

A Note on the Prothonotary Warbler.—In the many biographical sketches of the Prothonotary Warbler, one finds considerable unanimity concerning the succession of mating and nest building and the sex building the nest. For instance, Loucks in his 'Life History of the Prothonotary Warbler,'¹ states: "Soon after mating, the birds begin to build their nest.... In the construction of the nest, the female bird works alone. I have never yet seen a male really aiding in this task." The authors, studying in localities where the bird is more or less abundant during the breeding season, evidently made such notes from series of observations. A single instance contrary to the above is, therefore, probably less important than it is interesting. The case in point is that of a male Prothonotary Warbler which appeared at Ithaca in the spring of 1910. It was first seen May 31 in some willows overhanging a back-water from Fall Creek, one of the main tributaries of Cayuga Lake. It was singing at the time but soon flew down to the water's edge. Here it seized a good sized straw and thence carried it to a hole in a dead stub some five feet above the water. The site was an abandoned Downy Woodpecker's nest, the opening of which had, by some agent or other, been enlarged leaving its borders jagged and rough. While the bird was under observation, it continued flying to and from the hole carrying bits of grass, straw, bark and the like, most of which was obtained at the water's edge. It sang very frequently, often with nesting material in its bill, which was opened so widely during the process that the material was sometimes lost. The nest was not examined closely at this time for fear of disturbing the bird but from the place of observation the nesting material was seen projecting from the hole. Nothing was seen of a female. Two days later the bird had ceased carrying nesting material and was singing in the willows nearby. Upon careful examination the nest was found to be quite complete but there were no eggs nor was there yet any sign of a female. For eleven days this male was seen or heard singing about the spot but no eggs ever appeared in the nest and no female was ever discovered. He was never seen to enter the nest after the third day of observation but, with one exception, was found at all hours within fifty feet of the nesting site, usually singing. On one occasion he was seen to drive away a Bluebird which alighted on the stub. On June 12 he disappeared and did not return.

From these observations it would seem that this male, very shortly after arriving and before finding a mate, selected the nesting site and began building the nest. Furthermore, after completing the nest he waited, apparently for a female, at least nine days before deserting the site which he had chosen. In localities where the species is more abundant and mating is therefore assured, the necessity for the males building the nest may never arise. But the fact that this male, when isolated, was able to select the site and complete the nest in the absence of the female is quite significant.—ARTHUR A. ALLEN, *Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.*

¹ Loucks, W. E. Bulletin 4, Article 3, Illinois State Laboratory of Natural History.