

GENERAL NOTES

A Nesting Record of the Pintail at Tinicum Wildlife Preserve: As we were looking for nests in the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve, Philadelphia, Pa., on June 7, 1966, James Carroll and I saw an adult female Pintail (*Anas acuta*) with six young. They were in open water not too far from the main Preserve entrance. The young were only a few days old and so were obviously hatched locally. James Carroll or I saw the adult and young on several occasions after June 7.

This constitutes the first breeding record for the Pintail in the Tinicum area and, as far as we know, in southeastern Pennsylvania. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Ave., Lester, Pa.

The First Shoveler Nesting Record for the Tinicum area: On May 15, 1966, Thomas Dougherty and I flushed a female Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) off its nest in a large field near the Philadelphia Airport. The nest contained eleven eggs. I believe this to be the first nest of the Shoveler to be found in the Tinicum area or in southeastern Pennsylvania.

On May 28 we returned again to the nest and found that it still contained eleven eggs. By June 4, however, all eggs had hatched.

I had seen two Shovelers in this area in June and July of 1965 but could find no nest then. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Avenue, Lester, Pa.

Another Nesting Record of the Green-winged Teal in the Tinicum area: On June 16, 1966, while banding young Least Bitterns and Redwinged Blackbirds in a small marsh at Lester, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, Thomas Dougherty and I saw an adult female Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) with about ten young. As far as I know, this is the second definitive breeding record of the Green-winged Teal in the Tinicum area. In June, 1954, I found an adult bird with about twelve young at a small marsh near the Philadelphia Airport. I know of no other breeding records for southeastern Pennsylvania.

On a number of occasions I have seen Green-winged Teal drop into fields in or near the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve, but I have never been able to locate any nests. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Ave., Lester, Pa.

The First Short-eared Owl Nesting Record for the Tinicum area: On April 20, 1966, Thomas Dougherty and I were subjected to diving attacks and verbal bombardment by two Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) as we walked across a field near the Philadelphia Airport. Although it was quite obvious that there was a nest in the vicinity, we did not search for one on this occasion.

On May 15 Thomas Dougherty and I found one Short-eared Owl nest with four young and two eggs. We photographed and banded the young birds and also took pictures of the nest. We visited the area again on May 21 and found a second Short-eared Owl nest which contained eight young and one egg. The two nests were about 300 yards apart. The young in the second nest appeared somewhat older than those in the first nest we had found, and two of them were able to fly a bit. In all, I banded 13 young out of the two nests.

The particular field where these owls nested is one which harbors good numbers of Short-eared Owls during the winter season. Its days as a haven for these birds appear limited, however, as it is in danger of being filled in by pumping operations.

In June, 1954, I had found a pair of Short-eared Owls at this location that gave every evidence of breeding, although I could find no actual nest. The current nesting records constitute the first for the Tinicum area and for southeastern Pennsylvania. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Ave., Lester, Pa.

A Sight Record of a Rufous-necked Sandpiper at Holgate, N. J.: The Rufous-necked Sandpiper (*Erolia ruficollis*) was reported seen at Ashtabula, Ohio, on July 21 and 22, 1962, by Jon Ahlquist and others (*Auk*, 81: 432-433, July 1964). This is the only published occurrence of the species in the United States outside of Alaska.

On July 15, 1962, one week prior to the above sighting, a single bird answering its description was seen on the tidal flats south of Beach Haven, usually referred to as the Beach Haven Inlet or Holgate area. No photographs were taken, the bird was not collected, and the fact that this species had never been found in this part of the continent resulted in our making no published description of the finding. However, it was announced as a sight record at the August 2 informal meeting of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club by Stephen T. Harty and is recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

The following notes by Harty summarize the occurrence: "The tide was low, and we were almost at the south end of the island on the bay side when we spotted a small rufous sandpiper with a distinct reddish-brown head and neck. The three of us watched the bird for 20 to 30 minutes with 7X binoculars and a Balscope with 20X and 30X oculars. It was noted that the bird was much like a Least Sandpiper except that the bill and legs were dark and the head was ruddy. It was like a Least Sandpiper in both build and actions. The bird kept to itself and was feeding on the sandy mud flat in an active manner, across a small inlet of water from us on a bar exposed by the low tide. The nearest we were able to get to the bird was 30 to 35 yards. The day was sunny and bright, and the time was early afternoon."

