

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Since our spring meeting, ornithology and conservation in Alabama have been greatly augmented. Mrs. Blanche E. Dean has published her helpful book, "Let's Learn the Birds in Alabama;" the people in Alabama are becoming aware of the political fire ant program in Alabama and its dangers to man and beast; and we have good news about the Gulf Island Refuge.

Blanche Dean has done a very good job in publishing her small bird book. We won't compare it with Tom Burleigh's, "Birds of Georgia," which is fresh off the press, and which is a very superior state bird publication. Mrs. Dean's book is written for the beginner and is stimulating and should provide much help to those starting out. Copies of this book may be obtained from Mrs. Dean at 1228 South 29th Street for \$1.25 each. They should be good gifts to young and beginning bird students.

The fire ant situation is quite interesting. The U. S.D.A. started the program with a leaflet, "Facts About the Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program," in which many false propaganda statements were made. The worst error was the fallacious thought that a true eradication of the fire ant could be accomplished. Any sensible biologist who knows the situation realizes that this cannot be done, especially with the proposed program. After the U.S.D.A. program progressed, and it was increasingly evident that wildlife was endangered, the U.S.D.I., Fish and Wildlife Service in collaboration with several states set up research programs to determine what the effects of broadcast insecticide treatment are on wildlife. In Alabama, the A.P.I. Wildlife Research Unit set up a research program near Camden in Wilcox County. In a recent release of information it was shown that the Bob-white Quail was completely eliminated by the insecticides used, and that over 23 different species of birds were killed as well as many mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fishes. Dr. Clarence Cottam of the Welder Wildlife Foundation,

Sinton, Texas, and former assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, remarked in a letter that after our studies were over we would find that the wildlife was killed and that the fire ant had survived. We are hoping that shortly the U.S.D.A. will be glad to let this program drop and that it will avoid such political footballs in the future.

Mr. F. C. Gillett, who is Chief of the Division of Wildlife of the Regional Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, recently wrote that the island refuge situation on Petit Bois and other islands in the Gulf of Mexico that are available as refuges will be placed under active refuge management shortly. There are still 717 acres in Petit Bois Island, 1,270 acres in Horn Island and all of Round Island in private ownership. These lands should be obtained from this ownership for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Our job of helping get these lands released is still present. Anything we can do to aid in convincing the private holders of our need for this refuge land will speed up the acquisition.

The Alabama Ornithological Society has had a wonderful opportunity to show its interest in these political situations in which our wildlife needed protection. It was an opportunity, and still is, for us to individually and as a group, in the name of the A.O.S., stand up for and be heard in our demands for better conservation. This is one of the main reasons for the existence of the A.O.S. and it is our individual duty to see that our society functions to promote better conservation.

Julian Dusi
Auburn, Alabama

A BREEDING-BIRD STUDY IN WILCOX COUNTY, ALABAMA

LOVETT E. WILLIAMS, JR.

Introduction

In March, 1958, a study of birds was undertaken in Wilcox County, Alabama, to determine:

1. What species of birds breed in certain habitat types in Wilcox County and their status there.
2. Breeding-bird population densities in certain habitats in Wilcox County.

Our knowledge of distribution and population densities of birds breeding in Southern Alabama is quite limited. It was felt by Dr. Julian Dusi (Associate Professor of Zoology, A.P.I.) and myself that such a study might be of some value.

Methods

Field-work was begun in mid-March, 1958. The early part of the study was primarily concerned with selection of suitable study areas, marking observation stations and mapping.

In the middle of April, recording of individuals in the different study areas was begun. Because in April many migrants were present, only those birds exhibiting marked territoriality were recorded as possible breeding individuals. As Spring wore on, the population became more stable; beginning May 1 every bird occurring in the study areas was recorded—many of these later proved to be not breeding in the area. The study was completed May 27.

Singing males were plotted on maps. When these birds were heard singing or seen repeatedly in the same location, and later seen with a mate, they were considered breeding birds. In every case that individuals were considered breeders:

1. The bird was seen or heard in the same location (+ — 50 feet) at least 10 different days throughout a period of not less than 20 days, or
2. A nest was discovered, or
3. Young birds, out of the nest, were seen being fed by adult birds in a location where a breeding pair of the species was suspected.

