

ANHINGA RECORDS FROM NORTHERN
ALABAMA

By THOMAS Z. ATKESON

Howell's "Birds of Alabama," now badly out of date, lists the snake-necked Anhinga, or Water Turkey, as occurring only in the southern half of the State and gives no positive breeding records. Actually, these birds must occur, at least locally, throughout the State and definitely breed here.

Wheeler Dam, on the Tennessee River, was completed in 1936 and the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge was established on a part of the resulting reservoir in 1938. While refuge bird records were kept, beginning in the early summer of 1939, no Anhinga were noted until 1950. Either these birds failed to find the new reservoir until then or escaped notice, probably the latter.

A large nesting colony of Great Blue Herons and American Egrets was present in the Beaver Dam Swamp arm of the refuge in 1950. On April 27 of that year, the writer accompanied a group of Florence State Teachers College students on a visit to this colony. The group was headed by Gordon Cole, then a Biology professor at the college—now a T.V.A. biologist. Cole noted two Anhinga nests, with the adult birds sitting on them, and observed at least four adults. Nests were some forty feet above the surface of the swamp in large Tupelos. The colony was revisited on April 30, 1951, and at least one pair of nesting Water Turkeys was present then.

There have been no further nesting records, but the birds have been noted regularly each summer since and probably continue to breed in the vicinity. Records have come from the Beaver Dam Swamp and White Springs vicinities of the refuge and from the Beulah Bay and Swan Creek localities west of the refuge, all in the southern edge of Limestone County. Sight records have come from a number of good observers, including L. S. Givens, Eugene Cypert, H. H. Grammer, E. A. Byford, Thomas A. Imhof, Wayne Colin, and David C. Hulse. Due to the unique appearance of these birds, making misidentification unlikely, no collecting has been considered necessary.

April 27 remains the earliest sight record, obviously late, since they were incubating at that time. These

birds have never been seen later than July 27, despite efforts to establish later records. Cole reports that they nest regularly on Seven Mile Island, in the Tennessee River near Florence, in company with great blue herons and American egrets.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Alabama.