

GENERAL NOTES

Swallow-tailed Kite and snake: an unusual encounter.—On the morning of 10 May 1964, Mr. Bailey Darley, who operates the fishing camp at the South Altamaha River, just off U.S. Highway 17, in McIntosh County, Georgia, saw a bird, unfamiliar to him, alight on the road nearby. The bird was fluttering one wing. He found that the bird had a small snake wrapped around the wing. With the aid of a stick he was able to get bird and snake into a wire poultry cage. He then reached in with a stick and got under the snake, which released its hold. Through Mr. George Geiger of the Georgia Fish and Game Department the word was passed on to Mr. Neil Hotchkiss, of the Patuxent Research Center, and he and Mr. Walter A. Harmer went over that day, and identified the bird as a Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) and the snake as the keeled green snake (*Opheodrys aestivus*).

The following day, Mr. Brooke Meanley, also of the Patuxent Research Center, and I saw the bird and the reptile, and photographed the bird. It was an adult, in excellent plumage other than a minor amount of feather damage from the incident. Mr. Darley released the bird and the snake that same day. When released the kite flew toward the top of a nearby cypress, but was chased by two Mockingbirds and flew on off with no obvious damage.

Recent records of this kite in coastal Georgia are very few. Mr. Harmer, who is a biologist with the Georgia State Board of Health, has spent many years in the Altamaha River Delta and has never seen the species there before.

It is supposed that when the kite captured the snake in its claws, it wound around the wing enough to hamper flight. The bird was quite docile in captivity and accepted and ate a few small minnows offered to it on a straw or wire.—IVAN R. TOMKINS, 1231 East 50th St., Savannah, Georgia, 21 July 1964.

Piping Plover's nest containing eight eggs.—On 20 May 1964, we found a Piping Plover's (*Charadrius melodus*) nest containing eight eggs at Long Point, Norfolk County, Ontario (42°32'N, 80°07'W). An adult Piping Plover was seen incubating the eggs and appeared to be having some difficulty in covering them all. On 22 May the nest contained only seven eggs and by 27 May all had gone. It was suspected that Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) were responsible for the loss of the eggs, as indicated by footprints around the nest.

Bent (1929. *U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.*, 146:239) says "four eggs are the almost invariable rule with the Piping Plover; rarely only three are laid in second nests, and I have found one with five." Of 526 nests examined by Wilcox (1959. *Auk*, 76:129-152) on Long Island, New York, none contained more than four eggs; 448 contained 4 eggs, 70 contained 3 eggs, and 8 contained 2 eggs. Although it is probable that two females were responsible for the eight-egg clutch, no definite proof of this was obtained.—D. J. T. HUSSELL, 1916 Cambridge Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan, AND J. K. WOODFORD, 76 Glentworth Road, Willowdale, Ontario, (*Contribution of the Long Point Bird Observatory*), 8 September 1964.

The status of the Ruff in North America.—In this note I present evidence suggesting that the Ruff (*Philamachus pugnax*) may be breeding in North America. The Ruff is by far the commonest of the palaeartic shorebirds that occur in North