These pairs were counted as inhabitants of the Study Areas only when the center of their territory fell with-

in the area. In other words, a breeding-pair spending little time on the area was not included.

No all-out effort was made to find nests. In some cases nests were searched for to verify breeding activity. Few were found. It would be impossible to census more than a very small area if much time is spent in searching for nests.

An attempt was made to compute population densities. It should be pointed out, however, that the densities arrived at in this paper can be interpreted only in the light of the writer's definition of a "breeding-bird." Some species do not show marked territoriality, e. g., vultures, swifts, swallows, hawks. These are here treated as visitors in the study areas. For these species it would be impossible to determine if the center of their territory fell within the study area.

Area One

Study area one is a 1200 ft. x 200 ft. strip along an old logging road in a mixed pine-hardwood stand. The area was heavily logged about four years ago and a heavy underbrush of honeysuckle, smilax, and young hardwoods has developed. Few mature hardwoods are on the area and no pine over 10 inches diameter-breast-high. There is also no over-story cover.

The area held 28 pairs of breeding birds (18 species) in its 5.5 acres. This gives a breeding-bird density of 5.2 birds per acre, or 520 pairs per 100 acres.

Species Occurring in Area One (Cut-Over Pine Woods) and their Status Breeders

Hairy Woodpecker—1 pair was seen in the area throughout the study period.

Downy Woodpecker—1 pair was seen in the area throughout the study period.

Crested Flycatcher—1 pair was seen in the area throughout the study period. Other individuals of this species visited the area.

Wood Pewee—3 pairs were seen in the area throughout the study period. 1 nest found.

Chickadee—1 pair seen repeatedly and seen feeding young May 26. Others of this species visited the area throughout the study period.

Carolina Wren—2 pairs maintained territories throughout the study period.

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher—3 pairs seen in the area throughout the study period. Others of this species visited the area during the early part of the study.

White-eyed Vireo—1 pair maintained a territory throughout the study period. Another pair with young out of the nest found on the area May 26.

Red-eyed Vireo—2 pairs were seen on the area repeatedly during the month of May.

Yellow-throated Warbler—1 pair was seen on the area throughout the study period.

Pine Warbler—1 pair in the area throughout the period. Other individuals visited the area.

Prairie Warbler—1 pair apparently bred on the area—a discreet territory was maintained. The species was more abundant on the area during the early part of the study.

Kentucky Warbler—1 pair remained on the area throughout the study period.

Yellow-breasted Chat—3 pairs maintained discreet territories on the area.

Summer Tanager—1 pair was seen on the area throughout the period.

Cardinal—2 pairs were on the area throughout the period. A nest was found.

Indigo Bunting—2 pairs maintained territories on the area throughout the study period.

Towhee—1 pair was found on the area throughout the study period.

Visitors

Broad-winged Hawk—seen from time to time in the area, but no good evidence of their breeding there.

Bobwhite—seen several times in the area, but apparently not nesting there.

Turkey—numerous tracks in the area.

Mourning Dove—seen several times in the area but probably not nesting there.

Chimney Swift—flying over the area every day.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo—seen in the area, but no evidence of breeding activities.

Pileated Woodpecker—seen in the area once.

Common Crow—seen in the area 7 times.

Titmouse—seen in the area 5 times.

Redstart—heard singing in area for 3 days.

Chipping Sparrow—seen in the area 3 times during late May.

Area Two

This area is a strip 1500 feet x 200 feet along the edge of an old field. Fifty feet of its width, to the south, is in mixed pine and hardwood, with pine predominating. The remaining 150 feet of width is contained in an old field. The field is knee high in dewberry, smilax, and broom-sedge. A group of seven or eight persimmon trees grow in the field. There is a large pecan tree also.

The area held 15 pairs of birds on its 6.9 acres for a bird density of 2.2 birds per acre or 220 pairs per 100 acres.

