

GENERAL NOTES

The Carolina Chickadee in Kansas.—W. A. Lunk (1952. *Wilson Bull.*, 64:7-21), in an interesting and useful paper on variation in the Carolina Chickadee (*Parus carolinensis*), has described a new form, *P. c. atricapilloides*, ranging from Kansas through Oklahoma to central Texas. Among the Kansas records, two listed from Douglas County aroused the curiosity of Wetmore, long familiar with that area through his undergraduate days at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. The Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) is common there, but the other species, except for this record, has never been reported. On inquiry, Lunk kindly indicated that the two skins concerned were at the University of Oklahoma, allegedly having been collected by Charles D. Bunker on September 10, 1898.

Sutton examined the two specimens, comparing them and their labels with all specimens of *P. carolinensis* and *P. atricapillus* in the collection, and consulting all available catalogues. Deciding, finally, that Wetmore, who knew Bunker and his methods well, should see all specimens of comparable locality, date, or catalogue number, Sutton sent a series of seven to Washington. With this material in hand, Wetmore decided that the two moot birds had been wrongly labelled through some clerical error.

Bunker was associated with the University Museum at Norman for a period. He not only collected at numerous localities in Oklahoma, but also took a small number of specimens near his home at Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas, during this connection. It was his practice to use small tags marked only with a number in the field, and to prepare labels with complete data on locality, date, and other details later. In some way these two Carolina Chickadees, which bore only field numbers, must have become confused with certain Lawrence specimens, and so were wrongly attributed to that locality.

The mixup becomes the more evident through direct comparison of the two moot birds with a specimen of Black-capped Chickadee that it appears was actually taken by Bunker at Lawrence on September 10, 1898. The "make" of this Black-cap and the type of its field label differ decidedly from the "make" and field label of the two Carolinas. The field number of the Black-cap is 89, of the other two 324 and 325 respectively. Obviously the three birds are not of the same series. It seems probable that the two Carolinas were taken not in Kansas, but in Oklahoma, and by another collector, and that they were labelled wrongly through some confusion later, when permanent labels were prepared.

The northern limit of *P. c. atricapilloides* in Kansas is not, therefore, Douglas County, but Meade, Greenwood, and Montgomery counties, instead, and range statements concerning the form should so read.—ALEXANDER WETMORE AND GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. and Museum of Zoology, University of Oklahoma, Norman, May 4, 1953.*

Nesting of the White-throated Sparrow in West Virginia.—A considerable southward extension of the known breeding range of this species, *Zonotrichia albicollis*, is worthy of record. The A.O.U. Check-List of 1931 gives the most southerly localities of its nesting as the mountains of northeast Pennsylvania and New York. Todd ("Birds of Western Pennsylvania") suspected it of nesting in the northwest corner of that state but had no records.

On June 18, 1952, while leading a group of young nature students from Oglebay Institute through the bog formed in the valley at the headwaters of White-oak Spring Run, four and a half miles northeast of Terra Alta, West Virginia, Buchanan flushed a bird of this species from its nest containing three eggs. A fourth egg was subsequently laid. The bird was seen well by Buchanan and others in the group, and the nest and eggs were typical for the species. On June 19, while further exploring the swamp, the group found another nest. This nest contained two eggs of the White-throat (one dented), one of the Cowbird, and the shell of another White-throat's egg lay on the ground beneath. The female was flushed and was well seen by several of the group.



The first nest was placed 18 inches above the ground, supported by a small rhododendron bush which was thickly grown over with dead as well as green growth of fringed sedge (*Carex crinata* Lam.), the sedge forming a screened canopy over the nest. It was well constructed of coarse sedge stems ("straw") and a few grass blades, and lined with fine grass stems. No leaves were used in the construction. The location was in the intermittent shade of hemlock and maple trees as well as that of rhododendron and alder that grew in the bog. Some spruce was present not far distant. The second nest was of similar construction though in a little more open situation. It was also placed 18 inches above the ground, supported on a leaning dead shrub of shrubby St. Johns-wort, and a leaf of skunk cabbage partially shaded the nest.

