

A FIFTY-YEAR COMPARISON.

BY BAYARD H. CHRISTY.

SANDUSKY BAY opens from the southernmost corner of Lake Erie and extends westward about twenty miles. It is quite shallow, its shores are low and level, and between land and water extends a broad border of marsh. Streams enter the head of the bay through long finger-like approaches. The property of the Winous Point Shooting Club lies across the northernmost of these fingers—that fed by Mud Creek—and includes the marshlands of the opposite shores. The open water is about a mile wide, and the extent of the marshes on either side is not less, so that from land to land the distance is about three miles. The club property extends a mile or more up and down the bay.

The predominant marsh plant is the cat-tail. It stands in densest ranks and spreads over acres upon acres. The margins of the cat-tail marsh are deeply indented; ponds open within its extent; and channels wind through. These open spaces are more or less grown up with minor forms of plant life: the bur-reed, the deer's tongue, the bulrush; lotus, pond-lily, and pickerel-weed. Subaqueous plants choke the shallows. They lift delicate yellow blossoms in air, and their bleached masses, humped above the surface, give from a distance a semblance to sand-bars.

The continuity of the marsh is interrupted by islands grown with forest trees. Winous Point itself is such an island; it is joined to the mainland by an artificial causeway. In these islands stand elms, oaks, hickories, poplars, willows, and trees of other sorts; and, where opportunity affords, bushes and vines and annual plants, in such luxuriance as to form all but impenetrable covers. At the end of June the shadowy borders of the woods are lit with masses of clustering, wide-petaled roses; the charm and effect are heightened by the range of hue, from carmine buds to pale broad blossoms. Beyond the marsh, the dry land, elevated but a few feet above lake level, extends away in an apparently limitless plain. It is wholly devoted to agriculture, with interspersed small areas of woodland.

The ever-moving cat-tails, the distant shadowy woods, the

silvery glimpses of open water, and the wide sky, are the elements of an unusual and beautiful landscape.

Besides the birds, the forms of animal life chiefly in evidence are the muskrats, which cut wide swaths in the cat-tails, and the carp (introduced in 1883), which in their spawning wallow in the shallows and start with sudden splash when disturbed. In this their season mosquitoes and other nuisances abound.

A half-century ago, during the week which ended July 4, 1880, two young men from Cincinnati visited Winous Point and made a list of the birds which they observed. They were Frank W. Langdon, who has since become a widely known physician and consultant in nervous and mental disorders, and J. Bonsall Porter, a son of a member of the club. Dr. Langdon compiled the list with annotations, and published it, under the title "Summer Birds of a Northern Ohio Marsh," in *The Journal of the Cincinnati Society of Natural History*, in the issue of October, 1880 (III, 220-232). In preparing the list, Dr. Langdon added to it other species which his companion reported to him as species observed on earlier summer visits.

Mr. John B. Semple of Sewickley, Pennsylvania, a present member of the club, and the writer, as his guest, were interested to go over the ground again, on the fiftieth anniversary of the visit of Messrs. Langdon and Porter, to make another list, and to check it against and to compare it with theirs. They, accordingly, visited Winous Point, and between the evening of June 30 and the morning of July 3, 1930, made their observations. The results appear in the following list. Dr. Langdon's arrangement and nomenclature have been revised; in a very few instances doubts respecting his identifications have been noted.

The observers of 1880 manifestly were much engaged in nest-hunting and egg-collecting; the observers of 1930, with less time at their disposal, made no such effort. The first statement under each species is Dr. Langdon's while following the date "1930" is that of the later observers.

SPECIES OBSERVED BY DR. LANGDON.

Colymbus auritus. HORNED GREBE.

1880. [Listed on the strength of a conjecture.]

1930. Not found.

Podilymbus podiceps. PIED-BILLED GREBE.

1880. [Six nests containing eggs (of the second brood) observed.]

1930. Frequently seen, accompanied by well-grown young.

Ardea herodias. GREAT BLUE HERON.

1880. Very common, and as shy as usual.

1930. Very common.

Botaurus lentiginosus. AMERICAN BITTERN.

