

NOTES ON SOME OF THE RARER BIRDS OF THE  
PRAIRIE PART OF THE CHICAGO AREA.

BY G. EIFRIG.

DURING the three years of my residence in the small prairie town of Addison, Du Page County, Illinois, I have observed a number of birds that are rare nearly anywhere, or at least rare in this part of the state, some being first records for the county or even the so-called 'Chicago Area.' I had intended to send these observations as 'General Notes' to 'The Auk' from time to time, but lack of time prevented me, until now it seems best to put them together into one article.

Addison is situated about 20 miles west of Chicago, in undulating prairie, the highest point of which is about 350 feet above sea-level. The land is highly cultivated, except where imperfect drainage leaves spots too wet in spring. Here small remnants of the original prairie, with its interesting flora of shooting star, hawkweed, wild onion etc., may be seen. There is a large piece of woodland, containing about two square miles, but otherwise there are no trees here, if we except the usually large cotton-woods found around most farm yards. Beside the above mentioned wet spots between fields, there are some sloughs, large and small, but usually not large enough to entice ducks or Black Terns to breed, while on the other hand the King Rail, Least Bittern, Long- and Short-billed Marsh Wrens and the inevitable Redwing find even the smallest of them to their liking. Salt Creek, which flows into the Desplaines River, is the only stream of the neighborhood, but, though rich in small fish, it harbors almost no Kingfishers along its course, at least here. In fact, the absence or rarity of certain species, which should be common, as the Chipping Sparrow, Whippoorwill, Cedarbird, Least Flycatcher, Sparrow Hawk, Mourning Dove and others, is very puzzling.— Now to the notes proper.

While gulls are a very usual sight along the lake and river in Chicago, they are rare here in Du Page County. However, two Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) alighted near the out-buildings in my garden on February 26, 1910. It had been

raining and storming, and there was much water standing on the ice and snow. At such times, and during high water in the spring, Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) sometimes follow the course of the then rather formidable Salt Creek as far inland as this. Of terns, I have so far seen but one Black Tern. It lingered for a few moments over a rather large slough on July 20, 1910.

A rarity for this part of the country was captured on November 11, 1911, in the shape of a Cackling Goose (*Branta canadensis minima*). It mingled with the ducks of a farmer on the creek, and, when these wended their way homeward in the evening, this northern visitor came along and was caught by the farmer's sons. I secured it and kept it alive until April 18. During this memorably cold winter, it preferred standing on the snowdrifts in its yard to staying on the straw in its hut. It refused all food except chicken feed of cracked corn, oats, etc. Later, when the flocks of geese were flying to and fro overhead — this is evidently on the highway of goose migration — the little cackling member of the tribe would signal from below, whereupon the flocks would often halt, break ranks, apparently hold a consultation, and then pass on. Its repertoire of notes — call notes and low chucklings — was quite extensive; some of them were decidedly musical, reminding one of the Redwing, Cowbird or Bobolink in late summer, others were somewhat chicken-like. When in April that particular cracked corn etc. could not, for a time, be had, the little cackler refused the choicest whole corn, or food from the kitchen and deliberately starved to death. It proved a female; a large pellet of shot was lodged against one of the wingbones, which explains the seeming lack of shyness on the day of its capture. The length was  $21\frac{3}{4}$  inches, wing 14 inches, tarsus  $2\frac{7}{8}$  inches.

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis canadensis*) pass through here from January 19 (1912) to April 22 (1910). Last fall a Snow Goose (sp. ?) was taken out of a flock of 26 in a nearby slough.

In the above mentioned piece of timber the Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*) have a nesting colony of about thirty pairs. The nests are from thirty to fifty feet up in ash and oak trees.

On May 10, 1910, while walking — or rather stumbling — through a slough, I took a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*).

While this species is not so rare in Cook County, even nesting in the extensive Calumet marshes, this is the first record, so far as the writer is aware, for Du Page County.

What birds are able to go through occasionally, without succumbing, was illustrated by a Pectoral Sandpiper (*Pisobia maculata*) which came into my hands April 20, 1910. One leg above the tarsus must have been broken some time previously, but the bones had grown together, with the foot and tarsus turned around, so that the bird was walking with one foot directed forward and the other backward. On the abdomen was a scab over an old wound with a cleft in the center an eighth of an inch deep! This must have been done by a shot or by flying against a barbed wire fence.