On June 22, Ganier, Buchanan and others returned to the site and again identified the first bird as it flushed five feet away. The nest was photographed *in situ* (see illustration), and in view of the importance of the find, the nest and eggs were collected for future reference. The eggs average a little smaller (measurements in inches: $.81 \times .60$, $.80 \times .60$, $.80 \times .57$, and $.82 \times .56$; average, $.81 \times .58$) than those described by various authors, and are beautifully marked. The account of Davie (1898. "Nests and Eggs of North American Birds") describes the eggs quite accurately and is here quoted: ". . . ground color . . . pale greenish-blue, spotted, sprinkled and clouded with cinnamon-rufous and bay." The second nest mentioned was found to have been deserted.

On June 17, we had found good evidence of the nesting of this species about three and a half miles to the northeast, in the more extensive Pine Swamp bog at Cranestown in Maryland. We there found White-throats at two locations without making any

special search for them. One pair, discovered by George Breiding of Wheeling, West Virginia, seemed much disturbed by our presence and evidently had a nest close by. Ganier sat for half an hour while the birds flew uneasily about in nearby trees and shrubs, keeping 30 to 50 feet away, but they were not seen to go to the nest. The thick, knee-high marsh grass all about made a thorough search impossible in the time available. Maurice Brooks has written us that he and Carl Haller saw a male in this swamp on June 3, 1936, and felt at the time that the White-throat might eventually be found nesting in the West Virginia mountains. However, none were found in the high, mountainous area around Davis, Tucker county, about 25 miles south, in a week-long census by The Brooks Bird Club, June 9-17, 1951 (127 species recorded).

Barrows (1912. "Michigan Bird Life") states that in Michigan, all nests of which he had record were built on the ground. The elevated nests described in this paper may have been the result of occasional floodings of the bog by the stream which drains the valley.—ALBERT F. GANIER, 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville, Tennessee, and FOREST W. BUCHANAN, Amsterdam, Ohio, September 17, 1952.

Unintentional live-trap for American Mergansers.—On June 20, 1950, my wife and I arrived at a camp situated in the Winnipeg River just north of the Lake-of-the-Woods and six miles south of Minaki, which is only a few miles from the western border of the province of Ontario. Minaki is a small settlement and trading post on the Canadian National Railroad. The camp is situated on a wooded island of about two acres in extent, and there are half a dozen cabins scattered about it. Beneath an ice house on the island we found a nest with ten eggs of the American Merganser (*Mergus merganser*).

The morning after our arrival we found a female American Merganser in a mess hall adjacent to our living cabin. The bird had entered through the chimney during the previous night and we permitted it to escape. This experience was repeated on three successive mornings and in each instance the bird was unharmed and permitted to go free.

On the second day of our encampment there we visited a neighboring island a half mile distant where there was a single, large, unoccupied cabin with no open entrance revealed by subsequent, careful search except for the chimney. On the floor of the cabin were eleven female American Mergansers, all except two of which were dead. The two were permitted to escape by the door as we entered. They all had entered the cabin by way of the chimney and fireplace, and the nine apparently had died of starvation. After this experience we took pains to cover the chimney of this cabin, as well as the others at our encampment, with chicken wire held in place by stones of suitable weight. We subsequently learned from natives of the region that covering chimneys was a common practice, as female mergansers had a habit of entering unoccupied cabins in the spring.

During our stay of ten days we saw a great many American Mergansers, but we did not discover a natural nesting site. There were few large trees; and, because of the very high water, fully ten feet above normal, most of the short stumps were covered. This condition may have contributed to the behavior of the birds. Undoubtedly they were seeking nesting sites when they entered the cabin chimneys.

It should be added that in June, 1951, we revisited this region. The water was much lower on this occasion, and the behavior of the mergansers was not repeated. We did find a nest with a clutch of eggs under the ice house on this occasion, just as we had previously.—WILLIAM D. DUGAN, 221 Pierce Avenue, Hamburg, New York, January 27, 1953.