

Birds of the State Fish Hatchery Near Durant, Oklahoma

WAYNE H. SILVER, Southeastern State College, Durant

This, the first of a proposed series of papers on the birds of Bryan County, Oklahoma, presents a summary of my observations at the State Fish Hatchery near Durant from the fall of 1948 through the fall of 1952. I have chosen the hatchery as my locale because the birdlife there is so varied. Thus far I have not been able to make many observations in the spring and early summer, so those seasons remain to be accounted for.

The hatchery is about seven miles northeast of Durant on U.S. Highways 69 and 75. The 218 ponds within its 350 acres vary in size from one-eighth of an acre to 20 acres, and total, when filled, 274 surface acres of water. Most of the ponds are of about two-acre size when filled. Water is taken from the Blue River, which is spring-fed, at the rate of 2400 gallons per minute continuously. During hot dry spells in summer an additional 4400 gallons per minute may be required to compensate for evaporation. The ponds are arranged so that they may be drained readily and maintained at various levels. All but the smallest are surrounded by dikes, and these are used as roadways. Cattails, rushes, and grasses are the main aquatic plants, but there are various other aquatics both submerged and floating. The roadways are grassy, Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) probably being the prevalent species. Twenty or so head of cattle are pastured regularly. A number of trees, some of them apparently remnants of a small orchard, stand near the headquarters building. The hatchery is bounded by farmland and some woods, principally oak.

The hatchery is almost a bird refuge. The superintendent, Mr. John Murphree, shoots fish predators of all sorts, from turtles to herons. While hunting is not permitted on the grounds proper, some duck hunters do poach, especially when Mr. Murphree is absent. Hunters shooting outside the boundaries have friends drive through the hatchery to flush the birds. Observations during the hunting season in the fall of 1952 were difficult, at times even dangerous, except during the short period of the ban.

Mr. Murphree has been most kind in supplying information and in allowing me the free run of the place. Besides being an able hatchery man, he is well-informed about birds. He has reported several interesting species, some of which I have seen.

The species here listed represent very sporadic observation. Regular observations, weekly at least, I began in the fall of 1952. So far I have accounted, through personal observation, for a total of 68 species, all within the boundaries of the hatchery proper. Several sparrows I have not yet satisfactorily identified. My complete list, to date, is as follows:

1. Eared Grebe (*Colymbus caspicus*)
2. Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)
3. Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)
4. Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
5. Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)
6. Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*)
7. Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)
8. American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

9. Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*)
10. Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)
11. White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)
12. Snow Goose (*Chen hyperborea*)
13. Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
14. Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)
15. Baldpate (*Anas americana*)
16. Pintail (*Anas acuta*)
17. Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*)
18. Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)
19. Shoveller (*Spatula clypeata*)
20. Redhead (*Aythya americana*)
21. Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*)
22. Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*)
23. Scaup (*Aythya* sp.)
24. Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)
25. Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)
26. Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)
27. Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)
28. Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*)
29. Sora (*Porzana carolina*)
30. Coot (*Fulica americana*)
31. Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)
32. American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*)
33. Wilson's Snipe (*Capella gallinago*)
34. Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*)
35. Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*)
36. Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa falvipes*)
37. Pectoral Sandpiper (*Erolia melanotos*)
38. Baird's Sandpiper (*Erolia bairdi*)
39. Dowitcher (*Limnodromus* sp.)
40. Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Ereunetes pusillus*)
41. Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*)
42. Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)
43. Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipizcan*)
44. Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)

45. Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)
46. Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)
47. Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*)
48. Yellow-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)
49. Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Centurus carolinus*)
50. Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)
51. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*)
52. Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*)
53. Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*)
54. Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)
55. Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)
56. Long-billed Marsh Wren (*Telmatodytes palustris*)
57. Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*)
58. Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)
59. Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)
60. Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
61. English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)
62. Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)
63. Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)
64. Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
65. Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*)
66. Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)
67. Bronzed Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)
68. Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

A number of the forms listed above are not at all typical of an aquatic habitat such as one would expect a fish hatchery to be. Too, certain species are missing which could reasonably be expected to have been present, even though the period covered by my observation is not great. Mr. Murphree tells he has seen both the Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) and the Whimbrel or Hudsonian Curlew (*N. phaeopus*); the Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*); some of the larger rails; and the Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). I received several reliable reports of Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) seen at the hatchery in the fall of 1952. I fully expected to list the Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*), but did not.

The following species (all listed above) merit special comment:

3. Double-crested Cormorant. I saw this species only once, a single bird, October 11, 1952.
18. Cinnamon Teal. I saw two males together in the late spring of 1952 (exact date lost).
23. Scaup. Scaups were not scarce, but I never was able to get close to them, rarely saw them on the wing, and was not sure whether they

were Greater (*Aythya marila*), or Lessers (*A. affinis*), or both. A female seen October 25, 1952, was my first scaup for that fall. I saw two more females October 31. On November 8 I saw many scaups of both sexes, females being the more numerous. From that date on through December 7 I saw a few scaups on each visit.

30. Coot. My failure to see the Coot in late August greatly puzzled me. According to my scattered observations it is common the rest of the year, though I am not sure that it breeds.
32. American Golden Plover. Knowing that this species normally migrates farther to the east in the fall, I have been in doubt as to my identification of two plovers which I saw November 8, 1952, in company with some Killdeers on a newly drained pond. I observed the birds for half an hour with 8x binocular, part of the time at no greater distance than 30 feet. I flushed the birds twice. They did not keep together. They were slightly larger and proportionately bigger-headed than the Killdeers; their wings were without a noticeable white stripe of any sort; their rumps and tails were without white; and their axillary feathers were not black. On November 15 I saw two more plovers, apparently of the same species and quite possibly the same individuals. This time the birds stayed together. They were resting or feeding on a roadway.
33. Wilson's Snipe. I often watched snipe feeding. Freshly drained ponds, especially the two-acre ones, drew large numbers of Killdeers and many snipes. While the mud was still moist, the snipes forsook the grassy margins and fed in the open. On one pond bottom I saw 20 snipes feeding at one time. In my car I have driven slowly past snipes feeding in full view 15 feet from the road without causing them to flush. An excited snipe, running across the mud with neck fully extended, is rather comical.
40. Wilson's Phalarope. I saw two of these phalaropes together, both females, late in the spring of 1952 (exact date lost).
41. Franklin's Gull. This gull was abundant in the fall of 1952. I noted it daily from October 11 (the day my regular observing started) to November 11.
60. Starling. Noted as follows: one on November 8, 1952; four on November 15, 1952; one on December 7, 1952.
62. Eastern Meadowlark. All the meadowlarks I have thus far identified in the hatchery have been *Sturnella magna*, for the only songs I have heard have been of that species. The Western Meadowlark (*S. neglecta*) does, however, occur in Bryan County.
63. Yellow-headed Blackbird. I saw a group of three Yellow-headed Blackbirds in the late spring of 1950 (exact date lost) .
64. 65, 66. Red-winged, Rusty, and Brewer's Blackbirds. For the Audubon Christmas bird census in 1950 I reported 3,000,000 blackbirds from the hatchery. I was just fresh from Indiana and Illinois, where the only all-black blackbird that I had heard about was the Rusty, and I was only faintly aware of the existence of the Brewer's. The immense number (some said I was too conservative) was probably made up of 85% Brewer's, 10% Redwings, and 5% Rusties. This estimate is based on my observations in the fall of 1952.