

sort of platform. The cooks throw scraps of fish and other refuse out upon the water, and the pelicans gather in flocks about the kitchen to secure this food. They had become so tame that while feeding upon the scraps they would allow one to approach within ten or fifteen feet. It was an odd sight to see this flock of wild pelicans, at such close quarters, scrambling and tussling over the food. There was much competition among them, and the younger and quicker birds seemed to get most of the scraps, while the heavier and older birds took whatever they could secure in the hurry and bustle which occurred when a fresh can of scraps was thrown in the water. Having finished the scraps, the pelicans would fly far out in the bay, there to rest upon the water and bathe. Some, apparently for pleasure only, would rise high in the air, setting their wings and coming down in smooth, graceful circles. Late in the afternoon, the greater part of the Pelicans left the bay and disappeared up the coast line, though a number of individuals were seen, at dusk, perched upon the posts along the bay front, where they probably lodged for the night.

FOOD HABITS OF THE WILSON SNIPE.

BY BENJ. T. GAULT.

ARE the feeding habits of the common "Jack," or Wilson Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*), so very well known?

Elisha J. Lewis in "American Sportsman," p. 197, in speaking of the food and habits of this bird, remarks that "their nourishment consists principally of worms and larvæ, which, like woodcock, they extract from rich loamy soil by boring into it with their long and slender bills." "It was formerly very generally believed by sportsmen, and others who pretended to a knowledge of such matters, that snipe

as well as woodcock, support themselves by suction. This, of course, is as erroneous in the one case as in the other."

Mr. Chapman (Handbook of Birds, p. 154), on authority of Mr. Brewster, tells us that "two things are essential to its requirements—ground so thoroughly water-soaked as to afford slight resistance to its long and highly sensitive bill, when probing, and such concealment as tussocks, hillocks, or long grass afford; for, unlike the sandpipers, the snipe rarely ventures out on bare mud-flats, save under cover of darkness. Although less strictly nocturnal than woodcock, it feeds and migrates chiefly by night or in thick weather."

It has been thought advisable, in this connection, to make use of the foregoing quotations, that the remarks to follow might be better understood, which, if new, may throw some additional light upon a most interesting subject.

Our Glen Ellyn lake was unusually low and dry the past season, in consequence of which the autumnal crop of waders was considerably above the average.

Pectorals comprised the bulk, yet there were Solitaires, some Spotted and not a few Least Sandpipers in the lot. Also from two to three dozen Kildeer, both species of Yellow-legs, as well, coming in for a representation.

As if to add still further variety, the Great Blue and little Green Herons contributed their stately presence, while swimmers and divers were accounted for in a flock of sixteen Blue-winged Teal and half as many Dabchicks. It was a busy gathering, to which the well-known "Jacks" added a conspicuous feature during the early days of September.

Barring slight alterations, the several groups of birds in feeding arranged themselves about the lake as follows: first, the outer zone of sandpipers and Kildeer, which apparently picked up a comfortable subsistence from beneath the remains of algae found anywhere upon the flats; second, the snipe in the muddier parts; third, the ducks and herons of the shallows adjoining; and finally the grebes, which showed a marked preference for the deeper water of the lake.

The writer's attention was first called to the Snipes, four in number, September 1, when in company with a naturalist friend, and with a good pair of field-glasses, I had the pleasure of inspecting them at my leisure for some time, the glasses proving a most indispensable article on this occasion.

In habits, as compared with Sandpipers, there is certainly a marked distinction.

The Snipe seemed to select as special feeding grounds the water line just bordering the flats, where the mud was soft and into which they delighted in sinking their bills to the fullest depth. And in withdrawing them they never elevated their necks in true sandpiper style. On the contrary they kept their heads well "chucked down," so to speak, and in moving about from place to place, which they seldom did, however, continued to hold them in the same fashion.

In some respects their probing methods resembled the rooting of swine,—a simple, up and down and forward movement, and if remembered rightly, without lateral twists or side thrusts of any kind, and at times exposing fully one-half of the bill.

Whether the Wilson Snipe actually do resort to the so-called "suction" method of procuring their food, is a question still undetermined in my mind. The glasses, however, brought out the important information that the probing or feeling movements of the bill were accompanied every now and then with a guttural or swallowing motion of the throat, which at times developed into a decided gulp, as though large morsels of some kind were being taken down, and this *without the removal of the bill from the muck.*

Writers allude to the Wilson Snipe as a bird of solitary habits, yet my observations, in this case, led me to think otherwise. On the other hand, they appeared to greatly enjoy each other's company; and to the extent of causing one to think that possibly they were of one and the same brood,—a conjecture doubtless true.

These interesting birds were observed daily for over a week, their fondness for each other being manifested on all

occasions. Once I came suddenly upon two of them together, standing side by side, their bills pointing in one way. They crouched, or squatted, when they saw me, and presently took to wing, but made no sound of any kind or indulged in the customary zigzag flight. They evidently felt settled or had not approached the wild and erratic state.

But shortly after this my observations had ceased, owing to the changed conditions brought about by "the man with the gun"; and on September 10th the last snipe was seen.

In summarizing the foregoing, we observe: First—That the Wilson Snipe occasionally resorts to open mud-flats, unmindful of the cover of darkness, and that its stay is governed by the supply of food; second, it feeds at all hours of the day; third, the "suction" theory of procuring its food, however erroneous it may now seem, really has reasons for some foundation.

NOTES ON THE WINTER BIRDS OF ARKANSAS.

BY N. HOLLISTER.

THE following fragmentary notes on the winter birds of Arkansas are taken from my notes and collections made on three hunting trips in Lonoke, Prairie, and Arkansas counties during the greater part of January and November, 1899, and November, 1900. The part of the state comprising these three counties includes Grand and White River Prairies, large tracts of well-grassed open country, dotted here and there with patches of timber, principally oak, gum, hickory, etc., of varying acreage, from the scattering persimmon clumps and "slashings" to the larger "islands" of wood and vast forests and cypress swamps bordering the prairies and extending for many miles; still almost unbroken and affording shelter and range for deer, bear, turkeys, wild cats, and an occasional panther.



Gault, Benjamin T. 1902. "Food Habits of the Wilson Snipe." *The Wilson bulletin* 14(1), 7–10.

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