

## General Notes

### DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS BY TRAINS

George O. Ludcke, of Sioux City, reports a singular instance of the fatality which besets bird life. On October 11, 1919, he was proceeding by rail from Sioux City to a point in South Dakota for the purpose of shooting ducks. Having a personal acquaintance with the engineer of the train, he was invited to ride in the engine cab for a part of the journey. The trip being made at night, the track ahead of the engine was illuminated by the powerful rays of the electric headlight which is required by the law of South Dakota. As the locomotive rushed through the darkness, Mr. Ludcke observed in the light ahead of it great numbers of small birds, apparently aroused from the grass and weeds along the right of way by the noise of the passing train. It can be conjectured, also, that the birds may have been in migratory flight. However it may be, many of them, bewildered by the dazzling light of the locomotive, flew directly into it and were struck by the engine. Numbers of the birds struck the window glass of the engine cab with an impact almost sufficient to break it. In this way, Mr. Ludcke estimates, hundreds of birds were killed during the short time he was in the engine cab. He inquired of the engineer if such a thing were of frequent occurrence, and was told that birds often were killed in that manner, but not frequently in such numbers as on this particular occasion. The question immediately occurs, if this one train killed so many birds, how many other birds are similarly killed by the thousands of other trains which bear through the night everywhere during the migratory seasons? Mr. Ludcke is not certain about it, but he judges from the brief glimpses he had of the birds seen that the greater number of them were Prairie Horned Larks.

A. F. ALLEN.

Sioux City, Ia., Nov. 10, 1919.

### WINTER WREN IN WESTERN IOWA

The Winter Wren (*Nannus hiemalis hiemalis*) is a rare visitor in this locality, and there are few existing records of it. The only local records that I have knowledge of are those of Dr. G. C. Rich, who recorded it on March 11, 1908, and April 4, 1909. No record of the species breeding here has been established. An individual (sex not determined) was seen in the outskirts of Stone Park, Sioux City, on October 5, 1919. It first attracted attention by its call note, uttered repeatedly while the bird was

still some distance from the observer—a call note not at all like that of the House Wren. When located it was found to be in a gully at the bottom of a heavily wooded ravine. This gully was partially filled with fallen leaves and other rubbish; it had an overhanging edge caused by erosion and supported by the roots of trees, small sticks and broken branches. The bird was hopping about under this overhanging edge, making its way through the tangle of roots and sticks, apparently in search of food. It ceased to utter its call upon the closer approach of the observer. Occasionally, as it took note of the presence of the observer, it would perch on a root or twig close to the ground and remain quiet temporarily. It exhibited many of the characteristics and mannerisms of the Wren family. *Nannus hiemalis hiemalis* is distinguished from *Troglodytes aedon parkmani*, which is the species common here, by (1) its call note, already referred to; (2) its smaller size, one inch or more less than *parkmani*; (3) by the dusky line over the eye; (4) by its general darker coloring; (5) by its shorter tail, and (6) by its habitat. Its prevailing color is reddish or chestnut brown above, barred with dusky, while the throat, chest and under parts are a light wood-brown, speckled with buffy or dusky. The short, compact tail, slightly rounded at the end, is held erect. *Hiemalis* is a species of eastern distribution, but is found rarely breeding southward to northern Indiana and Illinois and central Iowa.

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#### A BANDED MALLARD

A female mallard which had been banded by the Massachusetts Fish and Game Commission was killed by a Norfolk, Neb., hunter, M. C. Fraser, on October 26, 1919. The bird was shot about twelve miles southeast of Norfolk, and was one of a number of wild ducks taken at the time. The wording on the leg band was as follows: "No. 350. Marshfield. Fish and Game Com. State House, Boston." Upon communicating with the commission, Mr. Fraser learned that this mallard, together with others, had been raised at the Massachusetts state hatchery at Marshfield. After being tagged, the birds were distributed over the state for liberation. The mallard taken by Mr. Fraser, it is apparent, joined the wild ducks in their flight northward and accompanied them on their autumn migration southward.

The mallard is one of the wild species of ducks which is easily domesticated. It is the practice among hunters in this locality, as it is in other localities, to rear mallards for use as live de-