

Chatham.¹ There seem to be but very few records for the Atlantic coast. Two were shot in New Jersey on April 5, 1877²; one was shot by Augustus Dexter on Oneida Lake, N. Y., on October 30, 1891,³ and only three have ever been reported from Long Island, all from Great South Bay. One was taken in 1840,⁴ one in 1889,⁵ and one in 1908.⁶ As far as is known these are the only three from that locality. This then makes but seven records for the Atlantic coast, with a total of but eight birds.⁷—S. PRESCOTT FAY, *Boston, Mass.*

Notes on *Chen caerulescens*, *Chen rossi*, and other Waterfowl in Louisiana.—While Audubon's statement that "The Snow Goose in the grey state of its plumage is very abundant in winter, about the mouths of the Mississippi, as well as on all the muddy and grassy shores of the bays and inlets of the Gulf of Mexico as far as the Texas"⁸ undoubtedly refers to *Chen caerulescens*, and, notwithstanding the fact of the occurrence of the species in large numbers in that region has been reiterated by Beyer⁹ and McIlhenny,¹⁰ the impression is general that the Blue Goose is a rare bird.

Professor Cooke speaks of it as "this rather rare goose,"¹¹ and Sanford says: "In its full spring plumage the Blue Goose is seldom taken in the . . . United States, and it is perhaps the rarest of our geese."¹² Moreover, these statements are typical of allusions to the species in most ornithological writings.

It was with pleasure therefore that the writer, while on a trip in the interests of the Biological Survey, during the past winter, found the Blue Geese abundant in southern Louisiana, probably just as numerous as in the days of Audubon. The localities visited were the delta of the Mississippi River, specifically, Octave, Main, 27, and other passes entered through Cubit Gap, and Belle Isle and the surrounding region to the west of Vermillion Bay. Not only were Blue Geese found in flocks of thousands, but it was learned also that on account of their great numbers, they do much damage to pastures, especially in the vicinity of Belle Isle and Chenjereau-Tigre.

¹ Cory, C. B., *Auk*, Vol. I, 1884, p. 96.

² Scott, W. E. D., *Bull. Nutt. Ornith. Club*, Vol. IV, 1879, p. 226.

³ Baggett, Egbert, *Auk*, Vol. XI, 1894, p. 163.

⁴ Dutcher, William, *ibid.*, Vol. X, 1893, p. 271.

⁵ Dutcher, William, *ibid.*, Vol. X, 1893, p. 266.

⁶ Herrick, N. L., *ibid.*, Vol. XXV, 1908, p. 473.

⁷ [To these should be added the type specimen of the species, taken at Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey, in January, 1846 (*cf.* Lawrence, G. N., *Ann. Lyc. N. H. N. Y.*, IV, 1846, p. 171, pl. xii), and two others taken later the same winter. There are also several later records for New Jersey in addition to those given above (*cf.* Stone, *Birds of New Jersey*, 1908 (1909), p. 96).—ED.]

⁸ *Orn. Biogr.*, V, 1838, p. 562.

⁹ *Proc. Louisiana Soc. Nat.*, 1900, p. 90.

¹⁰ *Auk*, XIV, 1897, p. 287.

¹¹ *Bull.* 26, Biological Survey, 1906, p. 68.

¹² *The Waterfowl Family*, 1903, p. 227.

In the Mississippi delta the Blue Geese rest by day on mud flats bordering the Gulf. At the time of my visit (January 29 to February 4, 1910) these were entirely destitute of vegetation, a condition to which the geese had reduced them by their voracious feeding. Every summer these flats are covered by a dense growth of "cut grass" (the local name for *Zizaniopsis miliacea*), "goose grass" (*Scirpus robustus*), "oyster grass" (*Spartina glabra*), "Johnson grass" (*Panicum repens*), and cat-tails or "flag-grass" (*Typha angustifolia*), and every fall are denuded by the Blue Geese or Brant as they are called in the delta. The birds feed principally upon the roots of these plants but the tops of all are eaten at times, if not regularly. Each goose works out a rounded hole in the mud, devouring all of the roots discovered, and these holes are enlarged until they almost touch before the birds move on. They maintain themselves in irregular rows while feeding, much after the manner of certain caterpillars on leaves, and make almost as clean a sweep of the area passed over.

