

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS OF THE CAYUGA LAKE BASIN

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The first comprehensive listing of the birds of the Cayuga Lake Basin, New York, was that of Reed and Wright (1909). Although this paper appeared after the manuscript of the first volume of Eaton's *Birds of New York* had been completed, the Reed and Wright records were available to Eaton and were utilized by him. In 1933, Arthur A. Allen and P. P. Kellogg prepared a revised list of the birds of the Cayuga Lake Basin, which appeared without change through the first four editions of Dr. Allen's *Ornithology Laboratory Notebook*. In the fifth edition (1947) appeared a new list, revised by Harold H. Axtell and Elsa G. Allen to include 1946 and a few 1947 records. This list has been the 'unofficial check-list for the Cayuga Lake Basin. It includes a number of records of more than local significance which have been overlooked by recent workers. Attention is being directed to certain of these records in another paper. The present paper gives certain additions and corrections to the 1947 list, several of which are of statewide importance. Dr. A. A. Allen has been instrumental in making many of the following observations, and has consented to their publication in this form. This paper could not have been written without his generous counsel.

Phalacrocorax carbo. European Cormorant. The specimen listed by Reed and Wright (1909: 412) has never been located, and was considered by Allen (1947: 45) as "doubtful". I know of no authentic specimen from the interior of New York. The species should be deleted from the Cayuga Basin list.

Leucophoyx thula. Snowy Egret. The notable invasion of southern herons into the northeast in the summer of 1948 added this and the following species to the Cayuga Basin list. A Snowy Egret was seen at the Montezuma refuge by Dr. Allen, Irby Davis and a party of students on August 7.

Florida caerulea. Little Blue Heron. Several birds of this species, all in white immature plumage, were seen during the summer of 1948 at the Montezuma refuge, Dryden Lake, and other suitable localities in the Basin. I know of no records from our region of either this or the last species during subsequent summers.

Mycteria americana. Wood Ibis. The only credible published record of this species in the Finger Lakes seems to be that of Clausen (1935: 97). To this may be added an observation by Dr. Allen in Ithaca on July 9, 1932. A Wood Ibis flew over his head at an altitude of less than fifty feet, affording an excellent view.

Plegadis falcinellus. Glossy Ibis. There are several New York records of this species, concentrated mostly in May. Certain years seem to bring a pronounced northward movement (Cruickshank, 1942: 80). 1947 was apparently such a year. Two Glossy Ibises were found at the Montezuma refuge on May 24, and the superintendent of the refuge saw them on a number of occasions during the following week. Buckalew (1949) reported this species in Delaware during this same week. A Glossy Ibis was also seen at Montezuma on May 20, 1951 (Parkes, 1951b: 65).

Branta bernicla. Brant. In recent years this species has tended to stray more often from its normal coastwise migration route. There are several Cayuga Lake Basin records. A flock of 29 appeared at the south end of the lake on November 8, 1941, and remained over a week. A flock of 12 or more was seen in whole or in part at various localities along the lake during the week beginning May 30, 1950. Flocks of small geese, probably of this species, were reported by a number of observers at both Cayuga and Seneca Lakes during mid-October, 1950. A single Brant was seen by Dr. Allen at Myers Point on December 3, 1950.

Chen caerulescens. Blue Goose. An immature bird of this species spent the winter of 1948-1949 with the flock of wild and semi-domesticated Canada Geese at the head of Cayuga Lake in Ithaca. Although the number of records of migrants, both spring and fall, has been increasing, this is the only known instance of a Blue Goose wintering in our area, and one of very few winter records from the state as a whole.

Anas strepera. Gadwall. Listed by Allen (1947: 46) as "Irreg. Sept. 16 — early May", the Gadwall is now known to breed at the Montezuma refuge.

Mareca penelope. European Widgeon. In recent years this species has been seen with increasing regularity at both the northern and southern ends of the Cayuga Lake Basin. I find the following spring records: May 18, 1941; April 28, 1944; March 19-20, April 1, April 14 and May 6, 1946; April 4, 1947; April 4 and 11, 1948; April 9-11 and May 14, 1950; April 7 and 8, 1951. Only two fall records are at hand; November 6, 1949 and September 25, 1950. The fall concentrations of Baldpates (*M. americana*) in the marshes at the north end of the lake have increased phenomenally in the past few years, 5,000 or more now being seen in a single day. It is quite likely that additional examples of *M. penelope* have escaped detection among these Baldpates.

Porphyryla martinica. Purple Gallinule. Eaton (1901: 218) listed a specimen of this species from East Homer, Cortland Co. In his later book (1909: 284), however, he listed only Long Island specimens, stating "occasional reports of the Purple Gallinule in New York which I have investigated prove to refer to high plumaged specimens of the following species" [*Florida Gallinule*]. An immature Purple Gallinule in the collection of the late Foster Parker of Cayuga apparently represents the only bona fide specimen from the interior of the state. It was taken on October 1, 1931, in the marshes near Cayuga. The mounted specimen is at present housed in Mr. Parker's home.

Erolia maritima. Purple Sandpiper. This species is purely casual in New York away from the Atlantic coast and the Great Lakes. The second specimen from the Cayuga Lake Basin, an immature male, was collected by Dr. Allen on November 27, 1849 at Myers Point, on the east shore of Cayuga Lake.