1880. A few specimens only observed. Breeds (*Porter*).

1930. Observed frequently.

Ixobrychus exilis. LEAST BITTERN.

1880. Quite common. . . . [Eggs taken].

1930. Quite common.

Nyroca affinis. LESSER SCAUP.

1880. Small flocks observed daily during our stay. One individual, in a helpless condition, floated up to the dock, and was brought ashore by a retriever very gently, but died in a few hours.

1930. Not found.

Mergus merganser americanus. MERGANSER.

1880. One specimen observed, evidently disabled, though still capable of distancing a sail-boat.

1930. Not found.

Haliaeetus leucocephalus. BALD EAGLE.

1880. Several specimens observed during our stay, flapping lazily over the marsh or taking a siesta on some projecting snag. [A nest described.]

1930. Very common. To be seen at all hours. Birds both in adult and immature plumage. Knowing the existence of a nest in one of the "elm islands," we did not take time to look it up.

Falco sparverius. SPARROW HAWK.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Colinus virginianus. BOB-WHITE.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Frequently heard whistling on grassy uplands adjacent to the marsh.

Rallus elegans. KING RAIL.

1880. One specimen taken by Mr. Porter, July 3d.

1930. Not found.

Gallinula chloropus cachinnans. FLORIDA GALLINULE.

1880. A very common species, breeding abundantly in the more open portions of the marsh. [Eggs taken and young observed.]

1930. Very common; the most abundant aquatic bird. Empty nests found and half-grown young frequently seen.

Fulica americana. COOT.

1880. A few only observed . . . A nest containing two fresh eggs. . . .

1930. Abundant. Well grown young frequently seen in company with parents.

Philohela minor. WOODCOCK.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. One flushed. The steward of the club, Leonard Jones, reported a nest this spring in woods near the club-house. He observed the sitting bird. The nest was afterward destroyed by high water.

Actitis macularia. SPOTTED SANDPIPER.

1880. Common.

1930. Common.

Sterna hirundo. COMMON TERN.

1880. Four specimens taken and others observed by Mr. Porter. We were informed that the "larger" Terns (probably this species) are quite plentiful in the marsh during rough weather, which drives them in from the lake.

1930. Noted twice or three times, singly or in pairs, flying over bay or marsh; and, on another occasion, in late afternoon, a compact company of 30-40, flying rather high, up the bay and up the wind, toward an approaching shower. Swallows in the air with them.

Chlidonias nigra surinamensis. BLACK TERN.

1880. A very common summer resident in the marsh; nesting. . . In no instance did we succeed in flushing a bird from the eggs, although they would appear in pairs to the numbers of twenty or thirty and hover about within a few feet of our heads making a great outcry when we approached their property. . . At other times the birds were not at all gregarious, being usually observed foraging singly or in pairs. . .

1930. Common. Possibly less abundant than Dr. Langdon's comment would suggest.

Zenaidura macroura carolinensis. MOURNING DOVE.

1880. Nest containing half-fledged young observed July 2d.

1930. Very common. Many young flown from nests.

Otus asio naevius. SCREECH OWL.

1880. Two specimens, young of the year, taken; both were in the gray "phase" of plumage.

1930. One seen, in red phase.

Chaetura pelagica. CHIMNEY SWIFT.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Abundant.

Megaceryle alcyon. BELTED KINGFISHER.

1880. Common.

1930. Common.

Colaptes auratus luteus. NORTHERN FLICKER.

1880. [No comment.]
1930. Common.

Melanerpes erythrocephalus. RED-HEADED WOODPECKER.

1880. Common.
1930. Common.

Dryobates pubescens medianus. DOWNY WOODPECKER.

1880. [No comment.]
1930. Common in woods adjacent to the marsh.

Tyrannus tyrannus. KINGBIRD.

1880. In the woods and groves bordering the marsh we met with this species in greater numbers than I have ever seen it elsewhere; they were not in flocks, but in some places almost every tree appeared to be occupied by a pair of these vociferous insect-collectors. The abundance of the "deer fly" and other insect pests about the marsh at this season is such that the Kingbird is an exceedingly welcome addition to the fauna.
1930. Abundant. Dr. Langdon's words, if applied to the present status, are not inappropriate; perhaps "almost every tree" would be thought hyperbole; but Dr. Langdon suggests as much.

