

GENERAL NOTES

The Mexican Grebe, *Colymbus d. brachypterus*, at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.—Late on the afternoon of December 14, 1947, the writers caught a glimpse of a Mexican Grebe as it dove beneath the surface of Capitol Lake, not 20 feet from the shore. Though we were both familiar with the species as a result of our work in Mexico, we were so unprepared for the discovery that we could not immediately convince ourselves of the bird's identity. Lowery collected it, a male, weighing 131.8 grams, with testes measuring 2.5 by 4.5 mm. (Louisiana State Univ. Mus. Zool. No. 10604).

Capitol Lake is situated within the city limits of Baton Rouge, adjoining the park-like grounds of the present statehouse. It still appears on many maps as University Lake, a name that dates back to the days when the State University was located not far from its shores, and one that causes it to be confused with the larger body of water, sometimes called New University Lake, near the present site of the campus. Capitol Lake is about 80 acres in extent and has firmly banked edges, nearly devoid of aquatic vegetation.

The fourth edition of the A. O. U. Check-list (1931) gives the range of the Mexican Grebe in the United States simply as "southern Texas." It has been observed in that state as far north as Bexar County and as far east as Rockport, occurring as a permanent resident at both places. Either locality is more than 350 miles from Baton Rouge. Since the record is unprecedented and since the species occurs also in Cuba, only about 700 miles from Baton Rouge, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that our bird was of Texan origin. Accordingly, its identity was checked very carefully. Its measurements are as follows: chord of wing, 86 mm.; culmen from base, 23.8; tarsus, 31. The latter two measurements are large enough to fall well within the range of variation in a series of eight West Indian males, as given by Wetmore (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 93: 230-231, 1943). But the short wing, the very white underparts, and the light sides and flanks definitely place it with the geographically nearest race, *brachypterus*, of Texas, Mexico, and Central America.

The observation in Louisiana of birds whose breeding ranges lie entirely to the west of the state's westernmost meridian is a commonplace occurrence, involving at least 49 forms (McAtee, Burleigh, Lowery, and Stoddard, Wilson Bull., 56: 152-160, 1944). But the overwhelming majority of such birds also breed north of the state's northernmost parallel and appear in Louisiana in autumn and winter. They are, in other words, southbound migrants, and the cause of their presence to the east of their points of departure may be sought in some factor associated with fall migration. One such explanation is suggested by the apparent correlation between air trajectories and nocturnal migration (Lowery *in press*) and the fact that the winds of autumn and early winter often sweep into Louisiana out of the northwest. Instances of individuals that have proceeded in the opposite direction, from a southwestern breeding range toward the northeast, are extremely rare; and among them the case of the Mexican Grebe is practically unique in that it concerns a supposedly non-migratory species, of seemingly weak flight-power, so constructed that a forced landing on the ground would confront it with disaster. The Daily Weather Maps (U. S. Weather Bureau) for November and December, 1947, reveal no unusual meteorological conditions that could clearly account for the sort of displacement involved. In view of the fact that Baton Rouge is not, after all, a great deal farther north than Bexar County, Texas, one cannot help wondering whether a few pairs of Mexican Grebes may not be spending their lifetimes unnoticed in the vast reaches of the Louisiana

marshland.—GEORGE H. LOWERY, JR., AND ROBERT J. NEWMAN, *Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.*

First Ontario Specimen of the Eared Grebe, *Colymbus caspicus californicus*.—Among a number of waterfowl which met death by being carried over Niagara Falls, an Eared Grebe is of particular interest since it now represents the first preserved specimen of this species from Ontario (R. O. M. Z., No. 77014). The bird was found on February 6, 1950, on the Ontario side of the Niagara River below the Falls by Mr. Roy Muma, Conservation Officer of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests. It was somewhat emaciated but the plumage was in good condition. It is a female and is, except for a few coverts on the left wing which are worn and brownish, in fresh winter dress.

Reference to the inner primaries discloses the specimen to be typical of the western American race *californicus*. The dorsal area is essentially black, with no trace of pale tips on the feathers. The lores, crown, sides of head, hind neck and the terminal portion of the side and flank feathers are blackish. The chin and throat are greyish white, the foreneck and sides of neck are dusky, the breast and belly silvery white. The specimen measured 315 millimeters in length and 540 in wingspread. The culmen, 24 millimeters in length, is broader than high at the base and has a slight depression in the outline of the culmen at the center.

Previous records for Ontario are as follows: The first concerns one examined in the flesh, but not preserved, by Dr. [J. H.] Garnier. It was taken at Colpoy's Bay, Bruce County, Ontario, prior to 1886 and was recorded by T. McIlwraith (*Journ. and Proc. Hamilton Assoc.*, 1885-86: 47). The second is a sight record of a pair on April 28, 1948, at Carroll's Point, Hamilton Bay, by George North and recorded by James L. Baillie, Jr. (*Aud. Field Notes*, 2: 174).—L. L. SNYDER AND C. E. HOPE, *Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, Toronto.*

Observations on the Food Habits of the Double-crested Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax a. auritus*.—Buchheister (*Aud. Mag.*, 46: 14-25, 1944) and Gross (*Auk*, 61: 513-537, 1944) have remarked on the increased populations in recent years of the Double-crested Cormorant along the North Atlantic coast of the United States. Such an increase has also been obvious to marine fishermen who claim that the birds are a threat to the fishing industry. As a result of many requests from operators of herring weirs and herring seiners, control methods were initiated in 1944 by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Game. Later, the Maine Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries also cooperated in the effort.

Recently, I have been engaged in an investigation of the herring industry in Maine and have had the opportunity to hear about the "depredations" of this bird. In the minds of marine fishermen, the cormorant is obnoxious for several reasons. They believe that the bird's swimming and feeding activities within weirs or pound nets may disturb the impounded herring schools, and the fish may try to escape from the fishing apparatus. When the fish are held in a seine, there is no easy way of escape; but in a weir, the school may rush out of the entrance, if such has not yet been closed. They also claim that the birds consume enormous quantities of commercially important fish. It is interesting to observe that similar charges of maleficence are made against the hair seal, *Phoca vitulina*, in Maine.

Mendall (*Univ. Maine Studies, Sec. Ser.*, 38: iv-159, 1936) summarized the available data on the food habits of the Double-crested Cormorant and concluded that only a small part of the bird's food was commercially important species. His examination in 1935 of a large series of regurgitated meals revealed that unimportant scrap