

THE VILLAGE ENGLISH SPARROW IN THE GRAIN-RAISING REGION.—In the admirable article by Mr. Frank C. Gates, which appeared in the last *Wilson Bulletin*, in speaking of Havana, Illinois, there occurs the following: "The town, itself, is surprisingly free from weed patches of more than a very limited extent. For this reason, perhaps, the English sparrows, which are naturally attracted to the dwelling places of man, not finding sufficient food there, flock in groups of 25 to 150 and **invade** the wheat and clover fields. It was noticed repeatedly that whenever English sparrows invaded crop land it was virtually always in good-sized flocks." This calls forth two questions: Does the English sparrow ever eat weed seed to any appreciable extent when a grain diet is procurable? And is not the habit above described, one that is common to all English sparrows in the grain-raising belt?

Year after year my observations have been, that as soon as the kernels of growing grain are of edible size all the village sparrows, not held by nest duties, flock daily to the nearest grain fields; and that there is no cessation of their visits until the last shock of oats, rye, and barley has been taken to the threshing machine. Frequently, with the flocks may be seen young birds not yet able to feed themselves, to which their mothers bring food, sometimes feeding them with six or eight insertions of the bill, each insertion unquestionably showing the delivery of a kernel of grain. The toll upon the farmers' unharvested crops in the aggregate must be a vast amount. At this season, while driving along country roads, one sees the English sparrows that usually swarm about the farmers' pig-pens and chicken yards have deserted these resorts for a time and have betaken themselves to the grain fields.

This "avian rat" proves a pest to the poultry raiser, because of its pilfering the soft foods prepared for little chicks. Some people have dealt successfully with the thief by catching it in traps placed on the tops of the coops. For this purpose mouse-traps are used—the sort that consists of a wire spring fastened upon a small block of wood; merely one more device against the forces of the mighty.

*National, Iowa.*

ALTHEA R. SHERMAN.

RARE BIRDS AT CANTON, OHIO.—The spring migration of 1911 has been especially interesting here, because of the visitation of several rare species. These were, with one exception, water fowl, and were observed chiefly on Meyer's Lake, a sheet of water about three-quarters of a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, situated two and one-half miles west of Canton.

The first of the rarer species to be noted was the Red-breasted Merganser, on April 2, when six individuals were seen, the males simplifying identification.

On the same date were also seen the Canvas-back and Old-squaw ducks, two individuals of each. Gunners also report the shooting of several Old-squaws. Dawson, in *The Birds of Ohio*, says this latter species is a rare winter visitor on Lake Erie, and casual in the interior; while the Red-breasted Merganser is stated to be a rare migrant. The Canvas-back, although less rare here than the others, is till entitled to mention.

April 9, and Osprey made its appearance here, staying in the vicinity of Meyer's Lake about a week. I had not met with an Osprey since January, 1904; long enough, certainly, to permit the species to be called rare.

Two Ring-billed Gulls were observed April 16, and one April 30. This species, Dawson states, is a rare migrant for the state elsewhere than on Lake Erie. Both observations were at close range under favorable conditions, and presented the peculiar condition of the first birds seen, being in full summer plumage, while the one observed a half-month later still bore some of the streakedness of head and rear-neck of the winter plumage.

April 23, two flocks of Bonaparte Gulls were met with, twelve and seven individuals respectively. Several times in years past early cottagers at the lake have reported gulls which, from description, were possibly of this species, but so far as I know this is the first time the species has been definitely identified here.

The Red-throated Loon, two individuals were observed April 30, by an ornithological friend, Edward Jacot, and myself. This species, also, is reckoned a rare migrant for Ohio, especially in the interior.

*Canton, Ohio.*

EDWARD D. KIMES.

BIRD NOTES FROM NORTHERN NEW JERSEY.—American Merganser (*Mergus americanus*). At Pompton Plains, Passaic County, on January 1st, 1911, I found a drake of this species on the Pompton River in behind a cluster of willows. The ice had thawed slightly the night before and quite a pool had formed and in this the bird was floating and bathing. This is rather a rare bird in this locality. On February 18th, two more (drake and duck) on the river about two hundred yards from where the one of January 1st was found.

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). At Pompton Plains on March 26th I found a pair of these beautiful ducks floating on the river near