

NOTES

A Clay-colored Sparrow summers in the Adirondacks. — It couldn't be, but it was! There it sat on a small spruce branch day after day, singing (?) its most unmusical song, "buzz buzz buzz" all day long. So on this Sunday afternoon after dinner, Dr. Marguerite Kingsbury and I took our binoculars and Petersons and went to examine the bird. We were able to get very close, to within about ten feet.

The bird did not have the big head and very short tail of the grasshopper sparrow. The song was also quite dissimilar. It was small, not much over five inches in length, pale in color, and had a very definite brown ear patch outlined in black. Its back was striped black and light brown, its pale breast unmarked. And it kept on singing the unmusical rasping, "zee, zee, zee, zee, zee." Independently we concluded that the bird was a Clay-colored Sparrow. Continued examination tended to confirm our judgment.

The location was the shrub nursery on the Sunmount Hospital grounds. This Veterans Hospital is on the outskirts of Tupper Lake, Franklin County. It is situated on a large plateau and none of the grounds are heavily wooded. The nursery is three-fourths acre in size, contains small tamaracks, spruces, pines and some flowering shrubs. It is just off a private road in a clearing of forty or fifty acres. This clearing is mostly grassland, outlined with evergreens and maple trees. Horned Larks seek out this area for nesting as do a few Meadowlarks. In winter occasional but large flocks of Snow Buntings feed on its weeds. All in all, the whole plot resembles a prairie.

All during the month of June and on until after July 4, 1956, this sparrow was perched on top of one of the spruces, singing its monotonous song. He never seemed to stop even to feed. No other sparrow was seen in the immediate vicinity, and we are quite certain that he found no mate. At the end of the first week in July the bird stopped singing and we saw no more of him.

Volume II of the National Geographic Book of Birds states that this species does wander from its migration routes and may be discovered in the most surprising places. Dr. Kingsbury and I both surmise that none could be more surprising than this — Agnes Amstutz, Sunmount Veterans Administration Hospital, Tupper Lake.

New York State Museum publications now available. — A new list of sales publications has been compiled by the New York State Museum and is available without charge on request to the Museum at Albany 1, New York. The revised list includes a considerable number of zoological bulletins, circulars, handbooks, etc., that were formerly considered out of print and have been available only through dealers. The stock of some of these items is small; in such cases, preference will be given to orders from libraries and universities, foundations and other organizations. —Victor H. Cahalane, Assistant Director, New York State Museum and Science Service, Albany 1. (Ed. Note: Perhaps the best example of the publications on this list is Eaton's two volume "Birds of New York," which has for some time been available only at inflated prices from bookstores.)

A late nesting record for the Short-billed Marsh Wren on Long Island — Fifteen years ago Cruickshank (1942, "Birds around New York City," p. 333) stated that the Short-billed Marsh Wren "must be considered a very uncommon to rare local summer resident. . . . There are nesting localities very thinly sprinkled . . . along the South Shore of Long Island from Idlewild to Mastic. . . . There are undoubtedly two broods, local egg dates ranging from May 19 to August 20." Since publication of this account all but possibly one of these localities have been abandoned or destroyed. Therefore, it appears worthwhile reporting the discovery of a new nesting locality for this species — a record made doubly interesting by the extreme lateness of the date.

On September 15, 1956, I was walking with (the well-known Long Island ornithologist) Gilbert S. Raynor and my 16-year-old son Dennis through a damp grassy meadow at the head of Fish Creek, a tidal tributary on the east side of the lower Carmans River, Brookhaven, Long Island. This meadow lies between a cattail marsh and the extensive dry oak and pine woods west of Mastic. Suddenly two very small dark birds flushed from under our feet and fluttered weakly off into a blackberry tangle about 20 feet away. At that moment we heard an unfamiliar scolding note, and we saw an adult Short-billed Marsh Wren watching us from a point close to where the two birds had disappeared.

We all had excellent views of the adult wren as it remained in the open, perched on a mallow stem for about a half-minute, permitting us to obtain positive identification. It was obviously distressed by our presence, and continued to scold at intervals with a ticking note. When it eventually disappeared, we started to move forward again, flushing two more small birds. This time we had good views of them: one permitting us almost to catch it with our hands before it dived into the rank grass. These were unquestionably young Short-billed Marsh Wrens, not yet fully fledged so that they were unable to flutter more than a few feet. From the weakness of their flight and their small size it would have been impossible for them to have traveled more than 100 yards from their nest, but we were unable to locate it in the heavy grasses. Bent (1948, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull 195:269) gives 12-14 days in the nest after hatching. These birds, therefore, were hatched about September 1, indicating an egg date about ten days later than that previously recorded by Cruickshank.

In early June 1954, Raynor and I located an adult bird about a quarter of a mile away from the location reported above, but we found no evidence of its being a breeding bird. According to the records of John J. Elliott, the last summering area for this species on Long Island other than this was at Massapequa about five years ago, except for one or two summer records from Springfield at the extreme eastern end of the Jamaica Bay marshes. — Dennis Puleston, Brookhaven, Long Island.

Cattle Egrets on Long Island — On May 21, 1954 a Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) was observed in an East Moriches, Long Island poultry farm, the first record for this species in the State. The bird was seen by many naturalists, including the writer; it remained in the vicinity for almost a week, spending most of its time inside the wire netting pens with a flock of white turkeys. It was a mature specimen with a touch of buff on head and back and with yellow legs.

A second bird was recently seen in Brookhaven, also on the South Shore of Long Island. It was reported to the writer on last October 20. I watched the bird on this date and on every subsequent day until its departure on the 25th. It was seen on the west bank of the lower Carmans River, in the vicinity of the public boat landing. Although cars and boats were frequently moving around it, it was quite tame and permitted approach to within 25 feet, affording excellent opportunities for photography. I notified the well-known Long Island naturalist, Leroy Wilcox, who obtained some good close-ups. It spent most of its time near the water's edge, hunting the plentiful crickets, grasshoppers, mantids and other insects in patches of rank weeds. A local fisherman, William Englehardt, informed me that he had tried to tempt it with small river fish (*Fundulus*), but it was not interested. However, on several occasions he caught large numbers of crickets under boards, and fed them to the bird by tossing them in its direction.

This specimen was an immature, having dark blacking-brown, instead of yellow legs; the eyes and bill were bright yellow, and the plumage pure white. It can be assumed that this bird was hatched last spring, probably in this country.

Although the bird spent most of the day along the river bank, it made several flights into the woods to the north, presumably to a roost. Several times I saw it perched on stakes out in the river, an unusual choice for this species. The last it was seen here was the first day of a severe cold wave, which would have reduced the insect supply and is presumed to be the reason for the bird's departure.

Due to the remarkably rapid increase of this species in the United States since its first appearance a few years ago, and the reported extension of its breeding range