Sayornis phoebe. PHOEBE.

1880. In spite of the abundance of insect food we observed but a few of this species.
1930. One noted.

Empidonax minimus. LEAST FLYCATCHER.

1880. One specimen taken.
1930. Not found.

Myiochanes virens. WOOD PEWEE.

1880. Common.
1930. Common.

Iridoprocne bicolor. TREE SWALLOW.

1880. An abundant species; the prevailing Swallow of the locality. Numerous young of the first brood observed on the wing in their peculiar silvery drab first plumage. On June 29th, a nest containing one addled egg and a young bird (probably of the second brood), was observed. . . .
1930. Present, but not abundant.

Riparia riparia. BANK SWALLOW.¹

1880. A few only observed.
1930. Not found.

¹Query: Could Dr. Langdon have mistaken the Rough-winged Swallow which he does not mention but which we found to be common, for this species?

Hirundo erythrogaster. BARN SWALLOW.

1880. Much less common than the [Tree Swallow]. First brood on the wing.

1930. Abundant; the most abundant swallow.

Petrochelidon albifrons. CLIFF SWALLOW.

1880. Many observed carrying mud; doubtless to repair their nests for the reception of the second brood.

1930. Not found. A neighboring farmer, in reply to a question, said that the swallows used to nest under the eaves of his barn; that the sparrows drove them away, and for a time there were few or none; and that now, nesting within the barn, they had increased in numbers. The farmer's confusion of two species needs but a word: the birds of the earlier years were Cliff Swallows; those of the later years, Barn Swallows.

Progne subis. PURPLE MARTIN.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Frequently seen in air; colonies in neighboring towns.

Corvus brachyrhynchos. CROW.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Common; less abundant, however, than might be expected.

Sitta carolinensis. WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Telmatodytes palustris. LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN.

1880. An abundant species, its lively, grasshopper-like notes resounding on all sides in the marsh. . . . Five eggs appear to constitute a full set, although we took sets of four that were slightly incubated; and while most of those taken were fresh, or nearly so, a few sets were far advanced in incubation. (July 2d.)

1930. Would accept Dr. Langdon's statement of abundance.

Dumetella carolinensis. CATBIRD.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Common; present in suitable localities.

Toxostoma rufum. BROWN THRASHER.

1880. Rather common.

1930. Not found.

Turdus migratorius. ROBIN.

1880. Common.

1930. Common.

Hylocichla mustelina. WOOD THRUSH.

1880. A few observed in the groves bordering the marsh.

1930. Not found.

Sialis sialis. BLUEBIRD.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Rare. Noted at Port Clinton.

Poliophtila caerules. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.

1880. Evidently this species is here much less common than in southern Ohio, as our only identification of it rests on the note of a single individual heard.

1930. Not found.

Lanius ludovicianus migrans.¹ MIGRANT SHRIKE.

1880. A single pair observed.

1930. A single bird seen by the highway near Sandusky.

Vireosylva olivacea. RED-EYED VIREO.

1880. Much less numerous than in southwestern Ohio, being evidently replaced to a great extent by the Warbling Vireo which was exceedingly common.

1930. Would accept Dr. Langdon's statement.

Vireosylva gilva. WARBLING VIREO.

1880. As above stated this species was found in considerable numbers, the woods and scattered groves on the borders of the marsh resounding with their musical and somewhat plaintive notes.

1930. Would accept Dr. Langdon's statement.

Dendroica aestiva. YELLOW WARBLER.

1880. A very common species in the willows bordering the marsh; young of the first brood observed on the wing.

1930. Would accept Dr. Langdon's statement.

Seiurus noveboracensis. NORTHERN WATER-THRUSH.

1880. One specimen only observed; so close that there could be no question as to its identity.

1930. Not found.

Geothlypis trichas. MARYLAND YELLOWTHROAT.

1880. Rather common, though not so abundant as would be expected considering the adaptation of the locality to its habits.

