

GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

Woodcock and Whistling Swan in Iowa.—On March 26, 1936, I flushed an American Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) in the Backbone Park, Delaware County, Iowa. On the following day I noted seven Whistling Swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) on Swan Lake, in Johnson County, Iowa. Mr. E. B. Speaker, Field Supervisor of Fisheries, was with me on both occasions and also noted these birds. We took pictures of these birds observed in Johnson county.—W. W. AITKEN, *Iowa Conservation Commission, Des Moines, Iowa.*

The Mute Swan and European Widgeon in Ohio.—A Mute Swan (*Sthenelides olor*) was observed by Mrs. Skaggs and the writer at Gordon Park in a small area of open water in Lake Erie on January 26, 1936. The bird was with a number of Lesser Scaups and was about 150 feet from the observers. Since this species has established itself in the East in a wild state, the bird may have been one of that type. No escapes have been reported from this region. Dr. S. C. Kendeigh also saw the swan, but it was in flight and he did not get to see the bill, so took it for a Whistling Swan.

On March 28, 1936, several members of the Cleveland Bird Club, including the writer, saw an European Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*) on the lake of the Sherwin estate, near Willoughby, Ohio. The bird was observed under perfect conditions and was a male in good plumage. Mrs. Sherwin saw the bird first on March 26. On March 29 it was not to be found. There are very few records for this bird in Ohio.—MERIT B. SKAGGS, *Cleveland, Ohio.*

Do Herons Use Their Beaks as Spears?—In the March, 1936, number of the WILSON BULLETIN is an article on "Bird Life in Green Bay", by L. E. Hunter of Dallas City, Illinois, in which he says the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) stabs fish with its bill. I wonder if this can be proved. I once found a Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax hoactli*) with a broken wing. It shrieked fiercely and struck at my dog with open beak, and all the feathers raised on its neck. I called the dog off and it remained perfectly quiet while I picked it up and carried it some distance, but on seeing the dog, it again showed fight and struck at my throat. Luckily for me it did not strike spear fashion, but with open beak, making two scratches about an inch long, one on each side of my throat. It was a young bird in the immature plumage. But in the days of falconry, herons were supposed to be more or less dangerous to the attacking hawks and naturally one would suppose this meant using the bill as a spear.—WILLIAM P. HAINSWORTH, *North Andover, Mass.*

The Harris's Sparrow in East-Central Illinois.—In the paper on the Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) by Myron H. Swenk and O. A. Stevens, published in the September, 1929, number of the WILSON BULLETIN, it is indicated that in Illinois, except in the southeastern portion, this sparrow occurs fairly regularly, especially in the vicinity of Lake Michigan. However, in the east-central portion of the state, in the vicinity of Champaign and Urbana, it has been noted but eight times in the last quarter century. Of these records, the greater number fall in April and May, and in October, as would be expected. It was my pleasure to record this bird for the first time at Mahomet, Champaign County, Illinois, on March 3, 1936. There are other March records for Illinois, although they are few in number, as mentioned in the above paper. The bird

was not collected, but the observation was made under such conditions of light and distance that no error is possible. Of added interest is the fact that the bird evidently was one hatched last summer, for it still retained the plumage characteristic of such birds when seen passing through during the fall migration. The chin and throat were white, and the breast was marked with a horizontal band of black streaks and blotches. The "pink" or reddish bill was quite distinctive.—C. T. BLACK, *University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.*

The Snow Bunting in South Dakota.—The occurrence and distribution of the Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax n. nivalis*) in South Dakota is not thoroughly established. At present it is classified as a winter visitor. It is not readily studied, as it occurs irregularly in flocks, usually during or following a severe snow storm accompanied by low temperatures. Then, too, it is often confused by the casual observer with Hoyt's Horned Lark, also a winter visitor. However, the Snow Bunting is more plump and at a distance displays more white on the belly.

Records of its occurrence are more common for the east half of the state than for the west. S. S. Visher (WILSON BULLETIN, June, 1915) says for South Dakota, "common some winters; others rare." Norman Wood (*A Preliminary Survey of Bird Life of North Dakota*, 1923) says, "winter resident some years." Adrian Larson (WILSON BULLETIN, March, 1925) says for South Dakota, "irregular winter visitor." These records apply to the eastern half of their respective states.

During the past winter (1935-36) it was recorded from the western part of the state. The writer has observed it many times in flocks of various numbers during cold days, either flying or feeding in weed patches or in plowed fields where snow had blown off. About 1915 a flock was seen feeding around elevators at Vermillion. In the Museum bird skin collection there are four from Hutchinson County, taken during the winter of 1901; one from Miner County, 1899, and three from Sanborn County, 1915.—W. H. OVER, *University Museum, Vermillion, S. Dak.*

Bird Notes from Oklahoma.—The following sight records were made in Oklahoma during 1935. Reference to the *Birds of Oklahoma* by M. M. Nice (1931, revised edition) leads me to the belief that species herein mentioned are rare or uncommon in Oklahoma. For that reason, these notes are of some interest.

Lesser Snow Goose (*Chen h. hyperboreus*) and Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). A flock of thirty Lesser Snow Geese and two Blue Geese was seen at Ponca Lake, Ponca City, April 15. The birds were fed grain by city park patrolmen and remained in the vicinity until April 24.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*). One bird observed flying over Lake Spavinaw, Mayes County, September 20.

Florida Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus cachinanns*). One bird seen April 29 at Crystal Lake within the city of Woodward, Woodward County.

Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus* subsp.). A Dowitcher was observed in a rain-filled ditch ten miles north of Perry, Noble County, on April 15. Three others were seen October 6 on the west shore of Lake Overholser, Canadian County.

Sanderling (*Crocethia alba*). I noticed a flock of fourteen birds on a mud flat in the North Canadian River at Woodward, April 29.