Reference to published description of the species showed close correlation with our observations.

It is suggested that the Rufous-necked Sandpiper be added to the New Jersey hypothetical list. — Stephen T. Harty, 450 Timberline Drive, Rancocas Woods, N. J., George B. Reynard, 105 Midway, Riverton, N. J., and Lester S. Thomas, R.D. 2, Newtown, Pa.

The Great Black-backed Gull Nesting in New Jersey and Additional Notes on Nesting Herring Gulls: My brother Robert and I spent much of the day on July 6, 1966, banding Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) on a small island in Absecon Bay, New Jersey. While looking for young Herring Gulls, I found a young Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) in a nest between several bayberry bushes and the salt marsh grass. As I was banding the young bird, the adult Great Black-backed Gulls constantly dove at us and kept up an incessant calling. On another island nearby I located a second Great Black-backed Gull nest, this one with three young which I also banded. The Great Black-backed Gull has been extending its breeding range southward, but to my knowledge these are the first nests of this species to be found in New Jersey.

Herring Gulls have nested on a few of these islands in Absecon Bay for several years, but there was a notable increase in numbers in the summer of 1966. Through mid-July I banded approximately 125 young birds on three islands there, and I missed a number of additional young birds that scurried off into the salt marsh. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Ave., Lester, Pa.

Herring Gulls Nesting at Stone Harbor, New Jersey: While on a banding trip to the Stone Harbor marshes on July 13, 1966, Thomas Dougherty, Fred Mears, Ron French, and I located a colony of 45 Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) nests. These were located on a small island in the bay. Most of the nests were empty, but a few still had eggs. We were able to band only 15 young birds, as most of the young were out in the salt marshes or in the water. — John C. Miller, 429 Powhattan Ave., Lester, Pa.

A Late Saw-whet Owl Record: On April 7, 1966, I flushed a Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadica*) from some tangles and undergrowth at Penn Manor, Pennsylvania. As I continued in the direction in which the bird had flown, I again located it, this time peering out of a tree cavity at me. As I started to climb the tree, the bird flew out and back to its perch.

On the following weekend I camped out at Penn Manor with a friend, and I found the owl in the tree cavity when we arrived about 10:00 A.M. When the owl had flown I climbed up to the tree cavity, but the hole was too deep for me to see the bottom. I tried again about 6:00 with a flashlight and mirror but again had no success. On this latter occasion the Saw-whet flew at me from a nearby perch, veering away when it was only some five feet from me.

Shortly after midnight on May 15 Alan Brady and I located the bird again, although we did not see it in the tree cavity. I did not return to Penn Manor again until May 29, at which time I could not locate the bird. Another visit on June 8, this time with Edward Manners and Joseph Jacobs, was similarly unsuccessful. On this last date Joseph Jacobs climbed up to the cavity and, with the aid of a mirror and small light, looked down into the hole, but he could find no evidence that the bird had nested. — Richard Mellon, 40 Seckel Pear Rd., Levittown, Pa.

Summer Records of the Brown Creeper in Gloucester County, New Jersey: On May 9, 1965, two, and possibly three, Brown Creepers (*Certhia familiaris*) were seen near Glassboro, New Jersey, by Herbert Cutler, William Russell, John Sawyer, Stuart Keith, and me as we were participating on the May Roundup. The specific locality was the fairly extensive woodlands just south of Glassboro which are maintained by the State of New Jersey as public hunting and fishing grounds.

