

FIELD NOTES

Woodpecker Damage to Private Home: On April 1st, 1960 Mr. John Kie of Brainard, N. Y. took me to the summer home of Mr. Arthur Aery of Albany, N. Y. This frame building is in northeastern Columbia County in the township of New Lebanon. The house had clap-board siding covered, some years ago, with cedar shakes. Mr. Kie had seen Woodpeckers, either or both the Downy **Dendrocopus pubescens** and the Hairy **Dendrocopus villosus**, drilling holes through the cedar shakes. They had already done considerable damage to the northeast side of the house. There were no holes on any other side of the house.



Woodpecker Damage

The holes were only driven in as far as the clap-board siding which was undamaged by the birds. The garage roof which projected from this side of the house, was littered with cedar splinters. Mr. Kie removed some of the shakes where the birds had been working and it was found that each hole was bored into a group of quiescent flies and other insects, mainly the Cluster-Fly **Pollenia rudis**, identified by Mr. John Wilcox, curator of entomology at the New York State Museum. While I was at the house, no woodpeckers were seen at work on the shingles, but both species mentioned above were seen in the nearby woods. Some Cluster-Flies were found alive under the shingles and by pressing our ears close to the siding faint buzzing noises could be heard.

The house is so situated that the early morning winter sun would strike the northeast side. Perhaps the warming rays of the sun would start some flies buzzing and thus attract the woodpeckers. There was no apparent reason as to why only the one side of the house was attacked since we did not have permission to tear shingles from the undamaged sides looking for flies.

The accompanying photograph shows a close-up of the holes. It can be seen that no building paper or tar paper was placed under the shingles which might have prevented such a large number of insects from gathering there. The shingles were still in excellent condition except for the woodpecker damage.

In the last few years there have been several reports of woodpeckers damaging house sidings. In some cases it was reported that the damage was done to new California Redwood siding. The author was unable to make personal inspections of any of these but can only suggest, in light of the above experience, that there may have been a similar cause. No one cares to pay for such damage to his own

house and the owners of such homes cannot be censured if they place the blame on the woodpeckers alone, not knowing the real culprits. It might be good conservation practice to see that builders and home-owners know the real cause and take steps to eliminate the insects rather than the woodpeckers. All instances of woodpecker damage in our areas should be examined, if possible, and home-owners should take reasonable precautions, where possible, to prevent future damage both to houses and to the woodpeckers.

Woodpeckers, usually the Hairy Woodpecker or the Flicker, have been known to use a house for a drumming post to the understandable annoyance of the occupants. Such action, however, would not lead to the severe and extensive damage shown in the photograph. — E. M. Reilly, Jr., Curator, Zoology, N. Y. S. Museum, Albany 1, N. Y.

Yellow-nosed Albatross off Long Island: On Sunday, May 29, 1960, a Yellow-nosed Albatross was observed about a mile and a half off the Jones Beach water tower, along the southern shore of Long Island. The bird was seen by some forty or fifty persons in two chartered boats on a scheduled Linnaean Society sea trip for pelagic birds.

When the albatross was discovered by the first boat, a radio message was sent to the second boat, some five miles away at the time. When the bird was first seen, it was on the water with Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls and resembled the latter in pattern. It was repeatedly flushed by the boats, upon which its wing-spread, estimated at seven feet, could be observed at extremely close range. While in the air the albatross, an adult, was harassed by some of the gulls. Colored photographs, both still and moving, were made of the rarity by several of the observers. The bird was under observation for about an hour, and when the boats turned homeward it was still sitting on the water. Besides the albatross the ocean was alive with birds of a great variety of species (see Region 10, this issue). Chumming over the side brought many of these into close range.

An ocean trip by several Long Island bird clubs just six days later, Saturday, June 4, revealed no evidence of the albatross. The ocean was destitute of birds and except for an epidemic of mal de mer the net result was a half dozen Wilson's Petrels!

The normal range of the Yellow-nosed Albatross is restricted to the south Atlantic and Indian Oceans and to the seas near Australia. There have, however, been three or four previous North American records for the species, as indicated by the Fifth Edition of the AOU Checklist. This is apparently the first reported occurrence of any species of albatross in New York State waters. — John J. Elliott, 3994 Park Avenue, Seaford, Long Island.

Cattle Egret reaches Western New York: What is regarded as possibly the first record for the Cattle Egret (*Ardeola ibis*) in western New York, was observed by Gail Seamans and Richard G. Beebe, of Batavia, on May 29, 1960, west of the village of Byron, (Route 262 and Bank Street Road). They immediately notified Mrs. O. L. Pixley, of Batavia, who in turn telephoned Mr. and Mrs. Edward C. Ulrich, in Buffalo. The Ulrichs advised us of this record on the same day. On the next day, May 30th, after a short search, and returning to the pond where the bird was supposed to be seen, I found the bird on the margin of the small farm pond.

It was an all white bird about the size of a Green Heron. The top of the head, over the back, and breast feathers were tinged by a brownish rust wash. One leg appeared to be injured.

While watching the bird, I talked to Mrs. Beach, wife of the man operating the farm where the Egret was discovered. She informed me that the white bird had been there for "about four weeks".

I had previously seen the Cattle Egret, at the "Coal Pocket Area" near Schenectady, on May 25, 1957. This was the first inland New York State record, and was seen by many attending the annual Federation meeting in Schenectady that year.

Another Cattle Egret was reported in John W. Brown's, "Birds Afield" column, published in the Rochester Times-Union newspaper, on June 2, 1960. This bird