

Carolyn W. Lathrop. 1929

Additional Bird Study.

During the eight weeks of June 16 - Aug 16 1929 I had the opportunity of visiting several birds nests other than those studied in class which I will undertake to describe. The 27th of June I visited a nighthawk nest, which contained two eggs, they were white thickly speckled all over with brownish gray, a very excellent example of protective coloration - so well in fact that if I took my eye off them for a minute it took some little time to locate them again. They were laid on the bare ground - sand mixed with loam - in a little natural depression in the ground, there were a few dead leaves, several clumps of grass and a few blueberry bushes in the vicinity and a tree here and there but the eggs themselves were in plain view, not protected in the slightest from any thing passing on the ground or from any thing flying above - it is surprising that so many of them escape their jays and hawks. A few days later it was my privilege to see a nighthawk sitting on the ground near one of the paths in the aspens - upon getting closer she flew off and exposed two fledglings sitting very close to each other facing the same way. They did not move at first but when I tried to pick one up became frightened and tried to fly. I judged it was the first attempt for the wings were very weak and it fell to the ground quickly. After placing them where they had been before we left, hoping the mother would come back to them soon - she had flown only a short distance away.

It was interesting to note upon our return that the old nesting spot was deserted. She flew up again about 4 feet from the old nest but the fledglings were nowhere to be seen. I presume they were near but we did not have time to hunt for them.

Some time during the first week of July a nest was reported at Camp Davis which I went down to see. It was not fifteen feet from the care taker's house in the park near the back door. There was a little natural hollow at the foot of the bank under a little grass sod and here a junco had made her nest of fine grass. It was very compact and seemed to be a part of the dead grass at the roots of the grass sod. It was lined with fine grass and very neatly built. The birds had left the nest that day and we saw the parents feeding them in the bushes near by quite undisturbed by the onlookers. I have seen that these sky birds but was interested to know that they would nest so near people and seem so little disturbed by their coming & going.

About the middle of July I visited a cedar waxwing's nest near Hog Back bog. This nest was especially interesting because it contained two cowbird eggs and as a rule cowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of much smaller birds, warblers or vireos. This was in a black spruce about 15 feet from the ground at the edge of a small bog; it was made of a variety of grass roots, strips of birch bark and twigs - not very compactly put together. The lining of finer grasses, pine needles and old mouse hair was. The latter also decorated the outside of nest. It was placed on the angle of two branches quite near the trunk, as the tree was a small one. One cowbird egg hatched but before I had a chance to go back again the nest had been deserted - whether the baby was not to be taken or for some other reason I do not know. It is interesting at least to know that the cowbird attempts to parasitize the cedar waxwing.

Another day around the middle of July I followed the road along Carp Creek to the end and here on the mound had an excellent view of the osprey's nest. It is at the top of a very tall dead pine probably 40 feet high - a large bushy nest of flat form type made of twigs and sticks. One of the Lawks was perched on the side of the nest. Another time when I was at Bent Lake I saw one of these quite plainly, the white head very evident, soaring over the lake as though looking for food. I was in hopes it would dive as I had seen one do on another occasion - and come up holding a fish in both feet.

In the 24th of July I saw the house wrens nesting in a box about 10 in x 8 in. which had a hinged cover. It was placed about 10 feet from the ground in a poplar tree which I climbed into so that I could see inside that box. Near the corner way to the back was the nest made of small twigs. It contained six of the smallest birds I have ever seen. They so filled the nest I could not see the lining - but the interesting thing to me was the number of young, their size and the fact that the parents had filled the whole box in front of the nest and to one side with somewhat larger twigs. I did not know whether it was done - but perhaps instinct of years earlier days when they had to build nests in hollow trees in which the hole was too large. I found the same thing true of the nest we studied at Murre Lake back of a board near the doorway of a deserted log house. so it must be natural to them to select a site too large for their nest.

Aug 2. I visited the least fly catcher's nest on the ridge between Bent & Douglas Lakes. It was in the crotch of a birch tree and looked very much like a wren's nest

4.

- except that it was not hung but rested in the crotch of three small branches well hidden from view about 12 ft from the ground. The nest was made of strips of birch bark, rootlets and plant fibers, lined with down, the birch bark used on the outside made the nest look a part of its surroundings. It is a compact nest but a little less firm than ^{the} others. It contained four white eggs, unmarked.

Aug. 7th I walked to Pine Point Douglas Lake where the day before ^{at noon} I had seen the flock of ring billed gulls roosting in hopes of getting a close view of them but as I left the cove in the back and went up onto the bank to get behind the shrubbery they began to edge out into the water and as I really got close enough to see them well they took to their wings but I was fortunate to see them again on the last field trip and to compare them in size with the Herring gulls which they resemble so closely as to markings.

On July 21 I went on the Duland water trip, thus having the opportunity to see some 25 different kinds of birds. We took the canoe at Conway on Crooked Lake about seven o'clock in the morning, the day was clear, with little wind. As we passed the cottages along the shore we saw the martins. From Crooked Lake we went into Crooked River, which is narrow, with willows and Myrica gale along the edge and thick evergreens along ^{the} parts the evergreens are replaced by dead tree trunks. Here we saw a good many red wing black birds and, King birds seemed to fly from every dead branch; the Kingfishers watching for their morning fish were startled several times and as we rounded a bend in the river an American Kite ^{was} flying up before us. From the bushes along the edge we heard the Maryland yellow throat and song sparrows, a screeching

door flew across the river in the same wooded section.

As we came to the mouth of the river it spread out forming a wide low marsh land, here the black and common terns were flying in numbers, the jivinal birds common among them. We left the marsh and as we looked to the right a bald eagle with its white head was clearly outlined against the wooded shore. Caspian, common terns and gulls were seen as we crossed Burt Lake. As we

As we got to the outlet Indian River, where there is a little village birds were common around houses were seen - the house wren, robin, bronze grackle and chimney swift. Near the boat houses at the edge of the village swallows flew out, among them the cliff swallow, with its buff rump - which I had never seen but once before - From here on the river was very marshy - another bittern flew up - coots with their families were seen - the latter ones with their red bills I thought were the Florida gallinules - the pied bill grebes were quite common and exhibited their diving abilities for us. A female lesser scaup was seen on the edge in a quiet pool out of the main channel and the great blue herons with long legs stretched behind came from the marsh. Two dead trees near by attracted the attention of all aboard they were so entirely full of ^{tree} swallows fairly pushing each other off for room - there were probably rough wing swallows among them but they were so much like the young tree swallows I could not be quite sure. From a marsh wren note was heard by Mr. Blanchard but I did not know it and the boat passed before he heard another. We soon left the river for open water, Mullet Lake, crossing one end of it to the

resort, Tobuikak, where we stopped for dinner. On the return trip later in the afternoon we saw a few of the same species we had seen in the morning but on the whole they were conspicuous by their absence. We saw thirteen muskrats however varying in sizes feeding on the grass in the water which as soon as they heard the boat swam under water to some shelter. It was a trip that I enjoyed very much but was a little disappointed not to see more ducks. maybe that will come next time.