

substantial nests, while on the Mud-lumps, a few coarse sticks clumsily piled together sufficed. It is interesting to note the great range of time for nesting among the different colonies. On the Chandeleur chain we found fresh eggs only, while on the Mud-lumps, scarcely a hundred miles away, we found young six weeks old,—and not even an egg from there on to Texas, although the birds had started building on Timbalier. The first nesting birds on the Lumps chose the islands farthest out, and as these grew too densely populated, the islands nearer in were occupied until the innermost one had its pelican colony,—fresh eggs and very small young, while the birds on the outermost were already large enough to leave. The lighthouse keeper told us the outer islands would again be populated, that the birds nested continually from the middle of April until August, which raises the interesting question of whether the pelican raises more than one set of young a year. We took specimens in winter plumage, or rather the brown immature plumage which showed all signs of breeding, and other birds taken in the highest of plumage were evidently not breeding at all. We enjoyed our little survey, and although we desired more time among them, we came away happy with the knowledge that the pelican is safe, “not guilty” of being a food slacker.

NOTES ON THE FEBRUARY BIRDLIFE OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI AND LOUISIANA.

CHRESWELL J. HUNT, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

I arrived in New Orleans about noon of January 28, 1918. That afternoon, just across the Mississippi River, in Algiers, I heard my first wild Mockingbird sing. It was a warm afternoon and Meadowlarks were also singing and a number of Grackles flew over. It surely did seem good after the snow-drifts that I had navigated in Chicago the previous morning. The following three days were spent about the city of New

* Read before the Chicago Ornithological Society April 9th, 1918.

Orleans. Louisiana claims the great Audubon as a native and one hears his name everywhere about the city of New Orleans. Except for the Herring Gulls seen about the river no birds were noted, but I visited the Louisiana State Museum and met Mr. Alfred M. Bailey, the ornithologist there, who showed me many interesting things. I also met Mr. S. C. Arthur, Louisiana State Ornithologist, who presented me with a copy of his recent list of "The Birds of Louisiana." To these two gentlemen I wish to express my thanks for many courtesies extended.

On February 1st I left New Orleans for Biloxi, Mississippi. As you travel east from New Orleans on the Louisville & Nashville R. R. you traverse one continuous stretch of marsh and salt meadows. From the train windows I noted numbers of Herring Gulls; a few ducks; any number of Grebes, mostly in bunches of from three to six, some of them were quite shy, while others did not seem to mind the train in the least; occasional flocks of Blackbirds; one Great Blue Heron, and several small Herons that I was unable to identify. After crossing Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, we strike the first high ground east of New Orleans. Here we come upon patches of pines and cultivated fields, pecan orchards and grand old Live Oaks with their festoons of grey moss.

The following three weeks, February 1st to February 20th, were spent at Biloxi, Mississippi, from which point I explored most of the extreme southern end of Harrison County. The town of Biloxi is situated upon Mississippi Sound. It is built upon a point of land and is almost surrounded by salt water. The principal industry of the place at this season of the year is oyster canning and the water front is rich in piles of oyster shells and there are fine shell roads running back into the country. Mississippi Sound is quite shallow here and the little oyster schooners have to make many turns coming into the harbor. Deer Island lies about a mile off shore. This island is a long narrow strip of land with a small pine grove in the center and much sandy

beach, where Brown Pelicans, Black Skimmers and Gulls love to congregate. Ship and Cat Islands, which separate the Sound from the Gulf of Mexico proper, lie some fifteen miles off shore and are of considerable size.

Birdlife was fairly plentiful about Biloxi, though not very rich in species. I believe the Killdeer and the Myrtle Warbler were the most common birds seen. The Myrtle Warblers—the natives seemed to know them by the name “Snow-birds”—were found almost everywhere, but were seen most along the water front flitting here and there among the oyster shells. At first I was surprised to see them in such places, but I soon discovered that these shells harbored any number of small flies, which no doubt explained the Warblers presence among them. The “Dee-dee” of the Killdeer was an ever-present sound. Great numbers of large Gulls—Herring or Ring-billed—were always to be seen about the Sound and Back Bay. Mockingbirds were common about the gardens and lawns and were frequently heard singing. Blue Jays were common. Red-headed and Downy Woodpeckers were plentiful and a few Flickers were seen, but I was surprised not to find the Red-bellied Woodpecker at Biloxi. A great number of Fish Crows were seen. I believe all the crows seen were of this species. Cardinals, Carolina Wrens and Tufted Titmice were plentiful and in song at almost all times. Chewinks and Brown Thrashers were common and both singing. One House Wren and one Water-thrush were seen. Carolina Chickadees and Pine Warblers were common in the pine woods. One Catbird was noted and numbers of Hermit Thrushes. A few Goldfinches were seen—a single bird each time. Bluebirds were fairly common, and back in the pine woods were found a few small flocks of Robins, which were decidedly shy. Flocks of Red-wings and Grackles were frequently seen. A few Meadowlarks and Kingfishers; both the Black Vulture and the Turkey Vulture; one Marsh Hawk and one Sparrow Hawk; a number of small Flycatchers, all of which I took to be Phoebe; a few Loggerhead Shrikes—known locally as “Bull-head Mockingbird”;

