

# THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL  
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

Published by  
THE TENNESSEE  
ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY —



**MARCH**  
**1932**



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# THE MIGRANT

VOL III

MARCH, 1932

NO. 1

Published by the Tennessee Ornithological Society, to Record and Encourage the Study of Birds in Tennessee. Issued in March, June, September and December.

## THE PASSING OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON

By H. P. IJAMS

The passing of the Passenger Pigeon represents one of the saddest pages in the history of the bird life in this country. More interest is evidenced in its history and its fate than in that of any other North American bird. Its story reads like romance. Once the most abundant species ever known in any country, ranging over the greater part of this continent from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada in flocks so great that they hid the face of the sun, it has vanished from the face of the earth, leaving us only a few mute specimens in museums and private collections to remind us of its sad end, and to serve as a warning of what happens when no thought is given to the preservation of wild life.

The first settlers in this country found the Passenger Pigeon in infinite numbers. They provided a source of food for the Indians. Wherever roosts were established Indians always gathered in great numbers. Early historians speak of flocks of them so great that they broke down trees in the woods where they roosted. Early settlers in Virginia found the pigeons "beyond number or imagination." Their flights in migration extended over vast tracts of country. A continuous stream of pigeons, three miles wide, that it took three days to pass a given point, was observed as late as 1860. Audubon and Alexander Wilson, the father of American ornithology, record instances of observing the flights of more than 2,000,000,000 pigeons in one flock. These birds traveled at a rate of a mile a minute and the light of noonday was often obscured as by an eclipse.

The migrations of these birds was not the regular, long-drawn-out movements that characterized the sensational flights of most birds. They were undertaken chiefly in search of food which consisted mainly of wild berries, nuts, insects and grain. They were so swift and tireless in flight that they could pass from zone to zone in a day. They migrated en masse. That is, the birds of one great nesting or roosting place rose into the air as one body and the movement of these immense hosts formed the most wonderful and impressive spectacle in animated nature.

There were stirring sights when great herds of grazing animals thundered over the Western plains, but the approach of the mighty armies of the air was appalling. The vast multitudes, rising strata upon strata, covered and darkened the sky, hiding the sun, while the roar of their myriad wings was likened to that of a hurricane. Thus they passed for hours or days, while the people in the territory over which the pigeons winged their way kept up a fusillade from every point of vantage. Where lower flights passed close to the hilltops, people were stationed with guns, poles, rocks and other weapons to knock down the swarming birds. At night their roosting places were raided and thousands killed. For weeks after the passage of a flock the people in some sections fed on no other flesh than pigeons.

Their winter roosting places almost defy description, says Audubon. He rode through one on the banks of Green River in Kentucky for more than 40 miles, crossing it in different directions, and found its average width to be

more than three miles. The ground was white with droppings like snow; trees two feet in diameter were broken off. When the birds came in at sundown there was a great uproar and confusion, and a crackling of falling limbs not unlike a storm. On April 17, 1810, Alexander Wilson visited a roost in this same region and found that the birds were nesting in vast numbers, the nests holding young at the time. This was one of the most southerly nesting colonies of which we have been able to find record.

The nesting places sometimes were equal in size to the roosting places, frequently covering 100,000 to 150,000 acres. As many as 50 nests were observed in a single tree. The females laid one to two eggs, and were generally believed to raise more than one brood in a season. The squabs were in greater demand for food than the older birds, and for this reason raids were made upon their nesting places and the young slaughtered by the millions. In some places hogs were fattened upon the butchered squabs and older birds left on the ground after a raid. The most destructive implement was the net, to which birds were attracted by bait. Gunners also baited the birds with grain and dozens were frequently killed at a single shot.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, hundreds of men made a profession of following the birds wherever they went. They kept up with their movements by telegraph and moved to each new location as rapidly as possible. It required fifteen tons of ice to pack the squabs killed in the last great slaughter recorded in New York State. In the seventies it was said that the New York market alone consumed 100 barrels of pigeons a day for weeks without a break in price. It was this market demand that brought about the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. When they began to become scarce the Indians raised objection to the way they were being slaughtered, and many tribes did everything in their power to prevent their total destruction, even using threats where pleading did not avail. The destruction of a large part of the young each year was what hastened the end. Nature cut off the rest with old age.

