

GENERAL NOTES

Gannet, Wood Ibis, and Gull-billed Tern along the coast of Mississippi.—From August, 1949 to late January, 1950 I was stationed at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi. The following three species of birds, which I observed there during that period, seem worthy of record. The first two are not even listed by T. D. Burleigh in his 'The Bird Life of the Gulf Coast Region of Mississippi,' and the last he reports only from islands well out from the mainland (1944. *Occ. Papers Mus. Zool. Louisiana State Univ. No. 20*, p. 382).

Morus bassanus. Gannet. On January 2, 1950, in Mississippi Sound about 8 miles offshore from Biloxi, I saw a number of Gannets. Although the day was misty, I identified ten individuals with certainty. Four of these were in mottled plumage. The birds were fishing in a loose flock.

Mycteria americana. Wood Ibis. On October 16, 1949, while observing shorebirds about six miles west of Biloxi, I saw a small flock of Wood Ibises flying eastward about five hundred yards off shore. With 8x binocular I could clearly see the dark colored heads and necks and extensive black of the wings.

Gelochelidon nilotica. Gull-billed Tern. Among a large flock of Forster's Terns, *Sterna forsteri*, sitting on some pilings along the sea wall at Biloxi, I saw four Gull-billed Terns in winter dress on August 31, 1949. This was the only occasion on which I noted the species.—Lt. KARL W. HALLER, Box 3344, Killeen Base, Killeen, Texas.

Winter copulation of Mallards.—The disposition of the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) to engage in coition outside the normal breeding season seems to have been generally overlooked in North America. Bent's 'Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl' (1923) contains no mention of it, and no recent reference has been made to it in *The Wilson Bulletin*, *The Auk*, or *The Condor*. On the other hand, Boase (1931. *Brit. Birds*, 25: 17) has reported "actual pairing" in Scotland as early as December 6 on salt water, and January 1 on fresh water. In 1910 Heinroth stated that coition was common among Mallards on the European continent after September throughout the fall and winter (*Verh. d. V. Internat. Ornith.-Kong., Berlin*, p. 679) and similar statements in the Handbook of British Birds (1939, 3: 234) are based to a considerable extent on Heinroth.

At Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary near Washington, D. C., on January 21, 1950, my attention was attracted by the bobbing of a male Mallard before a female. Soon the female also started bobbing, and presently she was mounted by the male. These Mallards belonged to stock which commonly migrates north about the middle of March. In recent years, however, a few birds have become permanent residents. On April 24, 1949, I observed a female with six young at the sanctuary. This female was probably one of the sedentary birds. The water is brackish.—FRANK C. CROSS, 9413 Second Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Ruffed Grouse eats snake.—On September 30, 1949, near Crane Lake, Minnesota, my wife and I noticed a garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) dead in the road. It was about 12 or 13 inches long and had not been much damaged. About an hour later, as we were walking back along the road, we encountered a Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) with about half of what we assumed to be the same snake hanging from its mouth. As we watched from a distance of 18-20 feet, the grouse, which appeared to be nearly full-grown, continued swallowing the snake, but it obviously was having difficulties. It seemed to be disturbed by us, and in a few minutes ran into the woods with about 5 inches of the tail of the snake hanging from its mouth.—J. S. FINDLEY, 1201 South Center Avenue, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.