



# General Field Notes

James F. Parnell

## **Anhinga Breeding at Springfield, S.C.**

WILLIAM POST

Department of Zoology

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C.

19 August 1969

On 20 July 1969 while visiting the Springfield, S.C., heronry in northern Barnwell County, Frederick Post, William Hastings, and I found a nest of the Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*). It was near the top of a 10 meter (30 foot) high Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). As we approached, the two young flew from the nest and plopped into the water, and were obscured from our view by the vegetation. The adult birds were sailing overhead. I did not find the Anhinga nesting in this colony in 1968.

I know of no breeding records for either Aiken or Barnwell Counties. *South Carolina Bird Life* (1949) does not clearly delineate the breeding range of the Anhinga in South Carolina.

## **Rattlesnake Predation on the Clapper Rail**

GILBERT S. GRANT

Route 1, Box 363, Sneads Ferry, N.C.

19 June 1969

On 27 May 1967, while walking between Alligator Bay and the beach on the northern end of Topsail Island, in Onslow County, N.C., I collected a Canebrake Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus atricaudatus*). It measured 4 feet 2 inches in length and 5.75 inches in girth. Dissection revealed the upper mandible of a rail comparable in size to that of either a Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) or a King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) and the fur and partially digested bones of a small rodent. Preference for salt marshes by the Clapper Rail indicated that it was probably this species that was taken by the rattlesnake.

Bent (US Natl. Mus., Bull. 135, 1926) states that the enemies of the Clapper Rail (all subspecies included) are hawks, owls, minks, raccoons, wild cats, turtles, fish, man,

crows, and crabs. The predation of a Clapper Rail by a Canebrake may not be unusual, however, as both are found at the edge of the salt marshes during periods of high tide. I know of no previous recorded evidence of this interesting predator-prey relationship, however.

## **An Early Record of the Saw-whet Owl From Western North Carolina**

MARCUS B. SIMPSON JR.  
P.O. Box 167, Statesville, N.C.

10 June 1969

Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (*Birds of North Carolina*, 1942) state that North Carolina's first record of the Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) was based on a mounted specimen which H.H. Brimley obtained at the Fish and Oyster Fair in New Bern during February 1892. The exact origin of this bird was uncertain, however, for the authors pointed out that the owl "presumably had been killed in the state" (italics mine). Apparently the first specimen conclusively taken in the state was collected by John S. Cairns of Weaverville, Buncombe County, on 30 November 1894. In a letter to William Brewster dated 11 March 1895, Cairns mentions having collected a female Saw-whet Owl; and subsequently the specimen was given to Brewster, for Raymond A. Paynter Jr. (pers. com.) informs me that the bird is now in the collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, where it is listed as accession No. 247,615. In addition to being the earliest positive North Carolina record, this specimen represents one of the only two autumn and winter observations of the owl from the mountain region of the state, the other being Peake's record on 26 October 1963 in Jackson County (*Chat*, 29:110-111, 1965).

## **Barn Swallow Observations In Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

H. DOUGLAS PRATT  
Route 3, Box 113L, Charlotte, N.C. 28210

26 December 1969

According to Stupka (1963) the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) is an uncommon migrant and possibly a rare summer resident in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As a result of observations made by me during the summer of 1969, it would seem that the status of the Barn Swallow in the park needs to be revised. Stupka lists no records for the North Carolina portion of the park. All of the following observations are from North Carolina.

On 9 June I discovered a nest with three almost-fledged young Barn Swallows on the porch of the Park Service Seasonal Quarters at Oconaluftee. This constitutes the first breeding record for this species within the park. Subsequently, other nests were located in the vicinity. Barn Swallows were present in the Oconaluftee area throughout the summer months of June, July, and August. A population estimate for the area would be about 150 birds.

On 7 August I observed a large flock (ca. 50) in flight near the Lone Pine Lookout on the Noland Divide Trail. The weather was clear, and the time was 4:00 PM. The birds appeared to be taking advantage of the updrafts of air over Noland Divide. In addition to the Barn Swallows, the flock contained Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*). There is no evidence that these birds represent breeding birds in the park. Indeed, suitable nesting sites for these species are lacking in the Noland Divide section of the park. This is evidence, however, that the Barn Swallow uses the park as a feeding ground even though actual nesting may be limited.