

GENERAL NOTES

NOTES FROM LAKE COUNTY.

PIPING PLOVER BREEDING.—My first spring record for this species was made on May 25 of this year, and my previous fall records having been mighty few, I was well pleased when visiting the place again on the 27th and 30th to find two birds about, and wondered if they would possibly stay and breed. Then I made the mistake of forgetting all about them until Mr. E. W. Hadelor informed me on July 5th that he had seen a Piping Plover that day on the beach. I lost no time in visiting the place the next day and found a pair of the birds, whose actions clearly indicated either eggs or young. A few minutes' search and I was lucky enough to find a downy young just old enough to run about. When first discovered it was squatted on the sand, with head flat down, and I rubbed the little crown with my finger without getting even a quiver out of him. The female meanwhile was doing the wounded bird stunt to perfection. Not wishing to cause too much disturbance I soon left, and as soon as I started off the little fellow ran for shelter. A few days later Mr. H. visited the place again, seeing three young in all, now able to run about swiftly.

SAVANNA SPARROW BREEDING.—While hunting a swampy meadow on July 8, trying to outwit a pair of Bartram Sandpipers that apparently had a nest there, I flushed a Sparrow from under my feet, and upon looking into the nest beneath a buttercup was struck with the heavy and unusual coloration of the three eggs it contained. They were so different from all the Song and Vesper Sparrow eggs I have seen that I thought it worth while to identify the bird. I followed her about the field a while, and in doing so, flushed another bird from her nest which also contained three eggs. Before I left I obtained excellent views of both birds and heard a male sing his wheezy song several times. The day was cloudy and the grass wet, and both birds flushed almost from under my feet and lit but a short distance away. I visited the nests again the next day and found one of the males singing from a nearby fencepost, but he flew far on too close an approach. The song reminded me of a Grasshopper Sparrow trying to sing a Song Sparrow song. The females acted different in leaving the nest this time. Though I approached as before they sneaked off mouse-like for some little distance, then flew far in their characteristic swift flight. Both nests were in a low part of the meadow beneath buttercups, their rims flush with the ground. This is my first knowledge of the Savanna Sparrow otherwise than that of a spring and fall migrant.

PURPLE FINCH AS A SUMMER RESIDENT.—During the latter part of

June and up until the present time (July 11) I have had a singing male under observation, but have not been able to locate any nest as yet. He is in full adult plumage.

RUSTY BLACK-BIRD.—The unusually cold wet spring that kept the Warblers here into June and gave me late May records for such birds as Kinglets, Brown Creeper and Junco also was the probable cause of a May 25th record for a singing male Rusty Blackbird weeks after they had apparently all moved on. An unusual alarm note aroused my curiosity, and I looked around to see the Rusty, who finally came flying towards me to alight near by in a willow and sing his "gor-whillier" notes several times as though they also were needed to satisfy me. The bird was not wounded in any manner that I could see.

RECORD FOR STILT SANDPIPER.—Visiting a flood pond along the beach on July 29, 1917, I found its shores to contain some fifty odd shore birds of various species, among which was one that immediately drew my attention by its peculiar actions. Before I could get a good view, however, the whole bunch flushed, the smaller Sandpipers going in one direction and the Killdeer and the unnamed one in another. An hour later I again found the Killdeer and this bird at the head of the pond and had ample opportunity to observe it and identify my first Stilt Sandpiper. It may be worthy of note that it staid with the Killdeer, while all the others kept in a separate flock which contained twenty-two Sanderling, several Spotted Sandpiper, three Semipalmated Sandpiper and two Semipalmated Plover. The peculiar actions mentioned were its manner of feeding. While all the rest were standing or moving leisurely about the muddy edges of the pond, the Stilt kept running rapidly about in most erratic circles and twistings and capturing just as they left the ground the insects that he flushed; each capture being attended by a dip of the body and a sinuous scoop of the neck, which made the whole performance very striking. And every few moments he would suddenly stop dead still and stretch up his neck to the limit to see if all was well. This action made the bird appear a very long-necked Sandpiper rather than a very long-legged one. I do not mean to say, however, that this is the usual manner of feeding with the Stilt Sandpiper, but it answered the purpose in this instance and was kept up all the time the bird was under observation. Probably an immature bird, as the legs were yellow, the underparts very light, and the tail white in flight. The slenderness of the rather long bill made a noticeable field mark.

RECORD FOR WESTERN WILLET.—Visiting the same pond on August 12 I found it occupied by several Killdeer, one Least Sandpiper, two Lesser Yellow-legs, one Black-bellied Plover and a big stranger;

while just over a sand ridge, on the beach, were Spotted Sandpipers, Sanderling, Semipalmated Plover, and a Turnstone. The big fellow was easily identified a little later as a Western Willet and proved the least timid of the lot, remaining after all the rest had flown, and running about in the shallow water. This was seemingly done to startle his food into action so as to effect its capture. Several large pollywogs, which he had drawn into shallow water, were not taken, however, but seemed greatly to arouse his curiosity. The bird had to be purposely flushed in order to see the attractive wing pattern, but he returned immediately, and I flushed him suddenly again to hear his call, and succeeded. Later in the day I found him unconsciously hunting the beach within a few hundred feet of a large gathering of bathers.

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SUMMER RECORDS FOR 1917.

In northwestern Iowa weather conditions throughout April and May were exceedingly unfavorable for seeing migrating bird. Similar conditions in 1915 were followed by like results, making the records for these months the poorest in a dozen years. In both years the birds were halted somewhere south of my station, and when their journey was resumed most of them hurried northward without stopping.

After a spring lacking in usual interests there has followed a summer in which the birds have been more plentiful than any year since 1910. This statement is based upon records of the species seen daily in my own dooryard and its immediate neighborhood, where forty-two species are known to have nested within recent years. Some of these, such as the Sora, Western Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow and Chickadee are infrequent breeding birds, the Cliff Swallow and Purple Martin are summer residents of the past, the Blue Jay has become scarce, and of late the Sparrow Hawk and Screech Owl are discouraged in every possible way from nesting.

For June and July, and for August to date (which is the 25th), the daily average of species seen has been twenty-three, the highest number for any day being thirty-two, and the lowest thirteen. The total number of species seen in these months on our place and its near neighborhood is sixty, which is exactly two-thirds of the number seen here this year. All but three of the breeding species have been present, and in addition there have been twenty-one visiting species. In size the variation has been great, ranging from that of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird to that of the immature