

GENERAL NOTES

Leach's Petrel in Ontario.—On July 19, 1939, A. Burrelle of Cornwall, Ontario, took the first Leach's petrel, *Oceanodroma l. leucorhoa*, to be recorded for the Province. Mr. Burrelle noted the bird as different, picked it up and mounted it for preservation. It was found about two miles below Cornwall, Stormont County, on the St. Lawrence river and the mount is now in the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology.

Weather conditions, gales blowing inland from the seas, are supposed to be responsible for such oceanic strays. In this instance the weather had been fine for a number of days previously. A. J. Connor, Meteorological Division, Department of Transport, Canada, states in a letter: "For some days prior to the 19th there was a general tendency to north and northwest winds in the region of the Ottawa river, while about 8 A.M., on this date, the wind over Lake Ontario changed to a southerly direction for a few hours."—G. C. TONER, *Cataraqui, Ontario*.

European Widgeon at Pymatuning Lake, Pennsylvania.—On April 27, 1940, a male European Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*) was seen on the west shore of Pymatuning Lake by the writer, Vera Carrothers, Margarette Morse, and Mrs. Skaggs. The bird was viewed at about 80 feet in a good light and was in company with about 35 Baldpates. All of the ducks were in a little puddle in a field about 150 yards from the Ohio state line and were observed from our auto on U.S. highway No. 322.—M. B. SKAGGS, *Julian Road, South Euclid, Ohio*.

Crow Depredation on Heron Nesting Colonies.—In April 1939, a large colony of Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) and Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*) was found nesting in an "island" of timber known as the "Live Oaks" on the coastal prairie 9 miles south of Waller in Waller County, Texas. Within the woods, which covers about 300 acres, the land is low and poorly drained, and a creek which flows through the area spreads out to form several meanders. The birds were first observed on April 4 by Valgene W. Lehmann and the writer, and by April 10, approximately 1,500 Little Blue Herons and 3,000 Snowy Egrets were breeding. Their nests were concentrated in an area covering less than one acre. Nests were constructed in trees and shrubs from 6 to 30 feet above ground.

Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) discovered the nests before egg laying was completed, and by April 17 every nest containing heron and egret eggs had been destroyed. The only evidence remaining of their attempt to nest was empty nests and broken shells covering the ground. Most of the birds lingered about the area for some time; on April 20 many were seen congregated at ponds and along the winding creek. By April 30, however, 90 per cent of the herons and egrets had left the place.

Approximately 750 Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax naevius*) and 1,000 Yellow-crowned Night Herons (*Nyctanassa violacea*) also were observed nesting at the "Live Oaks." The Night Herons began nesting shortly before the Blue Herons and Egrets, and by April 20 most of the birds had been incubating eggs for some time. They were not nesting in a concentrated group. The nests, usually 30 feet or more above the ground, were spread throughout the area with never more than three or four in a single tree or group of trees. Crows were seen to attack Night Heron nests as early as April 20, although remains of from one to four eggs which were found beneath trees containing Night Heron nests gave evidence that predation had been going on prior to that date. The herons paid little attention to the Crows and permitted as many as two at one time to raid a nest and carry off eggs in their beaks. Several hours of observation on April 26

showed that Night Heron nests were not being molested seriously, and later observations indicated that many of the nests were escaping the ravages of the Crows.

The total number of Crows inhabiting the "Live Oaks" was estimated at less than 40. These apparently were breeding at the time of the nesting of the herons; one nest was found. Crows were observed to carry off eggs of the herons in their beaks and also to eat their contents at the victim's nest. Observations and broken shells examined indicated that the damage was done almost entirely by Crows. Several hundred Turkey and Black Vultures roosted at the area, but they were not seen to take part in the destruction. Blue Jays were common in the woods too, but none was observed at heron nests and two stomachs examined revealed no evidence of eggs. Mammals were probably responsible for some damage, since droppings (thought to be those of either racoon or opossum) containing heron egg shells were found in the fork of a live oak tree.

It appears, then, that Crows may be destructive to concentrated nesting colonies of Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets whose eggs form a readily available food supply for the young, but considerably less destructive to Night Herons whose breeding habits do not limit them to such small areas.—ROLLIN H. BAKER, *Texas Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, College Station, Texas.*

English Sparrow with an Abnormal Bill.—After seeing a notice in the "Martinsburg Journal" of the finding of a strange bird which appeared to be "a cross between a starling and a sparrow," I went to Mr. Clowser who had kept the "hybrid" in a glass jar outside the window of his barber shop. The bird proved



Figure 1. Sickle-billed English Sparrow.