

## GENERAL NOTES

**The roosting tree of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.**—Knowledge of the flocking and social behavior of the Scissor-tail (*Muscivora forficata*) is inadequate. In 'Life Histories of North American Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows, and their Allies' (U. S. Nat. Mus., Bull. 179: 82-92, 1942) Bent quotes Mrs. Florence Merriam Bailey on an observation of communal roosting by these birds in Texas. Her article (Condor, 4: 30-31, 1902) relates that "when Mr. Bailey shot a rattlesnake at the foot of a big oak in camp the report was followed by a roar and rattle in the top of the tree and a great flock of scissortails arose and dispersed in the darkness." She attributed this concentration to a general lack of suitable roosting places in the area between Corpus Christi and Brownsville.

One of the least known facts of this relatively well known bird is the post-breeding season behavior. Its individuality during the breeding season is well known, when audacious attacks on larger birds are commonplace and even vigorous defense of a territory against members of its own species is the rule. But the interesting contrast comes after the ties of territoriality have been broken and the juveniles have attained nearly full growth. This extreme is a very decided flocking or gregarious tendency at roosting time, which is seemingly peculiar to this species in the family Tyrannidae.

During the summer of 1946, ample opportunity was afforded for the observation of these birds in and around College Station, Texas, which lies in the center of the breeding range. The flocking behavior was first noticed on the campus of Texas A. and M. College about 6:30 P. M. on August 23, when a large number of Scissor-tails were seen in and around one large tree, an osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*). In spite of the availability of dozens of other trees that appeared to be equally suitable as roosting sites, this one tree was selected and used night after night until mid-September when migration had thinned their ranks. Birds were followed from as far as one and one-half miles away to the tree, indicating that this roost served an area at least three miles in diameter. The birds were easy to alarm just before dusk and when frightened arose with a roar of wings and dispersed in all directions. What motivates this aggregation, and what sort of social organization makes it function so systematically would make an interesting study.—FRANK W. FITCH, JR., Texas A. and M. College, Fish and Game Department, College Station, Texas.

**January singing in the Black-capped Chickadee.**—The experience of Mr. Aretas A. Saunders with the singing of the Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus atricapillus*) in southwestern Connecticut as shown in his paper 'The Seasons of Bird Song: The Beginning of Song in the Spring' in The Auk for January, 1947, differs so decidedly from my own in eastern Massachusetts that it seems worth while to put mine on record. I agree with Mr. Saunders and most other observers in considering the *phoebe* whistle to be a song, and it is of that note that we are speaking.

Mr. Saunders says: "I have heard it every month of the year except January. The earliest date on which it was heard averages, in thirty-two years of observation, March 13. The earliest date is February 5, 1938, and the latest, April 19, 1935." My own records go back much farther than his, but for purposes of comparison I will use only those from 1915 to 1946, inclusive—thirty-two years. I have heard the Chickadee's song in January in seventeen of those thirty-two years, and in five of those Januaries I have heard it on four to six days. My average earliest date is February 4 as against his March 13. My earliest date of all is January 1 in 1926,