In the Belle Isle region the method of feeding is the same except that the birds feed by day, but the places frequented are what are locally known as 'burns,' that is, areas of marsh burned over so that new green food will sooner be available for the cattle. These pastures, for the most part, are barely above water level, so that the holes dug by the geese immediately fill with water. Continued feeding in one area produces shallow, grass-tufted ponds, where formerly there was unbroken pasture. Some of these ponds are resorted to for roosting places, in which case the action of the birds' feet further deepens them, and veritable lakes are produced, which the building-up influence of vegetation cannot obliterate for generations, and never, in fact, while the geese continue to use them.

The numbers of the Blue Geese are so great that these effects are not local but general. At Chenjere-au-Tigre, one proprietor formerly hired from two to four men at a dollar a day, furnishing them board, horses, guns and ammunition, and keeping them on the move constantly in the daytime to drive the geese away. The attempt was unsuccessful, however, and fully 2000 acres of pasture were abandoned. Other proprietors had similar experience and suffered loss of the use of hundreds of acres.

Besides Blue Geese, Canada Geese and Snow Geese are numerous. One goose among about every 25 Blue Geese is white. These white birds do not flock together but are always scattered among the blue and are regarded by the hunters as belonging to that species. A specimen collected in the delta of the Mississippi is referable to the lesser western form, *Chen hyperborea*. It should be recorded also that a specimen of *Chen rossi* was taken February 23, 1910, on the shore of Little Vermillion Bay, La., near the mouth of the Vermillion River. The nearest previous captures were made in northern Chihuahua, Mexico, and in Colorado.

Being so localized in their winter range, it might seem that the Blue Geese are in danger of extermination. But they are so wary and so few hunters molest them that at present there is no appreciable reduction in their numbers by man. The same is true, I feel sure, of the winter colonies of

Snow Geese and Swans on Currituck Sound, North Carolina. So long as conditions remain the same, the birds being very wary, and having little market value there is no incentive to kill them, nothing occurring during their stay in the United States will materially lessen the numbers, nor even interfere with the increase of these fine birds. However, if they should become an object of pursuit, it is equally true that they would diminish very rapidly.

Specimens of *Anas fulvigula maculosa* were obtained at Belle Isle, La., March 2, 1910. A male *Anas tristis* was apparently mated with one of the mottled ducks. Some of the hunters of Louisiana urge an extension of the open season on the plea that the Mottled Ducks leave the State in winter. I may say, however, that all of the evidence of intelligent persons living in the range of the species, confirms what has often been recorded, namely, that the Mottled Duck is resident. They may be absent in winter from localities they frequent even in large numbers in summer, but they remain in the same general region. As one hunter expressed it "they spread out." The bird is not well known among the hunters at large over the State, from the fact that the range is limited to a narrow strip along the coast. They have heard of it, however, under the names of Summer or Mexican French Duck, or Mallard, and as they get no such duck when shooting, jump to the conclusion that it migrates before the hunting season. Hence the clamor to get at it.—W. L. McATEE, *Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

Another King Rail in Massachusetts.—Mr. Richard M. Russell shot a King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) on Sandy Neck, West Barnstable, Mass., on December 30 or 31, 1909. This is I believe the ninth record for the State. The bird was very emaciated when shot, and quite tame. Mr. Russell has deposited the specimen, mounted, in this Museum from which it will be transferred to the Boston Society of Natural History.—R. HEBER HOWE, JR., *Thoreau Museum, Concord, Mass.*

Knot (*Tringa canutus*) Wintering in Massachusetts.—The winter records of our shore birds are so scanty that any new addition should be very welcome, and in this connection I want to record the taking of two Knots at Chatham on Dec. 31, 1909 — the very last day of the year. A friend of mine to whom the birds were sent identified them, which he described as being in the immature gray plumage and in as good condition as fat young birds killed in the early fall. A party from Chatham were out after rabbits on Monomoy Island near the flats and marshes which the shore birds frequent in summer, when these two birds flew by. As they were thought to be Black-bellied Plover the corresponding whistle was given, whereupon both birds wheeled about, and as they came nearer they were seen to be Knots. They were shot and both fell on solid ice. As the last week in December was bitterly cold, in fact the coldest part



McAtee, W. L. 1910. "Notes on *Chen caerulescens*, *Chen rossi*, and Other Waterfowl in Louisiana." *The Auk* 27, 337–339.

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