

GENERAL NOTES

Yellow-crowned Night Heron nesting in Salem County, New Jersey.—On April 30, 1939, in a large swampy deciduous woods at Alloway, Salem County, New Jersey, with Mr. Cornelius McFadden, I found a Yellow-crowned Night Heron's (*Nyctanassa violacea*) nest. It held five fresh eggs and was about 45 feet from the ground in a large black-oak tree with wide-spreading boughs, and as far out from the trunk near the end of a horizontal branch. The female flushed reluctantly at our approach and flew about thirty yards, perched in a treetop where her mate joined her, and both birds watched me in silence as I climbed an adjacent tree to inspect their nest. This was the only heron nest of any species in the woods and on a subsequent visit, May 10, with several ornithologists, it could not be found.

While there are several breeding records of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Cape May County, always in colonies of the Black-crowned, this is the only record for southwestern Jersey and for Salem County, and the only solitary one ever found in the State.—RICHARD F. MILLER, 2627 N. Second St., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The American Bittern as a Stake-driver.—I have for many years been familiar with the 'song' of the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) and I long ago discarded the notion that there was anything mysterious in the fact that it sounded sometimes like an old-fashioned pump and sometimes like driving a stake, having learned by experience that, in my case at least, the difference was a mere matter of distance. Some writers have supposed that individual Bitterns differed, some being pumpers and others stake-drivers. I am confident that this is not the case. Others, even while recognizing that a stake-driver becomes a pumper upon approach, have curiously failed to notice which of the Bittern's three notes it is that carries farthest and have said that it was the last one, whereas I have always found it to be the middle one—the *ka* of the *oong-ka-choonk*. No less careful an observer than William Brewster fell into this error when in his 'Voices of a New England Marsh' (Bird-lore, 4: 43-56, 1902), as quoted by Bent in 'Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds' (and also by Forbush in 'Birds of Massachusetts'), he wrote, "All three syllables may be usually heard up to a distance of about 400 yards, beyond which the middle one is lost and the remaining two sound like the words *pump-up* or *plum-pudd'n* while at distances greater than a half mile the terminal syllable alone is audible, and closely resembles the sound produced by an axe stroke on the head of a wooden stake." Similarly another excellent observer, Dr. Charles W. Townsend, in 'Birds of Essex County, Massachusetts' (1905), says, "When the bird is a long way off . . . one hears only the final syllable, which resembles the driving of a stake in a bog." On the other hand, Bradford Torrey in 'The Auk,' 1889, pages 1-8, says: "The middle syllable is very strongly accented. . . . The middle syllable of the second bird was a veritable whack upon the head of a stake." And in a footnote Torrey adds: "I am aware, of course, that Nuttall and nearly or quite everybody else who has ever described or written the notes, has placed the accent upon the last syllable. Why there should be this discrepancy is to me inexplicable, but there is no point to which Mr. Faxon and I have attended with more carefulness, both on the day in question and since, and there is none on which we are more fully agreed." New England ornithologists of that time knew both Bradford Torrey and Walter