

NOTES

Elmira's Night Herons — For at least fifteen years a flock of Black-crowned Night Herons has roosted in the trees on Elm Street, near West Third Street in the city of Elmira. As their numbers grew, they gradually spread around the corner on Third Street, forming quite a colony. Five years ago (1952) they built their first nest there and successfully reared young. They became a great nuisance in this section of the city, not far from the business section nor from the river. Area residents tried each year to get permission from the police, the health department or game warden to do away with them but to no avail. The birds were protected and the law forbade shooting in the city.

This year (1957) there were five nests and a great many herons roosting, making much noise at night, and making the streets filthy with dead fish and excrement. The nearby citizens were desperate and finally appealed to the City Council which, in turn, took the matter to the State and Federal Conservation agencies in Albany and Boston. They received permission for the police to shoot the birds. Some people deplored this so the Council decided first to try frightening away the birds by streams of water from the fire hose and to have the nests torn down, before trying the shooting. This method seems to be succeeding (as this is written in late summer). An occasional bird does return, but does not remain and at last the people are able to sleep through the night.

Apparently this nesting in cities is not as unusual as was first thought. A similar situation occurred in nearby Corning several years ago, and Roman candles were used to disperse the birds.

Over Labor Day one of the men working in the crusade to get rid of our herons visited Washington, D. C. and was surprised to see a similar situation in a locality in that city. The people disliked it there but were making no attempt to rid themselves of the nuisance.

We shall eagerly await next spring to see if any of our Elmira colony return or if it has been dislodged permanently — Olive R. York, (Mrs. Harry C.), Elmira.

A black and white Redstart — Part albinism in birds is not very unusual and such individuals are occasionally met with in the field. For example, birds like Robins may show an over-all paleness with whitish or buffy breast. Another form of albinism tends to make a bird patchy, and occasionally we see English Sparrows with such white blotches or spots on the upper parts. Again, feathers on one side of a bird may match those on the other side, as for example a Seaside Sparrow seen on several occasions into November at Oak Beach about a decade ago. This bird had Junco-like white outer tail-feathers. Several years previous to this a Sharp-tailed Sparrow flew around the Idlewild marshes with a well defined white wing patch on each wing and was seen for several weeks.

The two birds to be described apparently cannot be classified under such hit and miss albinism as described above, but rather as black and white birds lacking color pigment.

The first is a Bobolink which was shown in color movies, with several excellent close-ups, at the annual dinner and meeting of the Linnaean Society of New York, March 12, 1957, by Angelo DeAngelo in his illustrated talk 'Birds of Sussex County' (New Jersey).

As we know the Bobolink is a black and white bird, except for the nape which is buffy. One of DeAngelo's birds showed the nape to be white, thus making this Bobolink a black and white bird. DeAngelo spoke of the absence of this buffy and, while remarking on the remote possibility of this cause through ageing, he said the bird was extremely vivacious and appeared to be young and vigorous.

The second individual under observation was a male American Redstart (*Setophaga reticilla*) seen by Eugene T. Mudge at Northport, May 8-10, 1956. Whereas Bobolinks deviate from black and white in one area, the male Redstart has six patches of salmon-orange. In Mudge's bird these were white, in other words, a completely black and white Redstart.

Notes from Mudge's field notes: "It was identical in all black areas to a normal adult male Redstart. The head, throat and upper breast were jet black. As to the

areas which are normally salmon-colored, (sides of breast, wing and tail patches), these areas were white. I saw very clearly that the tail area of whiteness was a very little blurred here and there with black. In other words, the white tail-patch was not a pure white area, but had a little black mixed into the white in the border regions where the white and black joined.

"I had a wonderful observation of this bird and could have caught him in a butterfly net had I carried one."

Verbal inquiries among local observers showed no similar experiences, so a desire to investigate spring plumages of other American Redstarts caused Elliott to visit the several hundred male skins in the trays of the American Museum of Natural History.

Examination revealed that black areas and salmon patches were very regular in size and location, but the white underparts varied considerably; whereas some were almost clear white, others were blotched and streaked to some degree with black, and two specimens were particularly melanistic below. In these, wide-spread black areas enclosed the side salmon patches, peculiarly resembling the large black enclosures of the spring male Myrtle Warbler's yellow side-of-the-breast areas. Peculiar also, the areas normally salmon in these two melanistic individuals were pale and bordering on yellow or buffy, although they were normal Redstarts in all other details. So it happened that of all the birds in the trays, one of these two dark ones, a bird collected at Bayridge, L. I., May 20, 1880 (American Museum of Natural History specimen 440,589) came the nearest to the white and black of Mudge's Redstart.

In this Bayridge bird the inner vanes of the tail feathers were almost white, the outer vanes pale buffy; the wing patches ranged from whitish to pale burnt orange, as did the sides of the breast, both being a shade buffier than the tail patches. The restricted white on the underparts was relegated to the undertail coverts and forward to enclose both legs, ending in a peak one-half inch forward.

Therefore, the nearest the Museum trays had to offer was an almost all black Redstart with whitish-buff tail patches and slightly buffier side and wing patches. So we close with an appeal to readers of *The Kingbird*: has any one among you seen a black and white Redstart? — Eugene T. Mudge, R. F. D. 1, Northport, L. I.; John J. Elliott, 3994 Park Avenue, Seaford, L. I.

Winter record of the Kentucky Warbler in Ulster County — On December 5, 1956 I discovered a Kentucky Warbler on the property of S & E Farms Inc. (a professional laboratory animal concern) at Stone Ridge. As I stepped from the Office-Lab on this day I heard a sharp chip and out of the corner of my eye caught a glimpse of the bird as it dived to the ground among some Yew bushes. The dense evergreen shrubbery and Honeysuckle vines that landscapes the area must have been a strong attraction for this vagrant warbler, resembling in part its natural habitat of dense cover. The bird was not extremely wild but was constantly on the alert, apparently instinctively sensing the strangeness of at least part of the scene. It was seen several different days between the discovery date and Dec. 27 when it disappeared. It would come out of hiding on sunny mornings and search for food about the sunny exposed foundations of two of the buildings. Here the ground was always bare and with a warm sun there was a good chance of finding sluggish flies or spiders that crawled out to sun themselves. Although the bird habitually stayed close to the ground near shrubbery, it was seen on several occasions flying high up the side of the house to catch a fly. Scarcity of food must have prompted this action. So far as I could see it did not respond to the offer of commercial bird seeds. It generally ignored the other birds frequenting the area around the buildings. It was never heard to utter even the chip following the day it was found. Apparently the bird's chief concern in coming out into the open was to secure flies, a mainstay for this time of year since most of the natural food was gone. With the several buildings and driveways, a main highway, dogs, a dangerous cat, lots of human activity — all that must have been strange — it is a wonder this Kentucky Warbler stayed even for a day. Henry and Ilse Dunbar, who saw the bird, agreed that it was a male, judging from the bright, distinctive plumage.

Where did he come from? Perhaps he wandered off course from the Central New York colony in Cortland County or maybe Kentuckys have extended their breeding range up the Hudson Valley and he and his mate nested right here in Ulster County. Of course, we will never know this but at any rate we now have