During the extremely hot summer of 1911 flocks of northern shore-birds were here early in July, frequenting the pastures along the creek or around the sloughs. They then were still in their almost perfect nuptial plumage and thus unusually handsome specimens of Pectoral, Red-backed and Solitary Sandpipers, of Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs, and of the Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers were to be seen. It is surprising how late the Greater Yellowlegs remain here on their northward journey — into the last week of May — and how soon they are back again, namely by the end of June and beginning of July. These are undoubtedly non-breeding birds, that do not go very far north.

On May 10, 1910, I saw a flock of about fifteen beautiful Golden Plover (*Charadrius dominicus dominicus*), also three on May 9, 1912. They are becoming rather rare in this region.

The Bob-white (*Colinus virginianus virginianus*) has become very rare in this immediate vicinity, and of the Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus americanus americanus*) there is but one small covey on a farm nearby, where they are protected.

When we come to the *Fringillidæ*, however, the outlook brightens for this section, although here too the rarity of the Chipping Sparrow militates against it. Redpolls and Pine Siskins are plentiful some days in autumn, winter or spring, and even the northern Grosbeaks put in an appearance from time to time. But it is for Longspurs that the region is a veritable paradise. On the exposed,

wind-swept fields they may be seen from October to May, although they sometimes seem to disappear for a few days or weeks when the winds of winter are at their highest. I said, they may be seen; that is however only partly true, for when they are on the ground, busily gleaning seeds, their color is so obliterative, that one does not see them before they are almost stepped upon and take wing. When, however, in May they have their almost perfect nuptial plumage, the males are more conspicuous, owing to the deep black throat, but even then only when moving, as the white band on the side of the neck serves to break up the outline of the form of the bird. May 4, 1912, the fields, especially newly sown oat-fields, were literally alive with thousands of *Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus*, most in their fine breeding dress. Next day the clouds of them had disappeared; a few stragglers, however, were seen as late as May 9. Among the hordes of *C. lapponicus* now and then a Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) may be seen, a male of which I took May 1, 1912, the first record for the county.

A greater surprise awaited me on April 20, 1912, when, in walking over the old fields nearby, I saw among the many *lapponicus*, five Chestnut-collared Longspurs (*Calcarius ornatus*). I was without a gun, but they let me approach to within fifteen feet, where I watched them at leisure through the glass. I hurried home and looked at a skin of the species in my collection, from their breeding grounds, took my gun and hurried out, but did not see them again. The buffy throat of *ornatus* can, of course, not be confounded with the deep black of *lapponicus*, especially after one has seen thousands of the latter, in all plumages, and they were even then present in numbers.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Passerherbulus nelsoni nelsoni*) I have taken twice, on August 31, 1910, and on September 16, 1911. There is only one previous record of this species for Du Page County, by Mr. B. T. Gault, who writes me that a female was taken at Glen Ellyn on October 2, 1893.

For Henslow's Sparrow (*Passerherbulus henslowi henslowi*) I have an earlier date than that given for this species in Woodruff's 'Birds of the Chicago Area,' namely March 28, (1910), while it is there stated to arrive about the middle of April.

While the Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) was very common in 1911, it was absent here this year (1912).

The Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus grammacus*) is very rare; the only small breeding colony I have seen in three years I discovered in a clearing, adjoining some fields, on April 27, 1912.

Of the rarer warblers, I have once seen the Prothonotary (*Protonotaria citrea*), a female, on May 27, 1910. The Cerulean (*Dendroica cerulea*) and Golden-winged (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) have been seen once or twice each, the former in June, indicating breeding. For the Prothonotary it is the third record for the county, according to Mr. Gault. The Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*), so rare in most places, is rather common on some days during spring migration. The same holds good for the Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Hylocichla aliciaë aliciaë*). On certain days during the last week or ten days in May, they may be seen by hundreds in the woods, which would seem to indicate that we are here on one of their highways of spring migration.

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## BREEDING BIRDS OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA.

BY OSCAR E. BAYNARD.

ALACHUA COUNTY in middle Florida is one of the richest parts of the State so far as its bird life is concerned. This is due to the diversified character of the county. The middle and western parts are rolling with plenty of pine forests, while in the southeastern part is the low lake region with dense hammocks and cypress swamps and higher tracts of pine forests. The greater part of my observation and collecting has been carried on within a radius of twenty miles of Micanopy with several trips to the Suwanee River region.

Owing to the tropical character of the lake region this County is apparently the northern breeding limit of several species.