

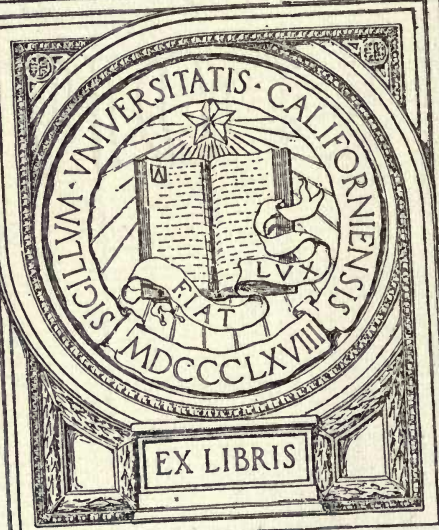
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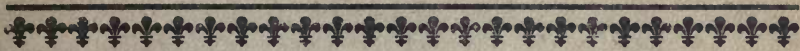
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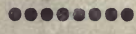


# Notes on Indiana Heronries.



BY A. W. BUTLER.

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From Proceedings of the Academy of Science, 1897.



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## NOTES ON INDIANA HERONRIES. BY A. W. BUTLER.

The Great Blue Herons have for years been known to breed throughout the State, some places singly, at others in small companies, and again in considerable numbers. The Black-crowned Night Heron also breeds in heronries often near to or included in a nesting community of the last mentioned species. The Yellow-crowned Night Heron has only been reported as breeding in Knox county, where it attains its most northern breeding range. There Mr. Robert Ridgway found a community of about a hundred pairs nesting in the tall ash and sweet gum trees in a creek bottom near Monteur's Pond, in April, 1881. From the same vicinity Mr. Ridgway reported the Snowy Heron as breeding. The American Egret has been known to breed in the lower Wabash Valley. This was supposed to be its most northern breeding ground. Late in the summer, after the duties to the family were done they were supposed to wander farther to the northward, even reaching northern Indiana, Michigan and Ontario. This supposition seemed to be further borne out by the fact that there were, with very few exceptions, no records north of southern Indiana at the time of the spring migrations. It seemed quite unusual that they should wander northward in such numbers after the nesting season, consequently when I began to hear of one or two pairs being found in company with some colony of Great Blue Herons I was prepared to believe that if the right locality was found they might still be found breeding in some numbers in the northern part of this State, provided man's agency had not in some way destroyed them.

In Knox and Gibson counties Mr. Robert Ridgway reported heronries and noted the breeding of the Great Blue Heron, the Snowy Heron and the American Egret.

The American Egret, according to Mr. E. J. Chansler, breeds about Swan and Grassy Ponds, Daviess county.

Dr. J. T. Scovell reports that up to about 1881 or 1882 an extensive heronry of the American Egret was to be found in the Wabash bottoms about a mile west of Terre Haute.

Mr. J. F. Elliott, of New Harmony, informs me of a heronry at Hovey's Pond, Posey county, Indiana.

There is no record of any heronries in southeastern Indiana, but Dr. F. W. Langdon reports the Great Blue Heron as breeding along the Great Miami River, and in the neighboring parts of Ohio. Great Blue Herons have been reported as breeding in communities about ten miles south of Frankfort, in Clinton county, where they were noted by Mr. E. R. Quick. A small colony has also bred regularly at the mouth of the Tippecanoe River, above Lafayette, but when it was visited in May, 1897, but one or two pairs were found as lone remnants of the former community.

In Carroll county, Prof. B. W. Evermann speaks of two large heronries and one small one. He found as many as thirteen nests on one tree at one place and many other trees contained from three to ten nests each. (The Auk, October, 1888, p. 347). They are also reported to have formerly bred in colonies in Dekalb county, and investigation may show that they still do so.

Prof. A. W. Bitting reports a small heronry of about one hundred nests in southern Marshall county, on an island in the Tippecanoe River, at a locality called the Millpond. These were Great Blue Herons and he saw them in 1891. The same observer informs me that up to about 1890 there was a heronry of twenty-five or thirty nests of the American Egret in the Preston Swamp, in the same county, about two miles north of the one he first mentions.

