

A PARADISE FOR LONGSPURS.

(Notes on the Birds of Addison, Illinois.)

BY G. EIFRIG.

First, a few words on the topography of this section. Addison is a small village, twenty miles west of Chicago, in Du Page County, hence it is in the prairies. which, however, at this point, reach their greatest altitude for this section of the state, namely, 350 feet. It is a rather prosaic, uninteresting region, being a purely agricultural district, with nothing but fields as far as one can see. There are next to no trees not even along ditches and creeks, excepting a few tall cottonwoods surrounding the farm-yards, and a rather large wood a half mile northeast of my residence. All around us there is more woodland to be seen, as e.g. at Glen Ellyn, about four miles from here, the home of our secretary, Mr. B. T. Gault, which is a very pretty, park-like place. The Addison woods is two miles long by one mile wide, and is mainly composed of Burr, Scarlet, Red, and White Oaks, Hickory, Elm, Ash, and Hazel, and several species of *prunus* bushes.

In the open parts as well as in the woods nearly every depression is a small swamp, or even pond. Those in the woods are grown over with Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*) and Button bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), the latter giving them a somewhat southern appearance. Here the Green Herons build, Yellow-throats are plentiful, and I even found a female Prothonotary Warbler at the edge of one of them, a rarity for Du Page County. The swamps in the open are overgrown with cattails, *sparganium*, *scirpus*, etc., and are difficult to negotiate, owing to the soft bottom, and to the hummocks and holes made by the cows, which are let in in the fall and late summer, when there is little if any water in these places. The last summer (1910) being exceptionally dry here, all swamps and ponds were dry, so that in one at least the Pied-billed Grebes, which had been there, had to allow one a good look at them, as the water was too shallow for diving, and later disappeared entirely. One that I cornered

lay motionless across a clump of old reeds, etc., thereby rendering itself nearly invisible. Here are also the homes of *Rallus elegans*, *virginianus*, and the Sora, as well as hordes of Redwings, Long-billed and Short-billed Marsh Wrens, and Swamp Sparrows. Several times I also flushed a Short-eared Owl. But these wet places contain rarer things than all these. March 28 I took a Henslow's Sparrow, and August 31 a Nelson's in one of them. Numerous springy places in pastures or near the sloughs harbor many Wilson's Snipes, Pectoral and Red-backed Sandpipers in migration, and a few Kildeer all summer. Rarities for this country that I saw here, were a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) on May 12, a Black Tern on July 20, and near by a flock of about fifteen Golden Plover on May 10. It is surprising how late and how early Greater Yellow-legs are here; the last were here May 23, and the first I noticed already July 19.

When an ornithologist goes to another place to stay temporarily or permanently, he always looks forward with keen expectation and pleasant anticipation, to find out what species of birds, hitherto not seen in the flesh, the new places will bring him. So it was in my case. Naturally northern Ontario is a more interesting place, both scenically and biologically, than Du Page County, Illinois. And some birds I expected to see here without going far, did not materialize till now, e.g. the Yellow-headed Blackbird, Dickcissel, Tufted Titmouse, Bob-white, Cardinal, Chat, Bank Swallow, etc. Even the Wood Thrush is rare here in summer; also the Whippoorwill and the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. But still there are surprises awaiting one, at least during migration, and mainly in the large woods, with its mysterious little sloughs. A rarity in most places was here in surprising numbers last spring, namely the Gray-cheeked Thrush. May 24, I must have seen at least 200. There was a noticeable disparity in size, too, among them (Bicknell's ?)—. I also took Tennessee, Cerulean, Connecticut, Blue-winged, Palm, and other

warblers here. The other warblers and the flycatchers are here in proportion. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is also here, even as a breeder.

One of the most interesting finds I made here, is a herony of Black-crowned Night Herons. It consisted of about thirty nests in a wet corner of the woods, adjoining a field. They were from thirty to sixty feet up in ash trees, and on June 11 contained two to four eggs each; no young were noticed. Another member of the same family that I was glad to meet with here in the swamps mentioned above, is the Least Bittern, and naturally its larger congener also. On the other hand such otherwise common birds like the Mourning Dove, Sparrow Hawk, and even the Kingfisher are strangely absent, although for the latter a creek with minnows and steep banks here and there, meanders through the landscape.

In the line of birds of prey, we have here the Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, Marsh, Cooper's, and Broad-winged Hawks, the last two rare. The Barred Owl is said to be in the woods, and the Screech Owl is often heard singing its to most people unpleasant song from orchards and shade trees. A few Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) are said to be still in the woods nearby, and Prairie Chickens are met with now and then. One day I flushed a flock of about twenty-five a few miles from here — a new and interesting experience for me — and I was surprised to see how high they would rise — a flight quite different from that of the Ruffed Grouse; more like that of a large Meadowlark.

In the finch family we have quite a selection: Goldfinch and Indigo Buntings, Song, Swamp, Vesper, and Savanna Sparrows, all common breeders. I gladly welcomed again an old acquaintance from Maryland, that I had missed in Canada, the Towhee. Of this I found a nest on May 28, containing two eggs of the owner and three Cowbird's eggs. Yes, the finch family brings us to the heading of these notes. As a place for Longspurs prosaic Addison shines. About the end of October they come in many small flocks and take possession of

the empty fields, i.e. empty for us, but full for them, namely full of weed-seeds. They prefer the high wind-swept fields, and can often be seen flying to and fro, from one rise to another. Some days they are tame, allowing of close approach, on others they are extremely shy. Last spring, with its cold weather, they stayed at least till May 5, when I took several in nearly full nuptial dress. Usually they are gone before this, as I am told. They are difficult to see when on the ground, especially in their winter dress. The flocks seem to be made up of *lapponcus* mainly, although on April 20 I saw one Smith's Longspur (*C. pictus*). Nearly every field contains one or several little flocks, of from five to twenty-five each, busily gleaning the weed seeds, of which their stomachs and crops, when taken, are full to bursting. On their restless days, or when being scared up from several fields, the air is sometimes literally alive with them, when also flights of up to a hundred can be seen. Their flight is somewhat erratic, but nevertheless, as well as its call and flight notes, characteristically finch-like. Other members of the finch family are the White-throated, White-crowned, Fox, Lincoln's and Tree Sparrows; also Juncos, most of which are, of course, only migrants, while the last two are to some degree winter residents. Thus, to-day (December 17), I saw a flock of Tree Sparrows, Juncos and Redpolls. Early in November, Pine Siskins were common here, and a few Pine Grosbeaks were seen, which, together with the fact that Evening Grosbeaks had been seen at several places in the neighborhood, makes me think that somewhat abnormal food or other conditions must be prevailing up north, to bring these hardy northern birds down here so early.



Eifrig, Charles William Gustav. 1911. "A Paradise for Longspurs (Notes on the Birds of Addison, Illinois)." *The Wilson bulletin* 23(1), 49–52.

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