

GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

The Starling in Southeastern South Dakota.—The Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) has been reported from all but three counties in Iowa and is now starting to invade Nebraska and South Dakota. Mr. Arthur Lundquist of Webster, South Dakota, reported the Starling in Day County, South Dakota (WILSON BULLETIN, XLVI, p. 62, March, 1934) which is in the extreme northeastern part of the state. On Christmas day of 1934 the writer saw a Starling near Elk Point, Union County, in the extreme southeastern corner of the state. It is interesting to note that the Starling was recorded from a point nearly 300 miles north in the state a year before it was found in the southern corner of the state, near the Iowa boundary, where Starlings have been reported at different times since 1932.—WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH, *Sioux City, Iowa*.

A Red-shafted Flicker Secured at Des Moines, Iowa.—An adult male Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer collaris*) was collected by the writer at Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, on December 26, 1934. This bird, noted along Walnut Creek in west Des Moines, had bright red shafts to the primaries, secondaries, and rectrices, and these were conspicuous in flight. This specimen, now in the writer's collection, is believed to be the third Iowa specimen now preserved.

When the *Revised List of the Birds of Iowa* was published in 1933, the writer knew of no existing Iowa specimens. Recently Mr. Frank C. Pellett of Hamilton, Illinois, wrote that the specimen of Red-shafted Flicker secured by him at Atlantic, Cass County, September 25, 1896, was still in his private collection at Atlantic. Mr. James R. Harlan of Des Moines, secured an adult male in Van Buren County, October 22, 1933. It is of interest to note that exactly six years before, Miss Olivia McCabe observed two Red-shafted Flickers at Des Moines at the time of the 1928 Christmas Census.—PHILIP A. DuMONT, *Des Moines, Iowa*.

A Cowbird Removes a Robin's Egg.—While seated at the dinner table, at about 5:30 p. m. on May 3, 1934, I saw a female Eastern Cowbird (*Molothrus ater ater*) skulking through the foliage of the low evergreens around the foundation of the house. She quickly passed beyond the limits of my vision, but a friend, also seated at the table, observed that the Cowbird alighted in a pyramidal arborvitae and proceeded to a Robin's nest that contained four eggs which had been under incubation for several days. The bird was seen to seize one of the eggs and to fly to the ground, holding it in her mandibles. The sudden appearance of a dog caused the Cowbird to fly away, leaving the egg laying on the ground only a few yards from the window. On examining the egg we found that it had been punctured in three places. Apparently the egg had been carried with the mandibles separated considerably and driven deeply into the shell. The Robin's nest was not further molested by the Cowbird and the remaining eggs hatched in due course of time.—BENEDICT J. BLINCOE, *Route 13, Dayton, Ohio*.

Apparent Scarcity of Certain North Dakota Birds.—During the first week of June, 1934, I made a hurried trip to North Dakota, going directly to Bowman County on the Montana boundary and then working east through the butte country to Bismarck, later making a quick trip to Cando and up the Red River Valley on the way home. The scarcity of the big hawks was of interest and corroborated the conclusions of Mr. Norman A. Wood following his work in the state, in 1920 and 1921, when he found such a dearth of these birds. One

Prairie Falcon was seen near Flasher, and a lone Swainson's Hawk was noticed near Buffalo Springs, to sum up the birds actually seen. The Marsh Hawk is holding its own and many birds of this species were seen in all parts of the state. The Upland Plover was gone from the regions visited, and one lone pair was found at Buffalo Springs Lake in Bowman County. In many suitable places the writer found scattered pairs of Western Willets and Marbled Godwits, but the Upland Plovers were not to be found. Possibly the birds are being killed off in their winter home, as I doubt if many are killed in the summer or during migrations.—WM. YOUNGWORTH, *Sioux City, Iowa*.

"The House Wren.—The mischievousness of the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon* Verill) is well known. The following incident came under my observation a short time since. A pair of Martins had taken possession of a box that I had erected in the garden for their benefit; had built their nest, laid their eggs, and had commenced setting, when a pair of house wrens, who coveted their neighbor's house, entered it in the absence of the Martins, and coolly picked up their eggs one by one, carried them out, and dropped them to the ground below. While engaged in this impudent business, the Martins returned, and while going in at one of the entrances of the box, the daring marauders darted out at the other, and alighting on a tree near by chattered noisily, apparently in great glee. The Martins, finding that their nest had been despoiled, abandoned the box, which was then duly taken possession of by the wrens, who reared two broods of young hopefuls during the summer, the first about the beginning of June, the second the latter part of July.—M. S. Hill, East Liverpool, O." (In the *American Naturalist*, Volume III, March, 1870, page 49).

Winter-killing of Mourning Doves in Central Iowa.—Creek bottomlands grown up to wild hemp (*Cannabis*) are especially favored by late migrating or wintering Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) in the vicinity of Ames, Iowa. By late November of 1934, there seemed to be something less than a dozen Mourning Doves (I should judge between eight and ten) wintering about the hemp growths along approximately four miles of Squaw Creek, from the College northwestward. Most of these were concentrated in a tract of about fifteen acres of bottomlands, characterized by dense hemp patches and scattered large trees. To appearances, the food supply was immediately adequate, and the doves were not suffering any conspicuous mortality. Then a heavy snow fell from November 29 to December 3 and persisted for the next few weeks. As a consequence most of the hemp seeds were made unavailable to the doves with the exception of the small quantities still retained on the plants.

The favorite habitat of the Mourning Doves was the regular feeding ground of a covey of sixteen Bob-white Quail (*Colinus virginianus virginianus*) and was visited irregularly by a covey the wintering territory of which was adjacent to the south. With the advent of the December snow, the Bob-whites to the south turned for food to a cornfield in their territory, and thus averted a crisis. The resident covey lost half of its number, largely from starvation, by January 7, and starved out entirely during the winter.

From December 8 to 11, five Mourning Doves were found dead, including three so thoroughly cleaned up by scavengers that only feathers remained. Two carcasses were intact, however, and were carefully examined. Of these latter, one weighed seventy-nine grams and the other eighty-seven grams, or probably between sixty and seventy-five per cent of their full weights. Neither showed extreme