

storms that are worse than a Dakota blizzard, with a soil into which you are sinking ankle deep at every step, or scrambling over jagged, volcanic rocks. These are a few, but not all of its discomforts.

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### MARSH COLLECTING IN THE VICINITY OF OSWEGO, NEW YORK.

DANBURY, CONN., Feb. 4, 1891

During the past season, 1890, I have confined myself almost exclusively to marsh collecting and although it was hard and tiresome work, the results were very gratifying indeed.

About five miles from Oswego, N. Y., is a level swamp meadow, containing 100 acres or more, grown over with tall, wild grass, cat's-tails, etc. and dotted here and there with clumps of willows and wild rose bushes.

Several hummocks covered with rocks and bushes, rise a few feet above the surrounding flat. Through it flows a creek of considerable size that overflows the entire meadow in Spring and Fall. On one side it is bounded by pastures and upland meadows, on the other sides by woodland.

May 24, 1890, I made my initial trip to this place in quest of duck's nests. Upon arriving there, I found the whole meadow covered with water from one and one-half to two feet deep. Divesting ourselves of unnecessary clothing and trappings, we waded in to the nearest hummock. As soon as we showed ourselves on top of the hummock, the ducks began to rise—Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Mallards and Black Mallards. Occasionally a Bittern, Green Heron, or a Great Blue Heron would take wing, while from the surrounding bushes and grass, could be heard call notes of the Sora and Virginia Rails and the song of countless Long-billed Marsh Wrens and two or three Coots were detected as they sought a more secure retreat in a dense growth of flags.

What a sight for a collector, who, in years gone by had devoted himself to fields and woods! What a thrill wobbled o'er the oological side of my "think tank," as I gazed upon this new field of bird life!

Without more ado we waded in. The first find was a ditch, waist deep. Ugh! The water was chilly. A few steps farther brought me to a nest containing three eggs of the Virginia Rail that had been flooded.

During the day we found a number of nests that were deserted on account of high water.

A short distance from this a Sora's nest was found, with five fresh eggs. It was made entirely of dead grass, and fourteen inches above the water in a wild rose bush. Two rods to the left in a small clump of willows, close to the creek, I found a nest with six fresh eggs of the Coot. The nest was a low heap of dried cat's-tail drawn together without much order of arrangement, the eggs resting in a shallow depression.

Six and three-quarter's hours of steady tramping, disclosed a large number of Sora's nests with uncompleted sets, and empty nests of the Marsh Wren, but not a single duck's nest.

From this day's work I learned not to wear a pair of new rubber boots while wading in mud and water. A pair of leaky shoes—more holes than shoe—is the proper kind of foot gear.

June 1st found us again at this meadow. The water was much lower than at the time of our previous visit. Five and a half hours of wading brought us as many sets of Sora's eggs as we desired. The largest set was fourteen, the smallest seven.

The smaller sets were fresh, or else evenly incubated, while the larger sets were in all stages: some fresh, others very far advanced.

Secured one set of Am. Bittern, four fresh eggs. One set of Long-billed Marsh Wren and two incomplete sets.

While wading in the woods at one end of the meadow, I noticed broken shells of ducks eggs near the foot of a soft maple. Looking through the top of the tree I could see a dead limb broken off about three feet from the trunk. My climber went up and reported that the cavity in the limb was about two feet deep, showed long use and contained nearly a hat-full of fresh duck feathers. In the bottom of the hole was a small quantity of old, decayed feathers. Next year that tree will bear the epitaph of a set of Wood Duck's eggs that have gone to their long repose, beside a set of purchased ones in a drawer in one of my cabinets.

On my way home I collected a set of five fresh eggs of the Blue-winged Teal. About half a mile from the scene of my day's work is a small vineyard, of perhaps, one-fourth of an acre, on quite a steep hillside, sloping to the creek. The owner while plowing the vineyard found the nest and, upon my arrival, had them under a setting hen. "Goin' to hatch 'em jest for the curiosity of it," he said. With the aid of a half dollar I soon convinced him that I would deem them a greater curiosity to have them unhatched. The eggs were laid on the ground, in grass about eight inches high and only twelve rods from the owner's house and barn. Directly across the creek from this nest, another one with nine eggs was found, but I did not know of it in time to get the eggs.

June 15th, I again visited the meadow and found sets of fresh eggs of the Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Sora Rail, Least Bittern and a deserted nest of nine eggs of the Coot, nearly fresh. Four of the eggs had been broken, which was probably the cause of the desertation.

June 22d, I visited Lake Neahtawanta, about twelve miles from here. This lake is a clean sheet of water, containing several hundred acres. Two sides of it are swampy and grown overwith tall grass, cat's-tails, willows and low bushes. Under a scorching sun it was hard work pushing a boat through this; at least my boatman thought so.

This trip enriched my collection with several sets of Least Bittern, Virginia Rail, Red-winged Blackbird—one egg being a runt .55x.43—and one set seven Florida Gallinule.

[Ed.]

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## THE BLACK SNOWBIRD.

(*Funco hyemalis*.)

WILLARD N. CLUTE, BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

In this part of southern New York, the Black Snowbird does not winter and is therefore seen only for a brief period, while going to their breeding grounds in the Spring and returning in the Fall.

They arrive from the north about the last week in September