

ADDITIONAL BIRDS OBTAINED BY CAPT. ROBINSON IN THE SUMMER  
OF 1895.

- Phaethusa magnirostris* (Licht.). Large-billed Tern.  
*Sterna erygnatha* Saunders. Red-billed Tern.  
*Sterna antillarum* (Lesson). Least Tern.  
*Butorides robinsoni* Richmond. Margaritan Green Heron.  
*Ereunetes occidentalis* Lawr. Western Sandpiper.  
*Calidris arenaria* (Linn.). Sanderling.  
*CEdicnemus bistriatus* (Wagler). American Thick-knee.  
*Ægialitis wilsonia rufinucha* Ridgw. Rufous-naped Plover.  
*Ægialitis semipalmata* Bonap. Ring-necked Plover.  
*Ægialitis nivosa* Cass. Snowy Plover.  
*Ægialitis collaris* Vieill. Azara's Ring Plover.  
*Columba gymnophthalma* Temm. Bare-faced Pigeon.  
*Zenaida vinaceo-rufa* Ridgw. Vinaceous Dove.  
*Chatura cinereiventris lawrencei* Ridgw. Lawrence's Swift.  
*Mitulus tyrannus* (Linn.). Fork-tailed Flycatcher.  
*Volatinia jucarini splendens* (Vieill.). Glossy Grassquit.  
*Vireo chivi agilis* (Licht.). Agile Vireo.  
*Arbelorhina cyanea eximia* (Cab.). Venezuelan Guit-Guit.  
*Platycichla carbonaria* (Licht.). Yellow-billed Thrush.
- About the lagoons I saw several herons, two terns (*Anous stolidus?* and *Sterna* sp.) and two shore-birds not given in either of the above lists.
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## THE IPSWICH SPARROW IN ITS SUMMER HOME.

BY W. E. SAUNDERS..

OWING to a happy combination of circumstances I had the pleasure of visiting Sable Island recently, arriving on May 16, 1901, and leaving on the 23d. Ever since reading Dr. Dwight's delightful monograph of the Ipswich Sparrow I have longed to visit this bird at home but with little hope that my desire would ever be realized, and it was therefore an unexpected delight when a feasible opportunity occurred. It will be remembered that not only is Sable Island the only breeding ground of this Sparrow, but also that the Sparrow is the only land bird which breeds there,

a fact which seems curious when one considers the migrants which remain for days in both spring and fall. The total number of summer residents is ten, including two Ducks, two Plovers, two Sandpipers, three Terns, and the Ipswich Sparrow.

During my stay, I was in every way highly favored, for not only was the season much farther advanced than at the time of Dr. Dwight's visit, without which I could have been able to see nothing of the nesting season, but on three of our eight days we saw the sun, and though many trifling rains were encountered, there were none that made one desire shelter, so that the whole of all the eight days were available for bird study, when other duties would permit.

The Sparrows were found in increased numbers and their song could be heard at all hours of the day.

The song resembles very closely that of the Savanna Sparrow, but instead of ending with *dzzz* as does that species, the concluding note is a weak imitation of the call of the terns which, as Dr. Dwight truly remarked, can be heard at all hours of the day and night. He has well described this note by the syllables *prē-a* and they are delivered rapidly and abruptly, almost as much so as one can articulate while giving the letters their full sound.

The birds were not found to be very shy, but their color is eminently protective, and they appear to realize this thoroughly and would often remain motionless and allow a fairly close approach before flying. There was seldom any difficulty in approaching to within comfortable range of the few that I shot.

While I was too early for most nests to have eggs, I arrived at the most favorable time to find them, because the first step in nestbuilding is the excavation of the nest cavity which usually results in the exposure of some black soil, the patch of dark color being easily seen among the dried grass stems which cover the site. A few days later, when these holes were covered with grasses, detection became very difficult indeed.

Three nests were found in the enclosure surrounding the Superintendent's house, and nearly 30 were found altogether, most of them being, of course, incomplete. Of those containing complete sets, four contained 5 eggs, and four contained 4 only, part of one set being hatched. All the nests but five were placed among long

grass where the bleached stems of last year had fallen over, thus increasing the shelter, the exceptions being placed, one in a clump of crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), one among dark green rushes, and three in a field of clover, of the most vivid green, surrounding the Superintendent's house. The former was said to be a favorite situation, but such cover was rare on most of the ground where I hunted, and only the one was seen, so situated. The nests are large, deep and thick, sometimes being heavily lined with horse-hair, and always placed in an excavation of one-half to one inch in the ground. A few of the incomplete nests were placed in holes in hillsides, just such positions as the Junco frequently uses, a projecting piece of sod partly sheltering the nest from above.