The last great slaughter was in 1878 at Petoskey, Michigan, when more than 1,500,000 birds were killed and shipped to market and perhaps as many more wounded birds and young squabs perished as a result. Over 2,000 people were at the nesting place, engaged in the business of trapping, killing and shipping pigeons. One Michigan firm reported the shipment of five cars a day to the New York market over a period of thirty days. In two years one authority says over twelve billion were killed and shipped to market from one town in Michigan, while another section contributed sixteen million. Another town killed and shipped over \$4,000,000 worth.

The 1878 slaughter was a blow from which the Pigeons never recovered. A much smaller breeding colony was recorded near Grand Traverse, Mich., in 1881, and the same wholesale slaughter for market purposes was carried out. After 1881, only scattering flocks were seen, and from that time onward the diminution of the birds was continuous until they became extinct.

William Brewster visited Michigan in 1888 to investigate a reported reappearance of the birds there and learned that small scattered flocks had passed northward into Canada during late April. Their nesting place of that year was never found, and the theory has been advanced that late snowstorms in this northerly latitude may have wiped out the remnant that remained. Major Charles Bendire, writing in 1892, said: "The extermination of the Passenger Pigeon has progressed so far during the past twenty years that it looks now as if their extermination would be accomplished within the present century." His prediction came true. Ben-

dire further records that the Pigeons did not always breed in colonies, and that their distribution in isolated pairs, through the North, was comparable with the Mourning Dove of the present day. Men had formed the habit of killing Pigeons on sight, however, and these isolated pairs were soon shot out as the country settled up.

The ruthless destruction of these species had much to do with the passing of our present game laws. No adequate attempt to protect them was made until they had virtually disappeared. Whenever a law looking toward the conservation of these birds was proposed in any state, its opponents argued before legislative committees that the Pigeons "needed no protection;" that their numbers were so vast and that they ranged over such a great extent of country, that they were amply able to take care of themselves. Where laws were passed, they were not enforced.

Audubon, in describing the dreadful slaughter of these birds at one time, said that people unacquainted with them might naturally conclude that such destructon would soon put an end to the species; but he was satisfied himself, by long observation, that nothing but the gradual diminution of the forests could accomplish the decrease of the birds.

The enormous multitudes of the Pigeons made such an impression upon the mind that the extinction of the species seemed an absolute impossibility. Nevertheless, it has occurred. In 1878 the Cincinnati Zoological Garden bought three pairs of Pigeons. They hatched and raised several young. Then the old ones started to die off, as did some of the young, and finally only two were left, a male and afemale. The male died in 1910 and the female in 1914, at the age of 29 years. The last bird to die was presented to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

In 1910 the Zoological Garden offered \$100 for a pair and in 1914 the offer was increased to \$1,000, but no one ever claimed the reward. So in thirty years the most numerous of all birds in the country vanished. The last record we have of a Passenger Pigeon being killed in the wild state occurred in 1908.

Knoxville, Tenn.

(NOTE.—In a later number we hope to present an article dealing with the former occurrence of Passenger Pigeons in Tennessee. Information from our members on this subject is solicited.—Editor.)



## THE RED-TAILED HAWK

By HARRY S. VAUGHN

Possibly the most maligned of all Tennessee birds is the Red-tailed Hawk, the largest member of the hawk family. As a matter of fact it is quite peaceable with other species of birds except perhaps in the vicinity of its nest. It is rather easy to identify, due to its large size, mode of flight and shape of wing, even though you do not get a glimpse of the brick red color on the upper surface of the tail. This red is quite noticeable when the birds are soaring, particularly if the sun is shining. During each circle which the bird makes there is a point where the tail is turned enough so that the observer can see its upper surface. Until the young birds are a year old, however, their tails remain a dusky gray.

The food of the Red-tail consists chiefly of young rabbits, squirrels, cliff rats, mice, snakes, frogs and lizards. Only rarely does it molest poultry, despite the fact that many country folks know it by the name of "Chicken Hawk." Among those who are more discerning, however, the



name "Rabbit Hawk" is used. If quite hungry and chicken is at hand, why chicken is served. However, they do not make it a practice to spend time about the chicken yard, as does the Cooper's Hawk, awaiting some unsuspecting young chicken to come within range.