Species Occurring in Area Two (Old Field Edge) and Their Status Breeder

Bobwhite—1 pair was observed in the area throughout the month of May. Other individuals visited the area.

Turkey—1 nest was found. Several individuals of the species visited the area throughout the period.

Red-bellied Woodpecker—1 pair seen frequently in the same tree since May 6.

Great Chested Flycatcher—1 pair seen in the area throughout the study period.

Wood Pewee—1 pair seen on the area throughout the period.

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher—1 nest found.

White-eyed Vireo—2 pairs maintained territories on the area.

Yellow-throated Warbler—1 pair seen on the area throughout the period.

Cardinal—1 pair seen on the area throughout the study period.

Blue Grosbeak—1 pair remained on the area throughout the study period.

Indigo Bunting—1 pair seen on the area throughout the study.

Field Sparrow—3 pairs apparently bred on the area. One nest was found.

Visitors

Turkey Vulture—several seen flying over the area almost every day.

Black Vulture—seen over the area 15 times.

Red-tailed Hawk—seen in the area once.

Mourning Dove—several pairs used the area but may have nested elsewhere.

Chimney Swift—seen flying over the area nearly every day.

Cuckoo—visited the area 12 times.

Hummingbird—occurred in the area 9 times.

Downy Woodpecker—visited the area 6 times.

Eastern Kingbird—several migrants recorded in the early part of the study; none bred in the area.

Rough-winged Swallow—occurred in the area 4 times in May.

Purple Martin—seen in the area 3 times in late May.

Common Crow—several seen in the area.

Fish Crow—several seen in the area.

Blue Jay—seen in the area frequently, but apparently not breeding.

Carolina Wren—seen in the area 8 times.

Starling—seen in the area once.

Redstart—seen in the area 3 times in mid-May.

Orchard Oriole—1 pair stayed in the area for about two weeks and left.

Cowbird—Seen in the area throughout the study and undoubtedly bred there, but no parasitized nest could be found.

Area Three

Area three, 1000 feet x 200 feet, is located along a small, fast-running creek. It extends 100 feet on either side of the creek. The vegetation here is mature hardwood in the over-story (beech, white oak, cucumber tree, and hickory) and in the under-story several species of shade tolerant shrubs, including *Illicium* sp., azalea, dogwood, and young hardwood trees. The terrain is typical of small upland streams in the county—a deep bank with occasional limestone outcroppings and a very steep slope toward the creek. The area is dark, shaded and cool.

This area, 4.6 acres, contained 24 pairs of breeding birds. This gives a density of 520 pairs per 100 acres. By coincidence, this density is identical with that of area one.

Species Occurring in Area Three (Mature Hardwood) and Their Status Breeders

Black Vulture—1 nest was found containing one downy young. Others of the species were seen flying over the area.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo—1 pair was seen everyday throughout the period. Others of the species occurred in the area frequently.

Hummingbird—2 nests were found.

Downy Woodpecker—1 pair remained in the area throughout the study period.

Acadian Flycatcher—2 pairs seen in restricted spots in the area throughout the period.

Carolina Wren—2 pairs remained in the area throughout the study period. One pair was seen with young out of the nest May 25.

Wood Thrush—1 pair was seen repeatedly in the same locality throughout the study period.

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher—1 pair seemed to be breed- in on the area. They were seen 19 times in the same place. Others of the species visited the area.

White-eyed Vireo—1 pair seen on the area throughout the period.

Red-eyed Vireo—3 pairs stayed on the area through-

out the month of May. Others of the species visited the area.

Worm-eating Warbler—1 family and 1 individual adult were on the area from May 7 through the end of the study, May 27. On May 7 one bird was heard singing in a location where on May 26 a family of two adults and two young were observed. Also on May 26, another adult, apparently not belonging to the family, was seen several times throughout the morning. 2 immature specimens were collected June 4.

Parula Warbler—3 pairs apparently bred on the area. One nest was observed being built on May 25. Another nest was found on May 26.

Louisiana Waterthrush—1 pair was seen and heard repeatedly. May 26 two adults and a young bird were seen in that location.

