

THE AVERY BIRD COLLECTION

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There is presently deposited in the University of Alabama Department of Biology Collections a valuable and well-preserved series of birds. This assemblage consists mainly of Alabama birds which were collected by the late Dr. W. C. Avery of Greensboro, Alabama.

Dr. William Cushman Avery, son of Rev. John Avery, D.D., was born in Edenton, North Carolina, on September 21, 1831. He graduated from Burlington College, New Jersey, in 1852, and then went to the University of Pennsylvania to study medicine. After studying at the University of Pennsylvania he decided to go to Paris to complete his medical curriculum. While overseas he visited Italy, Germany, Spain and Switzerland and traveled on foot in these countries studying the natural history there. Upon completion of his education in Europe he returned to the United States and settled down in Marshall, Texas, where he practiced medicine. After a few years in Texas he returned to Alabama and remained in Selma until the outbreak of the Civil War. He patriotically enlisted in the Confederacy as a private but never knew the rigors of war, for he contracted measles and typhoid fever soon after reaching Virginia. Because of this complicated illness he was retired from the service and returned home to Greensboro, Alabama, where he spent the remainder of his life practicing medicine and studying ornithology.

It is interesting to consider the scope of his ornithological work and reflect upon the problems that confronted him. Upon examination of his field records it is obvious that he was restricted almost entirely to Greensboro, Alabama, and the surrounding territory. His only method of transportation was either by foot or by horse and carriage; and undoubtedly he did much birding while on a professional call. His field notes indicate that he made several trips to Anniston, Alabama, and at least one trip to Dauphin Island in Mobile County and Perdido Bay in Baldwin County. Dr. Avery swapped several skins with friends in New York, North Carolina and Arizona, but beside these out-of-state specimens the entire collection consists entirely of Alabama birds. It is also interesting to note that it wasn't until his 40th birthday that he became interested in collecting birds. The first entry in his catalogue was dated June 21, 1875 and his last entry was dated March 5, 1894. During this period of nineteen years he made a collection of 900 birds, prepared scientific skins of these birds, and compiled a set of very copious field notes. Dr. Avery used a .44 caliber revolver loaded with number 12 shot for most of his collecting. Dr. Avery was not only interested in birds but in small mammals such as rodents and spotted skunks, and made a series of collections of these mammals which are included with his bird collection.

The Avery Bird Collection consists mainly of land birds, and in comparison, is conspicuously short of shore and marine birds. Obviously, this was due to the fact that Dr. Avery did not have access to these types of habitats in Greensboro. However, he collected excellent series of the flycatchers, woodpeckers, thrushes, warblers and sparrows.

The Avery Bird Collection was purchased by the Geological Survey of Alabama and is now in the University of Alabama Department of Biology Collections. This collection is being used for taxonomic and ecological work concerned with the avifauna of Alabama.

LITERATURE CITED

Holt, Ernest G., 1921, Annotated List of the Avery Bird Collection. Museum Paper No. 4, Alabama Museum of Natural History, University, Alabama. Alabama Museum of Natural History, University, Alabama.

BALD EAGLE AT GULF SHORES

On March 18, 1960, while staying in Cabin No. 16, on the east shore of the lake at Gulf Shores State Park, an adult Bald Eagle was seen flying over the lake. The eagle came into the lake shore with legs down about one fourth mile from the cabin. It reappeared shortly, and flew to the east end of the lake and over the swamp a short distance to a tall pine tree in which a bulky nest was readily visible at about ½ mile distance. With 7x50 binoculars the bird could be seen at the nest, but no young could be seen. The eagle was seen once again that day when it perched for some time in a tree near where it was first seen. Time and facilities did not permit a closer examination of the nest.

One could locate this nest quite readily by following these directions: stand in front of the cabin (No. 16), facing directly away from it. From this position, look at an angle of about 45 degrees to the left. The nest is easily visible in one of the several tall pine trees about ½ mile away.

—MAURICE F. BAKER, Wildlife Research Unit, Auburn, Ala.