These birds nest only in the larger tracts of big timber, and for that reason are rarely found within five or six miles of cities. Their nests vary in height above the ground from sixty to one hundred feet, being placed in suitable forks near the tops of the trees. Hickories, oaks, black gum and poplar trees are the most popular, in the order named. In hilly country, the site preferred is at the head of some well wooded valley. The nest situation is such that the birds, when sitting upon it, may be on a level or slightly higher than the top of the hill, thus enabling them to see the approach of humans. Even while sitting it is difficult to observe the bird on the nest, so quick are they about taking leave, nor will they return to the nest while the intruder is near. However, they will circle over the nest, at a safe distance, occasionally voicing their displeasure by their shrill cries. Only on one occasion have I observed a Red-tail approach a nest. I was standing behind a tree looking at an old one, which was being rebuilt, when I noticed one of the hawks coming at a very rapid speed, and in a direct line to the structure. Its talons were bearing some good-sized branches, which it dropped on the nest.

This species will often have two nesting sites, using first one and then another. Only one brood is raised each season, the eggs being laid from the tenth to the last of March. The nest is rebuilt each season by raising the rim with twigs and by bringing in a fresh lot of lining material. This lining is composed of shredded bark fibre, grass, roots and leaves. The depression in which the eggs are laid is rarely deeper than the thickness of the eggs, and measures about twelve inches across. The width of the entire structure depends somewhat on its location, but often measures three feet. Twigs of considerable size are frequently used in the nest, and from the ground it appears much less compact and larger than that of a Crow.

Two eggs are usually laid, although three have frequently been found about Nashville. In the West the Red-tail often lays four eggs. The markings are of a pale reddish or light brown shade, usually in large, irregular blotches, but often small markings, smears or streaks. Not infrequently a pure white egg is found.

There is some question as to whether it does or does not migrate. In winter it is usually seen singly and it may be that the females and young migrate, leaving the old males behind. These wintering birds, however, may be from a northerly region, merely spending the winters here. There appear to be fewer of them in midwinter than in summer.

These splendid birds of prey are very constant to a locality once they have adopted it as their home. To become acquainted with them, one must seek out these haunts, which is by no means easy, for they are no longer a common bird in this state. They are believed to live to a ripe old age provided they keep out of range of the country boys' guns.

Nashville, Tenn., February, 1932.



"The Birds of Arkansas," by W. J. Baerg, is a new book that should be in the hands of all T. O. S. members, since it treats of the birds of an adjacent state much like our own. It is a state publication of 200 pages, illustrated, with paper covers, and the 312 species enumerated are arranged according to the new A. O. U. check list. A copy may be had for 85 cents postpaid, by addressing D. T. Gray, Division Agricultural Experimental Station, Fayetteville, Ark.

## RED-SHOULDERED HAWK NOTES

By G. M. YARBROUGH

We had been tramping all day, making a systematic search of the wooded sections along the Cumberland River bottoms above Shelby Park. It was the 27th of March, 1928, and while we were making a general field list as we pushed on, our chief interest was in locating a pair of Red-tailed Hawks.

Late in the afternoon we found ourselves in the middle of a wooded swamp—a dismal spot, so still and seemingly devoid of life that the distant tapping of a Pileated Woodpecker startled us. Not a sign yet of a hawk's nest or of the bird. So far as hawks were concerned, it looked like another of those fruitless trips. Suddenly a shadow crossed the fast-sinking sun, and glancing up we saw a large hawk soaring gracefully over our heads. The Red-tailed Hawk as last, we thought. We quickly focused our binoculars on the bird and to our great surprise discovered that we were not looking at a Red-tailed, but a slightly smaller member of the Buteo family, the Red-shouldered Hawk. Here indeed was a find, because these birds have rarely been found in Middle Tennessee during the breeding season.

For a while we watched the bird swinging low over a nearby field, probably in search of field mice or crayfish, and then, having recovered somewhat from the shock of discovery, it suddenly occurred to us that this was the male bird and that it was entirely possible the female might be sitting on their nest somewhere in or near the swamp. Our search was successful, for we soon found the nest with the female on it in a fair-sized beech tree just inside of the swamp. When we approached, the bird flushed and we did not see her again while we were in the vicinity.

