

RECENT NOTES FROM AN OLD COLLECTING
GROUND IN NORTH-EASTERN ILLINOIS.

BY COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN.

SOME years ago the late John Farwell Ferry in his paper on 'Ornithological Conditions in North-eastern Illinois, with some Notes on Winter Birds' (*Auk*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2) called attention to Beach as an old Illinois collecting ground, where such men as Robert Kennicott, Fred T. Jencks, E. W. Nelson, Thomas H. and Charles Douglas, and Henry K. Coale had collected, some of their records dating back to 1853.

After nearly seventy years, however, its value as a collecting ground is almost gone and in a few years more the Beach of yesterday will have passed forever. The proposal to add Beach to the Forest Preserve was voted down at a recent election. Factories are steadily creeping up from Waukegan on the south. And some specimens taken at Beach show the effects of their closer approach as they are soiled by smoke and soot. The pines are being cut down for Christmas trees or to be used as blinds by duck hunters and fires have killed many of them and most of the junipers.

Mr Ferry gave a complete history and description of this region which I shall not repeat, but shall give a general idea of the country which will make references easy to follow. Beach lies forty miles north of Chicago in Lake County in the extreme north-eastern corner of the State, and stretches seven miles due north of Waukegan, a growing manufacturing town. It averages about a mile in width, with Lake Michigan on one side, and a high bluff, which is characteristic of the region north of Chicago, on the other. Along the lake stretch low sand ridges, and west of these is a large swamp, the open water of which is locally known as Dead Lake. This swamp drains into Lake Michigan through Dead River on the north and Little Dead River, which has now been dredged out to form a large harbor, on the south. South of Dead River the sand ridges are covered with rows of pines, and north, next the lake, with low juniper bushes, which on the west merge into thick oak scrub.

Beach has no deep hollows for a protection from the wind and no great food supply, so winter birds seem to make it just a temporary stopping place before passing to the Sand Dunes of Indiana about ninety miles south. It is only by chance then that they are found there and, although I have been very fortunate in this respect, there were many trips upon which, I have seen only a few Tree Sparrows and Crows. Inasmuch as this is the only wild bit of lake shore in northeastern Illinois it affords a natural feeding ground for many of the shorebirds.

During the past seven years that I have been collecting at Beach, I have made a number of records which I wish to add to the already long list from that locality. Some of these have already been reported in 'The Auk,' but as I have enlarged upon them, I take the liberty of repeating them. I wish to thank the members of the Chicago Ornithological Society for their co-operation in assisting me with certain of these records.

1. **Nycticorax n. naevius.** BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—On January 4, 1921, Mr. Henry Kern, the local game warden, arrested a hunter who had just shot an immature bird of this species. The specimen later came into the possession of Dr. C. W. G. Eifrig who reported the record.

2. **Tryngites subruficollis.** BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER.—October 2, 1921, I was attracted by the very long wings of a shorebird as it alighted a short distance down the beach. It proved to be a female of this species which is now in Mr. Coale's collection. Mr. Benjamin T. Gault and George P. Lewis reported two birds seen a number of times at the Lincoln Park beach in Chicago, early in September. As far as I can find, these are the first published records since 1898. (William A. Bryan, *Auk*, Vol. XVI.)

3. **Squatarola squatarola.** BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER.—Mr. George Stagg and I secured a pair of these birds October 7, 1920. They were in immature plumage and easily approached. This year (1921) I found a flock of twelve on the beach all through September and part of October. These were mostly immatures with three or four adults which kept a sharp watch and made it difficult to get within gun range. It is now rather a rare migrant here.

4. **Charadrius melodus.** PIPING PLOVER.—These birds first came to my notice on May 31, 1920, when I spent some time watching two pair, but my efforts to find a nest were unsuccessful. On June 5, I brought Mr. Edward R. Ford with me, who succeeded in locating a nest with four eggs

just hatching. Another pair, Mr. Ford decided, had probably had their first nest destroyed and would, no doubt nest again, so on June 12, I made a further search and was rewarded by flushing the bird from two eggs and on the 17th, collected the full complement of four. This is another species that was once common but is now rather rare. No birds were seen this year (1921).

