

THE WILSON BULLETIN

NO. 81.

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGY

VOL. XXIV

DECEMBER, 1912.

NO. 4

OLD SERIES VOL. XXIV. NEW SERIES VOL. XIX

PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS (PROTONOTARIA CITREA) NESTING AT RIVERSIDE, ILLINOIS.

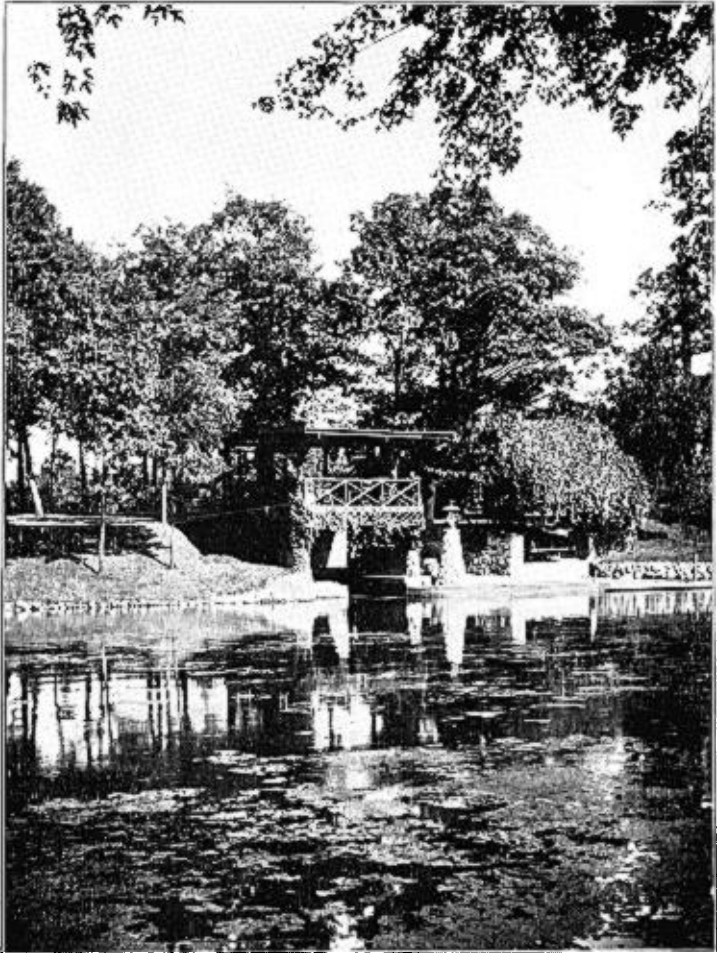
BY ORPHEUS M. SCHANTZ.

It is a rare pleasure at any time to make a new bird acquaintance, but to find that a supposed occasional spring migration visitor is an "old settler," and that it had nested in your vicinity as far back as 1898, although none of the local published records mentioned it except as a migrant, added greatly to the interest in finding a nest of this beautiful warbler in 1911 at Riverside.

On the morning of July 2nd, the writer and a friend, by the fortunate accident of a leaking canoe, were obliged to land at the home of an acquaintance on the east bank of the Des Plaines river at Riverside.

After getting the necessary "first aid," we were shown around the beautiful grounds with its fine native trees and artistic river frontage. As a final attraction we were invited to inspect a pavilion, the lower story of which served as a boat-house, and to see an unusually located bird's nest.

The pavilion was hung with Chinese lanterns each containing an electric light bulb. In the only lantern having a defective bulb a pair of small birds had built a nest.



The pavilion where the Prothonotary Warbler's nest was found.
Riverside, Ill. (Photo by Benj. T. Gault.)

The nesting place was so unusual that the owner of the place, although not greatly interested in birds and knowing scarcely any by name, had become very much interested in his tenants.

After the nest was discovered the pavilion was used as before and the birds seemingly were not at all disturbed by the coming and going of visitors.