The date of May 9 was sufficiently late to indicate at least a possibility of breeding, and since these woodlands are only a few miles from my home I made a number of subsequent visits. On June 12 I found two singing Brown Creepers, at locations about a mile apart. One June 19 and again on July 9 I heard one bird. On August 7 I saw and heard one bird and watched it for some time in an effort to establish a breeding record. I saw the single bird again on August 14, and on August 21 I found two birds together. At no time could I acquire any definitive evidence of nesting.

At least two or three birds were present again in the summer of 1966. I saw one bird on June 5 and heard another (presumably) at a different location in the woods on June 25. William Middleton had at least one July record.

The nearest regular breeding area for the Brown Creeper is probably the Pocono Mountains. In New Jersey the species has nested as far south as Princeton, and evidence of breeding has been obtained for eastern Burlington County (Fables, *Annotated List of New Jersey Birds*). A confirmed breeding record at Glassboro would have constituted the first for southwestern New Jersey and, I believe, the southernmost along the Atlantic coastal plain.

It is of interest to note that Mrs. Richard Chamberlain of Maplewood, New Jersey, observed a Brown Creeper in Parvin State Park, Salem County, on July 20, 1965. This area is about eleven miles south of the woods at Glassboro. — James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace, Blackwood, New Jersey.

The Golden-winged Warbler in Lehigh County in 1965: The status of the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, is poorly known. Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964: 54) considered the species an uncommon transient in southeastern Pennsylvania. It was elsewhere a local summer resident. One "presumed nesting" record is shown for the county (Poole, 1964: 78). Therefore, the following Lehigh County observations of *V. chrysoptera* are of interest.

On May 2, 1965, three migrants were observed at Robin Hood in Lehigh Parkway, Allentown, Pennsylvania. The species was not recorded again until May 23, 1965, when I discovered one singing male in a scrub oak thicket at Bake Oven Knob. An attempt to collect the bird failed. On June 27, 1965, I again encountered the species at BOK. One male and one female were carefully observed carrying food into the same scrub oak thicket at which the male was singing in late May. Presumably the birds were nesting, but the dense vegetation prevented a search for the nest. On July 31, 1965, a single female was again observed at BOK, this time about 750 feet from the location of the June 27th observations. In view of the lateness of these dates, it is most unlikely that these birds were stragglers from spring migration. — Donald S. Heintzelman, Natural Science Section, William Penn Memorial Museum, Harrisburg, Pa.

Albino Screech Owl: In his paper on avian albinism, Ross (*Cassinia*, 1963:4) states that this condition is extremely rare among owls. Thus it is advisable to record a complete albino Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) in the Muhlenberg College Biology Museum. The bird is specimen number 2292. It was found in poor condition on January 16, 1954, at Allentown, Pennsylvania. No additional data are available. — Donald S. Heintzelman, Natural Science Section, William Penn Memorial Museum, Harrisburg, Pa.

Bake Oven Knob Autumn Hawk Migration Observations (1964 and 1965). — For 39 days during the autumn of 1964, and for 54 days during the autumn of 1965, observations were made on migrant hawks at Bake Oven Knob, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Species totals for both years are summarized in Table One.

Table One

| Bake Oven Knob Autumn Hawk Migration Totals (1964 and 1965) | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| SPECIES | 1964 | 1965 |
| Turkey Vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>) | 106 | 113 |
| Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>) | 9 | 37 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk (<i>Accipiter striatus</i>) | 429 | 1719 |
| Cooper's Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>) | 8 | 58 |
| Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>) | 938 | 1276 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk (<i>Buteo lineatus</i>) | 78 | 142 |
| Broad-winged Hawk (<i>Buteo platypterus</i>) | 5940 | 7491 |
| Rough-legged Hawk (<i>Buteo lagopus</i>) | 8 | 9 |
| Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>) | 13 | 21 |
| Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) | 6 | 25 |
| Marsh Hawk (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) | 100 | 140 |
| Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>) | 219 | 379 |
| Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) | 13 | 10 |
| Pigeon Hawk (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) | 2 | 13 |
| Sparrow Hawk (<i>Falco sparverius</i>) | 89 | 199 |
| Unidentified Hawks | 85 | 170 |
| Unidentified Eagles | 0 | 1 |
| TOTALS | 8,043 | 11,803 |

During 1965, large numbers of Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) were recorded. This "invasion" probably resulted from a severe scarcity of food in the north country — a hypothesis which seems to be supported by the fact that sizable numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*), Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*), Purple Finches (*Carduelis purpureus*), and Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*) also were recorded at BOK. Even Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*), Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*), and White-winged Crossbills (*Loxia leucoptera*) appeared in small numbers.

