

NOTES ON BIRDS OF WAKULLA COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Wakulla County lies directly south of Leon County, wherein is located our State Capital, St. Marks being twenty miles directly south from Tallahassee.

The county covers about five hundred square miles and has a frontage on the Gulf (Apalachee Bay) of about twenty-five miles.

The eastern portion of the county is traversed by the St. Marks river, on which, eight miles up from the Gulf, our little village is located.

In general the surface of the county is a low coastal plain of limestone formation, the greatest elevation about sixty feet above sea-level.

Large areas are covered with water at times of protracted rains. Sinks are numerous and in two instances large streams appear directly from such openings. Several sulphur springs occur. The soil is sand and sandy loam. Cypress, Palmetto, Long-leaf and Pitch Pines, Sweet Gum, Live Oaks and Water Oaks are the prevailing trees in the lower sections, while in the higher hummocks Red Oaks, White Oaks, Hickory and Dogwood are common and on the sandy ridges Black Jack barrens occur.

Farming, while practiced somewhat, has not advanced greatly except in a few isolated cases. Turpentine industry is quite general throughout the county. Vast marshes line the coast and tidal streams and in many places the so-called "Open Piney Woods" are little more than sparsely timbered marshes.

Commercial fishing is followed to a considerable extent along shore, St. Marks being the principal shipping point, while seine yards are operated at a few places during the months of October and November each year and have some bearing on the abundance of certain species of birds.

Local interest in the bird life of the county has been found quite limited and little reliable information is to be gleaned except at first hand. Fortunately there are a few exceptions thereto and the writer desires to extend his hearty appreciation for numerous valued notes from the Messrs. W. F. and T. A. Linton of St. Marks and from their brother, Mr. John Linton of Wakulla, who have freely given from their almost life-long experiences in the county.

These observations, while extending over several years, have been as a recreation and of necessity at spare time from business. While for the most part they refer to the section lying on and near the coast, occasional trips have been made farther inland. As my work has been at St. Marks, so the notes are mainly from that immediate locality.

1. *Colymbus auritus*—Horned Grebe.

Numerous in the lower river and along shore in the Bay. Arrive in early November and remain until April. November 3, 1917, April 21, 1919.¹

2. *Podilymbus podiceps*—Pied-billed Grebe.

Frequent the fresher waters rather than in the Bay. Common from the last of September until early April. Some of the fishermen report "Dodappers" in the summer and a few may occasionally nest with us. September 20, 1916, April 3, 1914. One caught in a fisherman's net June 21, 1919.

3. *Gavia immer*—Loon.

To be seen regularly along shore and in the larger rivers and streams from early September until late in April. September 4, 1913, April 26, May 16, 1914. Not unusual to see five or six in close company.

4. *Larus argentatus*—Herring Gull.

Arrive regularly in October and remain until early May. At times abundant up the river to our village, gleaning from fish refuse. September 27, 1917, May 4, 1914.

5. *Larus delawarensis*—Ring-billed Gull.

I have only identified this species on two or three occasions, but believe it to be of regular winter occurrence, along the coast and lower river areas. My records are all in December.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated the dates represent the extremes in seasonal records.

6. *Larus atricilla*—Laughing Gull.

A nesting colony of about fifteen pairs has continued on our coast for several years. An extra high tide will sometimes destroy the eggs, but the birds usually rear some young. More numerous from the last of October until about April 1. June 6, 1915, nests with eggs and one or two young just hatched.

7. *Larus philadelphia*—Bonaparte's Gull.

Of regular winter occurrence, arriving the last of September and remaining probably until early May. September 30, 1917, February 26, 1917, May 3, 1919.

8. *Sterna maxima*—Royal Tern.

Probably occurs regularly in small numbers at the mouth of St. Marks river and the bars off Shell Point. One identified May 3, 1919. Not known to nest here.

9. *Sterna forsteri*—Forster's Tern.

Found usually along shore during the winter. Specimens taken April 11, 1915.

10. *Sterna hirundo*—Common Tern.

Occur regularly in winter and at times rather numerous. I have no nesting records.

11. *Sterna antillarum*—Least Tern.

Formerly this was a regular breeder at one or two places on our coast. It has not been noted the past eight or ten years.

12. *Sterna fuscata*—Sooty Tern.

Occur occasionally if not regularly in the spring. Possibly in the fall. April 10, 1917, May 22, 1913.

13. *Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis*—Black Tern.

Occurs regularly but in varying abundance from mid-summer until fall. Single and scattering birds come up the river feeding as far as our village. In broader waters they frequently feed in flocks of twenty or more, hovering over bunches of small fish close along shore and dropping down after their prey. I have no spring records. July 4, 1915, October 5, 1917. Local name, "Mother Carey's Chicken."