1930. Abundant.

Dolichonyx oryzivorus. BOBOLINK.

1880. A few specimens only observed.

1930. Common in fields at northern base of Winous Point.

Sturnella magna. MEADOWLARK.

1880. Common.

1930. Common.

Agelaius phoeniceus. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

1880. As would be expected the Red-wings were abundant in the marsh, rising before us at every few yards from their nests. . .

At the time of our visit the young of the first brood were on the

¹ Dr. Langdon, following Coues, identifies the shrike of the region as the White-rumped Shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides* (see, in this connection, his note in the 'Nuttall Bulletin' for April, 1879, 120). The subspecies of the Loggerhead and their ranges were subsequently (1893) worked out by Wm. Palmer (*Auk*, XV, 244), and the birds of the northeastern United States were segregated as a distinct subspecies and named *L. l. migrans*.

wing, and the second set of eggs had evidently not yet been completed in most cases, as most of the nests observed contained but two or three eggs, which were quite fresh.

1930. Very abundant. Dr. Langdon's notes apply to present conditions.

Icterus spurius. ORCHARD ORIOLE.

1880. Common.

1930. One pair noted, nesting near the club-house; a second pair along the highway, two miles away. Manifestly not a common species.

Icterus galbula. BALTIMORE ORIOLE.

1880. Common.

1930. Not common. A family party noted; the young able to fly. Possibly, since now the birds are all but silent, they are more plentiful than would seem.

Quiscalus quiscula aeneus. BRONZED GRACKLE.

1880. [Several shot for identification.]

1930. Very common.

Molothrus ater. COWBIRD.

1880. Common.

1930. Common.

Richmondia cardinalis cardinalis. CARDINAL.

1880. Not common; only two or three individuals observed.

1930. Fairly common and well distributed in thickets adjacent to the marsh.

Passerina cyanea. INDIGO BUNTING.

1880. Very common.

1930. Certainly present and well distributed. I should be disposed to drop the *very* from Dr. Langdon's comment.

Spiza americana. DICKCISSEL.

1880. Three or four specimens observed and taken.

1930. Not found on this visit. Three years ago (1927) a colony was found in a clover field, within a mile to the northward from Winous Point. This year (1930) the clover crop was poor and the fields few. A hasty survey of fields of clover and of alfalfa passed on the way from Winous Point to Port Clinton failed to disclose the bird.

Passer domesticus. EUROPEAN HOUSE SPARROW.

1880. Common at Port Clinton, within five or six miles of the marsh.

1930. Abundant about the club buildings and on adjacent farms.

Astragalinus tristis. GOLDFINCH.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Common.

Poocetes gramineus. VESPER SPARROW.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Noted on farms north of Winous Point, along the highway.

Spizella passerina. CHIPPING SPARROW.

1880. Common.
1930. Not found.

Melospiza melodia. SONG SPARROW.

1880. Common.
1930. Common.

SPECIES LISTED BY LANGDON, *vide* J. B. PORTER

Gavia immer. LOON.

1880. Three or four specimens observed in summer.
1930. Not found.

Pelecanus erythrorhynchos. WHITE PELICAN.

1880. One or two instances of the occurrence of this species in summer are noted.
1930. Not found.

Phalacrocorax auritus. DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT.

1880. Two specimens, male and female, taken in June, 1878.
1930. Not found.

Casmerodius albus egretta. AMERICAN EGRET.

1880. Usually common in August and September.
1930. Mr. Semple in the late summer of 1929 observed a flock of twelve, which roosted in woods near the club-house.

Butorides virescens. GREEN HERON.

1880. Breeds.
1930. Common; nest found.

Branta canadensis. CANADA GOOSE.

1880. Mr. Porter informs me that individuals of this species are frequently seen in the marsh in summer, having probably been crippled during the shooting season and thereby prevented from migrating.
1930. Not found.

Anas platyrhynchos. MALLARD.

1880. Breeds.
1930. Generally recognized to be a nesting species. The steward, well acquainted with the waterfowl, reported an individual feeding with his live decoys at the edge of the marsh.

