

GENERAL NOTES

Dexterous alighting maneuver of passenger pigeons.—I saw *Ectopistes migratorius* only once in my life, but I had an excellent view of the flock, and it made a deep and lasting impression. I was 13 years old. My diary of field-sports tells that on September 1, 1888, I was gunning for doves, *Zenaidura macroura*, near York, Pennsylvania. Suddenly there came into sight a flock of 150 to 175 wild pigeons. I had long been watching and hoping for them, and I tried unsuccessfully to stalk them.

What impressed me indelibly, and I have made a mental note of it ever since, was the compactness of their flock formation, their great rapidity of flight, and their alighting maneuver as they sped into a large white oak, standing alone in the corner of a grass-field, about 350 yards from me. Flying toward the tree, slightly above its crest, the compact flock suddenly dropped almost straight down, converged funnel-like nearly against the ground, and then rose sharply, almost against the tree-trunk, spreading into the branches above them.

I have never noted this collective pattern of alighting in any other species of birds. I believe this alighting maneuver was distinctive of the passenger pigeon.—HERBERT H. BECK, *Franklin and Marshall College Museum, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*.

Hummingbird killed by preying mantis.—Late in the afternoon of September 17, 1948, I saw a mantis poised on an orange-colored zinnia. When a hummingbird, *Archilochus colubris*, flew to the flower, the mantis seized the bird. I hastened to rescue the bird, but even after both had been removed to the ground the mantis would not release its hold. As the two were forcibly separated, bits of feathers held by the mantis were torn from the bird. The only blood to appear was from the bill of the bird.—CHRISTELLA BUTLER, *Grant Ave. and Ashton Road, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*.

Hummingbird captured by preying mantis.—In September, 1948, my neighbor, Mrs. O. K. Smith, heard a shrill bird-call early one evening. Presently she saw several hummingbirds, *Archilochus colubris*, circling around a blossom. The calls came from one bird that was being held in the grasp of a mantis poised on a flower. Mrs. Smith took the struggling bird into her hands, and it collapsed. She watched long enough to see it revive and fly away. There was a spot on its head where it was bleeding.—EARL M. HILDEBRAND, *Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, College Station, Texas*.

Scissor-tailed flycatcher in southern Louisiana in winter.—While traveling "Little Caillou Route," along Bayou Petit Caillou between Houma and Chauvin (Terrebonne Parish) in extreme southern Louisiana, Mr. Horace Whitten, biologist of Waubun Laboratories, Schriever, Louisiana, saw a pair of scissor-tailed flycatchers, *Muscivora forficata*, on December 2, 1947. The birds were near the highway and adjoining the Houma Naval Airport and when not in flight alighted on telephone wires and a nearby fence. He reported the observation to me and subsequently saw the birds several times between December 10 and 27. On January 4, 1948, we saw three of the birds at one time. The long, deeply forked tail, though somewhat abbreviated in two of the birds, was that of an adult in the other bird. These flycatchers were seen to very good advantage as they cavorted in the air, and it is my belief that they were a family group.

Oberholser's 'The Bird Life of Louisiana' (1938) lists the scissor-tailed flycatcher as "a rare spring and fall transient, from March 25 to April 10, and from October 4 to

October 6, in southern Louisiana." Oberholser's latest autumn date in Louisiana is October 6, 1889, and there are no winter records. I have been unable to find any other record of winter occurrences in the state. Howell and Green, in their works on Florida birds, report the species as not uncommon in winter in southern Florida; Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 179: 91, 1942) likewise reports winter records from southern Florida; Greene *et al.*, in their work on the birds of Georgia, have a single record of a wintering bird—at Tifton, southern Georgia, January 2 to February 9, 1943; Burleigh does not record the species in his study of the birds of southernmost Mississippi; Williams, Rice Institute, Houston, Texas, tells me that he knows of only two winter records of the species on the Texas coast in the last 15 years—at Galveston on December 14 and December 25, 1941, and at Rockport on December 6, 1942; and the species has appeared but once (1939) on the Christmas bird-counts recorded from the lower Rio Grande Valley since 1933. In view of the extreme scarcity of the species in winter along most of our gulf coastal area, the three birds wintering in southern Louisiana seem worth recording.—JOSEPH D. BIGGS, *Waubun Laboratories, Schriever, Louisiana.*

***Muscivora forficata* in Florida.**—In the Auk (65: 143, 1948) I saw a record for the scissor-tailed flycatcher, *Muscivora forficata*, in south Florida. It should be pointed out that this species is by no means rare at Key West. There are numerous records for that area. I saw at least three there on March 9, 1946, and even obtained kodachrome motion pictures of one. On April 4, 1942, I saw one near Homestead; on April 13, 1946, I observed another as far north as Cross City and on March 2, 1948, found one at Fort Meyers.—ALLAN D. CRUICKSHANK, *Rye, New York.*

Crested flycatchers nesting some distance from their foraging area.—Shackleford Banks is a narrow island on the North Carolina coast, just westward of Cape Lookout. The outer half of the island is a desolate stretch of barren sand, on which are scattered about the broken skeletons of a dead forest of red cedars killed by wind-driven sand. The inner half of the island is covered by a dense woodland formed chiefly of red cedar, live-oak, and yaupon holly. The inner margin of the sand forms a wall which is slowly advancing over the island and burying the woodland along an irregular line which now lies 400 to 800 yards from the outer beach.

In June, 1948, two nests of the crested flycatcher, *Myiarchus crinitus*, were found far out in the dead forest. The first (June 10) was in a weathered-out knothole in a nearly horizontal branch of a red cedar, about two feet above the sand. This tree stood 167 long paces, in a direct line, from the woodland at the edge of the sand wall, and 114 paces from the beach. Two birds were bringing food to the nest which contained at least three young. A second nest was discovered (June 11) in a similar location, about 1200 yards distant. This one was 274 long paces from the woods, only 97 paces from the beach. It was within sight and sound of the surf, in one of the outermost of the dead trees. Here also, two birds were busy feeding the five young.

In short observation periods on three separate days I saw these birds make ten round trips between the nest sites and the woodland carrying food to the young. Insects were not entirely lacking on the sandy waste since many large dragonflies hawked over it, but the strong onshore wind which always blows here in the summer kept the area decidedly clear of the mosquitoes, gnats, and several kinds of biting flies which are numerous in the woodland. Once, one of the parents, perching as usual for a moment on the nest-tree after a trip to the nest with food, darted out to catch a dragonfly within five feet of the nest and carried it inside. This was the only observation of the birds taking food over the sand waste. They habitually flew