14. *Rhynchops nigra*—Black Skimmer.

Formerly said to have nested along our shore. Apparently occurring rather rarely for several years, until the fall of 1917, when they were numerous. Local name, "Scissor-bill." June 8, 1917, September 29, 1917, April 22, 1919.

16. *Phaethon americanus*—Yellow-billed Tropic-bird.

". . . Accidental at St. Marks, Fla." The A. O. U. Check List of N. Am. Birds, 1910, p. 58. Normally a strictly tropical species.

16. *Phaethon americanus*—Yellow-billed Tropic Bird.

One of our reliable fishermen states that on May 25, 1919, he saw a bird flying about the bars near our light house different

from any he had ever before seen. "About the size of the smaller black and white Gulls" (meaning the Common Tern,) "with a tail full eighteen inches long, that went back to a long slender point."

17. *Anhinga anhinga*—Water-Turkey.

My observations indicate the "snake birds" as occurring regularly throughout the year, but in small numbers. They are usually to be found along the upper reaches of our rivers or on lakes and ponds. At times they exhibit wonderful powers of high flying and soaring.

18. *Phalacrocorax auritus, floridanus*—Florida Cormorant.

A common species along our coast and frequently inland on rivers, lakes and larger ponds. Nest in colonies of fifty to one hundred or more pairs in a close group. Nests of loose sticks and twigs on tall cypress trees bordering a stream, pond or lake. Eggs early in April. In flying to and from their roosting places they are frequently in companies of five or six or more, range in single file, on slow, strong wing-beats, keeping but a few feet above the surface of the water as they travel up and down stream or off shore over the Bay. The mandibles are often held slightly open while in protracted flight. Local name, "Nigger Goose."

19. *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*—White Pelican

Sometimes occur in considerable numbers, fifty or more, along shore from early fall until middle spring. Seemingly rare in mid-winter. August 29, 1912, October 2, 1917, April 26, 1918.

20.—*Pelecanus occidentalis*—Brown Pelican.

Seen in varying numbers throughout the year, although I am not aware of a nesting locality in our county. January 21, 1916, March 15, 1916, May 21, 1913, June 24, 1913, July 15, 1916. etc.

21. *Fregata aquila*—Man-o'-war-bird.

This bird of wonderful wing is to be seen from land only when driven in by stress of heavy wind. July 5, 1915, September 4, 1915, December 17, 1915.

22. *Mergus americanus*—Merganser. Winter visitor.

Perhaps this species occurs more frequently than my few records would indicate.

23. *Mergus serrator*—Red-breasted Merganser.

One of our most common aquatic winter visitors. Found singly and in varying flocks to twenty or more. Local names, "Sawbill" and "Hairy-head." October 10, 1918, May 8, 1917.

24. *Lophodytes cucullatus*—Hooded Merganser.

Decidedly less numerous than the preceding species. The "Fuzzy-head" frequently takes to ponds back from the bay and rivers.

25. *Anas platyrhynchos*—Mallard.

The "Greenhead" is with us in considerable numbers during the late fall and winter. October 22, 1916.

26. *Anas fulvigula fulvigula*—Florida Duck.

A few pairs of "Black Mallards" nest yearly on the broad marshes bordering our rivers and back from the Bay. Presumably they should be referred to this species.

27. *Anas rubripes*—Black Duck.

While the influx of Black Ducks during the winter may be in part of the preceding species our gunners believe they are largely from the North. R. W. Williams, Esq., reports them "Fairly abundant" at East Goose Creek, ten miles west of St. Marks, November 16-24, 1917. The Auk, January, 1919.

28. *Chaulelasmus streperus*—Gadwall.

Occur in irregular abundance from October until about April 1. Frequently resort to small ponds off from the rivers. Local name, "Widgeon."

29. *Mareca americana*—Baldpate.

I have not found it an abundant visitor. Usually a few are shot each winter.

30. *Nettion carolinense*—Green-winged Teal.

Both species of the common Teal are here during the winter, but in much fewer numbers than formerly. A few remain into April. September 26, 1917, April 11, 1915.

31. *Querquedula discors*—Blue-winged Teal.

The Teal are among the first ducks to arrive in the fall and may then often be found associated with Pintail. September 2, 1914.

32. *Spatula clypeata*—Shoveller.

The Shoveller may occur more frequently than my notes indicate. Gunners occasionally report a "Spoon-bill" Duck being shot.

33. *Dafla acuta*—Pintail.