Querquedula discors. BLUE-WINGED TEAL.

1880. Breeds; eggs taken in June.
1930. Notation regarding the presence of the Mallard applies to this species as well. We saw none, and surmised that already the birds might have lost their flight feathers and might be in hiding.

Nyroca americana. REDHEAD.

1880. One specimen, a male, taken June 28, 1879.
1930. Not found.

Nyroca valisneria. CANVASBACK.

1880. Of occasional occurrence in summer.

1930. Not found.

Charitonetta albeola. BUFFLEHEAD.

1880. Frequently seen and taken in summer.

1930. Not found.

Mergus serrator. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.

1880. Identified in summer.

1930. Not found.

Cathartes aura septentrionalis. TURKEY VULTURE.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Accipiter velox. SHARP-SHINNED HAWK.

1880. May, 1877.

1930. Not found.

Accipiter cooperi. COOPER'S HAWK.

1880. May, 1877.

1930. Not found.

Buteo borealis. RED-TAILED HAWK.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Bonasa umbellus. RUFFED GROUSE.

1880. Rare.

1930. Not found.

Meleagris gallopavo. WILD TURKEY.

1880. Rare.

1930. Not found.

Porzana carolina. SORA RAIL.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Identified once by its high, double-noted call.

Oxyechus vociferus. KILLDEER.

1880. Breeds.

1930. Several noted, among them birds of the year.

Capella delicata. WILSON'S SNIBE.

1880. Several shot in July, 1878.

1930. Not found.

Tringa solitaria. SOLITARY SANDPIPER.

1880. July, 1879-80.

1930. Not found.

Totanus melanoleucus. GREATER YELLOW-LEGS.

1880. July, 1879.

1930. Not found.

Totanus flavipes. LESSER YELLOW-LEGS.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. A party of four jumped in the marsh, and by whistling called back, within range of easy identification.

Pisobia minutilla. LEAST SANDPIPER.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Coccyzus americanus. YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Pair noted, calling constantly about borders of wood adjacent to the club-house.

Myiarchus crinitus boreus. CRESTED FLYCATCHER.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. A pair, repeatedly noted in coming and going through woods on Winous Point, gave the impression, perhaps subject to correction, that the species is a common one.

Penthestes carolinensis. CAROLINA CHICKADEE. [? The region is within the range of *atricapillus*.]

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Troglodytes aedon. HOUSE WREN.

1880. Breeds.

1930. Abundant in all suitable localities.

Bombycilla cedrorum. CEDAR WAXWING.

1880. Observed breeding in 1878.

1930. Two pairs noted in different places.

Pipilo erythrophthalmus. TOWHEE.

1880. [No comment.]

1930. Not found.

Spizella pusilla. FIELD SPARROW.

1880. Summer resident.

1930. A few noted on a farm adjacent to the south marsh.

SPECIES OBSERVED IN 1930, NOT LISTED BY LANGDON.

Nycticorax nycticorax naevius. BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.

Frequently seen, even in daytime, though usually about sunset.

Anas rubripes tristis. BLACK DUCK.

Jumped, usually in pairs. In the course of two days we saw three or four pairs. The young, inferentially not yet able to fly, escaped observation.

Aix sponsa. WOOD DUCK.

The duck most abundantly seen in the marsh. We surprised several family parties in sheltered bays amid the cat-tails. In one case the young, unable to fly, scurried away through the stalks.

Phasianus colchicus torquatus. RING-NECKED PHEASANT.

Common at edges of woods bordering the swamp.

Rallus virginianus. VIRGINIA RAIL.

One seen. A note believed to be theirs frequently heard. Generally regarded as common.

Bartramia longicauda. UPLAND PLOVER.

One seen in a stubble-field near the highway, a mile to the north of Winous Point.

Empidonax virescens. ACADIAN FLYCATCHER.

In woods at Winous Point, where the trees stood in water.

Stelgidopteryx serripennis. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW.

Common.

Prothonotaria citrea. PROTHONOTARY WARBLER.

A pair in damp woods at edge of the marsh near the club-house. One of the birds carried food in its bill, inferentially for its young.