and several Palm Warblers were seen. A few Bob-whites were said to be about, and one day I came upon some boys who had just shot one of them. White-throated Sparrows and a few Vesper Sparrows were seen, the White-throats were fairly common, but no other species of our native sparrows was noted. It appears that the bulk of the Song Sparrows, etc., must spend the winter somewhere north of this point. Quite a number of Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers were seen and also a few Cormorants.

February 5th was spent at Ocean Springs, Mississippi, just across the Bay in Jackson County. It was a fine warm day and birds were singing everywhere. It reminded one of mid-April back in Chicago. Noisy flocks of Grackles and Red-wings, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Flickers calling, Chewinks and Brown Thrashers singing, as also were Mocking-birds, Meadowlarks, Carolina Wrens, Tufted Titmice and Cardinals. The grass was beginning to look very green and long catkins were hanging from the alder bushes, or bushes that looked all the world like our alder, and here and there green leaves were opening. The past winter was a cold one in the South, as it was all over the country, and up to now, save for the green Live Oaks and Magnolia trees, the general aspect of this country was winter. But today it was spring, with frogs calling and butterflies flitting here and there, and in the gardens several handsome Japonicas, loaded with bright red blossoms. But the orange orchards about Ocean Springs had mostly been killed by the frost, and the pecan crop, for the past two years, has been blown off the trees before the nuts ripened, by severe storms from the Gulf.

On February 13th I rowed over to Deer Island and watched for some time several flocks of Black Skimmers. What curious birds they are, and their cries, as the flock circles about, remind one of the barking of dogs. While on Deer Island I saw two Laughing Gulls and a few Caspian or Royal Terns. On entering the pine grove on the island I made another discovery. It was the first February mosquitoes that I ever saw and they were certainly abundant and very attentive.

Leaving Biloxi on February 20th I went back to New Orleans and thence to Mandeville, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. The village of Mandeville is situated upon the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain, almost directly across the lake from New Orleans—twenty-one miles across the lake as the crow flies, but about sixty miles around by railroad, and as there were no boats crossing the lake at this season it was necessary to take the New Orleans & Great Northern for the sixty miles—a ride of some three hours through pine woods and marsh-land, where the new green leaves were opening and things looked very spring-like indeed. The following four days were spent in the country about Mandeville. Biloxi, Mississippi, was a thriving little town, but Mandeville, Louisiana, was decidedly rural. The most noticeable thing about the place to the northern visitor was the great numbers of live stock that roamed about at will. Cows and horses everywhere, on the streets and sidewalks, and back in the woods it was cows and goats and little razor-back hogs. There are no fence laws and these animals go and come wherever and whenever they please.

While the residents of southern Louisiana seem one and all to have a great affection for the Mockingbird, this species seems to be about the only one for which there is any esthetic feeling. Other birds appeal to them entirely according to the quality of the bird's flesh and this makes the work of the Department of Conservation very difficult in enforcing its laws for the protection of the insectivorous birds. These people have shot Robins and Wood Thrushes and Vireos and Kingbirds all their lives and it is difficult to explain to them why they should stop it now, and still harder to keep them from killing these birds. Mr. A. E. Manint, the Department of Conservation's agent in St. Tammany Parish, has done remarkably good work in protecting the birds in his territory and at the same time has kept the good will of the people. He has been diplomatic, and from what I saw it appears that most of the people like him and respect his authority.

People with whom I talked knew the birds by local names—to me entirely new names—and in many cases it was difficult to tell what species they were talking about as their efforts to describe the bird's appearance were often very misleading. For instance they told me that I should be there a little later when the "Pops" came. Their handsomest bird, they said, was the "Red Pop," while the "Blue Pop," and the "Green Pop" were also beauties. I later found that their "Red Pop" is the male Painted Bunting or Nonpareil, while their "Green Pop" is the female of this species. And the "Blue Pop" is the male Indigo Bunting.