A friendly grape vine made the ascent to the nest fairly easy without climbers. It was situated in a fork of the main trunk about thirty-five feet from the ground. Two eggs, smaller than those of the Red-tailed and marked with brown blotches, rested in a slight depression, on strips of bark. A close examination of the nest showed it to be considerably smaller than that of the Red-tailed Hawk, containing no leaves and trash, which is so characteristic of the latter species. On March 31 we returned to collect the set and were disappointed to find only three eggs, having hoped to find four. It was interesting to note, however, that the third egg was somewhat smaller than the other two and was not marked. The behavior of the birds was the same as on our first trip.

This pair of Red-shouldered Hawks have remained in the same section ever since, building within a radius of a mile of the spot where they were first located. On April 14, 1929, another nest of this pair was located in a large black oak tree a few hundred feet from the 1928 nest. It contained three young birds, just hatched, and one addled egg. In 1930 we were unable to locate the nest at all. In 1931, the nest was found on the broken-off top of a large sycamore tree nearly a mile farther down the river and on the river bank. A set of two eggs was collected from this nest on April 3, 1931, about seven days incubated. The nest was about thirty-five feet above the ground and very hard to reach.

The Red-shouldered is one of our useful hawks. Its diet consists of quantities of field mice, frogs, crayfish, snakes and grasshoppers. This particular pair had a fondness for crayfish, and quantities of their shells could be found about the base of every fence post where they had elected

to eat them. Like the Red-tailed Hawk, and unlike the Coopers, they rarely feed on poultry or quail.

This is the only pair of Red-shouldered Hawks that we have been able to find nesting in this section, and it will prove interesting for bird students to take a trip up the Cumberland, in order to make a personal study of these birds. It is also interesting to note that this pair reside here the year round, while others of the same species from a more Northern section pass through here on their way South, but fail to tarry.

Nashville, Tenn., February, 1932.



## SOME SPRING OBSERVATIONS

By MARGARET STACKER

Whether we study birds from a scientific or an economic viewpoint matters but little; just so we know birds we live a bigger, broader life. Any branch of nature study brings us in closer touch with the infinite. If we observe birds, all kinds and at all seasons, we soon come to realize how big they are and how little we are. It pleases me to cite two instances of the real value from an economic viewpoint, and the real pleasure from a sentimental viewpoint of my bird friends.

In the early spring, while having garden soil prepared for planting, I was watching the plowing when my attention was called to two Bluebirds sitting on a grape vine trellis also watching the operation. One flew down into the newly turned earth and arose with something in his mouth. Immediately the second bird did likewise. I watched them make repeated trips to and from the ground, and upon investigating I found they were picking up cutworms, the early gardener's worst foe. Soon a pair of Robins appeared on the scene, and within an hour I counted sixty-two trips made by the four birds, each trip meaning the destruction of a cutworm. The past spring was notable for cutworms in the gardens of my neighbors. I did not lose half a dozen plants by them. I feed my birds and encourage them to live in my yard, garden and orchard. My neighbors pay no attention to their bird friends and raise cats to catch rats and discredit the value of birds as destroyers of garden pests.

We have derived untold pleasure from the comings and goings of a pair of Mockingbirds which have made their home in a honeysuckle in an angle of the residence for three successive years. The vine is protected on the north and east and within two feet of the kitchen window, five feet from the living room window, and just below an upstairs bedroom window. The first intimation that spring house-cleaning is to be done in the apartment is the utterance of a few low and wonderfully sweet notes by the male bird at about four o'clock in the morning of the early spring. This performance is kept up for several mornings before he takes up a lofty position in the topmost branches of a nearby tree and pours out showers of golden song. During the winter the male returns to his honeysuckle home to roost during very cold weather. He heralds his coming at about the twilight hour with a cry given at no other time. He is a regular boarder at the feeding station maintained throughout the year near the "Honeysuckle Apartment."

Cumberland City, Tenn., August, 1931.