Ereunetes mauri. Western Sandpiper. An immature male taken by Paul S. Martin at Ithaca on October 8, 1949, proved to be the first specimen from our area referable to this species. There are several September and late August sight records by Dr. Allen and others.

Steganopus tricolor. Wilson's Phalarope. This species is a rare visitor to the interior of New York. The distribution files of the Fish and Wildlife Service contain some half dozen twentieth century records. There is a specimen in the Cornell collection from Ithaca, taken by Oliver H. Hewitt on September 3, 1943. This bird was photographed by Dr. Allen before it was collected, and a kodachrome of it was reproduced in the National Geographic Magazine (June, 1945: plate XIII). There is an earlier specimen listed by Eaton, 1909: 293) as having been taken by Louis Agassiz Fuertes at Ithaca in the fall of 1892. This specimen is not now with the Fuertes collection at Cornell, nor can I find any record of its disposition.

Larus marinus. Great Black-backed Gull. As is the case elsewhere in the eastern United States, this species is becoming more common in our area and is remaining for longer periods. Allen (1947: 50) listed the extreme dates as "Nov.-Apr." We now have records extending from the last week of July to the last week of May.

Larus atricilla. Laughing Gull. This coastal species is purely accidental in New York north and west of the lower Hudson valley. There are three good sight records from Cayuga Lake. One was seen by Fuertes on July 7, 1916. An immature bird was observed at Ithaca by many Cornell students, including the writer, on October 7, 1939. As recorded in a previous issue of *The Kingbird*, four were brought to Ithaca by the great windstorm of November 25, 1950 (Parkes, 1951a: 30).

Sterna albifrons. Least Tern. There seem to be no specimens of this species from the interior of the state, nor have any reliable sight records come to my attention. The Rathbun specimens cited by Reed and Wright (1909: 412) were examined by Eaton and found to be immature Black Terns (*Chlidonias nigra*), as were all the other supposed Least Terns from inland New York (Eaton, 1909: 148). The species should be deleted from the Cayuga Basin check-list.

Plautus alle. Dovekie. As reported earlier (Parkes, 1951a: 30), this species was added to the Cayuga Lake Basin check-list after the wind-storm of November 25, 1950. A Dovekie was captured alive in Ithaca on November 26 and another was seen on November 29.

Corvus corax. Raven. I know of no authenticated modern breeding record for the Raven in New York, although it is not uncommon in the mountains of Pennsylvania just south of our borders. Occasional individuals appear at scattered localities throughout the state. A male was collected at Sherburne, Chenango Co., on October 22, 1940, and is now in the Cornell collection. On November 22, 1942, a Raven was observed at close range by Dr. Allen and William C. Dilger at Myers Point. It was feeding on the remains of a Cisco (*Leucichthys artedi*) on the lakeshore.

Poliophtila caerulea. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. There has been a notable penetration by this species into our area in recent years. Although there had been a few previous sight records, the first specimen from the Cayuga Lake Basin was collected by Dwain W. Warner near Danby on April 13, 1947. The species has bred in or near Ithaca since 1948. On May 15, 1949, I collected a male in breeding condition at the outlet of Big Hollow Creek, in the town of Romulus, about 25 miles north of Ithaca on the west shore of Cayuga Lake.

Anthus spinoletta. Pipit. A specimen taken by Robert W. Dickerman and Brina Kessel at the Ithaca city dump on January 1, 1948 is our first and only mid-winter record of this species.

Protonotaria citrea. Prothonotary Warbler. Although this species has nested for some years at Oak Orchard Swamp, it has not been known elsewhere in New York as a breeding bird. It is of interest to recall that the unpaired male observed by Dr. Allen at Ithaca in May, 1910, was singing and carrying nesting materials (Allen, 1911). The Prothonotary Warbler definitely established itself in our area in 1948, when its nest was found at the Montezuma refuge by Harold and Rachel Axtell. It has apparently nested there in each subsequent year.

Helmitheros vermivorus. Worm-eating Warbler. Although there is a small breeding population of this species near Elmira, some thirty miles southwest of Ithaca, it is strictly accidental in the Cayuga Lake Basin. There are two specimens, both from Ithaca. The earlier was collected May 7, 1909, by Dr. Allen (Reed and Wright, 1909: 443). The most recent record is a specimen found dead by the Misses A. G. Mekeel and Evelyn Van Duzer on May 2, 1943. There are a few intervening May and September sight records.

Vermivora pinus. Blue winged Warbler. In a recent note (Parkes, 1949) I made the statement that there had been four authentic sight records of this species in the Cayuga Lake Basin. A specimen has since been collected in this region. A singing male with enlarged gonads was taken by Stephen W. Eaton on May 19, 1949, along Fall Creek near Varna. As the Golden-winged Warbler, *V. chrysoptera*, does not breed in this immediate area, this male bird would probably not have been able to locate a mate of either species.

Oporornis formosus. Kentucky Warbler. As previously indicated (Parkes, 1951b: 66), this species has been seen by reliable observers in our area for three successive years. It should be added to the Cayuga Lake Basin check-list.

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