Kentucky Warbler—2 pairs apparently bred on the area. One pair with a fledgling were seen May 26 and 27.

Hooded Warbler—1 pair was seen and heard in the same location throughout the study period.

Redstart—2 pairs were seen and heard in the same restricted locality through the month of May. Other individuals of the species visited the area.

Visitors

Turkey Vulture—seen flying over the area several times during the study.

Pileated Woodpecker—occurred in the area 4 times.

Wood Pewee—occurred in the area several times, but apparently not breeding.

Blue Jay—seen in the area 3 times.

Cowbird—seen in the area 4 times.

Summer Tanager—seen in the area 6 times.

Cardinal—seen visiting the area several times but not nesting there.

Auburn, Alabama
August 13, 1958

WHISTLING SWAN RECORDS FROM WHEELER REFUGE

THOMAS Z. ATKESON

That Whistling Swans must have visited northern Alabama rather frequently in earlier days is witnessed by the number of water areas that bear their name. As examples, there is a Swan Pond in Madison County, a Swan Creek and a Swan Lake in Limestone County. In more modern times, swans occur in this end of the State only as rare and irregular visitors. In the 20-year history of the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Whistlers have been recorded in refuge bird records on only four occasions.

The first swan record for the refuge came on November 16, 1942, when Henry H. Grammer, long-time refuge employee, found a single immature Whistler on Lakeside slough. This is an arm of the Flint Creek embayment, paralleling State Highway 67. Grammer remembers that the bird remained for a week or longer and attracted considerable public attention, but it is recorded in the refuge bird records only on November 16 and 17. C. R. Markley, then Wheeler Manager and now Manager of the Red Rocks Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Monida, Montana, exposed a considerable footage of 16 mm moving picture film at this bird. In a letter to the writer dated August 3, 1955, he stated that this film, in good condition, was still in his possession.

Whistling swans were not seen on the refuge again until March 25, 1950, when Dr. Clarence Cottam, then Assistant Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and now Director of the Welder Wildlife Foundation, Sinton, Texas, and Stephen Welline, a pilot-biologist, making an aerial inspection of the refuge, found four adult Whistlers in the flooded White Springs area. An effort was made, both from the ground and from the air, to relocate these birds the following day, but without success. However, Dr. Cottam's impeccable reputation as an ornithologist and his familiarity with the species leaves little room to doubt the validity of this record.

The third swan record came on November 8, 1953, when Paul Bryan, of T.V.A.'s Fish and Game Division, found one mature and one immature Whistler on the western end of Garth slough. On November 17, Gram-

mer saw the mature bird at close range in the same locality.

The last and most recent of the swan records came on November 3, 1957, when Refuge Manager Charles Parker, Grammer, and Homer Blackwood came upon a lone mature Whistler in the White Springs unit. This bird was seen almost daily through the remainder of that year and until March 3, 1958. So many individuals saw it that they are too numerous to mention. School and Sunday School classes, and other visiting groups were guided around the White Springs dike throughout the fall and winter of 1957-58 and were usually rewarded by a look at this bird. In addition to those already mentioned, it was seen by all refuge employees, including T. P. Sandlin, Gordon Bishop, and Emmett Waldrep, Jr. Other good observers include Dr. Ralph Chermock, of the University of Alabama's Biology Department, Professor Allen Bales, also of the University, Bryan, Paul Robinson, W. M. Depreast, Game Management Agent Leo M. Martin, and State Conservation Officer J. B. Tanner. The bird was usually seen in company with a flock of Canada geese and was often observed feeding on millet in the flooded White Springs unit or grazing in a nearby wheat field. It was carefully checked against various references and all possibility of its having been either a Mute or a Trumpeter Swan was ruled out.

Other than the four cited above, no recent swan records are known for northern Alabama. These four occurred wholly on the refuge in the southern edge of Limestone County and the northern edge of Morgan County. Due to the singular appearance of these birds, to the number of good observers, and to a natural reluctance to eliminate one of these stately and unusual visitors, no attempt was made to collect a specimen.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Alabama
March 26, 1958

THE MISSISSIPPI KITE IN ALABAMA

(*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

ROBERT W. SKINNER

Two years of field work, habitat studying, and general informational reading on the two species of kites in Alabama produced a specimen on May 7, 1958, in Baldwin County.

