

Carolina Parakeet

< 1895

Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co., IA

fide Bartsch

Bartsch 1895, Anderson 1907, McKinley 1965

Record Number: 81-NA
Classification: NA

REFERENCES

Bartsch, P. 1895. Birds extinct in Iowa and those becoming so. Iowa Ornithologist 2:1-3.

Anderson 1907

McKinley, D. 1965. Carolina Parakeet in the Northwest. Auk 82:221-222.

Bent 1940

Stephens, T. C. 1943. Early bird life in Clay County Iowa. IBL 13:65

VOTE (1981): 2-III, I-IV, 2-V, I-VI, 1-?

V, hearsay.

III, easy bird to id.

?, ?

III, Prob. correct, but second-hand information. (same situation as 4 & 5).

Bartsch, P. 1895. Birds extinct in Iowa and those becoming so.
Iowa Ornithologist 2:1-3

Another bird that has entirely disappeared is the Carolina Parakeet. This sociable bird, always gathered in flocks, would range as far north as Spirit Lake, where it would frequently remain until the cold snows and stormy blizzards from the north would drive it southward. It is said to have been not an unfrequent bird in the state. Its food in winter consisted chiefly of the seed of the Cocklebur, but it most loved the juice of young corn and would

do great destruction to this fruit, and this was one of the causes of its extermination. Its nature was so peculiar that where one of its number was killed or wounded, the others would gather around it with shrill cries and in this way the entire flock could easily be annihilated. The last of these flocks was presented to the State University of Iowa and has since been mounted by Mr. Ridgeway in a beautiful snow scene.

Bent, A. C.: Life Histories of North American Cuckoos, Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds and Their Allies. Bull 176 US Nat Museum, Washington, 1940. pp 10-11

Range.—Southeastern United States; probably extinct.

The range of the Carolina parakeet extended north to casually northeastern Colorado (Little Thompson River); eastern Nebraska (Omaha and Brownville); casually Iowa (Spirit Lake and Decatur County); casually northern Wisconsin (Lake Koshkonong and Waubesa County); Ohio (Columbus and Summit County); and Pennsylvania (Juniata River and Shermans Valley). East to Pennsylvania (Shermans Valley); casually the District of Columbia (Washington); casually West Virginia (White Sulphur Springs); South Carolina (Pine Barrens and Edding Island); Georgia; and Florida (Oklawaha River, Wekiva River, and Micco); south to Florida (Micco, Lake Okeechobee, Tampa, Tarpon Springs, Old Town, and Tallahassee); southern Louisiana (Bayou Sara and St. Mary); and central Texas (Brownwood). West to central Texas (Brownwood); eastern Oklahoma (Caddo and Fort Gibson); and casually eastern Colorado (Fort Lyon, Denver, and the Little Thompson River).

172. (382). *Conurus carolinensis* (Linn.). Carolina Paroquet.

The beautiful Carolina Paroquet formerly ranged in flocks as

far as the northern part of the state, but has not been observed in the state for at least thirty years and has practically been exterminated throughout the United States. Frank M. Chapman gives four reasons for its disappearance: "First, it was destructive to fruit orchards, and for this reason was killed by agriculturists; second, it has been trapped and bagged in enormous numbers by professional bird-catchers; third, it has been killed in myriads for its plumage; and fourth, it has been wantonly slaughtered by so-called sportsmen" (Birds East. N. A., p. 222).

