

28, 1893. "The nests," said the author, "which are fairly typical of *C. palustris*, were not more than eight yards apart and probably belonged to the same bird." Dr. Bishop proceeded to theorize: "The white eggs of this species which have been recorded, taken in connection with the normally white eggs of its near ally, *C. stellaris*, and the frequently white eggs of the Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) have to my mind a peculiar importance as an additional argument for the truth of the theory of protective coloration, the covering of the nest rendering the usual dark pigment unnecessary." Referring to this statement, a footnote by J. A. Allen, then editor of *The Auk*, criticizes Bishop's conclusions as follows: "Albinistic eggs are well known to occur more or less frequently in birds that normally lay colored or spotted eggs, and which do not breed in holes or in covered nests, just as albinism may occur in the bird itself in any species. Why then should abnormally pale eggs be considered as having any significance in the two species above cited?"

It seems to the present writer that Dr. Bishop was closer to appreciating the significance of his find than editor Allen, although he seems to have "gotten the cart before the horse" in using it as proof of the theory of protective coloration. If this were the case it would be a matter of natural selection operating in reverse. Bishop fails to follow through and explain why, lacking the need for protective coloration; all marsh wren eggs are not white. On the other hand Allen apparently failed completely to realize the possible significance of the white variant eggs in evolution and that what he called "albinistic" eggs are the rule, not the exception, in many species of hole-nesting birds. Among the wrens, the Short-billed Marsh Wren is the only one in North America that habitually has a pure white egg (Reed, *North American Birds' Eggs*: 317, 1904). From the above cited records it is obvious that the potentiality is present in the case of the Long-billed Marsh Wren, and in view of the lack of survival value of brown eggs due to the covered nest, a pair of white-egg-producing Long-bills, if sufficiently isolated, could give rise to a white-egged race, just as the white-egged race of Short-billed Marsh Wrens may have evolved from brown-egg-laying ancestors. In this connection it is interesting to note that some South American races of *Cistothorus platensis* have eggs speckled with brown (Hartert and Venturi, *Novit. Zool.*, 16: 163, 1909), so we see a recurrence of that typically wren-like characteristic even in that species.

The above-mentioned small isolated colony of Long-billed Marsh Wrens at Bay Point, Ohio, in less than five years after becoming established, produced several pairs of white-egg-laying birds, which is suggestive of a possible line of descent of the wide-ranging *Cistothorus platensis*. It might even be considered as an additional reason for placing the Long-billed Marsh Wrens back in the genus *Cistothorus*, where they formerly reposed, as is recommended by Hellmayr in the 'Catalogue of Birds of the Americas' (Part 6: 114, 1929).—JOHN W. ALDRICH, *Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.*

Audubon and anting.—In the accumulating literature on the anting behavior of birds I have as yet seen no reference to what Audubon had to say on a cognate subject. On page 7 of the first volume of his 'Ornithological Biography' and again on page 48 of the 'Birds of America,' Vol. 5, he says of the young of the Wild Turkey after they leave the nest: "They roll themselves in deserted ants' nests, to clear their growing feathers of the loose scales, and prevent ticks and other vermin from attacking them, these insects being unable to bear the odour of the earth in which ants have been." This suggests a modified form of anting. Unfortunately Audubon does not give the evidence on which he bases his statement. He probably saw the operation, but his interpretation of its purpose may have been only surmise.—FRANCIS H. ALLEN, *West Roxbury, Mass.*