5. **Falco c. columbarius.** PIGEON HAWK.—While hunting with Mr. George Stagg on October 12, 1920, he shot a male of this species on the wing; another was taken by Mr. Stephen S. Gregory on October 16, 1921. Most of the old writers give this bird as a common migrant but after talking to a number of collectors who have been very active in this region during the past ten years, I am convinced from their records that this species is now an uncommon migrant. Mr. Stagg also shot a Sharp-shinned Hawk the same day, a species which is a little more common than the former.

November 2, 1920, two friends of mine, Mr. Lyman Barr and Mr. George Stagg, reported an interesting observation to me. They were sitting on the beach when they saw a large hawk flying over the lake, where there were many flocks of ducks. The hawk suddenly swooped at the ducks which sent a shower of water into the air with their wings and drove him away. He tried flock after flock but each time met with the same defense and finally disappeared from sight. I have no doubt that this was a Duck Hawk but as I cannot definitely report it as such, thought that I would relate the incident and let the readers make their own identification.

6. **Picoides arcticus.** ARCTIC THREE-TOED WOODPECKER.—During the fall of 1920 the Chicago area was visited by a flight of this species, about sixteen being reported at different times. Previously there were only three records, to my knowledge, for the State, viz: one taken in Chicago by Dr. J. W. Velie in 1876; another later at Philo, Illinois, by Isaac E. Hess; and the third seen by Eliot Blackwelder at Morgan Park in 1894. The recent records are:

October 7, while at Beach, Mr. Stagg called my attention to a woodpecker which, when taken, proved to be a female Three-toed.

October 31, Mr. Karl W. Kahman, a taxidermist of Chicago, came into possession of a female which had been shot by a boy west of Evanston.

November 20, I saw a female on one of the main streets of Evanston and later heard of one being seen near there, probably the same bird.

November 26, Mr. Edward R. Ford observed a female on a busy street on the north-west side of the city.

Mr. H. L. Stoddard has already reported a number from the Sand Dunes in Indiana (Auk, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 and Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1) to which I wish to add another taken by him November 21, 1920, and three reported by Dr. C. W. G. Eifrig, November 26. Five others were also

reported from the Dune country during October and November. All birds reported from Illinois were females while those from Indiana, with two exceptions, were males.

7. **Colaptes auratus luteus.** NORTHERN FLICKER.—One seen February 6, 1921. I have seen this bird in the Sand Dunes in Indiana in February but this is my first winter record for Illinois.

8. **Agelaius p. phoeniceus.** RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.—An abundant summer resident but I was surprised to find one on December 17, 1917. It was shot by Mr. Stoddard and proved to be a male in good condition.

9. **Sturnella magna.** MEADOWLARK.—February 13, 1921, one seen near Dead Lake. A number of others were reported from different parts of the area due no doubt to the warm winter. I have questioned the species as three forms occur here, *magna* and *m. argutula* being about equally abundant and *neglecta* occasionally reported.

10. **Loxia curvirostra percna.** NEWFOUNDLAND CROSSBILL.—I first met with these birds on October 29, 1916, a cold, disagreeable day, with a strong north wind and occasional flurries of rain and snow. I did not expect to see much of interest on such a day but arriving at Beach I found large flocks of birds in the pines, which I soon identified through my glasses, as Crossbills. Due to the wind and the wildness of the birds, it was late in the afternoon before any were taken. Then I found three in the top of a pine and shot one. To my surprise the others did not leave so I took them both. This behavior proved to be typical from my experience with them later. When in large flocks they are wild or restless and hard to approach but when only two or three are together they can almost be caught by hand.

Mr. Coale and I had noticed the difference between these birds and *minor*, so with Mr. Stoddard we again visited Beach, November 5, and found the Crossbills still plentiful. They were feeding quietly in the pines and were not easy to see. One White-winged Crossbill seen among them is my only record for 1916. On subsequent trips, on November 19 and 26, and December 3, we found *percna* in large flocks; December 17, none were seen. The last record was January 11, 1917, when Mr. John Douglas sent one to Mr. Coale in the flesh.