Thomas Say states that the "Carolina parroquet" was seen several times during the winter of 1819-20 at Engineers' Cantonment (Long's Exp., 1, pp. 265-270). Prince Maximilian on May 14, 1834 (a little below "Weeping-water River"), records: "Auch Papageien wurden gesehen, deren Gardner schon oben an l'eau qui court [Niobrara River] bemerkt hatte," etc. (Reise 11, 345). Audubon noted the species several times along the Missouri (Journals 1, 476); (May 8, 1843), "we saw Parrakeets and many small birds but nothing new or very rare" (southwest corner of Iowa), (Ibid, 477, Bellevue, Sarpy county, Neb., May 9, 1843); (Ibid, 481, near Council Bluffs, May 10, 1843), "Parrakeets and Wild Turkeys plentiful;" they were also heard by Bell between Ft. George and the Great Bend of the Missouri September 15, 1843 (Ibid, 11, p. 165). As late as 1863, F. V. Hayden noted the Paroquet as "very abundant in the Mississippi Valley along the thickly wooded bottoms as far up the Missouri as Fort Leavenworth, possibly as high as the mouth of the Platte, but never seen above that point" (Trans. Am. Philos. Soc., xii, 1863, p. 154).

The last Iowa record is that given by Dr. Coues in his "Birds of the Northwest," (1874 p. 296). "In Iowa, according to Mr. Trippe, the Parrot still occurs. 'A resident of Decatur county told me that he had several times seen a flock of Parrots in the southern part of the county on a tall, dead cottonwood tree, known to the neighboring inhabitants as the "parrot tree," from its having been frequented at intervals by the same flock for several years . . . and that he had shot one of them on one occasion' (Pr. Bost. Soc., xv, 1872, p. 233)."

Paul Bartsch, in an article on "Birds Extinct in Iowa and Those Becoming So" (Iowa Orn., 11, 1895, pp. 2-3), states that the Paroquet formally ranged as far north as Spirit Lake, where it would frequently remain until the cold snow would drive it southward. Its food in winter consisted chiefly of the seeds of the cocklebur. Its nature was so peculiar that when one of the number was killed or wounded, the others would gather around it with shrill cries and in this way the entire flock could easily be annihilated.

Dr. Rich states that many years ago the Paroquets were noticed just across the river from Sioux City, in Nebraska. Some were captured and kept as cage pets. A series of about a dozen specimens in the University museum were taken by D. H. Talbot's collectors at the mouth of the Arkansas River in 1882.

Anderson 1907
pp 269-271

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2
3
not recorded
Iowa record
TK

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Carolina Parakeet

IOWA

D. McKinley
Auk 32:221-222 1965
Carolina Parakeet in
the Northwest

I looked at Nebraska
part of article and
can't see any specific
references relevant
to Iowa records. TK

Inasmuch as Iowa is bounded on the west by the Missouri River, almost all that I have written in connection with Nebraska applies to Iowa and I shall not repeat it. Wherever riverbank forest conditions allowed, there can be no doubt that both sides of the river were equally inhabited by parakeets. For Iowa itself, Anderson (1907: 269-271) gave a good account gathered from many sources.

Working entirely from secondary evidence, Paul Bartsch (1895: 2) wrote that in former times the parakeet, "always gathered in flocks, would range as far north as Spirit Lake [Dickinson County] where it would frequently remain until the cold snows and stormy blizzards from the north would drive it southward." He implied that there was an Iowa specimen at the State University of Iowa, but this appears not to have been true, those there being in Talbot's collection from Oklahoma. } 6

Notes of the late T. C. Stephens indicate that he knew of sight records of the parakeet in five Iowa counties (J. H. Ennis, letter of 23 November 1962). Of these, Fremont and Woodbury are on the Missouri River and my Nebraska account applies to them. Decatur County is included because of Trippe's (1873: 233) secondhand report of the species appearing in flocks there as late, perhaps, as the early 1870's. I am not sure of the origin of the Sac County record, but it may stem from J. A. Spurrell's rather negative statement (1919: 117) that he had found "only rumors" of the parakeet among the pioneers, nothing tangible. It appears that Stephens did not credit Bartsch's record for Dickinson County, mentioned above; reminiscences of F. W. Calkins of the period of 1865-1880 (Stephens, 1943) indicate that the parakeet was never seen in Clay County, just south of Dickinson County. }

The fifth county mentioned in Stephens's notes is Scott, and I have no definite data to validate the claim. It is possible that the somewhat recon-

dite account of T. H. Macbride (1928: 100-101), vaguely referable to the period of 1846-1860, may be the basis of the record. Macbride's fictional but basically true story seems to refer to southeastern Iowa; there is little doubt that he actually saw "lone trees," usually cottonwoods, on the prairies that were visited by flocks of parakeets. At any rate, it is the nearest that I can come to a Mississippi Valley record for Iowa.

