

General Notes

BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS AND CLARKE NUTCRACKERS IN NEBRASKA

The winter of 1919-20 was marked by an unusual abundance of Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrula*) over the entire state of Nebraska. The first large flocks were noted in the Pine Ridge region of northwestern Nebraska early in November. On November 7, 1919, Mr. L. M. Gates noted large flocks of these birds in that region, where they were feeding on the cedar berries. During November these birds were noted in flocks of 75 to 100 among the evergreen trees in the cemetery at Fremont, Dodge county. At about the same time (November 2-23) a few birds put in an appearance at Wyuka cemetery at Lincoln, but large flocks were not noted until early in January. For approximately the month from January 8 on a flock of about 150 of these birds remained in Lincoln, feeding upon "apple mummies" in the orchards and upon various berries. About the middle of December large flocks of these birds began to be reported from various points in western Nebraska, they having come in following a severe snow and wind storm. They were reported from Trenton, Hitchcock county, Nebraska, as arriving about December 15 and remaining until early in January, feeding on the fruit of Russian olive trees and upon frozen crab apples hanging in the trees. Large flocks were reported as arriving at Gothenburg, Dawson county, on December 17, and feeding on the cedar berries. Other reports of flocks of these birds were received from Murdock, Cass county, Crete, Saline county, and Waco, York county. They even reached to Falls City, Richardson county, in extreme southeastern Nebraska, from where Mrs. Rosa Cleaver reported them present in large flocks for several weeks prior to the middle of February. Toward the end of February the large flocks began to disappear from southeastern Nebraska, though on February 28 Mr. L. M. Gates noted a large flock near Chadron, from which locality they had been largely absent during January, evidently moving north. A flock of about 15 birds appeared on the University Farm campus on March 6 and continued there until March 9 feeding on the berries of *Viburnum opulus*.

Ordinarily the Clarke Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) is a rather rare fall and winter visitor in Nebraska, but during the fall and early winter of 1919 they were fairly common in the northern and western parts of the state. Professor C. E. Mickel collected one in Sowbelly Canyon, Sioux county, on September 16. On October 27, Mr. L. M. Gates noted them at Chadron, on the

eastern edge of the Pine Ridge. During November they appeared at Oshkosh, Garden county, and spread eastward along the Platte to Gothenburg, Dawson county, and Kearney, Buffalo county. A specimen taken at Kearney on November 18 is now in the A. M. Brooking collection. Mr. A. B. Colvin of Gothenburg writes, under date of December 8, that a few of these birds appeared there in the winter of 1918-19 also.

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FURTHER NOTES ON THE DECREASE OF THE CAROLINA WREN

In the Auk, No. 2, April, 1919, page 289, Mr. Alex. Whetmore has an article relating to the decrease of the Carolina Wren in his section.

I have also noticed this decrease in Virginia, a little further south of Washington, D. C. These birds, as a rule, are resident the year round, and are found in pairs around some farm, often as much in evidence in winter as in summer. I have attributed their decrease, not so much to hard winters, with snow on the ground, as to the "Swat-the-Fly" movement in the rural districts during the last ten years. These wrens, as well as the House Wrens, feed extensively about the house and farm buildings, and feed on flies, spiders and other insects found under porches, barns, cow stables and other farm buildings. The use of poisoned arsenical fly paper to kill off flies in the above mentioned farm buildings has resulted in the killing of countless numbers of flies. I do not think that the wrens ever drink the water from the shallow receptacles in which the sheets of poisoned paper are placed, but I have seen the wrens hopping around on the porches of my country home, picking up the dead flies, and on the ground also after the flies had been swept from the porch. I have also noted them engaged in similar feeding,—in the cow stable. After watching them extensively while thus engaged, I have noticed they became weak and wobbly in their movements, and I have been able to catch them by hand; and within a short time they have died. For a number of years this has been going on, and both the Carolina and House Wrens, especially the former, have become scarce in this section. Of course the House Wren migrates, generally by September 1st, and so escapes the multitude of dead flies killed in September, the height of their season. If snow is on the ground, Carolina Wrens are seen extensively around the farm buildings, looking over the cobwebs, in which old flies, spiders and other in-