

THE SUMMER BIRDS OF LAKE ERIE'S ISLANDS.

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During the year several places in the state were visited in the interest of the 'Revised Catalog.' The first in April, to McConnelville in Morgan county; a second to Medina, in Medina county; and a third to the islands of Lake Erie, not to mention several minor trips. It is of the third of these principal trips that I wish to speak, because it was planned with special reference to work on the 'Revised Catalog,' and was of more value as determining the northern range of several species whose summer homes are supposed to lie much farther south.

This field work was planned in conjunction with Rev. W. L. Dawson, of this city, with whom the best of my ornithological work has been done. A kindred spirit with whom such work becomes recreation of the most satisfactory kind.

Family, church and college duties prevented an earlier start than the 5th day of August. True, that was pretty late to study the summer birds, many of which must be in the annual molt, but, as it proved, there were but few from farther north, and those among the water birds. We were most concerned about the land birds which regularly breed upon these islands.

The landing on Middle Bass at six on the evening of the 5th left little time for study of the birds before going into camp. The best part of the next morning was given to a study of the birds swarming on the mud flats of the lagoon back of the large wine cellars. Such a company of swamp loving birds as here greeted us it has never been my privilege to see elsewhere. Of the 15 species recorded the Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plovers and King Rails were the most interesting. Of the 42 species recorded for this island, there was nothing else of any special interest.

A row boat proved the only available conveyance, and with the light airs usually prevailing, was very satisfactory. Twice the seas ran high, but that served only to add zest to our outing.

A day spent on North Bass yielded little of interest among the 34 recorded species, except a Carolina Wren, in the hedge by the church, and a pair of hoary old Bald Eagles spooning in their nest near the west side. No Yellow Warblers were seen north of this island.

The island commonly known as Big Chicken—the most southerly of the group of the Hen and Chickens—proved second only in interest of all the islands visited. Apparently formed by the stones pushed up by the ice during late winter, it stands 15 or 20 feet clear of the water, the loose stones thrown into windrows by ice and waves. Two fair sized trees and a bed of nettles are the

only land vegetation. A small fish-house stands under the larger tree, and seems to furnish a shelter for the terns during violent storms. Here we found only Common and Black Terns and Spotted Sandpipers and a single Bronzed Gackle. No doubt the sandpipers had reared their young here. Of the terns we estimated the Black at 20 and the Common at 2000 individuals, many of the latter young of the year. A careful count of the nests and eggs and squabs resulted as follows: Nests with eggs 232, without eggs 94; eggs 370; squabs 26; very young 25. Of the eggs by far the larger proportion were cracked and dry. Perhaps a quarter of them were pipped or almost ready to hatch. A few were rotten without being dry.

The Chick island lies about a quarter of a mile a little east of due north from Big Chicken. It is a narrow rock reef, which the waves would easily wash over in storms were there water of more than a foot in depth within several rods of it. Smart weeds (*Polygonum*) grow in abundance along its eastern side. Here we saw some 1500 Common and 500 Black Terns, 20 American Herring Gulls, which were knee deep in the water on the north west extending reef, two Black Ducks and two Spotted Sandpipers. Fifty-one nests of the Common Tern were counted here, with the proportion of eggs and young as on Big Chicken.

If the first island be called Big Chicken, and the smallest one Chick, why not call the middle sized one just Chicken? Anyway it is another rock reef with relatively little drift rock anywhere upon it. It lies well above storm waves because the water about it is so shallow. There is an abundant growth of smart weed, even to the water's edge, with a bunch of willows, each of which is about 6 inches in diameter, besides a considerable growth of smaller willows along the north side. The back-bone of this reef is without any sort of vegetation. Here the Common and Black Terns, the same two Black Ducks, and three Spotted Sandpipers greeted our arrival. There were 71 nests of the Common Tern on this rock. The Black Terns numbered about 200 individuals, and the Common perhaps 1700. The Black Terns were clearly not breeding on any of these islands, nor were the American Herring Gulls. The heat upon the rocks was so excessive that it seemed extremely doubtful if any of the very young terns could survive. The nests were fairly well made of grass and drift material, but were exposed to the weather. I noticed one nest which was nothing but a dry fish.

We were a little surprised to find Red-winged Blackbirds and Bronzed Grackles evidently breeding on the high and dry Hen island. Here, too, the House Wren had found a domicil. The seven acres of this loam-covered rock are covered by a considerable growth of hackberry trees, with a few rock maples interspersed, and a liberal fringe of willows. A fine peach orchard is an acqui-

sition. Also a few plum trees. The club and dwelling house have driven the gulls and terns away.

The row to North Harbor in the gloaming discovered to us converging lines of Purple Martins. A near approach to the island revealed the point of convergence to be the largest tree on the island, at its southernmost point. It was not possible to even estimate approximately the numbers forming this roost, but the tree was clearly well filled. There must have been 2000 birds among its branches. We thought we had heard and seen terns before. Camp had to be pitched right in the midst of them. Here we had the first sight of terns roosting perched upon the trees. They were a little awkward in getting settled, but seemed perfectly at home once the wings were safely folded.

The dense growth of trees and brush, over the largest part of the island, made a count of the nests impossible. It is safe to say, however, that the population exceeded all that we had thus far seen. Here, too, we found nests and dry eggs of Red-winged Blackbirds and Bronzed Grackles. Here, on this most northern outlier of the group, were Wood Pewee, Kingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Goldfinch, and even Carolina Wren, and a probable Red-eyed Vireo. On the sunny eastern side we saw the most very young terns, and several well fed black snakes. The birds and snakes seemed to be the only land vertebrates.

The island itself is interesting, and but for the terns would be a delightful place to spend the summer months were it not so far from any base of supplies. Where the rocks are exposed they are deeply furrowed by glacial scratches.

A few hours spent on East Sister island was fruitful in the discovery of species not seen hitherto. Here, again, were the Carolina Wrens and the others seen on North Harbor, and besides them the Cardinal, the Marsh Hawk, Crow, Indigo Bunting, Song Sparrow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Redstart and Robin. East Sister is an island so large in extent and so varied in physical features and vegetation that one is not surprised to find a large and varied bird population. Of course these six islands: the Hen and three Chickens, North Harbor and East Sister, do not belong to Ohio, being in the Canadian possessions, but they lie so directly in continuation with the Bass group that a study of their population is necessary to understand fully the more southern islands.

This brief study of this really large group of islands proved what I had every reason to expect, that it is by this route that many of our migratory species reach Canada. It forms a natural highway for the birds of weaker wing who wander westward along the shore of the lake to find here an easy crossing place. And it is this stream of migration whose strong current sweeps along with it such usually southern species as the Cardinal and Carolina Wren until they find congenial quarters upon the islands well to

the north where the rigor of winter and the heat of summer are both alike tempered by the surrounding lake.

The islands visited were: Middle and North Bass, Sugar, the Hen and three chickens, North Harbor, East Sister—nine in all. Fifty-eight species were recorded for the whole archipelago, 42 of which were found on Middle Bass. Of these 58 species there were possibly six which were from further north, having already started on their southward journey.

During the spring migrations this chain of islands should be a Mecca for the bird student. There can be but little doubt that it is the highway for many rare species.

Oberlin, Ohio.