Then they told me about the "Big Caille"—(pronounced Big Ki)—the game bird par excellence—a bird that feeds upon the magnolia seeds; a bird whose flesh some of the most famous French chefs had pronounced the finest eating in the world. And then there was the "Little Caille" and the "Black Caille," both shot along with the "Big Caille," but the flesh of the "Big Caille" surpassed them all. From the descriptions given me I decided that this "Big Caille" must surely be one of our Thrushes, and I later found this to be correct. The "Big Caille"—the most famed of all the game birds—is none other than the Wood Thrush. I have always heard the Wood Thrush praised, but never before from this standpoint. I have heard the Wood Thrush proclaimed the finest songster in North America. No doubt with us this species ranks foremost in esthetic value. To many of us northern folks it is indeed the bird of birds. It is perhaps the very last bird we would care to slaughter. But down in the country around Mandeville they love the "Big Caille"—when he is browned just right and served upon the table. And there is perhaps more hard feeling against the Department of Conservation for prohibiting the killing of the Wood Thrush than there is about the protection of any other bird. But we must remember that these southern folks never hear the Wood Thrush sing. They only know him as a silent bird of the woods that arrives in flocks sometime in September, at which time he is feeding mostly upon a vegetable diet. It

is said that when he once tastes the magnolia berry he flies up into the trees and stays right there feeding upon the bright red fruit until he becomes so fat that when shot his breast will burst open when he hits the ground. At this time the flesh is said to be almost as red as the magnolia seeds and to have a decided magnolia flavor. Later they feed upon the fruit of the sweet bay and gum trees, at which time they are not considered as good eating. All the Olive-backed Thrushes were shot under the name of "Little Caille" and the Cat-bird under the name of "Black Caille." These birds also feed upon the magnolia fruit.

I spent all day of February 22nd in the woods with Mr. Manint, who took me to the most likely spots for birds in the locality. He took me to a swamp where he says there is a small flock of Wild Turkeys, but although we tramped about a good deal we saw no trace of them. I made the acquaintance of the Red-bellied Woodpecker. This bird was very common about Mandeville. We came upon a large flock of Pipits. Two of these collected proved to be Sprague's Pipit. Robins and Bluebirds were common everywhere. Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, Tufted Titmice, Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, Chickadees, Redwings, Meadowlarks and Grackles were singing. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Flickers, Downy and Red-headed Woodpeckers were abundant. Numbers of Chewinks and Phoebes and Hermit Thrushes were seen. They call the Hermit Thrush the "Chalk" from the cluck which this bird makes. Blue Jays, Loggerhead Shrikes and Killdeer were common. A Great Horned Owl was heard calling and one Sparrow Hawk was seen. In the pine woods Pine Warblers were singing and a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen. All the Crows seen were, I think, the American Crow. A few White-throated Sparrows and Goldfinches and one Swamp Sparrow were noted. Bob-whites were said to be about, and I saw several Black Vultures, Kingfishers and Myrtle Warblers, which I believe completes my Mandeville list.

I will never forget my last day at Mandeville. To me it

was like a May day. The leaves were fast coming out on the shrubbery. Red Maples were in full blossom. Frogs and Toads were singing. Violets were blooming everywhere in the woods and in all the gardens Narcissus and Daffodils, May haw and Dogwood trees were white with flowers, and many other shrubs that were entirely new to me. Birds were singing everywhere—Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, Cardinals, Tufted Tits and Carolina Wrens. And the bright varnished leaves of the big Magnolia trees and the grey-green of the Live Oaks, and everywhere the grey moss hanging. Peach and Pear trees were in full bloom and the mosquitoes were also there by the hundreds and only too anxious to annoy one. I should have liked to have spent a few days more at Mandeville, but I received word that I must be back in Chicago by February 27th, and it was not without a feeling of regret that I left the sunlit southern woods and turned my face northward, but still the thought cheered me that I would reach Chicago ahead of the birds and would have the novelty of watching the spring arrive twice this year.

A VULTURE CENSUS AND SOME NOTES.

BY JOHN WILLIAMS, ST. MARKS, FLA.

“One might almost be willing to be a Buzzard to fly like that!”*

Familiarity may breed contempt in some instances, but I have ever found that an intimate acquaintance with Nature in any aspect, at any season, in any clime, invariably leads to fresh wonderment and renewed kinship and esteem. Vultures are not commonly objects for adoration, I verily believe, and yet they have many attributes to be admired.

Majestic Ease would seem to be an appropriate expression for the wide-encircling, smooth and graceful evolutions of *Cathartes aura septentrionalis* as he serenely defies the tempest on unbending wings, calmly floating far on high or again

* Bradford Torrey, in “A Florida Sketch Book.”



Hunt, Chreswell J. 1918. "Notes on the February Birdlife of Southern Mississippi and Louisiana." *The Wilson bulletin* 30(3), 68–75.

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