One of our most abundant winter Ducks. Early to arrive and late in departure. September 24, 1916, early April.

34. *Aix sponsa*—Wood Duck.

The "Summer" Duck is with us in considerable numbers, being found in secluded ponds and less frequented parts of the rivers throughout the year.

35. *Marila americana*—Redhead.

Winter transient. Not numerous. So far as I have observed it occurs less frequently than does the Canvasback.

36. *Marila valisineria*—Canvas-back.

Winter transient. Quite irregular in abundance. During the winter of 1914-15 it was unusually numerous. In 1915-16 quite rare, 1917-18 again numerous.

37. *Marila marila*—Scaup Duck.

Our gunners confuse the two species of "Bullheads," both of which occur throughout the winter.

38. *Marila affinis*—Lesser Scaup Duck.

Decidedly the most numerous of our Ducks. Arriving from late September until mid-October the bulk depart in April, but a few usually remain throughout June, seemingly strong, sound birds. October 22, 1917. July 1, 1913, nine seen.

39. *Marila collaris*—Ring-neck Duck.

Winter visitor. Probably occurs regularly, but I have seen but few during the past few years.

40. *Charitonetta albecola*—Buffle-head.

Probably occurs regularly, but I have seen it but rarely. Winter visitor.

41. *Erismatura jamaicensis*—Ruddy Duck.

Winter visitor. Rarely noted along our rivers and bays.

42. *Chen hyperboreus nivalis*—Greater Snow Goose.

Seemingly rare along our coast. Lintous saw seven together October 30, 1916, and apparently the same bunch on the following day. One from a bunch of three shot November 23, 1918.

43. *Branta canadensis canadensis*—Canada Goose.

Occur along shore in considerable numbers during the winter, coming in on the flats to feed. The fishermen report them as numbering *thousands*, but in fact hundreds are to be seen at times. October 9, 1917, March 21, 1917.

44. *Branta canadensis hutchinsi*—Hutchin's Goose.

One found dead March 12, 1918, is referred to this form and identified by the Biological Survey.

45. *Ajaja ajaja*—Roseate Spoonbill.

The "Pink Curlew" was formerly a fairly common bird along our coast. For at least ten years I find no positive record of its occurrence here.

46. *Guara alba*—White Ibis.

Probably nests regularly with us. The only nesting colony I have seen was made up of about 30 pairs of birds and was associated with a much larger colony of Little Blue Herons (*F. carulca*). April 4 the nests contained fresh eggs. Local name "White Curlew."

47. *Mycteria americana*—Wood Ibis.

While I have seen the "Garnet" here in both spring and fall I have no hint of their nesting within our limits. May 29, 1917, July 16, 1916, October 24, 1915.

48. *Botaurus lentiginosus*—Bittern.

I have not found the Bittern numerous but usually see two or three in the course of a winter or spring. September 24, 1917,

April 7, 1914. May 10, 1919, two flushed at a small pond.

49. *Ixobrychus exilis*—Least Bittern.

A regular summer dweller in our larger marshes and about inland ponds where a heavy growth of reeds and grass abound. At times, probably often, they nest in small colonies. May 22, 1914, a nest was found with four young seemingly but three or four days old. April 3, 1918, earliest arrival record.

50. *Ardea herodias wardi*—Ward's Heron.

Very generally distributed except while attending to their affairs of incubation, when they generally associate in colonies of a few or many. Singly and in small groups they wade the shoals along shore or glean from pond or stream. Almost as wary as an old Turkey they move off on labored wing, beat far in advance of an approaching boat, seemingly in no haste, yet "safety first" by virtue of a timely start. March 16, 1918, young in nest. May 16, 1916, young almost ready to fly.

51. *Herodias egretta*—Egret.

While greatly diminished in numbers, compared with years gone by, this conspicuous bird is frequently to be seen in small companies along shore or on a favored marsh. I have not seen a nesting locality, but believe a few breed regularly with us. May 24, 1913, June 29, 1913, October 3, 1916.

52. *Egretta thula thula*—Snowy Egret.

The dainty and much persecuted "Little Egret" was formerly an abundant breeder in this locality. Alas! it has almost disappeared and one hears with sorrow the tales of the hundreds that were shot for their "scalps." I have no personal dates of their occurrence for several years, but sometimes hear of one being seen by an *old timer*, who claims to distinguish them from the immature of *F. cærulea*. R. W. Williams, Esq., noted two at East Goose Creek November 24, 1917. Auk, January, 1919.