On the morning of that date the author was on the Alabama River in Baldwin County adjacent to the mouth of Holly Creek with the purpose in mind of collecting a Mississippi kite, of which there is no specimen for Alabama.

The A. M. proved fruitless, as no kites of either species were sighted. As noted on previous field trips the kites seem to be more active during the noon hour. Shortly after noon the first Mississippi kite was sighted—a single flying at high elevation over the tall timber on the river bottom. This was a thrilling sight to watch as the kite went through its aerial maneuvers; although it seemed to have no intention of dropping to a lower elevation.

No more kites were seen until about 2:30 P. M., at which time we rounded a bend in the river and came upon a drove of six, working their way up the river.

One of the birds was finally collected—an adult male. This was due to some very good boat maneuvering by Weber Walters, a district Conservation Officer who was obliging enough to act as guide.

During the course of the day a minimum of 15 Mississippi kites were sighted. This is far above the number usually seen on previous trips. Although no Swallow-Tail Kites were seen on that date, they are usually more numerous than the Mississippi kites.

About one week later on May 13 Reynolds Thrasher, a biologist, explained that he had seen a bird with which he was not familiar near Montgomery. The bird was described as pearl gray, pointed wings, etc. The area in which he had seen the bird was No. 4 Prison Camp in the bend of the river in North Montgomery County. The No. 4 Camp area is planted in several hundred acres of wheat.

Ten minutes after the author's arrival a Mississippi kite suddenly appeared overhead at a very low elevation. It was feeding on a grasshopper, which, with the use of field glasses, was very distinguishable. In

a matter of minutes seven kites were in view. All the birds at one time or another were observed diving into the wheat, then rising for elevation and feeding.

It is gratifying to know that so beneficial and picturesque a bird has not been reduced in numbers beyond a possible comeback. However, full protection is needed for both species if they are to continue to survive.

As yet no nest has been found in Alabama; although ornithologists are sure that they breed here.

Recent records show that the Mississippi kite is to be found in the southwest counties of Alabama, with one or two in the north-central section of the State.

The specimen collected in Baldwin County is to be placed in the Department of Conservation collection.

Department of Conservation
Montgomery, Alabama

SPRING MEETING BIRD COUNT

A composite bird list was contributed by members of the Alabama Ornithological Society who attended the spring meeting at Auburn, Alabama, April 19 and 20, 1958. The weather was clear and mild. A total of 109 species was recorded. "C"—common and "A"—abundant. Great Blue Heron, 1; Little Blue Heron, 1; Green Heron, 3; Blue-winged Teal, 6; Wood Duck, 1; Ring-necked Duck, 3; Lesser Scaup, 2; Ruddy Duck, 1; Turkey Vulture, 2; Black Vulture, 6; Cooper's Hawk, 4; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Red-shouldered Hawk, 5; Broad-winged Hawk, 1; Bobwhite, 6; American Coot, 1; Wilson's Plover, 4; Killdeer, 4; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Solitary Sandpiper, 4; Mourning Dove, 20; Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 4; Barred Owl, 3; Chuck-will's widow, 2; Whip-poor-will, 1; Common nighthawk, 5; Chimney Swift, C; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 15; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 10; Pileated Woodpecker, 2; Redbellied Woodpecker, 10; Red-headed Woodpecker, 7; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 5; Hairy Woodpecker, 10; Downy Woodpecker, C; Eastern Kingbird, C; Great Crested Flycatcher, C; Least Flycatcher, 1; Eastern Wood Pewee, 7; Rough-winged Swallow, C; Barn Swallow, 4; Purple Martin, 14; Bluejay, C; Common Crow, C; Carolina Chickadee, C; Tufted Titmouse, C; Brownheaded Nuthatch, C; Carolina Wren, C; Mockingbird, C; Brown Thrasher, 10; Robin, 10; Wood Thrush, C; Hermit Thrush, 1; Gray-cheeked Thrush, 1; Eastern Bluebird, 15; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, C; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 3; Cedar Waxwing, 18; Loggerhead Shrike, 10; Starling, C; White-eyed Vireo, C; Yellow-throated Vireo, C; Red-eyed Vireo, C; Warbling Vireo, 1; Black and White Warbler, 15; Prothonotary Warbler, 4; Worm-eating Warbler, 1; Blue-winged Warbler, 2; Tennessee Warbler, 1; Parula Warbler, 1; Myrtle Warbler, C; Cape May Warbler, 1; Yellow Warbler, C; Black-throated Green Warbler, 2; Cerulean Warbler, 5; Blackburnian Warbler, 1; Yellow-throated Warbler, C; Pine Warb-

