

The third year of the Alabama Ornithological Society is now under way. It is a great pleasure and honor to serve as third president of this worthwhile society.

Alabama has been, for many years, what could be called an "in-between state" so far as scientific data is concerned. Many of the great Ornithologists of the past traveled through Alabama simply because of the necessity of getting from one place to another. This usually consisted of traveling from the Atlantic Coast or Florida, where they spent considerable time, to Louisiana, which was also considered a fertile field so far as gathering bird data was concerned. Fortunately, these men did record a few sight records while passing through this state.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Dr. William Cushman Avery of Greensboro, Alabama, contributed more to Alabama ornithology than any other man. His excellent collection of bird skins was the first extensive collection of birds taken in Alabama. The only other work of importance on a statewide basis was the book, *Birds of Alabama*, by Arthur H. Howell in the early part of the present century. Howell recorded in his book data collected by avid amateur ornithologists who collected material in their own or adjoining counties. Were it not for these men, scientific bird data would be almost completely lacking in this state.

The objectives of the Alabama Ornithological Society appear to be made to order for furthering the study of birds in this state. The first three objectives as listed in the Constitution of the society are: 1. To promote scientific and educational activities in the field of ornithology; 2. To bring together those residents of Alabama who are interested in birds; 3. To coordinate and make available the findings from bird observations.

With these objectives in mind and the interest and cooperation of the members, Alabama need not ever have to take a back seat to any state in the field of ornithology.

By WALTER ROSENE, JR.

Some bird students prefer to travel away from home to make observations. Usually opportunities are present near at hand and such was the case when we studied the Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) in our backyard. When I say "we" I mean the entire Rosene family, my wife, Kathryn, and our two boys, Jimmy, age 12, and Walter Carl, age 6.

After building our house in the winter of 1951, we noticed wrens in our backyard so we provided cavities in our wood rack which we thought might be suitable for a nest. The wrens were not interested, but preferred to make their own selection. We made the mistake of leaving open the door which provides access under the house, and a pair chose a very dark situation on the foundation sill. We were concerned with this precarious position as the young could have fallen from the nest along the foundation below the door and not reached the outside. However, this nest was successful.

In the spring of 1953 we kept the door in the foundation closed and the pair of wrens was still with us. We had placed an old martin house on top of a pile of scrap lumber which we were keeping for use on odd jobs around the house. My wife wanted this "unsightly" lumber burned but I had been against her "proposal." The wrens liked the lumber pile and were on my side as they decided to use one of the compartments in the martin house for their first brood. This meant the lumber pile must remain virtually intact until they had finished activities. The first brood was a success. We watched four birds leave the nest one morning, while eating breakfast, between 7 and 8 a. m. We did not make any records on this brood.

Approximately 10 days later activities for the second brood started. Both male and female seemed to be interested in a flower box which was on the rail of our back porch. They were active around this site from June 3 to 6. On the morning of June 7, the wrens were at work building a nest in the box. Kathryn noticed the activity from the kitchen window at 6:30 a. m. At that time the nest was approximately half finished. We postponed breakfast and the four of us watched the wrens complete the job by 8:00 a. m. The nest was on top of the soil among the stems of growing plants, 18 inches from the house, 2 feet from the kitchen window over the sink, and where one passed within 8 inches of the nest when entering the kitchen door.

Both birds worked at construction. We could not determine sexes but assumed the female remained at the nest while the male brought building material. The structure was finished by

working from the inside only. The female would receive material from the male and drag it in. When she was placing the material around the inside, the nest would rock back and forth and expand as she formed the cavity. Literally, she "stretched" the nest as she worked. To make construction by this technique successful meant that outside material must be long enough and laid in such a way that in the "stretching" process the outside material would not fall apart.

The nest opening faced the yard and we could look directly into the hole each time we climbed the porch steps to enter the kitchen.

One egg was laid each morning, June 10, 11, 12, and 13, always before 7:00 a. m. Neither bird was seen near the nest during these days after that time. On the afternoon of June 12, Walter Carl thought the nest had been abandoned so removed it from the flower box. Kathryn replaced it in the same position after counting three eggs. The fourth egg was laid the next day.

Incubation began late in the afternoon of June 14. It was assumed the female carried on all the incubation. She left the nest only to feed and water in the early morning and late afternoon. During these short periods the nest was unattended. The male would come to the incubating female only in the later afternoon after she had fed. They would "talk" to each other for a short while, then he would depart.

This pair of wrens used over one-half acre of land, composed of woodland, shaded lawn, vegetable garden and shrubbery behind the house. Water was available in a branch on the rear of the lot.

Three young hatched in the morning on July 1. The incubation period was 16 days, 16 hours. The fourth egg was infertile. Incubation periods of birds have been erroneously reported, possibly due to the lack of an understanding as to when the timing should commence. Eggs may be deposited in a nest over a relatively long interval but embryological activity does not commence until body heat from the bird starts the processes within the egg. Bent (1948) gives the incubation period as 12 to 14 days. Nice (1953) says 16 days are required for the European Wren.

Both adults fed the young throughout the time they were in the nest. Each came and went independently of the other and sometimes were at the nest simultaneously. Their food gathering area was confined to the one-half acre range previously described.

The young left the nest on July 11 at 10:20 a. m., 10 days plus a few hours after hatching. They were not seen at any time on the edge of the nest prior to departure. Neither were they seen testing their wings for flight. The first young to leave

the nest appeared to be the strongest bird. He was "coaxed" to the edge by a call from the adults. He remained there for less than a minute, then made his first flight up and onto the roof of the house, approximately 25 feet from the nest. The next bird then came out and departed, and then the third one. The shortest first flight was by the third young, which flew up but only about 8 feet from the nest. Second flights of the young were down into thick portions of an adjoining vacant lot.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Nice, Margaret Morse, 1953, The Question of Ten-day Incubation Periods. *Wilson Bulletin* 65 (2): 81-93.  
Bent, Arthur Cleveland, 1948, Life Histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and their Allies. United States National Museum Bulletin 195 Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., pp. 486.

127 Oak Circle  
Gadsden, Alabama.

#### WHEN DO THE BIRDS OCCUR AT BIRMINGHAM

By THOMAS A. IMHOF

Many Alabama bird students want to know when to expect certain species. Still others are unaware of the abundance or scarcity of some species at certain seasons. It is important in making a convincing record of an unusual bird that the observer be aware at the time that it is unusual and thus give to the identification of the bird the care that it warrants.

These are some of the reasons for publishing the migration data listed below. For birds observed some distance from Birmingham a certain amount of latitude is needed when comparing them with this list. So, I hope to see in this journal articles that will show how Birmingham migration data compare with the rest of the state.

This list covers all of Jefferson County and small areas of Shelby County near Lake Purdy and Oak Mountain State Park that are regularly worked by local observers. This region is a hilly rather rugged oak-pine woodland and with about 40% pine. Man, of course, has altered it so that there are large urban and suburban areas, some artificial lakes, and relatively few farms and pastures. The few marshes and swamps are small in area. In short, the region is a paradise for woodland birds (particularly non-game), moderately attractive to field and farm-dwellers, but rather unattractive to most waterbirds and shorebirds.

Most of the records are based on observations of Dr. Henry M. Stevenson of Tallahassee, Fla. (5 years between 1933 and 1940) and the writer (8 years between 1946 and 1954). Other records