

Hybrid Flickers: *Colaptes auratus* x *C. cafer* in New York State: The Red shafted Flicker, *Colaptes cafer* ranges from the Pacific coast eastwards to the western portion of the Great Plains (western Dakotas, western Nebraska, western Kansas). Our Yellow-shafted Flicker *Colaptes auratus* ranges westward to the eastern edge of the Rockies. Hybrids are fairly common where the ranges of the two species overlap and are progressively less common westwards and eastwards. On April 29, 1961, Mr. John Heller, the staff-photographer of the New York State Museum, brought me a Flicker which he found dead at the north end of the Education Building here in Albany. This specimen, now N.Y.S. Museum #19783, was an adult male. The outermost and two innermost rectrices were almost completely normal for a Yellow-shafted Flicker but the three in-between rectrices on each side range from almost true Red-shafted coloration of the innermost to a somewhat lighter red. The reddish in both wings is confined to the 4th to 8th primaries. The small outermost (10th) and next (9th) are normal for a Yellow-shafted Flicker, the 8th and 4th have a slight reddish tinge on the lower (entad) vane. The 6th and 8th primaries have both vanes and shafts a rather light, but typical, Red-shafted Flicker coloration. The 7th primary is a typical "Red-shafted" feather.: In all other observable respects, the bird is a normal Yellow-shafted-Flicker.

Mr. Henry Thurston, now on the staff of the N. Y. S. Museum, reported a Flicker from the Claverack area of Columbia County first seen on April 29th, as having nearly similar coloration. He has been unable to collect this bird.

Dr. Allen Benton, Albany State Teacher's College sent me the following data about a specimen in the College collection:

"Killed by car at Utica, N. Y., September 1955. Adult female, so of course it has no mustache marks. Shafts and vanes of most rectrices reddish at base, shading off to normal yellow near tip. First two primaries likewise normal toward tip but quite reddish near base, other primaries appear quite normal. There is some evidence of molt in primaries, so the ones I mention as first two may actually be farther back. Most of the wing feathers, however, are relatively normal to quite normal."

There have been other records and reports of such hybrids in the east. I recall a specimen, similar to the two here recorded, in the Cornell University collection and there are probably others elsewhere. It would be interesting to plot such occurrences on a map to see the real extent of such "hybridization". A rather hasty perusal of the literature available disclosed no data on dominance of red over yellow or *vice versa*. Careful sight observations should be made of Flickers to note the appearance of any "reddish" individuals. Birdwatchers finding any dead Flickers with such characteristics could save, at least, the wings and tails and notes on the rest of the plumage. If no other institution desires such specimens the New York State Museum would be happy to accept all those sent.

—E. M. Reilly, Jr. Curator, Zoology, N. Y. S. Museum, Albany 1, N. Y.

Lark Sparrow in Onondaga County: On Sunday, May 14, 1961, as we turned from Munro Road into Lyons, south of Camillus, we noticed a bird fly from the road to an adjoining piece of plough-land. The bird was a large sparrow with white prominent on the outer tail feathers. I stopped the car and the bird returned to feed on the road in front of us, where it was observed from a distance of about 12 feet for 4 minutes before it flew up into a tree.

The bird was unfamiliar to us. We noticed particularly well the black moustaches, the cream stripes on the head, the white spectacles, the distinct chestnut cheeks and the breast spot. As the bird moved about, the white corners of the spot. As the bird moved about, the white corners of the tail were quite distinct. It was larger than a Vesper and somewhat more heavily built than a Horned Lark (one of which fed with it during the subsequent observation.) The breast, except for the spot was clear and unstreaked.

Having satisfied ourselves that the bird was positively a Lark Sparrow, we hastened to bring to the scene Margaret Rusk, Roberta Seaman and Walter Spofford. After searching for three-quarters of an hour, and as we were about to give up and depart, we found the bird feeding again at the same spot on the road. The identification was confirmed by Spofford, who knows the bird in the Mississippi Valley. Good views were obtained through the telescope (20X) and Spofford took several photographs. We noted that the bird took readily to perching in trees when it was disturbed, flying up from the road into the tree, then dropping down again to feed.

The day was sunny with clear skies and temperatures in the 70's. The preceding day (May 13th) had southern air streams (10-15 mph) coming into the area, with a low pressure system moving east from the Mississippi Valley. The preceding week had seen a heavy migration of Passeriformes following the end of cold April weather. Migration had been very heavy on Tuesday, May 9th.

The Lark Sparrow is listed as an occasional, quite irregular visitant in upstate New York. This is a first record, so far as we are able to determine, for Onondaga County. — Mr. and Mrs. Michael Thomas, 420 Orchard Road, Syracuse 9.

Little Galloo Island Revisited: On May 25, 1961, after a lapse of four years, I again visited the prodigious gull colony on Little Galloo. The first definite information on this colony at the eastern end of Lake Ontario was obtained sixteen years ago by the late Harry L. Kutz. At that time Kutz estimated 2000 breeding birds, 90% Ring-billed Gulls and the remainder Herring Gulls. In May 1948 at the time of my first visit it was evident that the Ring-billed Gulls were increasing rapidly. In the next few years the colony continued to expand and by 1954 occupied about twenty acres, nearly one-half of the island. During this period estimates of nest density were made, the average being 2100 per acre. On May 22, 1955 there were judged to be 45,000 nests of the Ring-billed Gull on Little Galloo.

My observations indicate that the Herring Gull population has remained nearly stationary, at no time being more than fifty pairs. This species maintains a circular area in the interior of the island against intrusion by the Ring-bills.

On the current trip few birds of any kind were seen after leaving Henderson Harbor. As the boat approached Little Galloo about seventy-five Brant left the water and settled down on the opposite side of the island. On landing it was noted that Black-crowned Night Herons were more numerous than in the past. Many nests were located in the low bushes that fringe the island. At least fifty contained eggs, and a few downy young were seen.

The Ring-billed Gull colony had obviously expanded since 1957. Most of the island, except for the domain of the Herring Gulls, was covered by their nests. This amounted to at least thirty acres, and, using the density figure previously mentioned, a total of 63,000 nests is obtained. Some contained one egg, others two, still others three, while a few held four. There was a sprinkling of young birds, mostly one to three days old.

The amount of food required to maintain this colony during the period the young are being raised must be tremendous. Assuming two surviving young per nest, the total number of birds is in the neighborhood of 250,000. To obtain food the adults scour the shoreline of Lake Ontario for miles, they range inland over the farmlands of southern Jefferson County, and even follow the branches of Sandy Creek well onto the Tug Hill plateau. — John B. Belknap, 92 Clinton St., Gouverneur.