ler, C; Prairie Warbler, C; Palm Warbler, A; Ovenbird, 4; Louisiana Waterthrush, 1; Kentucky Warbler, C; Yellowthroat, 10; Yellow-breasted Chat, 4; Hooded Warbler, C; American Redstart, C; House Sparrow, C; Eastern Meadowlark, C; Eastern Redwing, C; Orchard Oriole, C; Purple Grackle, 4; Brown-headed Cowbird, C; Scarlet Tanager, 1; Summer Tanager, C; Cardinal, C; Blue Grosbeak, 5; Indigo Bunting, 11; Painted Bunting, 2; Eastern Goldfinch, C; Rufous-sided Towhee, C; Savannah Sparrow, 2; Pine-woods Sparrow, 1; Chipping Sparrow, C; Field Sparrow, 15; White-throated Sparrow, C; Swamp Sparrow, 1.—Dan Speake, Auburn, Alabama.

NOTES OF INTEREST

Some Nesting Records from Cleburne County, Alabama

The following observations were made during the 1957 nesting season: On June 24, a Bobwhite Quail nest was located by road crews working in the Management Area. Apparently this disturbance caused the birds to desert the nest containing 12 eggs. The nest was located in **Andropogon** stubble at the edge of a dirt road.

A young chick, less than 24 hours old with dried blood still on its beak, was caught and examined on July 4. Both parents were nearby and called and displayed constantly while I remained in the vicinity.

On July 9, a cock was seen leading approximately 8 to 10 recently-hatched chicks along the forest edge. When approached, the chicks hid and the parent displayed with a broken-wing routine and eventually flew onto a low branch. Of this same group, both parents and 13 chicks were seen on July 26. This would place the age of the chicks, which were capable of short flights, at 17 to 19 days.

A cock and 6 young were flushed in a pine clearing atop a high ridge on July 16. The chicks were estimated to be about two weeks old and capable of short flights.

A young Blue Jay, capable of flight and with nearly-completed juvenile plumage, was seen perched on a pine limb on July 1.

The nest of a Brown Thrasher was first noticed on June 15. The clutch contained four eggs and the nest was placed in a honeysuckle thicket six feet above the ground. Three of the eggs hatched on June 17 and the young birds were gone from the nest on June 25.

Two full-feathered juvenile Red-eyed Vireos were seen and heard calling incessantly in an oak tree on July 2.

On June 12, a female Pine Warbler was seen feeding two flightless young that had recently left the nest and dropped to the ground (Figure 1). The male parent was perched and singing in an adjacent pine tree.—William H. Adams, Jr.

Coturnix Quail Observation

On August 29 while driving the Cut-Off to Columbiana in the early morning, I flushed two Coturnix quails.

They were in the weeds by the roadside, flew up suddenly and disappeared into cover in an uncultivated field by the road. They were not as large as bobwhite, but similar in color. They were nearer the size of meadowlarks, but did not have the white feathers.—Blanche E. Dean.