## CHRISTMAS CENSUS, 1931

Species	Nashville		Knoxville		Memphis	
	Dec. 25	Dec. 27	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Dec. 26	
Pied-billed Grebe	1	--	1	--	--	--
Double-crested Cormorant	1	--	200	--	--	--
Great Blue Heron	--	--	--	4	--	--
Canada Goose	--	--	--	--	--	12*
Snow Goose	--	--	--	25	--	--
Mallard	43	--	--	--	--	--
Black Duck	--	--	--	25	--	--
Wood Duck	--	--	--	15	--	--
Lesser Scaup	40	--	--	35	3	--
Ringneck Duck	90	--	--	--	--	--
Golden-eye	1	--	--	--	--	--
Red-breasted Merganser	--	--	--	3	--	--
Ducks (unidentified)	--	--	200	--	--	--
Turkey Vulture	1	--	12	2	5	--
Black Vulture	5	--	40	1	12	--
Coopers Hawk	1	1	--	--	--	--
Red-tailed Hawk	1	--	1	--	1	--
Red-shouldered Hawk	--	--	--	--	1	--
Bald Eagle	--	--	1	--	--	--
Marsh Hawk	1	--	--	--	--	--
Sparrow Hawk	16	1	4	3	1	--
Bob-white	8	--	--	3	15	--
Wild Turkey	--	--	--	--	1	--
Coot	81	--	1	8	--	--
Kildeer	60	2	4	8	90	--
Wilson's Snipe	--	--	--	2	--	--
Herring Gull	--	--	1	1	--	--
Ring-billed Gull	--	--	2	12	--	--
Gulls, Herring & Ring-billed	--	--	--	65	--	--
Mourning Dove	6	26	3	2	24	--
Screech Owl	3	1	--	--	--	--
Barred Owl	1	--	--	--	1	--
Kingfisher	4	--	--	--	1	--
Flicker	55	10	36	35	25	--
Pileated Woodpecker	2	2	--	--	1	--
Red-bellied Woodpecker	11	5	10	17	15	--
Red-headed Woodpecker	2	6	12	26	24	--
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	--	3	1	2	--
Hairy Woodpecker	5	--	--	2	--	--
Downy Woodpecker	9	28	1	1	12	--
Phoebe	1	6	--	1	2	--
Prairie Horned Lark	61	--	--	--	--	--
Blue Jay	9	17	40	17	50	--
Crow	36	41	2	6	2	--
Carolina Chickadee	48	104	12	22	20	--
Tufted Titmouse	15	35	12	30	10	--
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	1	--	2	--	--
Red-breasted Nuthatch	--	1	--	1	2	--
Brown Creeper	2	1	--	4	--	--
Winter Wren	3	8	4	5	1	--
Bewick Wren	4	--	--	--	--	--

Carolina Wren	19	23	24	40	20
Mockingbird	68	15	16	30	8
Brown Thrasher	--	--	--	7	--
Robin	36	62	--	450	1
Hermit Thrush	--	--	15	3	5
Bluebird	84	11	8	54	15
Golden-crowned Kinglet	8	--	10	35	10
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	--	18	1	3	1
Cedar Waxwing	32	2	1**	--	--
Migrant Shrike	2	--	12	6	6
Starling	--	52	--	--	--
Myrtle Warbler	22	66	12	50	5
English Sparrow	Com.	Com.	Com.	Com.	Com.
Meadow Lark	113	17	1	160	24
Red-winged Blackbird	--	--	--	--	1
Rusty Blackbird	20	--	10	6	5
Bronzed Grackle	--	--	300	1600	1
Cowbird	2	--	--	3	--
Cardinal	116	33	30	92	40
Purple Finch	6	26	--	--	--
Goldfinch	24	97	3	7	10
Towhee	31	31	--	35	6
Savannah Sparrow	5	11	--	--	60
Fox Sparrow	7	--	--	16	2
Junco	81	12	4	--	50
White-crowned Sparrow	7	--	--	--	--
White-throated Sparrow	69	154	80	--	250
Chipping Sparrow	--	4	--	--	--
Field Sparrow	105	130	3	--	15
Swamp Sparrow	4	5	--	1	--
Song Sparrow	85	81	50	150	45
<hr/>					
Number of Species (82)	60	40	41	52	48
Number of Individuals	1876	1150	1193	3136	903

\*Dec. 27. \*\*Dec. 23.

