

## GENERAL NOTES

**An unknown loon from the Miocene fossil beds of Maryland.**—Among recent accessions in the fossil collections of the U. S. National Museum there is included the distal end of a right tibiotarsus of a loon (Cat. no. 16612) presented by Mr. Arlton Murray. The bone was found by the donor, March 6, 1941, on the shore of Chesapeake Bay about one mile south of Plum Point Wharf, Calvert County, Maryland, and comes from the Calvert formation of the Miocene.

It represents a species of the genus *Gavia* slightly smaller than modern *Gavia immer*, but differs somewhat in conformation from that species. As the bone has been considerably worn by beach wash, all projecting points have been cut away so that though it is unquestionably a species not at present recognized it does not seem desirable to give it a name from this imperfect specimen. It serves merely to record the family from the Miocene where loon remains have not been identified previously in North America.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

**Double-crested Cormorant breeding in Massachusetts.**—It is well known that the Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax a. auritus*) has been rapidly extending its breeding range along the New England coast during the decade and a half since E. H. Forbush wrote ('Birds of Massachusetts,' 1925): ". . . Black Horse Ledge near Isle au Haut—the southernmost known breeding-place on Atlantic coast and the only known breeding-place in Maine. . . ." It is now possible to report that this extension has reached the vicinity of Boston, Massachusetts, for on August 5, 1940, I went ashore on Shag Rocks, 800 yards east-northeast of Boston Light at the entrance of Boston Harbor, and found a good-sized colony.

These rocks had undergone a striking transformation since I last saw them five or six years before. I remembered them as gray and brown in color; now their upper slopes were chalky white in the afternoon sun as we approached from the west, while sitting in ordered ranks along the whole crest were not less than two hundred and fifty cormorants. The adults gradually took flight by scaling off the heights and flapping away to neighboring islets, but there remained nearly a hundred juveniles. We counted fifty-three nests in all, of which one contained three fresh eggs, two a pair each of the naked shiny-black young, and the rest were trampled flat by their grown occupants. There were also a few Herring Gulls' nests.

This colony is probably of several years' standing. The presence of cormorants during the summer and the increasing whitewashing of the rocks were noted by a number of people at least two years ago, and in 1939 this Department had several reports of the matter from the captains of its patrol boats. Mr. Francis H. Allen also had reports, including a circumstantial story of nests and eggs. Mr. Allen was much more active in checking these reports than anyone else, and I regret that continued bad weather during July and his absence from home in early August prevented his making the actual discovery. He has kindly put me in touch with Mr. Edward R. Snow of Winthrop, who is somewhat of an authority on the history of the islands in Boston Harbor, and who assures me the cormorants began nesting at Shag Rocks at least as early as 1937. Double-crested Cormorants are regularly summering at the present time on the whole of the Massachusetts coast. They are particularly common in Buzzard's Bay, where on June 16 and 17, 1941, I saw good-sized groups at Gull Island off Cuttyhunk, in Quick's Hole,

along the west shore of Cuttyhunk, on the Weepecket Islands, and off the Fairhaven shore. The great majority of these were immatures, but on the smallest of the Weepeckets was a sprinkling of fully adult birds whose behavior approached that of nesting pairs. Although we found no nests, it is possible a colony is in process of formation.—JOSEPH A. HAGAR, *Massachusetts Department of Conservation, Boston, Massachusetts.*

**Cormorants killed by lightning.**—In 'The Auk,' vol. 58, page 91, 1941, Frederick C. Lincoln gives one of the "few substantiated cases" of birds being killed by lightning. The record concerned some 33 pelicans so done to death near Nelson, Nebraska, on April 4, 1939. The writer was not aware of the scarcity of authentic reports of such happenings, but, upon reflection, realizes that such is the case! While it undoubtedly occurs at times, there must be few occasions when an observer is on the spot at the right moment. Therefore, in view of this, so ably brought out by Mr. Lincoln, the following should be of interest as it is of undoubted and absolute accuracy, and happening so closely on the appearance of the above note, is the more striking.

On April (curious coincidence) 11, 1941, a portion of Low-Country South Carolina was visited by a heavy electrical squall, accompanied by a decided precipitation of hail. Most of the disturbance centered in parts of Charleston County. At Point Farm, Wadmalaw Island, four gentlemen were inspecting a large field of cabbage about 2 p. m., when the squall broke. A flock of birds was passing overhead at the time. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning, instantly followed by a "terrific clap of thunder" split the cloud, and four birds were seen to fall headlong from the flock. Three of the four were picked up dead. One fell in a thicket and could not be found. These proved to be Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax a. auritus*), in good spring plumage as they possessed "a puff of feathers like a small top-knot above each eye" according to one of the observers.

The birds were definitely identified by Rev. T. A. Beckett, Jr., of Wadmalaw Island, to whom they were taken. This gentleman has a well-deserved reputation in knowledge of natural history, and has been known to the writer for many years. It is through him that the above information was made known to me, and it constitutes, as far as I know, the first such instance for this area.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *R. F. D. 1, Charleston, South Carolina.*

**Little Blue Heron nesting in Massachusetts.**—On June 21, 1940, my son, Frederick A. Hagar, returned from a visit to the Black-crowned Night Heron colony at Tilden's Island, Marshfield, with the report that at least two or three adult Little Blue Herons (*Florida c. caerulea*) were in the rookery and refused to be driven from a certain rather restricted portion of it. I was there myself the next morning and soon located four birds which gave every indication of being two mated pairs. We determined to make a thorough search for a nest, and enlisted the assistance of my nephew, Donald Chisholm Hagar, Jr., as an additional beater. Our first try on the morning of June 23 was not fruitful except that we worked out a method which later proved successful. We found that the birds could always be flushed from the immediate vicinity of a clump of large red cedars on the eastern slope of the island, and that soon after our withdrawal they would return to the tops of these trees, stand guard a few minutes, and eventually drop down into the tangle of cat-briers, wild-cherry bushes and sumac which formed the undergrowth. It was impossible to see anything from close at hand, but by standing far enough out in the marsh so that the herons paid me no attention, and