Icteria virens. YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.

A pair in open, bush-grown, and dry woods near the club-house.

Setophaga ruticilla. REDSTART.

One pair, in woods adjacent to the south marsh.

Sturnus vulgaris. STARLING.

Abundant. Already gathered in flocks.

Passerculus sandwichensis savanna. SAVANNAH SPARROW.

Common in boggy pasture lands between Winous Point and the highway.

SUMMARY.

Total number of species named, 108. The list of 1880 includes 63 species actually observed; that of 1930, 69. Fifty species are common to the two lists.

In addition, and on the authority of Mr. Porter, Mr. Langdon included 32 species more. Of these, the observers of 1930 noted 9, and 3 others are recognized to be of regular occurrence. Twenty species remain, accredited by hearsay, and manifestly most of them are in any case stray birds—Loon, Cormorant, Pelican, Red-breasted Merganser, Butterball, Canvasback, Redhead,¹ Goose, Least Sandpiper, Greater Yellow-legs, Solitary Sandpiper, Turkey Vulture. Of the other eight it remains to note that the Snipe is doubtless regular but rare as a nesting species; the Wild Turkey was, even in 1880, a fabulous bird; the Ruffed Grouse is probably to be found only in extensive and remote forests; the three hawks,

¹ Elsewhere in this paper the permanence of environment is dwelt upon. In one particular there has been change. In 1883 the German carp was introduced, and immediately it became overwhelmingly abundant. It consumed certain duck foods, and, in consequence, the open-water ducks, which before had abounded, all but disappeared from these marshes. Verification in this regard is afforded in the results of a study of the records of kill of the Winous Point club, made some years ago at the instance of the club by Dr. T. S. Palmer, of the Biological Survey. These results have not been published, but Dr. Palmer has courteously permitted the writer to examine them.

Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Red-tail are as nesting species extinct; and the Towhee and Chickadee may be expected to be found sparingly.

Consideration of the lists of species actually observed will reveal these things:

Certain crescent species are present in larger numbers today than they were in 1880; notably the House Wren and the Bobolink.

Three introduced species, the European House Sparrow, the Pheasant, and the Starling, have attained normal abundance. Of these the sparrow alone had in 1880 made its appearance in the vicinity, and it then was a newcomer.

There seems to have been some advance of forms of southern association into the region. Dr. Langdon mentions the Yellow-breasted Chat as a bird which he expected but failed to find. It was found in 1930, and with it the Prothonotary Warbler. Dr. Langdon notes the Cardinal as rare; but in 1930 the Cardinal was found to be common, and present in all suitable places.

Certain recessive species have dwindled or disappeared, notably the Cliff Swallow, and also those orchard-frequenting species, the two orioles, the Chipping Sparrow, and the Bluebird. The Dickcissel is doubtfully holding its own.

The birds of prey, excepting the Bald Eagle and the Screech Owl, which still persist, were even in 1880, practically gone. Now they seem to be gone altogether. Neither the Marsh Hawk nor the Short-eared Owl, to which the environment is peculiarly suited, remains to breed. This condition is due, of course, to the widespread and deplorable misunderstanding of the place which these birds properly occupy in an avifauna, and to the all but universal practice of shooting them on sight. With the two exceptions named, there are no birds of prey at Winous Point in the nesting season.

For the rest, and in the main, the two lists are virtually identical. Although such terms, employed by Dr. Langdon, as "rare," "common," "abundant," and "very abundant," are relative; still, the general condition is indicated with sufficient precision, and this general condition has been found to remain unchanged.

That such is the case is reassuring. The Winous Point Club is eighty years old, and its territories today present physical con-

ditions of water, marsh, and woodland, identically as they were fifty years ago—indeed as they were primordially. The passing over of frequent aeroplanes is but a distant reminder of an altered world. Nor has there been during fifty years considerable change in the adjacent farm-land. This much is fairly to be deduced: that even in this world of change and of confusion, Nature remains constant. Wherever by care or by accident a particular ecology is in other respects preserved, a particular element of that ecology (it is the avifauna that we have been considering) will continue.

Sewickley, Pennsylvania.