During the next two years I was in the army so Mr. Coale kindly took up the work of identifying the Crossbills. He writes as follows:

"I am glad to be able to identify the large Crossbills we took at Beach, Illinois, October 1916 to January 1917, as the Newfoundland Crossbill, *Loxia curvirostra percna*, described by Mr. Bent in 1912. (Smithsonian Misc. Coll., Vol. 60, No. 15.)

"A number of specimens of *Loxia* from Illinois, Wyoming and Europe were sent with some of the new form to ornithologists for comparison. I quote from some of their letters:

"Mr. Robert Ridgway: 'You can safely label your specimens *Loxia curvirostra percna*, and the Wyoming birds *Loxia curvirostra bendirei*.'

"Dr. Witmer Stone: (who at the time had no others of the new race for comparison), 'I have no doubt that those obtained in 1916 in Illinois, are *Loxia c. percna*, the two little ones are of course *minor*, the Wyoming birds *bendirei*, and the European specimens true *curvirostra*.'

"Mr. J. H. Riley: 'I have shown your Crossbills to Mr. Oberholser, who is of the opinion that the large Illinois birds are *Loxia c. percna* Bent.'

"Mr. Bent: 'The box of Crossbills is very interesting. I have not had time to examine them critically, but off hand I should say that the two birds so marked are undoubtedly '*percna*.'

"In January, 1921 I had the pleasure of visiting several of the large eastern museums, and further confirmed the fact already established, that the large Illinois birds are *percna*."

Measurements given below were taken from fresh specimens before skinning (all collected at Beach):

H. K. C. No.	<i>Loxia c. minor.</i>	Average
22630 F. Nov. 30, 1919.	Length 5.6 in. Extent 9.7 in.	2 females
10774 F. Nov. 9, 1906.	Length 6. in. Extent 10.75 in.	L. 5.8
10772 M. Nov. 9, 1906.	Length 6 in. Extent 10.50 in.	Ex. 10.23
		2 males
22629 M. Nov. 30, 1919.	Length 5.75in. Extent 9.75 in.	L. 5.87
		Ex. 10.13
	<i>Loxia c. percna.</i>	Average
20452 M. Oct. 29, 1916	Length 7 in. Extent 11.25 in.	3 males
20489 M. Dec. 3, 1916	Length 6.5 in. Extent 11.10 in.	L. 6.83
20610 M. Jan. 11, 1917	Length 7. in. Extent 10.20 in.	Ex. 11.18
		2 females
20484 F. Nov. 26, 1916	Length 6.5 in. Extent 11.30 in.	L. 6.66
20153 F. Oct. 29, 1916	Length 6.82 in. Extent 11.20 in.	Ex. 11.25

A number of other specimens of *percna* taken from the same flock are in the collections of the Field Museum (in the Harris Extension Coll.) and of Mr. E. E. Armstrong of Chicago.

11. **Acanthis l. linaria.** REDPOLL.—This winter (1920-21) is the first year for some time that I have not seen Redpolls. They were formerly here from early fall to late spring.

12. **Spinus pinus.** PINE SISKIN.—December 26, 1915, I found large flocks feeding in the weed patches. Have not seen many since although they have been reported commonly from the Dunes.

13. **Plectrophenax n. nivalis.** SNOW BUNTING.—Very common during the fall of 1916, from October to January; not many seen again until 1920, when they were here once more in large numbers.

14. **Spizella p. passerina.** CHIPPING SPARROW.—This was a very common bird about Chicago before the English Sparrow was introduced;

now it is only locally common. Beach is one place where it still holds its own. They first came to my notice on June 12, 1915, when with Mr. W. A. Goelitz we found three nests, one with large young, and two with fresh eggs. Another nest was found June 5, 1920. Mr. Coale has taken only one specimen near Highland Park.

