

perhaps the most attentively examined by bird students and sportsmen, it has not heretofore been recorded as a nesting bird there.

Giraud wrote seventy years ago (*Birds of Long Island*, N. Y., 1844) of this species on Long Island in his pleasing manner; of its habits and comparative scarcity, but makes no mention of its nesting. George N. Lawrence in his 'Catalogue of Birds observed on New York, Long and Staten Islands, and the adjacent parts of New Jersey,' merely lists the bird, without remark of any sort. Mr. Dutcher's notes on the birds of Long Island in Chapman's 'Handbook' 1894, and subsequent editions mention no record of its breeding, but give its status as "common transient visitant."

In my 'List of Birds of Long Island' (Abstr. Proc. Linn. Soc. of N. Y., 1907) I also gave its status as a common transient visitant, recording the limits of its occurrence, observed and collected to that time, in spring, April 16 (Sheepshead Bay) to May 5 (Montauk); autumn, August 4 (Shinnecock) to December 11 (Rockaway). I may say that data since collected have extended the spring arrival nearly a week earlier, *i. e.* to April 10 (1909, Seaford).

The actual discovery of a nest, eggs and young of the American Bittern on Long Island has apparently been reserved till the present year. On Sunday, June 14, 1914, Mr. Robert W. Peavey, to whom students of Long Island birds are indebted in many instances for his indefatigable enthusiasm, discovered a nest of this bittern on the part of the Great South Bay of Long Island, known as Jones' Beach, or locally, as Seaford Beach. This is one of the least frequented parts of the ocean-side Long Island beaches. The nest contained two newly-hatched young birds and two eggs. It was placed on salt meadow hay and was built up several inches above the level of the ground. Mr. Peavey flushed the bird off the nest when he was within three feet of her. The locality was one mile east of the High Hill Life Saving Station near the back or bay side of the beach, and within a newly-established game-preserve of about 5000 acres, which is guarded by a patrolman.

It may be said that he was the less surprised in that he had been informed of the unusual occurrence of one or more "Look-ups," as they are named in this part of Long Island, by Nelson Verity, one of the veteran gunners of this locality, and had himself seen an American Bittern on June 7 on Seaford Creek, almost within the limits of the village of the same name.

It is safe I think to say that the bird as a breeding species is exceptional on the whole of Long Island, as well as in this restricted locality — Seaford region, since Mr. Peavey has spent a day each week for many summers in this place, and his own observation as well as the testimony of the baymen of the region make its occurrence here in the nesting season altogether unprecedented.— WILLIAM C. BRAISLIN, *Brooklyn, N. Y.*

**Cory's Least Bittern in Illinois.**— On May 23, 1914, the writer was staying on the edge of a small swamp along the Fox River, about forty miles northwest of Chicago. While standing motionless to watch the



abundant water-fowl such as King, Virginia and Sora Rails, Coots, Florida Gallinules, and Least Bittern, which were either stepping out of the dark recesses of the clumps of cat-tail and other swamp vegetation to feed along the edge of the open places, or swimming in patches of open water further out, or at least giving vent to their various queer notes, in which they were ably seconded by multitudinous Redwings and Prairie Marsh Wrens (*Telmatodytes p. iliacus*), I was startled by a bird about the size of a Least Bittern flying out of some *Scirpus lacustris* and heading toward a thicket of button-bush, willow, etc., at the edge of which it alighted and disappeared. The bird in coloration looked unlike anything I had ever seen. The shape, size and flight all fitted the Least Bittern, but it seemed to be all black or blackish with the exception of brown crescent on the wing next to the primaries. Thinking the light or my eyes were deceiving me, I put it down as a Least Bittern. Still having some doubts, I put out in a boat which was with some difficulty poled through the dense vegetation by a friend. When nearing the bushes above mentioned the dark bird got up and flew a distance back of the boat, again alighting in the rushes. My friend, anxious to have at least one shot for his hard work of pushing the boat, took my 44 caliber shot-gun, fired — and the bird stayed there. Poling on as quickly as possible, which was still slow enough, I was surprised and elated to find the bird to be an *Ixobrychus moxenus*. On dissection it proved to be a female, the largest egg would have been ready for extrusion in a few days or a week; the stomach contained two sunfish, each about three inches long. The following is a description of the skin now in my collection. Length, from tip of bill to end of tail,  $11\frac{3}{4}$  inches, to tip of longest toe,  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches, tarsus  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, bill,  $1\frac{1}{16}$  inches. Color, back, tail and broad line from crown along back of neck, where the ends of the feathers on sides of neck form it, greenish-brownish-black; wing coverts dark purplish-chestnut; primaries, dark slaty, with a trace of the flour-like bloom characteristic of the herons; cheeks, throat and neck chestnut, the fluffy tuft of feathers streaming over the bend of the wings, blackish; belly dark-purplish brown, quite different from the neck, in middle of abdomen some white feathers, forming an irregular white patch; sides gradually darkening into blackish; culmen of bill blackish shading to dark brownish horn color on sides and on lower mandible, different from the straw color in *I. exilis*; tarsi and feet also blackish to brown. From this it is apparent that the coloring of *neoxenus* is quite different from that of *exilis*, only some of the dark brown on the back of the latter being identical with the same colored areas on the wing of the former, as well as the greenish-black on the crown.— C. W. G. EIFRIG, *River Forest, Ill.*

