

**Rare birds in west-central Ohio.**—On several different mornings in the early part of March, 1945, a female American Scoter (*Oidemia nigra americana*) was observed on the east end of Lake St. Marys and on the ponds of the State Fish Hatchery adjacent to the lake. On the morning of March 19, the bird was collected and is now a part of the collection belonging to the Ohio Division of Conservation and Natural Resources. According to men who formerly hunted ducks on Lake St. Marys for the market, the "Black Muscovy" was an irregular transient, always seen in very small numbers, and usually on the rough open waters of the lake.

During the morning of October 7, 1945, a Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) was seen in pursuit of a group of teal. This bird was killed by a hunter and is in the above-mentioned collection. According to older residents, this falcon was not abundant but was a regular visitor during the duck flights. This is the first individual I have seen in my eight years of observations in this area.

During the past three years, I have received reports on the presence of a single Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*) at the west end of Lake St. Marys. The observations were made by Game Protector Arlie Rhodes and Mr. Lowell Gilbert during the month of May in both 1943 and 1944. On June 9, 1945, I found a single bird on a patch of high ground in the marshes of the lake. I was unable to make a positive identification but all characters indicated that it was a Sandhill Crane. On October 14, 1945, another individual was seen. This crane was observed at a distance of not over 400 feet with the aid of five-power binoculars. The bird stood upright and walked with graceful strides. It flew with outstretched neck like a goose and interrupted the beating of the wings with short periods of soaring. The uniform gray color of the plumage and the darker bald spot were further distinguishing characters.

Also, I wish to report the presence of the White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons albifrons*) at Lake St. Marys. Forsthoefel (unpublished manuscript, 1933) states that he found a dead specimen of this goose at Lake St. Marys in 1926. As far as I have been able to learn, these geese have not been reported from Ohio for many years and never by published record from this section.

On the morning of November 2, 1945, a group of four White-fronted Geese came from the south side of Lake St. Marys and flew over the Fish Hatchery. They were so low that the yellowish or orange feet and the speckled breast of one adult could easily be seen. Game Protector Albert Wells saw the same flock as it left the lake. Mr. Granville Filiburn, at Lake Loramie in Shelby County, reported three on that lake.

According to the old commercial hunters, the "Speckled-bellies" were uncommon and irregular migrants on Lake St. Marys. These men also state that they have not seen one of these geese in at least forty years,—CLARENCE F. CLARK, *Ohio Division of Conservation and Natural Resources, St. Marys, Ohio.*

**Black Skimmer breeding in Massachusetts.**—The Black Skimmer (*Rynchops n. nigra*) is again nesting in Massachusetts after the passage of more than 100 years without a record. On July 8, 1946, at Plymouth Beach, Dr. Oliver L. Austin and a banding crew from the Austin Ornithological Research Station found a nest with one egg.

This discovery was not unexpected, for a number of Skimmers, including what appeared to be a mated pair, appeared at Plymouth in early July of 1945 and spent the summer. By late August they had built up to a maximum of twenty-four adults and four immatures, but no nest was found. They returned promptly this year, and when Dr. Austin began banding operations in the tern colony on June 15, eight birds

were regularly present on the front beach. Two weeks later there were indications of courtship, and by July 3 two pairs were definitely mated. On July 8 the Austin party noticed that both pairs repeatedly entered the edge of the tern colony at about the same point, and a short search soon led to the actual finding of the nest and egg by James L. Peters. The full clutch of three eggs was completed July 11 or 12, and on July 18-19 Dr. Austin trapped and banded one of the parent birds and took moving pictures of a nest-relief. Two eggs hatched just before or during a severe northeast storm on August 1-2; the chicks were dead, apparently from exposure and chilling, on the morning of August 3. The remaining egg hatched that morning, and at the date of writing (10th) the chick is alive and well. In the meantime, the second and two additional pairs of adults have progressed through the stages of courtship to the point of scooping out nest-hollows in the immediate vicinity of the occupied nest, but have not laid eggs.

The steps by which the Skimmer has reoccupied its old Massachusetts range are interesting enough for brief review. The species is supposed to have nested on Cape Cod in colonial times, and it almost certainly persisted at Muskeget Island until about 1830 (Forbush, 'Birds of Massachusetts,' etc., 1: 133, 1925). By 1870, when consecutive ornithological records for New England may be said to begin, it was reduced to the status of an accidental straggler from the south, and so continued through the second decade of the present century. Its appearances were at long intervals, and almost invariably after the northward passage of a West Indian hurricane in late summer. Specimens were taken all along the coast after such a storm in 1879, and again in 1924. With the recent increase of the species on the middle Atlantic coast these post-hurricane visitations have become larger and more frequent; during September and October of 1944 there were gatherings of one to four hundred Skimmers at several points along the Massachusetts shore. No matter how many birds were involved, however, it does not seem to me that these accidental incursions had any direct connection with the reoccupation of former nesting territory.

The type of occurrence which foretold renesting was a gradual increase of single Skimmers during June and early July, chiefly in the vicinity of Vineyard and Nantucket sounds. These records were made at dates which corresponded roughly to the close of spring migration farther south, and indeed may best be thought of as overrunnings of the established range at a season when the bulk of the species was actively nesting. They occurred very rarely during the period when Skimmers were most reduced (sight record, Weepecket Islands, July 16, 1903), but increased progressively from the middle 1930's when the bird was already re-established in New Jersey and was about to breed on Long Island. Thus I have sight records for Nauset in 1936, lower Buzzard's Bay in 1937, Hyannisport on June 22, 1939, and for every succeeding summer. At first the extension was in the form of a greater number of occurrences of single birds, but later more birds were seen together. The transition to the type of gathering already described for Plymouth in 1945 and 1946 is obvious.

In view of the progressive steps by which the Skimmer has returned to Massachusetts, I think it is reasonable to expect that its numbers will increase somewhat further as long as environmental conditions remain substantially unchanged.—  
JOSEPH A. HAGAR, *Massachusetts Department of Conservation, Boston, Massachusetts.*

**California Gull on the coast of Texas.**—On October 21, 1945, I discovered a gull near the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, standing on the beach with a flock of Ring-billed Gulls. It was observed with 8-power binoculars at about fifty feet and its unusual features noted. The legs and half of the bill were bright ochre; the outer half of the bill was black. The mantle was turning pearl gray, flecked with