

## GENERAL NOTES

**Sight record of the Scarlet Ibis for Alabama.**—On 9 May 1964, an adult Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*) was observed in a White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) nesting colony located about 15 miles southeast of Dothan, Houston County, Alabama. The ibis was perched in the top of a tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*) tree preening its feathers. No fear was displayed by the bird as it was observed from a distance of 150 feet through  $7 \times 50$  binoculars and was color photographed through  $8 \times 40$  binoculars in the late afternoon. The bird was observed for about 15 minutes, before it flew away. There was no evidence of bands or other markings to indicate the origin of the bird. Although the bird was not collected, the observation was verified by Dr. Julian L. Dusi, Professor of Zoology at Auburn University, who was conducting a study of herons in the area at that time. No additional sightings have been made to June 1965.

"A Manual of the Ornithology, the Water Birds, of the United States and of Canada," written by Thomas Nuttall (1834. p. 84) is the only reference used by the authors of the Alabama ornithology books. Howell (1928. "Birds of Alabama" p. 71) and Imhof (1962. "Alabama Birds" p. 109) refer to Nuttall's statement, "This brilliant and exclusively American species, inhabits chiefly within tropics, abounding in the West India and Bahama Islands, and south of the equator, at most, as far as Brazil. They migrate in the course of the summer (about July and August), into Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina; but retire into Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands, at the approach of cool weather." Imhof (op. cit.) commented, "It is doubtful that new definite sight records will be obtained because the immature birds, which are the great wanderers, are virtually impossible to distinguish from immature White Ibises."

Palmer (1962. "Handbook of North American Birds." Vol. 1:530-531) listed for North American distribution nine possible records from Texas (some occurred after tropical storms), Audubon's questionable sight record from Louisiana, and the A.O.U. Checklist records from Honduras, Costa Rica, and Jamaica. He lists, also, an ibis found dead in Dade County, Florida, 12 November 1954, that was possibly an escapee.

Robertson (1962. *Audubon Field Notes*, 16:470) indicated in his nesting season reports for the Florida Region that a number of Scarlet Ibises had been reported in the Tampa Bay area. Six Scarlet Ibises were known to have escaped from the Busch Gardens; another one was reported seen for two consecutive days at the Myakka River State Park. He also mentioned the experiment of Carter Bundy.

Carter Bundy (1962. *Florida Naturalist*, 35:87) reported an experiment in July 1961, in which 22 eggs were obtained from Trinidad, and placed under brooding White Ibises in the Greynolds Park rookery, north of Miami, Dade County, Florida. Seventeen of the fledglings survived of which the oldest birds were 11 months, at the time of his article.

The Scarlet Ibis sighted and reported here could have been an escapee from the Tampa Gardens or the Greynolds Park colony. It also could have been a wanderer from the natural area of distribution. Regardless of its origin, it arrived in Alabama, and its sighting is given for the record.—ROSEMARY T. DUSI, 560 Sherwood Drive, Auburn, Alabama, 26 June 1965. (Originally submitted 8 September 1964.)

**Osprey preys on turtle.**—On 27 September 1964 at about 5:00 PM, the following observation was made at Big Creek, southeast of Amherstburg (Concession II, one mile north of Highway 18 in Malden Township), Essex County, Ontario.

We saw an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) hunting along Big Creek. The bird dove out of sight and was seen to arise with a dark object held by one foot. The bird circled about, apparently looking for a perch on which to devour its prey. It landed on a telephone pole about 50 feet from us, at which time we could see that the object dangling from the bird's foot was a turtle. The turtle, which was thought to be a painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), appeared to be about 4 to 6 inches long. Unfortunately the Osprey flew up again and circled around until it was out of sight. We did not see whether it ate the turtle.

Bent (1937. "Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey," Part 1, *U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 170, p. 369) quotes B. R. Warriner (1934), who describes an Osprey taking a turtle, which it could not hold, however. The Osprey we saw had no trouble holding on to its turtle. The above is the only reference we could find to an Osprey preying on turtles.—SERGEJ POSTUPALSKY, 2926 West Thirteen Mile Road, Royal Oak, Michigan, AND JOSEPH P. KLEIMAN, 3271 Albert, Royal Oak, Michigan, 27 November 1964.

**Ring-billed Gulls gorge on fiddler crabs.**—While assisting in the St. Petersburg, Florida, Christmas census on 29 December 1962, I made the following observations on the feeding behavior of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) foraging at the western end of the Howard Frankland bridge in Tampa Bay.

At 1230 hours I was standing at the edge of a strip of red mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle*) bordering 4th Street watching the maintenance activities of 25 Ring-billed Gulls resting on a mud flat near the mangroves, a loafing area that was regularly used by the gulls. Some of the gulls were preening, others were resting with bills on their backs, some were simply looking about. A narrow tidal creek entered the open water near the mud flat where the gulls were located. Several of the gulls closest to the tidal creek flew up at 1232 hours, patrolled the creek for a minute or so, hovered for a few moments, called loudly, then settled hurriedly on the narrow flats bordering the creek. Almost at once the remaining gulls joined the small group along the creek. I moved closer to see what had attracted the gulls and saw that the flats along the creek were literally teeming with fiddler crabs (*Uca pugnator*).

The 25 gulls began to gorge themselves with crabs; this group was soon joined by an additional 50 Ring-billed Gulls. The entire group continued to feed in a frenzied manner for about 2-3 minutes, and then the entire flock rose almost in unison, flew over 4th Street, settled at the edge of a different tidal creek, and began to mill about and call loudly. I ran across 4th Street and saw that the gulls had settled near a horde of fiddler crabs that were milling over the mud flats at the edge of the red mangroves. Within 5 minutes an additional 100 gulls had joined the first group. The gulls gorged on the crabs, flew up in small groups, settled again, called loudly, flew over the mangroves, settled at another tidal creek, and then repeated this behavior many times. By 1300 hours I estimated that 1,500 Ring-billed Gulls had been attracted to the abundant food source, probably by a combination of visual and auditory stimulation from the milling flocks already present.

I watched the manner of prey capture and food handling repeatedly: a gull would land among the milling crabs, briefly chase one and then seize it, and then the gull would appear to deftly remove the enlarged cheliped with a snap of its mandibles, although autotomy was more likely the cause of cheliped loss. Usually the crab dropped from the gull's grasp along with its severed cheliped, but the gull simply ran after the crab, grasped it, and then tossed it down its gullet hurriedly. One gull I watched