

FIELD NOTES

Barrow's Goldeneyes in Jefferson County: On November 27, 1960, three Barrow's Goldeneyes were shot at Stony Point on Lake Ontario. One was a male, and this was taken by Elmer Wagner of the Watertown office of the New York State Conservation Department to Case Junior High School, Watertown, where it was mounted and added to the collection of birds.

The day was cloudy with a temperature of 50 degrees and no wind, which is hardly ideal for hunting ducks. About two o'clock four ducks approached the decoys. They came easily and seemed unafraid. In fact they were described as "rather foolish." Their behavior was much like that of the Common Goldeneye, several of which (both male and female) were also taken. The fourth Barrow's Goldeneye, which was not collected, was a male. The identity of the specimens was established by comparison.

For other records of Barrow's Goldeneye in New York State as published in the **Kingbird** see: Parkes, Kenneth C., "The Barrow's Goldeneye in New York," (Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 54) and Lesperance, Thomas A., "Barrow's Goldeneye at Ausable Point, Lake Champlain" (Vol. 5, No. 2 p. 39). There have also been several reports of this bird in recent winters from the Hudson River near Albany. — Frank A. Clinch, 173 Haley Street, Watertown.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on Long Island: The appearance of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Atlantic Beach on October 29, 1960, brought numerous observers into the area, and most of them had excellent views of this spectacular bird. This rarity was discovered by Paul Buckley of the Bronx. The bird was in excellent plumage, its long scissor-like tail guiding it accurately as it flew from perch to perch and occasionally as it flew in spectacular swoops after some insects.

The bird was seen to hop a foot or two from its perch and grab passing insects, at other times to swing out after them, and it was observed to supplement its insect diet with the ripening berries of the Russian olive, large bushes of which were spread around in clumps at the rear of the Atlantic Beach swimming clubs. The bird remained in this area for about eight days; it was last seen on November 6.

The Scissor-tail prove itself to be a dominant bird in the area. It arose gracefully to prominent perches such as high wires or television aerials, but at other times when feeding on berries it would naturally be found within the leafy structure of the bushes.

Long Island's only other record for this species is one seen on November 23, 1940, by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Austin at the Coast Guard Station at Gilgo. This record is in Allan D. Cruickshank's "Bird Around New York City," published in 1942 (Ed — The Scissor-tail is one of several western flycatchers that have appeared along the Atlantic seaboard from time to time during the latter part of the fall migration. This particular occurrence of the Scissor-tail marks at least the third New York State record in the last twenty years. John Elliot cites the 1940 record above. The intervening record was an inland one, at Tomhannock Reservoir near Troy, on November 4, 1956; an account of this record is given in the May, 1957, issue of the **Kingbird** (Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 14). — John J. Elliott, 3994 Park Avenue, Seaford Long Island.

A Ground Nesting of Mourning Doves: As I was engaged in bird-banding activities in late June, 1957, at the village of Peru, I located a Mourning Dove's nest on a hummock of saw grass in a small swamp. The swamp was the result of the impoundment of the waters of the Little Ausable River just above the Mason saw mill. The body of water extends upstream about one-half mile and comprises about twenty acres. As silt and debris gradually accumulated, an extensive bog began to grow on the northwest portion of the upper pond. In time the bog became covered with grasses, and eventually alders, pines, larch or tamarack, and several other species of trees became established. At the time of discovery of the nest, the average height of the trees was about fifteen to eighteen feet.

Inasmuch as Mourning Doves had many times in the past used these tree branches, especially those of the larch, as nesting sites, it was with some surprise that I came across the ground nesting. Only a few yards away stood an adequate

larch with an old nest amid its upper branches. My first thought was that perhaps the young had been blown from the nest to the ground and had been established there by the parents, but, and this does not preclude that the above did not happen, there was quite evidently an attempt at construction of a rudimentary nest of coarse twigs, such as is typical of the species.

The nest contained two downy young, about three weeks old as judged by the development of the wing and breast feathers. Pictures were taken to authenticate the occasion. The parents were in evidence while I was at the nest site, but they would not come to feed the young while I was in the vicinity. I constructed a blind and hoped to obtain feeding pictures in this manner, but the parent birds were wary of the disturbance in their natural surroundings.

A Black Duck's nest was located about ten yards away. The alertness of the old mother duck made it impossible to proceed to the Mourning Dove's nest without the parent bird taking flight, even in inclement weather.

I banded and weighed the young. The larger of the two weighed four ounces, the smaller three ounces; three days later both weighed four and a half ounces. As I kept watch on the nest in the several days following, I chose a different approach path each time in order to not attract predators.

The hummock on which the nest was situated was surrounded by water about a foot deep; the hummock itself was some five feet across by three feet in length. A few black alder grew upon the same hummock, to a height of about five feet. These provided some canopy and protection from the sun.

When I viewed the nest at the end of the second week in July, I found it to be empty. In looking about the area I noted two adults and one young bird perched on transmission wires about a quarter mile from the nesting site. The band on the leg of the young was plainly discernible through the binoculars; it was then justifiably assumed to be one of the two mentioned above inasmuch as there were no other banders in the immediate area. The trio was seen several times at later dates, sometimes in company with others. I did not see the second young bird after it had left the nest.

In June, 1958 I went again to the area to see whether the old pair would return to the same site. A pair of adults was seen on the wires nearby, and although I combed the area for evidence of a nest, either on the ground or in the trees, none was found. None was found in either 1959 or 1960 although adults were seen regularly. The banded bird was not seen again, and there has been no return information from the Fish and Wildlife Service indicating that a recovery has been made.

A ground nesting of the Mourning Dove is a matter of some interest; the great majority of nests, of course, are in trees.

In further connection with the Mourning Dove the Fish and Wildlife Service is especially interested in tracing its migratory movements and determining its status as a resident in areas where it is found. Although numbers in this area vary by season and year, the species can be found here the year around. In winter such localities as wind-swept knolls, plowed dirt roads, and bare stream banks are attractive to these birds, as are in fact any areas where seeds might have blown and small gravel is available. The gravel is of importance in the assimilation of food consumed, much as it is with the gallinaceous birds.

The Mourning Dove is a protected species in the North, and it would seem that the species should be accorded the same protection in southern areas where it is now hunted. As evidenced by literature sent to banders by the Fish and Wildlife Service, this is a declining species. Its status merits the attention of Federation members in seeking nationwide protection of it as a species. — Thomas A. Lesperance, Keeseville.

Barn Owls in Onondaga County: The Barn Owl is a rare bird in Onondaga County. The most recent nesting was discovered in an abandoned coal silo near Brewerton. When the four birds were found on October 5, 1960, the youngest was estimated to be about three and a half weeks old (its feathers were just poking out of the quills). The primary feathers of the oldest bird, estimated to be about five weeks of age, were well advanced and the down was rubbing off. Assuming a three week incubation period, the egg dates would be approximately August 9 to August 21.