53. *Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis*—Louisiana Heron.¹

An abundant resident, nesting at times in large colonies, two hundred to four hundred pairs. Sometimes associate at nesting time with *F. cærulea*. They are rarely molested. The nests are usually placed in bushes near water, but on May 7, 1917, I discovered a colony of four hundred or more pairs nesting on a low island two miles off shore; the nest is a slight depression in the drift or reeds as left by an extra high tide. May 7, 1917, eggs fresh. June 6, 1915, a few eggs had hatched. Local name, "Silver Gray Heron."

54. *Florida cærulea*—Little Blue Heron.¹

¹ See "Some Florida Herons" in Wilson Bulletin, June, 1918.

¹ On May 7, 1916, an immature (white) specimen was shot, showing considerable progress towards an adult plumage.

Numerous and generally distributed, nesting in colonies, on bushes for the most part, in or bordering ponds. In a colony of about one hundred fifty pairs of these birds there were also nesting about the same small pond eight or ten pairs of Louisiana Herons (*H. t. ruficollis*), one pair Green Herons (*B. v. virescens*), and about thirty pairs White Ibises (*G. alba*). April 1, 1917, egg laying incomplete. On April 30, at same rookery, some young were traveling over the bushes, using bills as well as toes in progression.

55. *Butorides virescens virescens*—Green Heron.

Quite generally distributed, but not numerous. A few seen every year about ponds and streams. Nest with fresh eggs April 4. I have never seen it here in mid-winter. March 16, 1918, December 4, 1918.

56. *Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*—Black-crowned Night Heron.

While these birds are with us throughout the entire year I have failed to find their nesting locality. In winter they frequent the broad open marshes in companies of twenty to forty or more.

57. *Nyctanassa violacea*—Yellow-crowned Night Heron.

Much less numerous than the preceding species and usually seen singly or but two or three together. They frequent more secluded ponds or may be seen fishing a tidal creek at low water after sunset. Do not occur in winter.

58. *Grus mexicana*—Sandhill Crane.

In former years it was not uncommon to see these birds in their wanderings and a pair frequented and probably nested on one of our river marshes about 1895. Two birds were seen flying high overhead May 20, 1913. It is reported that two were shot in southwestern part of our county about May 1, 1918.

59. *Rallus elegans*—King Rail.

Probably a regular resident. An adult with a single half-grown young was seen May 26, 1917. One noted November 21, 1916.

60. *Rallus crepitans scotti*—Florida Clapper Rail.

Our coastal and larger tidal river marshes abound with this species. Eggs noted from April 18 throughout June. Many nests are destroyed by storms, high tides and Fish Crows.

61. *Rallus virginianus*—Virginia Rail.

Usually a few may be seen every winter, but I have not observed them numerous.

62. *Parzana carolina*—Sora.

Seemingly much more abundant than the Virginia Rail. Found from the last of September until May. One shot May 6, 1915, and others seen May 7 had the bright yellow—nuptial—tip to bill. September 27, 1913, May 14, 1916.

63. *Coturnicops noveboracensis*—Yellow Rail.

May occur regularly. My only record is May 22, 1915.

64. *Circus jamaicensis*—Black Rail.

Doubtless they occur regularly during the fall and winter, but from their secretive habits are unobserved. Two were taken during very high water September 4, 1915, and two others seen on the same date. Two were seen October 9, 1916.

65. *Ionornis martinicus*—Purple Gallinule.

Not noticed as abundant and I have no records in mid-winter, although it may occur then.

66. *Gallinula galeata*—Florida Gallinule.

More generally distributed than the preceding species in summer and found regularly in winter.

67. *Fulica americana*—Coot.

"Blue Petes" are numerous from early fall until March and occasionally birds are seen during the summer, but whether or not they are breeders I have been unable to determine with certainty.

AN ANNOTATED LIST OF THE LAND BIRDS
OF SAC COUNTY, IOWA

BY J. A. SPURRELL, OF WALL LAKE, IA.

This paper continues a local list of the birds of my home county, the first part of which appeared in the Wilson Bulletin, Vol. XXIX, Number 3, (September, 1917). The reader of this list will find an account of the local topography and other data on the manner of collecting notes, etc., in the introduction of my other article.

This article is based on my own observations to a much larger degree than the former one, as only a few of the land birds have become extinct. I expected to find a record among the pioneers of some one having seen the Carolina parakeet, but I found only rumors of it, and therefore have given quotations showing that its former range covered this county. I was very much surprised to find among the pioneers a knowledge of the pileated woodpecker and the magpie, and still more surprised to find a Clarke's nutcracker which was taken locally among the specimens in the Smith collection at Odebolt, Iowa. Mrs. Smith has no catalogue of this collection but I interviewed