REGIONAL WINGBEATS

DECATUR—The record cold and snows of February and March changed abruptly into spring with the beginning of April. The shorebird flight seemed normal. On March 27, Margaret and Jim Robinson spotted a lone Marbled Godwit on mudflats northeast of the Decatur Boat Harbor, the second Godwit record for Wheeler Refuge.

Bill Depreast checked the nesting colony of Yellow-crowned Night Herons, located on Wheeler Refuge near the Triana community, and found them present on April 8, the earliest local record by several days. A recheck on May 20 showed at least five active nests with at least 12 young present.

David Hulse checked the Beulah Bay colony on May 3 and found nine Snowy Egrets and some 30 pairs of Little Blue Herons present, with birds of both species incubating. However, this was a decline compared with 1959 use, and no Black-crowned Night Herons used the colony this year.

Demett Smith, of Huntsville, prowling the northern part of the Refuge on weekends, came up with a number of interesting small-bird notes that filled several gaps in the Wheeler records. Among these were a Blackburnian Warbler on May 7, the second spring and only May record; A Canada Warbler on May 7, the only Refuge spring record; a Cape May Warbler on May 7, the second spring record; a Tennessee Warbler on May 15, the second spring record, and a Wilson's Warbler on May 15, the second Refuge record and the only spring record.

Twenty-six geese, no doubt cripples, remained on the Refuge throughout the summer, though there was no sign of nesting. Among these was a big gray goose, evidently a barnyard fowl, that had been noted keeping company and flying with Canada Geese here for the past two years.

Although no Trichomoniasis, the messy dove sickness, was noted or reported among local doves this spring or summer, dove numbers here are not high. No significant changes were noted in the behavior or numbers of other birds.

—THOMAS Z. ATKESON, P. O. Box 1643, Decatur, Alabama

HUNTSVILLE—We don't know whether the late cold weather kept the spring migrants south of Huntsville for a week or so, or whether we just missed seeing them on our field trips. The only first arrivals to beat our past records were one Black and White Warbler and one Chimney Swift on March 30, Routh-winged Swallows on April 3, and 2 Nighthawks on April 7.

We had what we thought to be our latest record for a White-crowned Sparrow on May 9, but found another on May 14, at Maysville, Alabama, about 13 miles northeast of Huntsville.

February 22 seemed to be a good day for the hawks heading north. We saw 10 Red-tailed Hawks, 6 Sparrow Hawks, 5 Marsh Hawks, and 1 Sharp-skinned Hawk between Huntsville and Decatur. The trip usually yielded only 2 red-tails and 1 Marsh Hawk.

At the spring meeting, Tom Imhof told us to be on the lookout for a Cerulean Warbler's nest at Monte Sano. He said that a nest had never been reported from Alabama. We looked all spring and found it quite frustrating to see and hear the birds all around us, yet not be able to find a nest. On June 18, right off Bankhead Parkway leading to Monte Sano Park, we heard some young birds making the usual noises they make while being fed. After a long search we located the nest about 50 feet off the ground in an elm tree. It was not long before a female Cerulean Warbler returned to the nest. While we watched, both the male and the female came to feed the young birds. Perhaps one thing which makes finding the nests of these birds so difficult is the fact that neither parent bird ever called or sang while in the vicinity of the nest. Collecting the nest will be quite difficult, but we plan to get it.

Our very casual observations for the past 4 years have failed to turn up any Whip-poor-wills in Madison County during the breeding season. On the one organized Whip-poor-will hunt conducted in the area on June 19, 1960, the authors and Mr. Demett Smith left Huntsville and traveled east on Highway 72, stopping occasionally to listen. This procedure was carried out to a point about 3 miles east of Gurley, where the road turned north on a country road into Jackson County. Approximately 5 miles north, as the moon rose about 11:30 p.m., the only Whip-poor-will of the evening was heard. This northern route was pursued through Jackson County into Tennessee, where we turned east. At Elora, Tenn., the route turned southward into Madison County where most of the northeastern portion of the county was covered. This trip covered about 130 miles and took over 4 hours, with frequent stops along the way.

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