Although J. A. Allen (1868) did not find any reports of the parakeet in central and western Iowa in 1867, this may mean merely that parakeets were already forgotten. I. N. Gabrielson reported to me (conversation 13 June 1959) that his grandfather had described the species convincingly as having been seen in Webster County in the late 1850's or early 1860's. } 4

Little new information on the parakeet has been added in the many lists of Iowa birds that have appeared over three-quarters of a century. Keyes and Williams (1889: 131) noted that although it was gone, it once occurred in the southern part of the state; Osborn (1891: 7) listed it, even though no specimen was present in the collection that he was describing, and he later (1905: 568-569) mentioned the species rather perfunctorily. Ridgway (1916: 148, 149) cited the reports of Maximilian, Audubon, and Trippe only. W. W. Bennett (1931: 9), in a list of the birds of Sioux City, referred to Audubon's trip of 1843 (but see above: Audubon did not specifically report parakeets from the Sioux City area) and referred to specimens that *are not* of Iowa origin.

The last careful treatments of the parakeet in Iowa were those of DuMont (1933: 81; 1935: 206). Bent (1940: 10) summarized the affair: "casually Iowa (Spirit Lake and Decatur County)."

I tried to follow one long enough to see if he had a band across his breast, but they were too swift for me and the group was moving on.

A little grayish bird caught my attention. I glanced at it and said, "Another Warbling Vireo."

"Tennessee Warbler," pronounced the expert. I was ready to argue, but after all he should know, so I merely questioned, "How can you tell one from the other? They look just alike."

"Why, one is a warbler and the other is a vireo." He answered my questions in such a kindly manner, but he could not conceal his surprise at my stupidity.

The man just behind me offered a suggestion: "Warblers are very active and vireos are more sluggish." That sounded reasonable, so I made a note of it on the margin of my check list.

After that I did not name any birds aloud. When I saw old familiar friends such as Robins, Flickers and Crows I silently checked them.

When we met with the other groups at noon, a list was compiled of all the birds seen by the separate groups. The total was 149 species. Our group had listed 82, but if I had checked only the ones I had actually seen and identified, my total would have been about 12. That meant there were 149 birds around me; I had seen 11 familiar ones and had learned one new one.

As I walked wearily back to the hotel a little jingle formed itself and kept running through my mind:

Oh, abirding we will go,
Abirding we will go,
We'll catch a fleeting glance
Of a birdie on a branch,
And then away he'll go.

I repeat, if you want to learn something about birds, don't wait to go out with an ornithologist. Find someone who knows as much or a little more than you do, and go out together, often. Then, when you think you know all there is to know about birds, go out with an expert and you will really enjoy the trip. He will show you birds you have never seen, and when he points out an elusive little shadow and says, "There is an Orange-crowned Warbler," you will know that it is an Orange-crowned Warbler just because it acts like one, not because you saw it plainly enough to know it had a streaked breast.

