

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS OF ANDERSON, INDIANA.

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It is rather a shock to open a volume and find oneself face to face with a title that carries you back a quarter of a century, the paper treating your boyhood hobby at your boyhood "stomping" ground. Such was my experience as I opened my copy of the Academy's Proceedings of 1925, Esten's interesting report on the birds of Madison County being the paper concerned.

During the years 1895 to 1900, both inclusive, Anderson was my home town, and during each of those six seasons the birds received most of my spare time. Extensive notes in diary form, were recorded and most of these are now available for reference. While Esten's experiences and mine check to a considerable degree, certain definite divergencies seem to warrant published comment. It is well known that two or more persons, traveling the same territory at the same time, will have different experiences with the birds. It is also well known that bird populations vary, from year to year, in a given region; this, of course, being partly due to man's readjustments of the fields, thickets, and woodlands, thus affecting the haunts and habits of the birds. Draining of certain areas and reclaiming of wet, tangled thickets for corn-planting was rapidly taking place in my day. Hence I assume that Esten's "country about Anderson" and mine must have differed in many details. Accordingly I now make a few comments anent discrepancies in our respective experiences, etc. To make reference to Esten's paper easy, I use the numbers and sequence of his catalog.

15. (221) American coot. My experience with this species about tallies with Esten and Gilpin's. On April 17, 1897 I caught a disabled coot, some three miles north of Anderson, along a small stream; this the only specimen I saw in the county.

16. (228) Woodcock. "A rare migrant" seems to be right. On April 24, 1900, I flushed a lone specimen in a woodlot about a mile south of the city,—my only record.

34. (387) Yellow-billed cuckoo. I considered this a common species. One nest was found in 1898, six in 1899 (May 18 to June 10), and five in 1900 (May to June 9).

35. (388) Black-billed cuckoo. Recognized by me just once, when a nest with young was found June 9, 1896.

41. (409) Red-bellied woodpecker. Frequently seen by me. On one occasion, I noticed a pair of these birds separated by a red-headed woodpecker. One of the "zebra-backs" was cornered in an excavation in a limb of a tree, and the minute it showed its head at the entrance-exit, the red-head would dash toward the prisoner, uttering sharp, scolding notes. The head of the timid prisoner quickly disappeared at each onslaught of the tyrant, which then dashed at the equally timid,

alternately approaching and retreating, unimprisoned mate. The cries of the excited birds attracted my attention to the episode, and when I left the comic tragedy was "still on".

53. (465) Acadian flycatcher. "Rare summer resident" certainly attracted my attention, yet the species may be erratic in its summer distribution, since I did not recognize it during my first four years of observations. But in 1899 I found eight nests (May 30 to June 12), and in 1900, 15 nests (May 30 to June 16). These nests were in ironwood (*Carpinus*), beech, maple, elm, hawthorn and flowering dogwood, the extremes of elevation above the ground, four and nineteen feet.

54. (466a) Alder flycatcher. I look with interest at the statement, "Rare migrant May 17 to June 17 and very rare summer resident". I found five nests, as follows: June 25, 1897, June 10 and 22, 1899, and June 16 and 23, 1900. Most, or all, of these were located in a wet thicket that was rapidly being changed into corn land during those years, this region now, perhaps, being wholly unattractive to this species. Yet Esten's dates suggest that this bird may still nest about Anderson, perhaps more frequently than his experiences show.

— (474) Horned lark. Not mentioned by Esten; perhaps inadvertently omitted from his catalog. I noted this species April 8 and 9, 1897, and March 15 and May 7, 1898. Probably my birds were of the race, or subspecies, called the prairie horned lark.

59. (495) Cowbird. Another matter of special interest to me is that Esten found the cowbird, seemingly, favoring the nests of the song sparrow, thrasher, and towhee. Have the cowbirds changed their habits since my day; found out in some way that those birds make better foster-parents for their young? My records show that none of my 17 nests of song sparrow, three nests of towhee, or 15 nests of thrasher were "blessed" with the uninvited guests; but cowbirds had "favored" six of my nests of indigo bunting, five nests of each chat and red-eyed vireo, two nests of each cardinal and white-eyed (?) vireo, and one nest of each acadian flycatcher, yellow warbler, yellow-throat, catbird and wood thrush.

70. (542a) Savanna sparrow. The expression, "rare migrant", agrees with my experience, I having seen the species at "Esten's locality", April 2 and 3, 1899.

71. (546) Grasshopper sparrow. Considered common by me, at least one summer, in fields two or three miles northwest of town, the characteristic song often heard and easily recognized.

86. (595) Rose-breasted grosbeak. This bird was first seen by me on May 22, 1897, in a swampy thicket northwest of North Anderson, a male "rose bud" being found covering a set of five eggs. At the same locality additional nests were found on May 27 and June 3, 1899, and June 8, 1900. This was the thicket of my Traill (alder) flycatchers, and may have, long since, been reclaimed for agricultural purposes, leaving no nesting retreats for these two retiring species.

104. (631) White-eyed vireo. "Frequent summer resident" must mean that this species has "moved to Anderson" since my day. I spent

much time watching for this bird and actually identified it just once or twice, assigning, with a question mark, three nests to this species.

108. (641) Blue-winged warbler. "Frequent to common migrant." In 1900 this was a common breeding species in the woodlands northwest of the Madison Avenue Bridge. I found fledglings out of the nest, but failed to find a nest with eggs.

130. (683) Yellow-breasted chat. "A rare summer resident." What has become of the chats? I considered this one of the really common summer birds, the characteristic whistling being one of the familiar sounds of the thickets everywhere. My records note three nests in 1895, one in each 1896 and 1897, three in 1898, six in 1899, and five in 1900.

137. (719) Bewick wren. "A very rare summer resident. One record, Apr. 30...." My first record of this bird for 1898 was March 23, the latest April 17. My first record for 1899 was April 12. No record for 1900, and no record later than April 17. I doubt that it nested about Anderson in those days, the house wren being the breeding species.

149. (751) Blue-gray gnatcatcher. Evidently not found nesting by either Esten or Gilpin, as the species is listed as a "migrant." I found a nest, with young, on June 5, 1899, and located two pairs building, on May 6, 1900, followed by a third nest, with five eggs, on May 20.