On September 11, 1965, an unusually large number of Ospreys passed BOK. During my ten hours and 15 minutes of observation (6:45 am, EST to 5:00 pm, EST) a total of 102 fish hawks were observed. During the last two hours on the lookout, 40 of these birds passed. As many as seven were simultaneously aloft and flying toward me in a straight formation. This is the largest number of Ospreys ever recorded on one day along the Kittatinny Ridge (M. Broun, verbal communication). According to my field notes, cloudy skies prevailed with a maximum visibility of about 30 miles, wind NW at 5-15 MPH, and an air temperature of 17° C at 12:00 noon, EST. — Donald S. Heintzelman, Natural Science Section, William Penn Memorial Museum, Harrisburg, Pa.

Lark Bunting in Bucks County: A full-plumaged male Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) frequented the feeding station at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Hicks near Holland Station, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, for several weeks in April, 1965. The bird, unidentified, was reported by Mrs. Hicks to the nearby Churchville Nature Center.

Alan Brady and I visited the Hicks' feeding station early on the morning of April 25, and as if on schedule the bunting appeared, remained for a short while (long enough for several long-distance photos to be made) and flew away. This was its usual routine, we were told. Conversations with other residents who operated feeders revealed that a "strange black bird with white on its wings" had been making the rounds for a month or more in the vicinity. All feeding stations known to have been visited by the bird were in or at the edge of wooded areas next to weedy fields.

The Lark Bunting remained in the area until sometime in early May, during which time it was seen by a number of visitors.

This record is a first for Bucks County. Earl Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964) lists three previous state records. One of these, at Graterford, Montgomery County, has been previously described in some detail in *Cassinia* (Vol. XLVI, 1961-1962, p. 23) — Lester S. Thomas, R. D. 2, Newtown, Pennsylvania.

An Occurrence of Botulism among Waterfowl and Shorebirds along the Delaware River: Botulism is an annual threat to birds using the fills in the vicinity of Philadelphia during late summer. At this time conditions are ripe for the botulism bacteria as well as the minute animal food, probably largely tubifex worms, that attract the migrating birds.

These fills or spoil dumps are usually extensive diked areas along the river. A solution of water, mud or silt, and sand and gravel is pumped in along one side of the fill and a sluice on the other side carries off the water. The heavy sand and gravel settle near the end of the pipe, but the silt flows to the sluice area. When pumping stops, a very shallow muddy pool of several acres is usually left near the sluice. If this pool remains through late summer without resumption of the filling operation and large numbers of birds are feeding there, some poisoning is nearly always evident. The outbreak ends abruptly with the first cold wave in late September that drops night temperatures into the forties.

An outbreak of botulism is contingent upon favorable conditions for the anaerobic bacteria that manufacture the toxin. These conditions are relatively high water temperatures, an abundance of dead organic matter, and shallow, stagnant, oxygen-free water. Decay of the organic matter saturates the water with carbon dioxide, and the stagnant water concentrates the toxin. I have found the silt to contain as much as 50% organic matter by weight. The poison first affects the birds' ability to fly, then their ability to walk, and finally their ability to even hold their heads erect. I have found that affected birds still able to walk will usually recover if removed to a dry, warm area.

During September, 1965, a rather serious outbreak of botulism occurred on a fill near Thorofare, New Jersey. Hundreds of ducks and a few shorebirds were killed. Ducks affected were Mallards, Blacks, Pintail, and Green-winged Teal. Shorebirds affected were Pectoral Sandpiper, Golden Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer, and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Ducks were affected to a greater degree inasmuch as they used the fill area almost continuously. — Edward Manners, 108 N. Monroe Ave., Wenonah, New Jersey.

