

party with which I was employed found a cow moose with her calf on an island about a quarter of a mile off the south shore of Cedar Lake, Manitoba. The island was covered mostly by willows, and has an area of only a few acres. There were so many spots bedded down, and there had been so much browsing that the conclusion was reached that the old moose had come there to calve and remained on the island thereafter.—C. H. D. CLARKE.

THE RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) WINTERING IN MANITOBA.—Mr. Frank T. Farley's note on the Red-breasted Nuthatch wintering in Alberta, which appeared in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* of March, 1935, page 61, is of more than passing interest because of recent records of this species in Manitoba.

The first record of a Red-breasted Nuthatch in winter here was made in December, 1933, when temperatures were very low, and snows very deep.

The second record was made here in January, 1935, and several more individuals and pairs were noted in February and March in widely separated woods of this district. In all cases these birds were seen in heavy mixed woods of balsam fir, white spruce, aspen poplar, and white birch.

A nest of the Red-breasted Nuthatch was discovered on Elks Island, five miles from Hillside Beach, Lake Winnipeg, June 23rd, 1934, in mixed woods. The nesting cavity, 20 feet up in a dead birch stub was coated near the entrance with balsam gum (see Reed's *Pocket Guide*).

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a shy species at any time, and keeping as it usually does to heavy woods it is apt to be overlooked or its calls confused with those of the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*). Can it be that *Sitta canadensis* is in reality a Permanent instead of a Summer Resident?—FRED J. ROGERS, *Hillside Beach, Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba*.

WOODCOCK FEEDING IN DAYLIGHT.—On April 22, 1934, the writer was climbing a steep hillside on the east bank of the Don River at Toronto and was following the course of a small spring creek which had cut a deep groove in the bank when a Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) was flushed, flew a few yards and dropped back to earth, immediately becoming invisible, as is the way with Woodcock. I stood for a few minutes trying in vain to see the bird and was about to

move on when it appeared from nowhere and after running a yard or two began to feed in the black, mucky soil bordering the spring. This was just before noon on a clear day and at a distance of less than 50 feet I watched it for two or three minutes with X8 bioculars, feeling conscious at the time that I was looking at something which I had never hoped to see and might never see again.

There was really little that was remarkable about the feeding actions of this particular Woodcock, as it walked about slowly, probing deeply with its beak quite like a Dowitcher or Stilt Sandpiper on a mud-flat. Two exceptional points were noted: often, though not each time, after inserting its beak full length in the soil, the bird remained perfectly motionless for several seconds and it seemed a reasonable supposition that at such times the flexible tip of the upper mandible [maxilla] was working; also, the mucky soil adhered freely to the beak and this was scraped off with one foot after nearly every withdrawal. At this distance I could see the earthworms clearly as they were pulled out. These were, of course, immediately swallowed. A slight movement on my part and the Woodcock ran a few feet to the top of a small dry mound where it crouched with the tarsi flat on the ground. Another step and it sprang into the air and disappeared among the second growth of the hillside.

The weather had been cold enough to freeze the surface soil for several nights prior to this date so that a logical explanation of this Woodcock's evident anxiety to feed by day would seem to be that this particular spot was receiving the full heat of the sun, making the soil quite soft and, as investigation showed, well populated with earthworms.—R. J. RUTTER.

THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE.—Regarding this matter in the December '35 issue of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, if Mr. Stuart L. Thompson will refer to my Birds of Hatley published in *The Auk*, vol. 33, 1916, p. 70 and *Auk* vol. 34, 1917, pp. 484-85, he will find that I have recorded the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Myrtle and Black-throated Blue Warblers as having acquired the habit of sap drinking.—HENRY MOUSLEY, Montreal.

ACADIAN CHICKADEE. (*Penthestes hudsonicus*).—The interesting compilation of "Christmas Bird Censuses, 1935" in *The Canadian*

Field-Naturalist for February, 1936, contains a single record (p. 24) of the occurrence of the Brown-headed (Acadian) Chickadee at St. Adèle, Terrebonne County, Quebec.

At Mille Isles, Argenteuil County, Quebec, a locality about midway between St. Jerome and Morin Heights, an Acadian Chickadee has been visiting our suet-boxes in the company of many Black-capped Chickadees and some Red-breasted Nuthatches. The first date upon which an Acadian and many Black-caps were seen together was January 1st, 1936. In taking turns at the suet, it has been noticed that the Nuthatches dominate the Chickadees. On December 14, a Blue Jay flew to a balsam fir in the gar-

den and began peering about, then edged nearer to the centre of the tree and attacked a Black-cap, bringing it to the ground. It was taken into the house, where it remained stunned on the floor for half an hour, then flew up against a windowpane and crashed to the ground once more. I held it in my hand and felt its grip gradually tighten. I then fell into a doze with the bird in my hand. We woke up together and, when set at liberty, the patient flew off as if nothing had happened, circled around and returned to the original tree. About six weeks later, on February 3, a Blue Jay, perhaps the same one, was being pursued over the garden by a low-flying hawk, but the result of the chase was not witnessed.—A. WILLEY.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PASSENGER PIGEON IN ONTARIO by Margaret H. Mitchell. *Contribution No. 17 of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology. Coloured Frontispiece, 5 maps, 6 illustrations and diagrams, pp. 181. Published under the Reuben Sells Leonard Bequest by the University of Toronto Press, 1935.*

A very important addition to our knowledge of this historical species. What the Buffalo was to the development of the Far West, the Passenger Pigeon was to the Middle West and the East, and they have suffered similar fates.

Though applying specifically to Ontario, the interest of this report is much broader than this geographical limitation. Much life history and incidental information have been saved from oblivion. It is founded upon a wide review of literature, old and new, (some 196 titles are cited in the bibliography) and returns from a large number of questionnaires from the rapidly decreasing ranks of those who can speak from first-hand experience. There is too much in this publication to be readily summarized but range, seasonal occurrence, nesting, habits and decline in this great Province are extensively treated and well documented. Nowhere else has so much information on this remarkable species been brought together. The author is to be complimented upon the thoroughness that has been brought to bear upon the task.

Of course no treatment of the Passenger Pigeon is complete without discussion of the cause or causes of the complete disappearance of its vast hordes within the space of a single generation. Ecological changes caused by

settlement of the land, disease, man's destruction and market hunting are discussed as contributory causes but a new theory is advanced as to the immediate agent in the final catastrophe—an inability of the species to persist after a reduction in number below a certain minimum necessary to its success. It was a gregarious species, its whole economy adapted to congested associations of its kind, and could not function as efficiently in small scattered units as in large flocks. This reviewer, cannot help feeling that disease, perhaps foreign and introduced by domestic stock, may have had a larger part in the Passenger Pigeon debacle than is generally considered. We have ample analogy for this in other species. It seems that only some such agency is adequate to explain the continuance of depletion between the time when man's exploitation was unprofitable and the above results of under population became effective. Of course now this is purely a matter of speculation in which one opinion is no more demonstrable than another.

The subject, however, brings to mind a suggestion incidentally thrown out years ago, I believe by Dr. Vaughn of the University of Michigan Medical College. He called attention to the fact that "fever and ague", almost universal in the early days of settlement of the middle west, disappeared almost coincidentally with the passing of the vast pigeon flocks. No definite connection was postulated but the more we learn of the transmission of parasitic disease by carriers, the more significant the coincidence becomes.—P.A.T.



Willey, Arthur. 1936. "Acadian Chickadee (*Penthestes hudsonicus*).*" The Canadian field-naturalist* 50(4), 68–69. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.339902>.

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