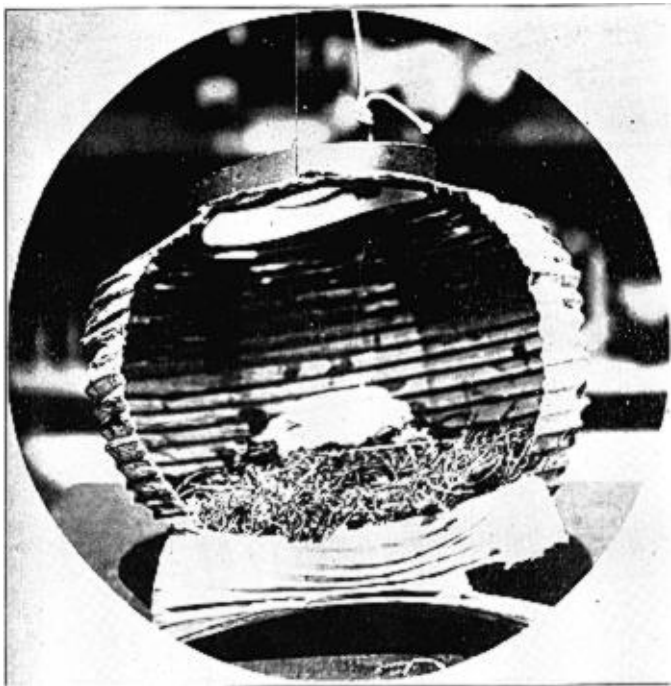
By standing on a camp chair it was easily possible to look down into the nest and see the little mother on the eggs without disturbing her. Not wishing to frighten the birds a very hurried view was taken, and the writer supposed he had seen only an unusually placed nest of the common Yellow Warbler. You can perhaps imagine his surprise and delight a few minutes later, to see on a nearby tree a pair of Prothonotary Warblers. A second examination of the nest was made to be positive as to the identification. This revealed five beautifully marked eggs, and a nest entirely different from that of the Yellow Warbler, and typical of the Prothonotary.

The mother bird soon returned to the nest, perching on the edge of the lantern before entering, and the ringing song of the male was then heard from a large willow tree across the river.

Within about a week the five eggs were replaced by five very hungry little warblers, and both parents were kept exceedingly busy carrying worms to their family. For some undiscovered reason all the young birds died before the 16th of July. Whether the public location of the nest finally disturbed the old birds so that they did not feed the little ones enough, it is impossible to say.

The location of the nest was not only remarkable for being in the lantern, but for the fact that only a few hundred feet away was the "Q" railroad bridge with its noisy traffic day and night.

Shortly after the discovery of the identity of the occupants of the nest, it was the writer's privilege to meet the lady who made the first record of the Prothonotary Warbler nesting at Riverside, Mrs. P. K. Solger.



The Prothonotary Warbler's nest in a chinese lantern.
Riverside, Ill. (Photo by O. M. Schantz.)

Mrs. Solger's notes accurately described it in 1897, and told of its nesting and rearing a brood in 1898. By an oversight her observations were not included in the bird bulletin published by the Chicago Academy of Sciences a few years ago.¹

That the birds have nested along the Des Plaines year after year is quite probable, for the conditions are ideal, both as to nesting sites and food supply.

The discovery of the Riverside nest positively establishes the fact of the Prothonotary breeding much farther north in Illinois than previously reported, and sets a new nesting record for Cook County.

The nest and its occupants were visited by a number of bird lovers before its desertion, some of them coming purposely from quite a long distance. Several attempts were made to photograph the parent birds while perching on the edge of the lantern, but no good negatives were produced on account of poor light.

Mr. Ben. T. Gault of Glenn Ellyn, Ill., photographed the pavilion from across the river, and the accompanying picture shows the remarkable nesting site.

¹The Birds of the Chicago Area. 1907.

FOOD OF HERONS AND IBISES.

BY OSCAR E. BAYNARD.

During the past three years that I have been Warden of the Orange Lake Florida Reservation of the National Association of Audubon Societies I made a special effort to learn the exact kind of food that the Herons and Ibis prefer.

From the following list it will be seen that these birds do a lot more good to the country than any one has given them credit for. The Ibis for their fondness for Crayfish have about cleaned up the thousands of acres of flooded marshes around Orange Lake and the other known fact that Crayfish destroy thousands of the spawn of fish and I have noticed that lakes and ponds that have marshes around them and no