Summer Record of Junco

At least four Carolina Juncos spent the summer around my home this year in the southern part of Clay County near Goodwater. Whether they were a family, a pair which nested raising two young, or not, I am not able to state. I had seen Juncos all the winter, but suddenly became conscious to the fact that it was summer and the Juncos were still here. One day, Blanche Dean was at my home and was quite surprised to see the Juncos. She conferred with Mr. Imhof, who says he has no record of their nesting or spending the summer in Alabama. My neighbor, Mrs. Runyan, and I have seen them almost every day, sometimes singly or pairs or the four of them together. Mrs. Dean saw and identified them at least twice on July 24 and August 11, 1957.—Eulalia Johnson (Mrs. Otis).

Oriole Observations

On December 7, 1956, a neighbor, Mrs. Gayle Riley, alerted me that a bird, possibly an oriole, was in our vicinity. December 9th the unusual bird appeared at the feeder. It was an immature Baltimore Oriole, but not until April did the bird begin to brighten into male plumage. The oriole was a daily visitor at the feeder and was banded on February 9, 1957. After March 12 the oriole was an intermittent visitor appearing for a few days following an absence of a week or more. This Oriole was last observed on April 19, 1957.—Harriett Wright.

Ticks (Four in Three Days)

At dusk on October 29, 1957, Mrs. Gayle Riley brought a Mockingbird to me that had a swollen tick on the left side of the throat. The Mockingbird had become so weakened that Mrs. Riley had caught the bird with her hands. The tick was removed and the bird was banded. The bird was released the following morning and flew to a high perch in an oak tree,

after which it flew away with no apparent impairment.

On October 30, 1957, a female Cardinal was observed at the feeder with a swollen tick at right eyebrow level.

While banding on October 31, 1957, two birds were trapped with a swollen tick in the same identical spot, just below the right eye. One was an immature White-throated Sparrow; the second a male Cardinal. Both birds were banded and flew away without difficulty.—Harriett Wright.

Cattle Egret Records

On April 26 two Cattle Egrets were found on Dauphin Island by Lovett E. Williams, Jr. One of them was collected by Dan Speake for the Alabama Wildlife Research Unit Museum.

I collected a Cattle Egret at Boatyard Lake on May 7. Measurements are as follows: Length, 505 mm; wing, 191 mm; tarsus, 74 mm; Culmen, 60 mm; weight, 13 oz.; Gonads, Left 8 mm and Right 7mm; sex, male. The stomach contained numerous grasshoppers, coleoptera, etc.—Robert Skinner.

Birds and Snakes

On May 23, 1958, a four-foot gray rat snake was collected by the author near Tallassee in Elmore County and was taken home and placed in a wire cage for future use and study.

On the afternoon of May 24, upon checking the cage I found that the snake was missing. The following night at approximately 8:30, a rasping cry of a bird in fear was heard behind the house. Upon checking an orchard oriole nest 25 feet up in an elm tree, I found it was wrapped up in snake.

After erecting a ladder, I pulled the snake from the nest and the partially disgorged, and very dead, female oriole from the mouth of the rat snake. The four young birds were left in the nest unharmed.

It was previously noted that the male bird had taken an active part in the feeding of the young. Observation showed that the male fed and cared most diligently for the young birds for four more days, at which time the nest was deserted by the parent and no more cries of hunger were heard from the young. Evidently the task of feeding and caring for the young birds had become too great and the ants took over.

The snake refused to eat in captivity and two days after being pulled from the nest it died of unknown causes.—Robert W. Skinner.

Breeding Record for Dickcissel

On May 16, 1958, the writer found a male Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) exhibiting territoriality in a clover-field in Wilcox County, Alabama. This bird was observed from time to time for the next three days, but was not seen with a mate. My next visit to the area was June 2. On June 3 a female was found and after considerable searching, a nest containing one large fledgling and one unhatched egg was found. The male bird was collected as well as the nest, egg, and fledgling. The adult and fledgling are preserved in the collection of the Wildlife Research Unit at A.P.I., Auburn.

This record constitutes the southern-most known breeding of the species in Alabama.—Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

White Crow

On September 7, 1957, Robert Skinner observed a white crow in Autauga County.

Virginia Rail—Fall Migration Date

On September 4, 1957, Ralph Allen saw a Virginia Rail near Montgomery.