GENERAL NOTES

Hudsonian Curlew in Winneshiek County.—On May 16, 1943, we saw a lone Hudsonian Curlew at close range about four miles north of Spillville, Iowa (to be more exact, one-quarter of a mile north of the "Bily Brothers Clocks Museum"). The curlew lit on a plowed field about 40 feet from the road, at which distance identification was positive. The huge, strongly down-curved bill and the dark line through the eye region were plainly visible. It was relatively tame, for when approached on foot, it would fly about 30 feet, drop to the ground and wait until approached again before repeating the short flight. The only Iowa record of the Hudsonian Curlew reported by DuMont in his 'Revised List of the Birds of Iowa' (1933) is the statement of Anderson that he had a specimen taken in Hancock County in 1895, but sometime after 1907 dermestes ate away some of the feathers and the bird was probably discarded.—NICHOLAS L. and MABEL E. CUTHBERT, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Golden Eagle in Northwest Iowa.—In December, 1942, a young man by the name of Seifert, living about 16 miles northwest of Algona, Iowa, brought a large bird to Paul R. Wille, custodian of Call State Park, for identification. It proved to be an adult Golden Eagle. It had one wing injured and was unable to fly. The farmer had found

it in a grove unable to fly and in a very emaciated condition. Evidently it had been injured quite some time previously, probably by a shot from a small caliber rifle. Both the Bald and Golden Eagles are protected, and Mr. Wille took custody of the bird and placed it in a cage. It took about one rabbit a day to feed the eagle, which was larger than a turkey. Rabbits were shot by Mr. Wille for this purpose. A photograph of this Golden Eagle was published in the Algona 'Advance' on December 10, 1942. A letter from Mr. Wille in February described the condition of the eagle as very good and said the wing was healing satisfactorily. The practice of many unthinking people of shooting any large bird of prey is a very unwise one. Wherever circumstances warrant, prosecutions follow the shooting of eagles, as they are protected by law.—ZELL C. LEE, Sioux City, Iowa.

Early Bird Life in Clay County, Iowa.—Some interesting information on the early bird life of northern Iowa is contained in a letter to the writer (dated, August 30, 1917) from Franklin W. Calkins. These comments on various bird species by Mr. Calkins apply to Clay County, Iowa, between the years 1865 and 1885.

Snow Goose. Small flocks were occasionally seen from 1865 to 1880. **Baldpate, or Widgeon.** Great numbers passed through in the spring and fall migrations.

Pintail. Flocks of thousands passed northward in the spring at least up to 1884; but never in autumn.

Canvas-back. They were occasionally seen from 1866 to 1880.

Ruffed Grouse. They were never seen in Clay County.

Wild Turkey. Only a single turkey was heard of in Clay County, and that was in Gillett Grove in 1867.

Whooping Crane ("White Crane"). Not known to nest, but thousands in annual flight, April and November.

Sandhill Crane. Great numbers passed through in autumn; many nested in Clay County from 1865 to 1880.

Golden Plover. Thousands of them in migration from the last of August to the first of October.

Black-bellied Plover. Never observed in Clay County.

Woodcock. A few in the larger groves along the Little Sioux River.

Long-billed Curlew. Nested in Clay County from 1865 to 1875, but was never numerous.

Upland Plover. Very numerous all summer up to 1876; literally shot out after the coming of the railroad.

Wild Pigeon. One flock of 27 was seen in 1866.

Little Green Paroquet. Was never seen in Clay County.—T. C. STEPHENS, Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa.

Nesting of the Chimney Swift in an Abandoned Farm House.—The Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) is recorded in Iowa as a common summer resident, nesting in all parts of the state. Because of the inaccessibility of nesting sites it is seldom that the bird student is treated to the opportunity of easy observation of its nesting activities. Most Iowa bird students know of Althea R. Sherman's Chimney Swift tower¹ and have read accounts of the swifts' nesting. Arthur Cleveland Bent² records a number of instances of the Chimney Swift nesting in such unusual places as outbuildings and old wells, but it is a treat for the casual observer to happen upon this most interesting bird when nesting under such circumstances.

During the first world war, the Army in expanding the area of old

¹Iowa Bird Life, 13 (2), 1943: 23-24.

²Bent, Arthur Cleveland. Life Histories of North American Cuckoos, Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds and Their Allies, 1940 (with chapter on the Chimney Swift by Winsor Marrett Tyler, pp. 271-293).