

SOME OF OUR COMMON BIRDS SEEN IN DISTANT LANDS

LILLIAN C. STONER

We know that many of the birds that are here only in the spring and summer go to other lands in the fall and winter. They migrate — but where, we often ask.

I have been quite interested in seeing in distant localities some of the birds that we commonly see here, as I have been fortunate to go on three trips conducted by staff members of the Florida Audubon Society — to Jamaica in January 1967, to Mexico in January 1968, and to British Honduras, Central America in February 1969. On each day on the all-day field trips, we were taken by car, bus, boat or airplane to different types of habitats. Then, at night after dinner, the group met to report the birds seen or heard on that day for the compiled list of the different species.

One of the first birds I saw in Jamaica in 1967 was the American Redstart. This beautiful male bird flew to the top of a tree on the hotel grounds on a bright sunny day. It was plainly seen without bird glasses as it gave its familiar song. This species is listed as a winter resident on this island. We observed it on six days in British Honduras and on three days in Mexico. My late husband and I reported seeing this member of the warbler family ten years between May 11 and June 7 in our book entitled "The Birds of Washington Park, Albany, N.Y.", and as we know, it is a summer resident here.

Also in Jamaica and not far from the Redstart in the tree top and also immediately in front of the hotel, a Green Heron flew to the rim of a large iron goldfish container. It peered down intently in the water for small fish, and paid no attention to the observers and the clicking cameras which were not far away. In the five different years when we listed this Heron in Washington Park between April 26 and August 29 (summer records here) it was easily frightened into flight, and also quickly took flight when seen along the Hudson River during its seasonable stops here.

The Sparrow Hawk, which is in Albany during the entire year as it nests here, was seen daily in Mexico and on several days each in the other two tropical localities we visited.

The greatest number both of species and of individual ducks was recorded in Mexico, while most of the shore birds we listed were in Jamaica.

The Turkey Vulture, which is reported here occasionally and is usually seen flying at not too high an elevation, was listed every day on all three trips. Sometimes it was flying fairly low but often it was high in the sky. One day in Jamaica we saw it above us, soaring gracefully around the mountain peaks when we were at 5000 feet. In Mexico we saw this species flying above us when we were at 9000 feet.

It seemed strange not to find gulls in Jamaica, but authorities say Herring, Ring-billed and Laughing Gulls occur as transients; not many gulls were about the harbor of Belize, the capital of British Honduras.

The Belted Kingfisher's loud chatter was heard daily in British Honduras and reported only twice in Jamaica and not at all in Mexico.

We had only one record in Jamaica and Mexico and five in Central America of the Rough-winged Swallow. We see this bird here in our warm season but not in great numbers as compared to Bank, Barn and Cliff Swallows.

One of our three Mexican records of our Robin was at 9000 feet. Other species of Robins were recorded in British Honduras.

The red head patch, eye ring and wing bars were plainly seen on the Ruby-crowned Kinglet as it fluttered about in the top of some bushes in southern British Honduras. The bird chirped occasionally, but did not sing its beautiful song which we hear when they come in fairly good numbers to Albany in April and early May.

We heard and saw other members of the warbler family than the American Redstart but not always the same ones on the three trips. In Jamaica the Black-and-white was observed daily; here, too, the following three-Palm Parula and Prairie-were listed on five days. No Myrtle was recorded in Jamaica but it was seen daily in British Honduras and on three trips in Mexico, where we also had the Audubon's Warbler on four days. This latter bird is not seen in our State but I mention it because it was interesting to watch and compare with the similar plumaged Myrtle. The Myrtle is known as the warbler with four bright yellow spots in its plumage while the Audubon's has five bright yellow spots as it also has a yellow throat; the songs of these two birds are similar.

Some of our regulars, such as the Meadowlark and Cardinal, were observed in all three localities and the Catbird was seen in Jamaica and Central America. But *no* Crows were listed by us (although reported by authorities) in Mexico or British Honduras. The two Jamaican Jabbering Crows, created quite a little excitement in our group when we saw them fly out of deep woods and heard them as they flew over us. They are found in only a few localities on this island. The grackles and cowbirds recorded in Mexico are quite different from ours.

Both House Sparrows and Starlings are in Jamaica and the Sparrows were seen daily in Mexico, but no Starling was listed there by us.

The colorful Indigo Bunting is reported in Mexico, but was not seen there by us. We had four records for it in British Honduras and one in Jamaica; however, it is more common here in March and April. Mrs. Audrey Downer, whom we met in Botego Bay, Jamaica, is a bird bander who specializes in banding Indigo Buntings. Her interesting experience in seeing a banded female Indigo Bunting at her feeding station which had a strange numbered band on its leg has been written up in two magazines under the title "Recovery - by Telescope." Mrs. Downer as

an experiment set up her newly acquired telescope in the house and focused it on her bird feeding station in her garden. She found out that by means of the telescope she could read the small numbers on the bands of the birds feeding at the feeder without retrapping them. On April 17, 1966 she noticed different numbers on two of the birds that did not go into the traps. Finally after working on it for some time she made out on one of them 6?274, the second number either 6 or 8. She and other Jamaica banders knew that none of them had had used that numbered band on the island. After consulting authorities in U.S.A., they learned that this female Indigo Bunting had been banded in Pennsylvania by Mr. Ralph K. Bell on September 29, 1963. So this recovered bird was over two and onehalf years old when it was seen in Jamaica and it had travelled quite a distance in its migratory journey.

Our three lists of birds compiled on these eight-day trips to these tropical localities are far from complete records of all the birds that might be recorded there. While we heard and saw many new species, it was gratifying to see some that we were familiar in our own State. It also gave us a glimpse of where some of our common birds spend their winter and where they can be seen during their migration.

399 State Street, Albany, N.Y. 12210

SUGGESTED READING

An article by Federation member Herb Saltford of Poughkeepsie on the Christmas Bird Census in Roger Tory Peterson's Old Lyme-Saybrook, Connecticut, area. It appeared in the December, 1969, issue of Yankee Magazine.

FIELD NOTES

A White Pelican Sighted at Tupper Lake, New York. A White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) was sighted one-half hour before sunrise (6:16 a.m. EDT) on October 19, 1969. Although Peterson's Field Guide lists this bird as accidental in the northeast, the authors are aware of no previous sightings at the higher elevations of the Adirondack Mountains. The marsh between Raquette Pond and Tupper Lake is located at latitude 44° 12' north and longitude 74° 29' west. The marsh has an elevation of 1545 feet and is located approximately 29 miles west northwest of the highest peak in the Adirondacks. The bird was sighted on a clear, cool morning at the western extremity of the marsh close to Raquette Pond.

The large distinctive bird was under observation from a boat and on foot with 7 × 35 and 10 × 50 binoculars for approximately three and one-half hours at a distance of 50 to 60 yards. The bird was swimming within 5 to 10 feet of the marsh emergents and at times appeared to be dipping bait fish. One observer waded to within 50 feet of the bird at which time it flushed and flew south down Tupper Lake. The other observer simultaneously observed the bird in flight and confirmed the black primaries.

Rainer H. Brocke and George F. Mattfeld, The Archer and Anna Huntington Wildlife Forest Station Newcomb, New York 12852