15. **Junco hyemalis connectens.** SHUFELD T'S JUNCO.—One taken March 19, 1916 from a flock of *hyemalis*. There are only two other records for the State that I know of. February 20, 1887, Mr. H. K. Coale took a male at Waukegan (Auk, Vol. IV, page 330) and on December 16, 1892, Mr. William E. Praeger took one on the Illinois shore opposite Keokuk, Iowa, no sex given. (Auk, Vol. XII, No. 1).

16. **Melospiza l. lincolni.** LINCOLN'S SPARROW.—A specimen collected by Mr. Stephen S. Gregory, December 26, 1920. It is a fairly common migrant but I know of no other winter record.

17. **Lanius borealis.** NORTHERN SHRIKE.—Mr. Stephen S. Gregory reported one of these birds December 26, 1920. Another was caught at Waukegan by Mr. W. I. Lyons who has been doing extensive trapping and banding work. The Shrike entered the trap after a Junco which it killed. It is a rare winter resident.

18. **Bombycilla garrula.** BOHEMIAN WAXWING.—There was a large flight of Waxwings during the winter of 1919-20. (Auk, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2.) Mr. H. L. Stoddard and I were in the pines the day many of them arrived, November 30, from six-thirty until noon, during which time flocks of fifty to one hundred passed steadily every five or ten minutes. There was a high wind and the birds were very restless swirling about like snowflakes, dropping down near a dead tree as if to alight, and then swinging up and away to the south. A flock stopped now and then to feed but for the most part the birds were migrating, following the edge of the Lake, for none were seen more than a quarter of a mile from the beach. Once about seventy-five birds lit on the frozen surface of Dead River, making a picture I shall long remember, but it was for only a minute as the last ones had hardly alighted when the first were up and away. We estimated that about fifteen hundred of the birds passed that day.

December 3, I found only one stray Waxwing, but on December 31, there were two large flocks present, about one hundred and fifty birds. This was the last time they were seen at Beach but were found throughout the winter in the Sand Dunes.

19. **Dendroica vigosii.** PINE WARBLER.—These Warblers used to breed at Beach a good many years ago, but at present are rare even as migrants. My only record is a male taken May 7, 1921.

20. **Lanivireo s. solitarius.** BLUE-HEADED VIREO.—One taken November 5, 1916, a very late record for this region.

21. **Baeolophus bicolor.** TUFTED TITMOUSE.—Mr. Coale took one November 5, 1916. There are a few seen every year and one record of a

pair breeding at Lake Forest. They seem, like the Cardinal, to be gradually extending their range to the north.

22. *Sitta canadensis*. RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH.—Very common during the falls of 1915, 1916 and 1921. Other years only a few have been seen.

23. *Poliophtila c. caerulea*. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.—Some years a very common migrant during May. A male was taken May 31, 1920 in the oak scrub and later the same day and throughout June a female was seen in the pines, generally in the same place and always uttering a plaintive call. I spent a great deal of time watching her on different occasions but if there was a nest it was never found. Dr. Eifrig reported seeing several May 30, 1921, and I intended making a search for a nest but my trip was delayed until July 24. On this date, I had just started through the oak scrub when I heard the call of the Gnatcatcher and found five in a small oak, two adults and three young. The young were almost fully grown and were catching insects for themselves but I saw the parents feed them a number of times. When the old birds approached the young opened their mouths and quivered their wings. This is a rare breeder in north-eastern Illinois but is more common in the Sand Dunes in Indiana.

24. *Hylocichla g. guttata*. ALASKA HERMIT THRUSH. Mr. Coale took this bird November 5, 1916, and has already reported it in 'The Auk' (Vol. XXXIV, No. 1) being the first record east of the Rockies.

25. *Planesticus m. migratorius*.—ROBIN. Robins sometimes spend the winter in this region; seen December 31, 1914 and February 18, 1917.

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THE ROLE OF THE "ACCIDENTAL."*

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL.

The total number of species and subspecies of birds recorded upon definite basis from California amounts at the present moment to 576. Examination of the status of each species, and classification of the whole list according to frequency of observation, show that in 32 cases out of the 576 there is but one occurrence known. In 10 cases the presence of the species has been ascertained twice, in 6 cases three times, and for all the rest there are 4 or more

* Contribution from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California.