There is a heronry of Great Blue Herons at Golden Lake, in Steuben county, and one at Wolf Lake, in Noble county, at each of which, according to Mr. H. W. McBride, occasional pairs of American Egrets have been found breeding.

Mr. R. B. Trouslot wrote me of a visit he made to "Cranetown," in Jasper county, in April, 1887. At that time he estimated there were thousands of Great Blue Herons nesting, and he saw a few American Egrets.

Mr. Ruthven Deane has favored me with several notes on a heronry called "Crane Heaven," near English Lake, Starke county, which, on March 18, 1894, he described as being occupied almost exclusively by Great Blue Herons, though quite a number of Black Crowned Night Herons always breed there.

Mr. Charles Dury, Cincinnati, has also informed me of a heronry at English Lake, which may be the same one.

Mr. J. G. Parker, Jr., of Chicago, informs me of a large colony of Great Blue Herons on the Kankakee River, nine miles south of Kouts, Indiana, where, on April 14, 1894, he reports the heronries filled with birds nesting. I am indebted to Mr. Parker, and also to Mr. F. M. Woodruff, of the Chicago Academy of Science, for notes furnished me concerning heronies in Porter county, Indiana. The accounts given refer to different dates, but whether the locality referred to is the same I am at present unable to say. Mr. Woodruff says that Mr. Charles Eldridge found the American Egret breeding at Kouts, Indiana, in May, 1885, and took a large number of their eggs. He found their nests in the same trees with those of the Great Blue Heron. He concludes: "I visited the heronries last June, 1896, and did not see a single specimen of the American Egret. In the fall of 1895 a terrible fire swept through the timber along the Kankakee River, which probably accounts for the depopulated state of the heronries."

Mr. Parker says Mr. George Wilcox found quite a number of American Egrets breeding in a heronry with the Great Blue Heron, near Kouts, Indiana, during May, 1895. Mr. Parker himself visited the place in the spring of 1896 and found only a few of the latter species occupying the heronry. He thinks the small number of birds found was due to the fact that a heavy fire swept through the timber in the fall of 1895.