The chief ingredient in the construction of all the nests is fine, dry grasses; and frequently these compose the whole of the bottom of the nest, there being only a slight difference in the fineness of those placed on the ground and those on which the eggs are laid. The upper edge of the nest is covered with coarser grasses, with a very few weed stems, but the latter increase in number as the ground is approached, and at the ground level the weed stems predominate. Eel grass is often added and sometimes moss, but the centre of the nest against the ground shows from three to six square inches of fine grass only.

The measurements of the nests average as follows:

	Average.	Extremes.	
Diameter inside	$2\frac{1}{2}$ inches	$2\frac{1}{4}$ inches	$2\frac{3}{4}$ inches
"    outside	5 "	$4\frac{1}{2}$ "	$5\frac{1}{4}$ "
Depth inside	2 "	$1\frac{1}{2}$ "	2 "
"    outside	3 "	$2\frac{1}{2}$ "	$3\frac{1}{2}$ "

The thickness of the walls is thus shown to vary from one-half to two inches.

The nest in *Empetrum* was the smallest, all the minimum measurements belonging to it, the reason probably being that this plant grows so thick that the site selected was too small to hold a much larger nest, and the birds have not the art of embracing twigs in it, but place it as a rule entirely free from its surroundings.

The only nest of the Savanna Sparrow to which I have access just now, measures  $2\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  in diameter against  $2\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ , average for the Ipswich, and in depth  $1\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  against  $2 \times 3$  for the Ips-

wich. These figures utterly fail to give any idea of the enormous difference in the quantity of material present in the nests of the Ipswich Sparrow, which are very thick-walled and substantial; therefore I have weighed them and find that while two ordinary nests of the Ipswich Sparrow average 300 grains each, the nest of the Savanna weighs but 110 grains.

Since returning from the island, a letter from the Superintendent informs me that they had (in July I think) a gale of 60 miles an hour! Such occurrences, coupled with a spring temperature which may be characterized as moderate to cool, explain the absolute necessity that these birds are under to build a heavy and compact nest.

Dry localities were almost invariably selected as nesting sites, only two exceptions to this rule being noted, both on May 20 when I obtained a set of 4 eggs from a nest in low damp ground under long wiry rushes; and found another nest near water but on drier ground among long grass, containing one addled egg, one egg almost hatched, and two newly hatched young.

The birds were seldom close sitters, some of them leaving the nest as soon as an intruder was seen, judging from the fact that the eggs were so often found uncovered. Others would be seen to leave when I was still 15 to 20 yards distant and only the one that had built in the damp locality dared to remain till I got within 2 or 3 feet. Even the mother of the newly hatched young flew when I was 15 yards away but in that instance I was running, and I came over an eminence and down a grade towards her nest which was situated on a slight upward slope facing me and directly in my line of passage, and she could hardly be expected to await such an attack. It must be remembered that all upright objects appear disproportionately large on Sable Island from the lack of trees or other upright growths of any size.

The eggs vary considerably both in size, shape and color. The two largest measure  $.81 \times .64$  and  $.84 \times .59$  in. and the two smallest  $.75 \times .57$  and  $.73 \times .63$ , the average of the eggs in the six sets in my possession being  $.79 \times .60$ .

But the variation in color is more surprising to me, perhaps because my limited series of Savanna's show so little variation. Two sets resemble a common phase of the Vesper Sparrow, one

with bright, well defined streaks and blotches of light brown on a greenish ground, the other with a more cloudy effect. Two other sets are almost exactly like some of the Savanna, thickly dotted with fine brown spots so as to hide the ground color; the fifth bears a striking resemblance to some eggs I have seen of the Bobolink, being clouded and washed with dull brown on a dirty greenish white ground, while in the sixth set, 3 eggs are almost exactly like the ordinary type of the Prairie Horned Lark, with the buffy tint of the latter replaced by greenish, and the ground color being sparingly dotted with light brown; the other egg in this set resembling a light colored Savanna's, thickly dotted with brown spots, so as to nearly hide the ground color. I had no time to take a description of the seventh nest, which was taken by Col. Gourdeau, Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries, to the Museum of his Department at Ottawa.

Mr. James Boutillier, who seemed to know where nearly every pair nested annually, assured me that pure white eggs were seen in the nests occasionally, perhaps one egg in two years.



UNUSUAL ABUNDANCE OF THE SNOWY OWL  
(*NYCTEA NYCTEA*) IN NEW ENGLAND  
AND CANADA.

BY RUTHVEN DEANE.

UNDER a somewhat similar title I published a short article in the 'Bulletin' of the Nuttall Ornithological Club<sup>1</sup> in January, 1877. For two months prior to that date there had been a large migration of these owls through various parts of New England, though largely restricted to the seacoast. I have received information from different localities that another large incursion of Snowy Owls appeared this past winter, though the migration commenced considerably earlier than usual, the first being seen in October. While these owls are not regarded as rare visitors to

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<sup>1</sup> Bulletin Nuttall Ornithological Club, Vol. II, No. 1, 1877.