in 'The Auk,' 1889, pages 1-8, says: "The middle syllable is very strongly accented. . . . The middle syllable of the second bird was a veritable whack upon the head of a stake." And in a footnote Torrey adds: "I am aware, of course, that Nuttall and nearly or quite everybody else who has ever described or written the notes, has placed the accent upon the last syllable. Why there should be this discrepancy is to me inexplicable, but there is no point to which Mr. Faxon and I have attended with more carefulness, both on the day in question and since, and there is none on which we are more fully agreed." New England ornithologists of that time knew both Bradford Torrey and Walter

Faxon as particularly careful and competent observers. Another excellent observer, Frank Bolles, in his 'Land of the Lingering Snow' (1891), after syllabifying the utterance as 'kung-ka-unk,' says, "As we listened to the bird at a distance . . . the only sound which we could hear was the 'ka,' which, under the changed conditions, became the true stake-driving 'chuck' or 'tock'." Of more recent writers Roger Tory Peterson, in 'A Field Guide to the Birds,' gives the song as *oong-ka-choonk* and adds, "Distorted by distance, the *ka* is often the only audible syllable and sounds like the driving of a stake into the bog."

I have made no attempt to round up all the published descriptions of the Bittern's song, and in addition to what I have already said I will simply call attention to the evidence of Arthur J. Parker and Frederick Hermann as presented by Edward Howe Forbush in 'Birds of Massachusetts,' Mr. Hermann's being quoted from 'Bird-lore,' 1924, page 441. Both of these witnesses placed the accent on the second syllable.

With my own experience thus supported by good authority it is a disappointment to find Dr. May's revised edition of Forbush's great book, now called 'Natural History of the Birds of Eastern and Central North America,' quoting this one of Brewster's rare mistakes and omitting the correct statements of others.

I find I cannot resist the temptation to add my own rendering of the Bittern's song to the many that are to be found in the literature. Once, in May 1927, I got unusually near to a pumping bird in the meadows between Dedham and Needham, Massachusetts, and made the following note: "The middle syllable, the one that carries and suggests stake-driving, has quite a liquid quality near at hand. The whole performance sounded to me like *oom-pwahl'-oom* or *oom-pwul'-oom*, the first note very sonorous and the last short, a mere appendage to the second."—FRANCIS H. ALLEN, *West Roxbury, Massachusetts.*

**Greater Snow Goose at Philadelphia.**—Not many years ago, the spring migration route of the Greater Snow Goose (*Chen hyperborea atlantica*) had been an enigma to all ornithologists. During the last decade, sight records of migrating birds have cropped up from various localities in the Delaware Valley. It was observed that the flocks flew very high, almost out of sight. Delaware Bay is, every year, a regular stopping-off place for thousands of Snow Geese. By the first week in April, most of them have left to wing northward. To substantiate a few records already published on the occurrence of this species migrating up the Delaware Valley, I have the following record. On April 7, 1940, Mr. Jerome Kessler observed a flock of 150 Greater Snow Geese over the Delaware River at Holmesburg, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These birds flew in V-formation at an altitude of approximately 1500 feet and had set their course due northeast. The day was clear with a mild temperature and scarcely any wind.—EDWARD J. REIMANN, 2261 E. Kennedy St., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Snow Geese in the Pennsylvania Appalachians.**—As waterfowl of any kind are all too rarely seen in the hilly country of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, one of the divide counties of the northern Appalachians for drainage to both the Atlantic and the Gulf, and as Snow Geese in the northeast are none too plentiful, I wish to report a record for this County.

Following a stormy period of several days, October 29, 1939, dawned crisp and cool. The cloudless sky helped the temperature to climb to 55° F. by noon, the time when the geese were seen. The first two or three calls of the still-invisible birds were mistaken for a distant hound. I was at the time about eight miles east of the