**Willow Ptarmigan in Minnesota.**— A specimen of the Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus lagopus*) was shot on April 20, 1914, at Sandy Island Lake of the Woods, Minnesota. Sandy Island is located in Section 21, Township 163, Range 36, of Warroad. This seems to be the first authentic record of the species in the state. The specimen is owned by Mr.



Steve Whitey of Crookston, Minn.— J. W. FRANZEN, *Minnesota Academy of Sciences, Minneapolis, Minn.*

**Audubon's Caracara in New Mexico.**— On May 4, 1914, Mr. Andrew Archer brought to my office a specimen of Audubon's Caracara (*Polyborus cheriway*) that had been shot by Mr. Harold Church from a cottonwood tree standing in an alfalfa field near Mesquite, N. M., below Las Cruces in the Rio Grande Valley. This specimen was an immature male not yet in typical color. In the stomach were found the almost completely digested remains of a small bird and a small rodent, whose identification could not be determined. The skin is now in the collection of the New Mexico College of Agriculture, at State College, N. M.

This constitutes the second established record of the occurrence of this species near here. Mr. E. W. Nelson, of the U. S. Biological Survey, kindly gave me the following note on its occurrence. "There is but a single other record, so far as we know, of this bird's occurrence in the State. This was one taken by Dr. Henry at Ft. Thorne in the winter of 1856 and sent to the U. S. National Museum." — D. E. MERRILL, *State Collegé, N. M.*

**Actions of the Red-tailed Hawk.**— In 'The Auk' for 1913 (page 582) I described the very active defense of her nest offered by a Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus lineatus*). It may be recalled that two sets of eggs, April 6, and April 29, 1913, were collected from this pair of birds. I was then especially anxious to observe the birds the next year, and early in April I visited the Sawyer woods for this purpose. The birds flew from trees on the east side of the woods from which direction I was approaching. They were very noisy but flew high and no nests which seemed to be recently occupied were seen. On April 23 I again visited the woods approaching from the east, near the southern edge. Both birds met me at the edge of the woods and flew about with noisy screaming at some elevation as I walked westward. At the west side of the woods I turned and walked in a northeastly direction directly towards the beech tree in which the first set of eggs were taken in 1913. The female was in a tree top near this beech and when I was possibly 200 feet away she launched herself directly at me. I could hardly conceive she would attack me as I stood on the ground, but she came straight on and I had to drop to my knees to avoid her blow. She alighted west of me and I walked on toward the nest, watching her over my shoulder. I had hardly stepped forward when she again dashed to the attack with more fierceness possibly than before and I again was compelled to drop to my knees. She came to rest about 30 feet from me in a small maple where she rested in a threatening attitude for some time while I stood admiring her. Her plumage was perfect, her breast being almost red, and her attitude of fearless defiance as she stood leaning toward me made a picture impossible to forget. She made no further attacks till I began climbing the tree when she struck at me viciously four times.



Eifrig, Charles William Gustav. 1915. "Cory's Least Bittern in Illinois." *The Auk* 32, 98–100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4071623>.

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