

## OBSERVATIONS OF INTEREST FROM DAUPHIN ISLAND

Rev. Matthew Turk, S. J.

The following list includes one new record for the Alabama coast (the Phalarope), 10 extensions of the time of occurrence and several other records of interest.

<u>Northern Phalarope,</u>	2 birds in fall plumage,	8/27/64.
<u>Gray Kingbird,</u>	1 bird	, 6/30/64.
	2 birds	, 9/5/64.
<u>Western Kingbird,</u>	1 bird	, 8/29/64.
	2 birds	, 9/10/64.
<u>Olive-sided Flycatcher,</u>	1 bird	, 8/29/64.
	2 birds	, 9/5/64.
	6 birds	, 9/12/64.
	1 bird	, 9/19/64.
<u>Worm-eating Warbler,</u>	1 bird, (extension)	, 3/25/64.
<u>Blackburnian Warbler,</u>	1 bird, (extension)	, 3/21/64.
<u>Prairie Warbler,</u>	1 bird, (extension)	, 3/11/64.
<u>Palm Warbler,</u>	(error: no extension)	, 3/15/64.
	1 bird, (extension)	, 8/29/64.
<u>Northern Waterthrush,</u>	1 bird, (extension)	, 3/15/64.
<u>Orchard Oriole,</u>	2 birds, (extension)	, 3/21/64.
<u>Indigo Bunting,</u>	7 birds, (extension)	, 3/21/64.
	6 birds, (extension)	, 3/25/64.
<u>Rose-breasted Grosbeak,</u>	1 bird	, 8/27/64.
	1 bird	, 8/29/64.
<u>Blue Grosbeak</u>	1 bird	, 8/12/64.
	1 bird	, 8/27/64.
	1 bird	, 8/29/64.
	1 bird	, 9/5/64.
	1 bird	, 9/12/64.
	16 birds	, 9/19/64.
<u>Lark Sparrow,</u>	1 bird	, 8/29/64.

Other local observers have reported seeing Gray Kingbirds all summer and in numbers as many as six. The same is true, since August, of the Olive-sided Flycatcher. The Gray Kingbird is believed to have nested on the Island, as might have the Olive-sided Flycatcher since several of them were immature birds.

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NOTES ON YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS  
ON DOG RIVER

Kathleen Yerger Johnstone

Dog River is a brackish tidal stream which enters Mobile Bay from the west about 10 miles south of the harbor. Exploring the river by boat from our home near the mouth of the river, my husband and I discovered a secluded place where we found many Yellow-crowned Night Herons in various stages of development on July 10, 1965. Thereafter, we checked the spot twice or three times a day for seven weekends and several times during the week. The birds were there from the first trip until August 3rd. We always saw one or two, usually four or five herons each trip. None was seen on the weekend of August 7th nor that of August 14th.

The birds were seen on a "creek" or "canal", an arm of the river, which came to a dead end in a marsh. This canal was separated from the river by a long, narrow, crescent-shaped island which would be awash at high tide. The island was fringed with marsh grasses and had a few fairly large trees but most of the growth was not over twenty feet high.

On the mainland side of the canal there were huge trees such as pines, magnolias, maples and black gums; and under them dense underbrush with many palmettos. This wooded area bordered the inlet for three-fourths of the way. The remainder was bordered by a marsh, as large as a city block, surrounded by trees. It was cut by natural ditches. Some shrubs grew in it as did one large pine.

When found, the herons were always standing in trees overhanging the water or at its edge. The pine in the marsh was a favorite perch. Only once did we see a bird on the ground, an immature walking on the island. When disturbed by our arrival, it flew from its perch near the entrance to this open spot.

A sudden noise would frighten the birds from the trees and occasionally they would flap away even when we took care to enter the canal silently, poling our boat or Indian-paddling a canoe. More often, however, we were able to glide within twenty feet and stay there as long as we pleased, time enough to make detailed observations.