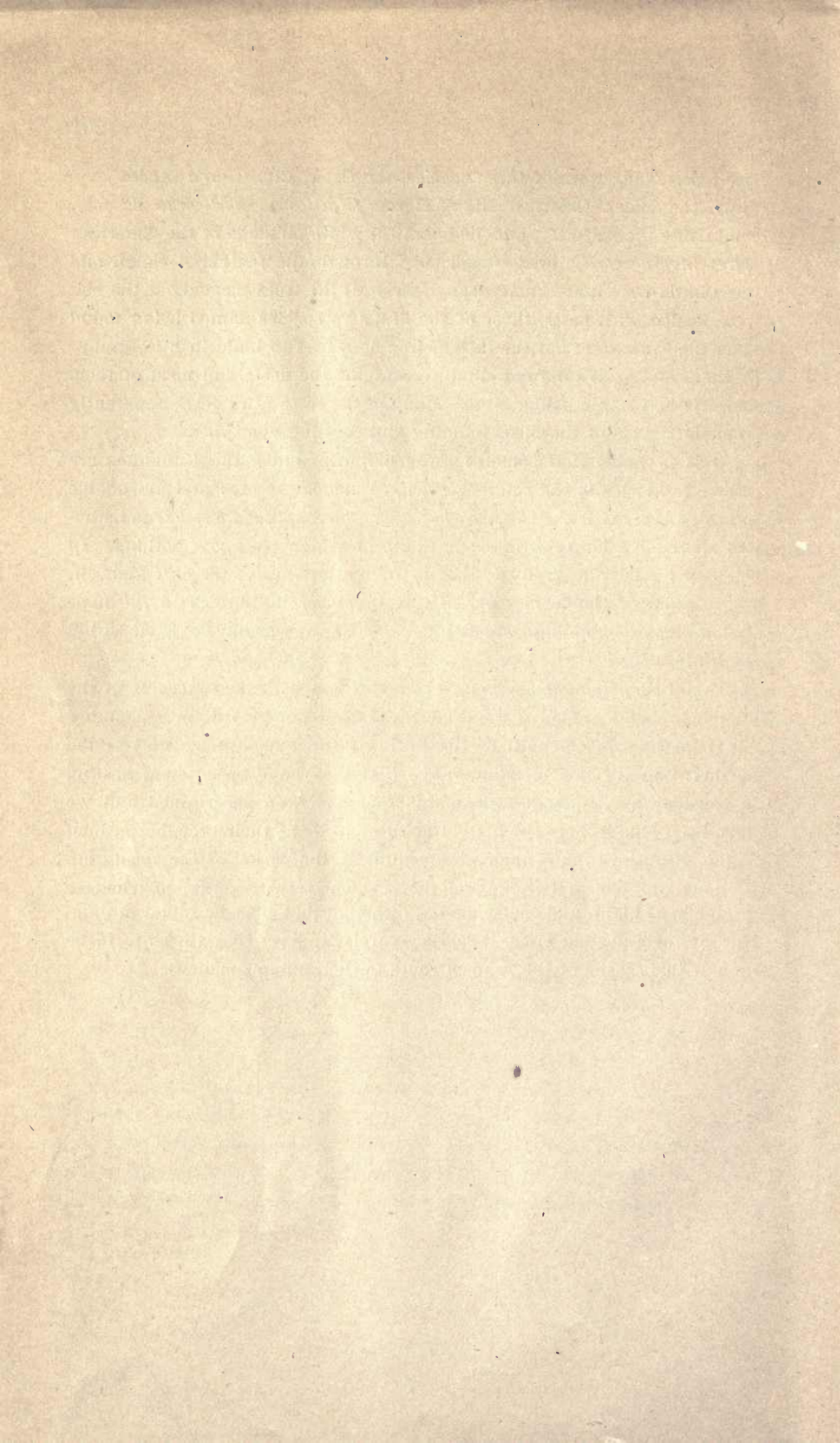
Mr. C. E. Aiken, of Salt Lake City, Utah, who has made many valuable observations on the birds of northern Illinois and northwestern Indiana, as well as of Colorado, has very kindly given me an account of a visit to a heronry known as "Crane Heaven," occupying thirty or forty acres along the Kankakee River, some twenty miles above Water Valley. The time of his visit was in May, 1886. He says: "The locality is a timbered plot of ground, being submerged with twelve to eighteen inches of water at the time of our visit. At our approach, upon the discharge of a gun, the birds rose with a noise like thunder and hovered in hundreds above the



tree-tops. They were of three species, the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), the Black Crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*), comprising the majority, but the beautiful white plumage of the American Egret (*Ardea egretta*) was conspicuous through the feathered cloud, and these birds were quite numerous. Nearly all the trees throughout the belt were loaded with nests, those of the first two species named being found upon the same tree, but the latter birds appeared to build in little groups by themselves. We did not climb to examine the nests, but most of them appeared to contain young birds. Many of the trees were dead, apparently from the effects of the birds building and roosting upon them."

It is probable that some of these heronries along the Kankakee are referred to twice in the references I have made. At present I am unable to decide this matter. It is likewise very probable that there exists heronries on the Kankakee within our limits of which we know nothing. In this paper I have desired to bring to your attention, so far as I know it, the location of the former or existing heronries in Indiana in the hope that we may be able to locate all such sites as exist or have existed within the State.

This little article has served to acquaint you with the extension of the known breeding range of the American Egret northward for a distance equal to the whole length of the State of Indiana, and we find at the northern part of this breeding range that they have been found nesting in considerable numbers. Since this fact has been ascertained and we have been able to note the arrival of these birds at their breeding ground in the spring, we found their absence during the period of the spring migrations was only apparent, and that evidently their vernal pilgrimages are made at night, and consequently, although they may be found in numbers at their nesting sites, it is very rarely, indeed, that they are to be seen at this season of the year en route to their summer homes.









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