

only the weaker perished, but nevertheless, we shall miss our family of Phoebes this summer.—WENDELL P. SMITH, *Wells River, Vt.*

Notes from Cobb's Island, Virginia.—The results of a trip to Cobb's Island, Va., by the undersigned in company with R. O. Bender and B. C. Hiatt on June 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1929, seem to offer enough contrast to those of the Kuerzi brothers in 1927 (See 'Auk,' January, 1929) to make them worthy of attention.

On June 8, Hiatt and Worth discovered two Black-necked Stilts feeding daintily on a small marshy pond near the northern end of the island. They were not flushed, in hopes that they might still be there when Bender had been summoned to see them, but about an hour later a thunder-storm came up, and the birds disappeared. Nor were they to be found there during the following days, thus precluding the supposition that they were breeding birds, as had been fondly hoped. Another rather interesting record is that of a Savannah Sparrow, seen by Worth on June 11, probably a summering non-breeder or a very late migrant. Three Red-backed Sandpipers seen on June 9 by Bender and Hiatt, as well as numerous Sanderlings present during the entire visit, are not mentioned in the Kuerzi's list of shore birds, but as this visit was earlier in the season than theirs, it is not surprising that they were not seen.

A census of the other water birds of the island is interesting because of the unaccountable rarity of certain of them, and the relative abundance of others: Herring Gull, 6; Laughing Gull, 1000; Common Tern, 75; Forster's Tern, 50; Gull-billed Tern, 25; Least Tern, only 10; Roseate Tern, only 1 identified (Bender and Hiatt); Black Skimmer, 1000 (two colonies of 250 and 750); Double-crested Cormorant, 50 (mostly seen migrating north); Red-breasted Merganser, 6; Clapper Rail, 50; Dowitcher, 25; Knot, 75; Semipalmated Sandpiper, 1000; (Least Sandpiper not seen); Willet, 40; Black-bellied Plover, 30; Ruddy Turnstone, 20; Semipalmated Plover, 3; Piping Plover, 2; Wilson's Plover, 20; Oyster-catcher, 20. This includes the birds found on Cordwell's Island, as this is so close to Cobb's as to be practically continuous with it. However, Willets and Wilson's Plovers seemed to be the only breeders on Cordwell's besides a solitary pair of Oyster-catchers. All the Gulls, Skimmers, Terns, and the rest of the Oystercatchers nested on Cobb's.

Probably the most interesting, though tragic, event of the trip was the "Nor'easter" which virtually wiped out all the nests on the islands, and incidentally ruined all chances for banding and photography. On June 8, about 4:00 P. M., the thundershower which probably put the Stilts to flight changed to a heavy downpour. This in turn soon turned into a regular storm with heavy winds and a driving rain. The following day it continued incessantly. That night (June 9-10) the first tragedy occurred. A remarkably high tide, caused no doubt by the gale, swept over the beach and marshes, flooding out all the Laughing Gull and Forster's Tern colonies as well as most of the Skimmers' and Gull-billed and Common

Terns' nests, only those in the highest dunes escaping. Whereas on the day before there had been a large number of Skimmers' and a few Terns' nests dotted along the beach, the next morning's search revealed only twenty nests of Skimmers and a few of Terns which had escaped due to their being built on higher ground. The Laughing Gulls and Forster's Terns in the marshes had fared even worse, for not a single nest was left. A short walk revealed tragedy after tragedy: Gulls nests, with the eggs still in them, were seen floating sedately out to sea; eggs were strewn over the sand in profusion, and here and there a Laughing Gull or Crow (Sp?) was seen feasting on them; at intervals a stray Skimmer would be seen hawking over this scene of desolation, "yowping" disconsolately; everywhere was havoc and confusion and destruction. Occasionally a nest would be found which the devoted parents had not left in spite of the wind, rain, and tide. The eggs were usually half buried, or perhaps there was only one left, but it would be unmistakably an undeserted nest, for the outline of the bird would be clearly visible, mute evidence of how it had sat facing the wind, while the driven sand had slowly piled up against its breast until it had formed a bank an inch or more in height, slowly burying the bird alive, until in desperation it, too, had yielded to the urge for self-preservation and left its treasures to the whims and caprices of the elements.

The Clapper Rails suffered from the storm also, although it was not possible to determine accurately to how great a degree. Several adults and young birds were found drowned, and a large number of eggs, some of them already pipped, were washed ashore. Captain Cobb saw a Laughing Gull carrying off a half-grown young one, still alive, but fortunately rescued it. Under his house he found five more of various sizes marooned on a log, and huddled together, but after keeping them in a basket until they dried out and feeding them some fiddler crabs, they became lively. On being released in a drier part of the marsh, they melted away into the grass, apparently none the worse for their experience.

But the night of June 10-11 was not yet past. If the previous one had not been disastrous, this one was unmistakably so. The rain had ceased on the afternoon of the 10th, but the wind was still strong, and the tide came up higher than ever that night. The remaining few Skimmers' nests were washed away, and only one solitary Tern's nest could be found on the next morning. Even the young Barn Swallows had been swished out of their nests under the house and drowned. Possibly only the Willets escaped, since their nests were usually on the highest dunes.

Although several new nests had already been scooped out by the Skimmers, Captain Cobb predicted that only a few of the birds would nest again, so that the season this year seems to have been a glorious failure!—

C. BROOKE WORTH.