Sometimes the bird under observation would side-step down the limb, or jump to another. On two occasions, we watched immatures preen themselves. One gave himself a casual grooming; the other put on quite a show. This latter bird was perched on a limb of a dead, sun-silvered cedar. With the trunk as a background, the slate-gray bird with its light markings was perfectly camouflaged. When we first saw it, the wings were held akimbo, the neck stretched full length. Slowly, the neck shrank, the head fell back, the eyes closed. It came to with a jerk, folded its wings, and preened thoroughly; then, spreading its wings, again ducked its head into the shade of one, and dozed again. It jumped when our gas can expanded with a sudden, metallic noise, but did not fly. If the birds did fly, they didn't go far. We were often

able to see them again further up or down stream, or in a pine across the marsh at the entrance to the creek.

We saw differences in the birds which may be worth noting. Of the immatures seen at close range, we found one with yellow-green legs; one with oyster-white legs; and one with legs described in my field book as "pale". The bills were slate-blue. On the yellow-legged specimen, the head was suffused with yellow around the bill. Its eyes were amber, with a dark pupil.

Birds that were probably slightly older, though spotted still, were more nearly the blue of the adults than slate-color. With these, the black surrounding the cheek-patch was well defined, but the "crown" was not. It appeared as a narrow, dirty-white stripe ending in a very wispy crest-feather.

Among the adults, one was without a doubt a mature male. It was intensely blue; the legs bright yellow; the "crown" a broad band, the color of old ivory, which ended in a substantial crest-feather. The bill was heavy and dark.

There was one apparent adult with blue legs, and one with bluish-white legs which were pink from the "knee" up. In neither of these last two was the crown stripe as well developed as that of the first adult described. Were these last younger adults or females?

To us, the "cheek-patch" looked more like a broad stripe than an oval as it is shown in Peterson.

Although the color variations may be quite normal, they proved that we were not seeing the same three or four birds on each visit. I believe there were many.

We saw no nest, so we have no proof that this was a rookery. Perhaps it was simply a resting area conveniently located for birds breaking away from the great rookeries up the Alabama River.

During the time of observation, we saw immatures feeding in the bay once in the late afternoon. One morning an immature lit on a log at the water's edge in front of our house and walked along the flat exposed by a low tide, and on another occasion we found an immature in our service yard.

In July and/or August of past years, it has been usual to see a solitary immature stalking fiddlers on our narrow beach; or, at high tide, walking on the retaining wall made of broken concrete for the same purpose. They have often stood on the wharf. On July 25, 1962, and July 8, 1963, we saw adults on the wharf.

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#### THE FALL BIRD COUNT AT MOBILE

The Mobile Chapter of the Alabama Ornithological Society conducted a bird count on Saturday, October 16, 1965, at Dauphin Island-Bellingrath Gardens area.

Those participating in the count were: Mary Louise Andridge, Fred Bowers, Clara Caffey, Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Donaven, Fr. L. Dorn, Mary Gaillard, Wilson Gaillard (Compiler), Sybil Hanks, Tuck Hayward, Mr. and Mrs. H. I. Johnstone, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Horne, W. D. McDaniel, Louise McKinstry, Bill Lee, Margret Miller, Ross Partridge, Alice Patterson, Elin Silsby, Alice Tait and Lib Toenes.

Birds seen during the day were:

Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Reddish Egret, Common Egret, Snowy Egret, Louisiana Heron, White Ibis,

Canada Goose, Blue Goose, Mallard, Black Duck, Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Widgeon, Wood Duck, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser,

Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Pigeon Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Bobwhite,

King Rail, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, American Oystercatcher, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, Kill-deer, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Snipe, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Sanderling,

Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Black Skimmer, Mourning Dove, Ground Dove,

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby Throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Peewee, Vermillion Flycatcher,

Tree Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, Common Crow, Fish Crow,

Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown-headed Nuthatch, House Wren, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Short-billed Marsh Wren,

Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, Starling,