Shorebird Observations at Delaware City, Delaware: During the late summer and fall of 1965 I made a number of visits to the area of Delaware City. The two specific locations most frequently visited were 1) the ponds adjacent to the south edge of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, and 2) the seven fill areas near St. Georges between U. S. Rte. 13 (U. S. Rte. 301N) and Del. Rte. 71 (U. S. Rte. 301S).

The ponds were drained during the summer in order to eliminate vast swarms of carp and were at optimum conditions during August and September because of the large areas of exposed mud. The fill areas maintained steady water levels the entire fall in spite of the continued drought conditions, but were being claimed by phragmites. In all likelihood, they will eventually be rendered unsuitable for shorebirds.

Both areas exemplify habitat which is temporarily ideal for shorebirds in a region which may perhaps be described as being only moderately good for them. Birders should be on the alert for areas such as these and search them out while they are at their best. There is a great deal of draining, damming, and dumping being done by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and it is perhaps inevitable, if not ironic, that at least some of this activity should be of advantage to the field ornithologist.

In the short summation which follows I have used DC for Delaware City ponds and SG for the St. Georges fill areas.

GOLDEN PLOVER: October 11, 141 (SG), October 13, 158 (SG), October 16, 126 (SG), October 20, 21 (SG), October 23, 85 (SG).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS: July 30, 300 (DC), August 2, 349 (DC), September 16, 400 (DC).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER: October 11, 2 (SG) .

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER: July 30, 900 (DC) , August 2, 320 (DC) .

STILT SANDPIPER: July 23, 4 (DC) , July 30, 130 (DC) , August 2, 118 (DC) .

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER: July 30, 3000 (DC) , August 2, 2225 (DC) .

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: September 27, 1 (DC) , October 9, 3 (SG) , October 11, 2 (SG) , October 13, 1 (SG) , October 20, 1 (SG) , October 23, 1 (SG) , October 26, 1 (SG) , October 29, 1 (SG) .

AMERICAN AVOCET: September 16, 1 (DC) , September 27, 1 (DC) .

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: July 23, 1 (DC) , August 14, 1 (DC) , September 16, 1 (DC) . — Henry T. Armistead, 7720 McCallum Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

An Unusual Shorebird at Brigantine Refuge: On May 9, 1965, a shorebird of unique appearance was seen at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey, by Alfred Kronschabel, John McIlvain, Robert Sehl, William Reynolds, Robert Grant, Lester Thomas, and me. After our observation and upon examination of skins and consultation with authoritative literature, we have concluded that the bird was a Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) .

When first observed, the bird was approximately sixty yards away, standing in shallow water with several Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucus*) . We thus had excellent size comparison. The bird was slightly smaller than the Yellowlegs, but it had the same general proportions. The head was completely black with the exception of a very pronounced white eye-ring. The neck was a very dark gray. The underparts were black, and the back was a medium shade of gray. The bill was approximately as long as that of the Yellowlegs, straight, slightly tapered, deep reddish-orange at the base, and dark black or brown at the tip. The legs appeared dark.

When we first saw the bird, it was preening, and some white area was observed at the base of the tail. We watched the bird for some five minutes, during which time it preened and then slept, with its bill under one wing. Suddenly the group of birds was alerted, and they took off, flying rapidly and parallel to the observers. We could see no tail or rump pattern. However, it was noted that the wings were plain and dark, and the smaller size of this bird in relation to the Yellowlegs was again evident.

Unfortunately, the bird disappeared as it alighted in tall grasses and was not seen again.

On May 30 and 31, 1955, a Spotted Redshank was seen at Tiverton, Rhode Island, and was studied with great care (pers. comm. with Mrs. Ruth Emery) . A suspected Spotted Redshank was observed at Tinicum Wildlife Preserve, Philadelphia, on July 30, 1960 (*Cassinia*, Vol. XLV, 1960, p. 10) . — Alan Brady, Wycombe, Pa.