

FIELD NOTES

THE ROADSIDE CENSUS IN MASSACHUSETTS

In western Massachusetts we found roadside censuses were not as easy to take as in Oklahoma; first, because of the good roads, automobiling is apt to be too rapid for bird identification; second, the birds are less in evidence since they are not largely dependent on fence and telephone wires for perches; and, lastly, there are various kinds of sparrows and swallows that cannot readily be distinguished. Nevertheless, the results of ten censuses—154 miles—taken in Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin counties between June 7 and July 13, 1921, are interesting for comparison with our findings in Oklahoma.*

As to the kinds of birds, Kingbirds, Bluebirds and Cliff Swallows were almost the only native birds seen in both States; the former averaged nearly the same number of individuals seen per census in both localities—3.8 in Oklahoma and 3.3 in Massachusetts,—but Bluebirds were much less common in the East, averaging only 1.6 per census in contrast to the 6.5 in the West. (As the 1920 censuses average 20 miles apiece and those in 1921 15 the advantage of Oklahoma is even greater than first appears). It was a relief to find English Sparrows comprising only 11 per cent of the total number of birds seen, instead of 28. Robins were by far the most abundant bird recorded, 28 per cent of the 587 native birds belonging to this species.

In regard to the number of birds seen per mile, the average for all censuses was lower in Massachusetts than in Oklahoma—3.8 in contrast to 4.8; and when we consider that all the eastern censuses were taken in pleasant weather, and compare this 3.8 with the 5.2 in Oklahoma, we have fewer birds than ever. However these censuses are not directly comparable, for in Massachusetts two-thirds of them were taken in the heat of the day and in Oklahoma only three-sevenths occurred at this period. The censuses in the cool of the day are astonishingly alike in both States: 6.1 birds per mile in Massachusetts and 6.2 in Oklahoma. But the five counts taken during the heat of the day—101 miles—show somewhat fewer birds in the East: 2.6 in comparison to 3.9 in the West. (The maximum temperature ranged from 79° on three days to 88° on one day and 93° on another, which was less, of course, than the average maxima on the Oklahoma censuses of 90° to 95°, not to mention the exceptional one of 99°). It may be that New England birds dislike excessive heat more than the prairie birds do, or it may simply be that fewer were seen because of the greater accessibility of cover in this region.

* Nice, M. M. & Nice, L. B. This Journal. XXXIII, 3. 1921. p. 113-123.

Three later censuses — 42 miles — from August 3 to 9, gave an average of 8 birds per mile; in these the effect of the flocking of Cliff and Barn Swallows is seen, for more than half of the native birds recorded — 125 out of 330 — belonged to these species.

This further experience has convinced us that the chief value of the roadside census for comparative purposes lies during the breeding season, partly because birds are easier to identify then, but largely because of the stability of the avian population.

Norman, Okla.

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SPRAGUE'S PIPIT—*ANTHUS SPRAGUEI*—IN FLORIDA

On February 23rd, 1921, while investigating a colony of Florida Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto floridana floridana*) in De Sota County — now Charlotte County — about eight miles northwest of Punta Gorda, I noticed two small birds fly up from the very open, sandy "prairie" and go off quite wild in rather erratic flight. A general grayish color and decidedly white on the outer tail feathers indicated a stranger to me. One of the birds went off entirely out of sight *eastward* while the other lit on the summit of an excavation on the border of a large drainage canal and was there shot and later found to be a female in normal winter plumage.

So far as I can determine this is the first record for this bird in Florida.

On March 7th, following, while crossing the same "prairie" about one and one-half miles farther east another bird of this species was observed and twice flushed at long range and finally disappeared. I judged it might be the number two bird seen February 23rd.

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WILD BIRDS AND GAME FOWL ARE INCREASING

Notable increases in migratory birds, through special protection afforded them under Federal laws, are reported by George A. Lawyer, Chief U. S. Game Warden of the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, as a feature of his recent inspection of the various districts scattered throughout the country. Mr. Lawyer's trip took him practically around the borders and coasts of the entire country, giving him opportunity to observe the condition of the birds in all important wintering sections of the United States.

Wild ducks and geese were found in great abundance, showing the most notable increase of any of the migratory birds. Greater numbers of upland plover, sandhill cranes, and Wilson snipe or jacksnipe, were also especially noted. The welfare of the birds was found to be generally satisfactory and promising, although the