

GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

An Early Arrival of the Bobolink in Indiana.—On March 13, 1932, during a hurried trip to Ohio, as dusk approached and we were driving rapidly, we saw a lone Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) fly up and across the road into a field. I could not understand how that bird could be in this part of the country at that early date, for I never previously had seen it before May 4, with one exception. It generally is found, according to my past records for ten years, between May 4 and June 13, although these dates may not be those of first arrival. One year (1924), the Bobolink was seen April 6. That was my earliest record before this year. But we have had unusual winters the past two years, hardly knowing winter had been with us. I believe the Bobolink had come upon the heels of the mild winter, before it knew it was not yet time for migration. As a rule these birds come in flocks, as I have seen fifty or more males together before they separate, making it evident, as with some other migrants, that the males come first together. The Robins do this, the males appearing about two or three weeks before the females. Many different varieties arrive together, then separate. I have seen the Bronzed Grackles, Starlings, and others all feeding on the ground together in the early spring. Warblers and other small migrants do the same. Birds of many varieties collect together in the fall before returning to the south, but when they are nesting they will have nothing to do with the other birds of various species.—MRS. HORACE P. COOK, *Anderson, Ind.*

Further Comment on the Nesting of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.—I have read with much interest the note of Mrs. Horace P. Cook, of Anderson, Indiana, (*WILSON BULLETIN*, XLIV, p. 45), on the nesting of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea caerulea*). In more than forty years of observation I have never seen a nest of this species in a location other than on top of a horizontal limb. I have found them placed as Mrs. Cook describes, on top of the lower fork of a limb that branched vertically, so that the upper fork furnished some protection to the nest. Also, I have frequently noticed that the nests of both gnatcatchers and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds usually disappear in whole or in part soon after the young leave them, and the following incident suggests a reason.

I had located a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's nest about thirty feet up in a slender oak, and a few days after the young had left it I went to the place to collect it. After shinning about two-thirds of the way up to the nest, I paused on a limb to catch my breath. In less than a minute a gnatcatcher came to the nest, and with much twittering began to pull material out of it. She soon had a bill full and flew away to the south. Thoroughly interested, I waited, and in a few minutes she returned and carried away another bill full of material.

I came down and followed her line of flight directly to where she was building a new nest. I had no means of knowing whether or not it was the same bird building a second nest from the materials of a first nest.—JOHN B. LEWIS, *Amelia, Va.*

Ground-Nesting Birds.—Two very unusual records of ground-nesting birds have come under my observation, one of the Eastern Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura carolinensis*) and the other of the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*). In June, 1929, in crossing a field, I found where an Eastern Mourning Dove had

placed a few sticks to form a frail nest, which contained two white eggs, under a small overhanging tree, in the niche of the bank of a tiny stream. At New Vienna, in 1900, I found a Brown Thrasher's nest on the ground protected by a pile of osage-orange brush. In this section all of the early nestings of the Eastern Song Sparrow (*Melospiza m. melodia*) and of the Red-eyed Towhee (*Pipilo e. erythrophthalmus*) are placed on the ground. The second nests of the season of the Eastern Song Sparrow are placed from two to ten feet up, in weeds, shrubs, and small trees. The Red-eyed Towhee most generally builds a couple of feet high in a shrub for its second nesting. An exception to this was the placing of a nest on a corn stalk where the leaf-blade joined the stalk, about three feet from the ground.—KATIE M. ROADS, *Hillsboro, Ohio.*

A Flight of Franklin's Gulls in Northwestern Iowa.—On September 17, 1931, I noticed about one hundred Franklin's Gulls (*Larus pipixcan*) resting in a compact group on Medium Lake, just north of Emmetsburg, Palo Alto County, Iowa. This was at 9 A. M. They arose and seemed to leave the lake soon after. The rest of the day I spent looking over game range in Palo Alto, northwestern Kossuth, and eastern Emmet Counties. Over almost all this territory there was a continuous body of gulls, evidently feeding on some flying insect.

Until evening the birds were flying at heights of fifty to one hundred yards. Toward evening they gradually grew lower, until at 5 P. M. they were on or near the ground level. At the same time my car began to pass through insects. Evidently the insects themselves had changed the level of their flight. Samples were collected and submitted to Carl Drake, State Entomologist, for identification. Unfortunately the specimens were mashed in the mails, so that the species could not be determined. Dr. Drake wrote me they were flea-beetles of some kind. This flea-beetle was evidently the attraction for the gulls.

The flight of gulls was observed over an area covering a total of four townships in Palo Alto, five in Kossuth, and four in Emmet Counties, a total of thirteen townships. It may have been actually much larger. On the other hand, the gulls may have accidentally followed our route of travel, and thus not actually covered thirteen townships. The density is estimated to have ranged from one to two hundred gulls to forty acres. Assuming that it covered ten townships and that the density averaged two gulls to forty acres, the total number of gulls would have been about thirty to the section, 1,100 to the township, or 11,000 gulls on the observed area. The density probably averaged much more than two gulls to forty acres.

Frank Marnette of Arnold's Park, Kossuth County, Iowa, a competent observer, tells me that these inland flights of Franklin's Gulls are a regular autumnal phenomenon, but that in his county every individual returns each evening to Spirit Lake to roost.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Madison, Wis.*

The Philadelphia Vireo Near Nashville, Tennessee—On September 18, 1931, I was studying migrant warblers and vireos near my camp, Birds-I-View, some ten miles east of Nashville, Tennessee, when my attention was directed to the song of a bird about twenty feet away in an elm tree. Its notes were rather like those of a Red-eyed Vireo but more melodious, less continuous, and at times suggestive of the notes of the Purple Finch. Since vireos had practically ceased to sing I watched this bird very carefully as he moved sluggishly around just above my head. To my surprise there was a pale yellow color to the entire breast; and there were no wing bars as in the case of the White-eyed Vireo and