

Wellesley, Massachusetts, Aug 25, 1955; Wareham, Massachusetts, June 25, 1956; Athol, Massachusetts, Aug 4, 1955; Natchitoches, Louisiana, May 5, 1956. Four birds banded June 24, 1956: recoveries: Verdun, Quebec, Sept 23, 1956; Rochester, New York, October 21, 1956; Montreal, Quebec, Aug 6, 1956; Montreal, Quebec, July 22, 1956.

RING-BILLED GULL. Banded June 11, 1955, recovery: Durzea, Pennsylvania, June 15, 1956.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON. Banded June 11, 1955, recovery: Bilwas-karma, Nicaragua. — Thomas A. Lesperance, Keeseville.

North Country bird notes — In the past 20 years, I have averaged more than one trip a year between Nyack and Canton, in St. Lawrence County. Thus I have come to know the North Country rather well — but as a tourist, not a birder. My birding has been casual, wayside observation. Even so, this summer's trip confirmed a few interesting points noted in earlier years:

1. The Upland Sandpiper seems to be increasing in abundance in a triangle bounded roughly by a Lowville-Watertown-Antwerp line. Up to three years ago, I had never seen this bird along the way. Then I saw two near Evans Mills; the next year, I saw two again in the same general area. On last June 27, one was flying across Route 12 just south of Lowville and another was perched on a wire south of Antwerp; on July 2, a bird was seen again near Lowville, perched on a stump. If so many Upland Sandpipers can be seen from a fast-moving car passing through the area, how many might a real search reveal?

2. The Black Tern may frequent the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, but I have never seen it there until this summer, when I saw two ranging over a small marsh on the "officially closed" portion of Route 37-B between Massena and Waddington. My only previous St. Lawrence Valley terns had been on the Canadian side upriver from Prescott.

3. The tail of Hurricane Audrey, which lashed the Canton area for 36 hours on June 29-30, had more effect on birdlife than I have ever seen in several hurricanes at Nyack. Wind velocity was on the moderate side — for a hurricane — but several huge trees and many branches were brought down. Being in the nesting season, this storm could be expected, I suppose, to cause more disturbance to birds than more severe storms in the autumn. In any event, three Warbling Vireos that sang near the house in Canton on June 28 were silent or absent thereafter. Sidewalks were dotted with nests, many of them from this year but none with eggs. A day or two after the storm, an abnormal number of young birds were around the lawns, especially Flickers, Robins and Grackles. At least two Robins appeared a few days too young to be thrown on their own devices, and at Ogdensburg, I did see a nestful of naked young robins that had been thrown to the sidewalk.

According to the newspapers, Hurricane Audrey was revitalized in northern New York when it struck a strong low-pressure area. I saw wind velocity figures that indicated an acceleration from 40-50 mph. winds at Syracuse to above 80 mph. at Plattsburgh. — Robert F. Deed, 50 Clinton Ave., Nyack.

The Red-headed Woodpecker in northern New York — There is considerable evidence that the Red Headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) is increasing as a summer resident in northern New York. Prior to 1951 I saw this species on only one occasion, despite the fact that I travel extensively in the area and have done so since 1935. Beginning in 1951 the Red-headed Woodpecker has been noted fairly regularly, particularly in Jefferson County. It arrives in May and is not usually seen after September. A number of nesting sites have been located, most of them in Jefferson County, but there is at least one near Lowville in Lewis County, and one was discovered in 1955 near Gouverneur in St. Lawrence County. North of Watertown, in the general vicinity of Perch Lake, there are probably at least four nesting sites.

In northern New York the preferred habitat of this species consists of open groves in dry upland areas. Mature trees, such as elm, maple, and basswood with dead stubs situated in old pasture land constitute a typical nesting site.

The Red-headed Woodpecker is relatively common in parts of western New York,

growing scarcer as one moves east and becoming rather rare as the easterly border of the state is reached. Its numbers apparently fluctuate rather widely. Fifty years ago it seems to have been more numerous than it is today. A quarter century later several writers mention a marked decrease in numbers, the lethal effect of the automobile being given as one reason for its decline.

A perusal of the "Kingbird" discloses numerous references to the Red-headed Woodpecker. Since 1950 it has been seen or found breeding in a number of areas where it had previously been absent, and seems to be making a gradual but fairly widespread recovery in much of the state. A recent issue of the Kingbird (1956, 6(3):97) mentions probable increases of this species in Oswego and Oneida Counties just south of the area under consideration. The editor for Region V makes the pertinent comment, "this may indicate an actual population increase or more observers, probably both." — J. B. Belknap, Gouverneur.

An experience with the Greater Shearwater. — For an observer like myself who rarely gets offshore, nothing could be so exciting as to watch at close range a Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus Gravis*). Such was my experience last summer. Greater Shearwaters are seldom seen from shore. Usually when they can be observed, they are around fishing boats five to ten miles or more out in the ocean.

August 26, 1956 was a day set aside for the family to picnic. We selected our place on the beach at Westhampton and proceeded to prepare for the annual outdoor barbeque. While this was being done I assembled my tripod and Balscope, and set them up overlooking the ocean. There was a slight wind from the southeast.

Hours had passed when at about three p. m. a flock of birds were seen working their way eastward. Common and Least Terns made up the greater part of this group; with them were also a few gulls and two dark birds that would dip from one side to the other.

In the scope, these birds revealed themselves to be Greater Shearwaters. They were working their way towards me about 100 yards off-shore. I wondered how close I could get to them. Surely I could swim 100 yards in the surf before they arrived. Without a second thought I took off for the water.

It was about ten minutes before my experiment became a reality. Here I was bobbing in the water, no more than 25 feet from one and 150 feet from the other shearwater. They would flap, then sail from one side to the other or circle about. One started in my direction while the other one left. The remaining Shearwater seemed to spot me, and then circle around me. Surely, I thought, it wouldn't dare attack.

The Greater Shearwater, 18-20 inches long and with a wing-spread to almost four feet, is a fishing petrel, which follows moving shoals of surface-swimming fishes as well as squids that come to the uppermost layers of the ocean during the hours of half-light or dark days (Murphy, *Oceanic Birds of South America*, 1936, p. 663). Herbert K. Job states in "Birds of America" (1936, p. 82) that their food consists of floating animal or vegetable matter, besides such marine organisms as small fish.

Perhaps I looked like some floating animal or piece of vegetable matter for it came rushing at me about to make the belly-landing characteristic of the species and was only an arms length away now. I could see that big, dark, hooked bill and wondered what would happen to my arm if I grabbed it. I saw its dark tarsus and light feet which were a sort of pink or flesh color. The eye looked dark; I didn't notice any distinguishing color.

I splashed some water as I started to back away from the attack, never once taking my eyes off it. This move seemed to startle it, and the Shearwater started to reverse action with wings flapping furiously, like those of a tern hovering above a prey. As it lifted its body, tail end down, I could see the white patch on the rump very clearly now. Then it started to take off. My blood pressure started to return to normal, but I realized it wasn't through, for circling it came toward me again. This time I prepared myself for a deep surface dive. However, it was not necessary, as the Shearwater looked at me and probably decided that I wasn't quite what it was looking for.

With its departure I returned to shore and to my family. "Well!" they wanted to know: "Did you get close enough?" "Close enough," I responded. "Yes sir, close enough for a long time to come!" — Alan H. Penberthy, Freeport.