

A HERONRY NEAR INDIANAPOLIS.

BY AMOS W. BUTLER.

Thirteen miles southeast of Indianapolis is a remarkable heronry occupied by a number of Great Blue Herons. The Indianapolis papers, a year ago last May, published accounts of this interesting bird colony, but



Great Blue Herons' Nests Near Indianapolis.

called them cranes. A few days later, May 24, 1911, Dr. B. S. Potter, Superintendent of the Marion County Asylum for the Insane at Julietta, very kindly drove me to it. This heronry is situated in Section 23, Township 5, Range 15, in Hancock County, Indiana. The land is owned by Anton Schildmeier, who came to it with his father in 1837, and it has been in the family ever since. The herons were first seen about five years before my visit. They occupied a timber tract of 70 acres, which remains to this day much as it was when the present owner came to it. It is a splendid bit of the primeval forest, containing some of the finest specimens of the characteristic trees of this latitude. No amount of money can tempt this old pioneer to part with his big trees, which he loves so dearly. Neither will he permit a hunter or other person who is liable to disturb the birds upon the premises.

When the herons first occupied these woods they built their nests in sycamore and other trees. More recently they have chosen and are occupying the largest oak trees.

At the time of my visit the leaves had come out so the opportunity for observation was not as good as it had been a little earlier. Dr. Potter reported that on a former visit that spring he had counted sixty-five nests. One tree contained thirteen. Those who have attempted to count them think there are about sixty birds. If this is true, some of the nests are old ones not occupied. Mr. Schildmeier, who is a careful observer, says they return every spring with the first few warm days in March. He has seen twelve to fifteen at one time feeding in the wet meadows along Doe run, which flows through the farm. When I visited the locality the eggs were hatched. The young were making a noise and egg shells were common under the large trees bearing the nests.

To one who knows what to look for, these birds may be seen not only by travelers along the Brookville road, but also from the steam and traction cars. Doubtless the nests are also visible when the leaves are off the trees. I am indebted to Paul Shideler for a very good photograph taken a short time before my visit. It is printed herewith.