Nashville: Dec. 25, four parties; within a range of ten miles of the city, including Radnor Lake and Cumberland River bottoms; Messrs. Mayfield, Ganier, Hayes, Spain, Monk, Crook, McNish, Mr. and Mrs. Woodring, Mr. and Mrs. Sharp, Mrs. Duncan, Mrs. Laskey and Mrs. Cochran.

Knoxville: Dec. 27; vicinity of town; dull and cloudy; 8 hours; Messrs. H. P. Ijams, W. Johnson, B. Crouch, S. A. Ogden and E. Henry.

Memphis: Dec. 24; Horseshoe Lake, 12 miles southwest of city; 11 miles on foot; Ben B. Coffey, Robert Reinert, George Reed and Jack Embury. Dec. 25; Raleigh, Wolf River Bottoms, National Cemetery, Overton Park, Wharf, Riverside Park, Pine Woods and Nonconnah Creek; 15 miles on foot; one main group; Mr. and Mrs. Coffey, Reinert, Reed, Embury and H. Clark; Acle Boyd, seven miles up Mississippi River by boat. Dec. 26; Camp Currier, 20 miles south of city and Lake Cormorant en route; Messrs. Coffey, Gerald Capers, Reinert, Reed, Embury, Ragsdale and Madre.

The 1930 census showed 56 species at Nashville, 51 species at Memphis and 42 species at Knoxville.

## THE ROUND TABLE

**AN EAGLE CENSUS FOR TENNESSEE:** We reproduce below a letter from our President, which is self-explanatory:

"To My Fellow Members of the Tennessee Ornithological Society: The status of the Bald Eagle is becoming alarming. The two glimmers of hope that we have are the recommendation to repeal the Alaska Bounty Bill and the Eagle Bill which is pending reintroduction to Congress. In the meanwhile we should do all in our power to create a favorable sentiment toward the bird which is our National Emblem. As a preliminary step I am appointing a committee composed of the following: A. F. Ganier, Chairman; Ben B. Coffey and Brockway Crouch, to make a census of the remaining birds, showing the nesting range in Tennessee and adjacent States. After this census is made a report should be submitted to the Society outlining some constructive policy wherein we could be of benefit in conserving this noble bird. Sincerely yours, H. P. IJAMS, President, T. O. S., Jan. 15, 1932."

Work by the committee was begun immediately. Mr. Crouch will assist the Chairman with the eastern part of the State, while Mr. Coffey is assisting with the west. Questionnaires have been directed up and down the Mississippi Valley from Cairo to Natchez, which area is believed to be the last great stronghold of the Bald Eagle in the interior.

**FLICKER CAPTURED BY A BULLSNAKE:** One sultry morning in August, 1931, I was awakened about five-thirty by a great commotion among the birds, in a group of large walnut trees that tower above my sleeping porch on the second floor. I arose and went from window to window trying to find the cause of the excitement. There were numbers of almost every kind of bird common in this locality—Mockingbirds, Flickers, Bluebirds, Chickadees, Titmice, Cardinals, Sparrows, etc., all screaming S. O. S., but I could see nothing to alarm them. An innocent gray squirrel sat on a lower limb eating a walnut. Below him was the feeding basket, the bird bath and the sparrow trap, and nothing out of order. Suddenly a number of the smallest birds left the trees and flew away over the house in great haste, but returned immediately, accompanied by half a dozen screaming Blue Jays, which flew and darted from tree to tree, screaming incessantly. I suspected a snake, but found none, so guessed it was too small, or so camouflaged against the tree that I could not distinguish it. In the course of half an hour the birds gradually dispersed. Two hours later the tumult began again, this time a hundred feet or more from the walnut trees, and the birds were flying closer to the ground. The Flickers were leading the battle, dashing and darting at a bundle of something on the ground. Closer inspection with field glasses showed it was a snake, all tied up in a curious knot. He was too big for me to attack with the hoe I had, so I shot into the "bundle" with a shotgun. As if by magic the snake flung himself into the air and fell, straightened out, over five feet long, and disclosed a full-grown Flicker that he had wrapped himself around many times. The Flicker was still alive, but died very shortly, probably from the gunshot that killed the bullsnake. Who can tell me how a snake could catch a full-grown Flicker?—Mrs. Sanford Duncan, Nashville.

**NOTES FROM MEMPHIS:** A Catbird, noted on November 29, is our latest record here for this species. A series of field trips every Saturday has been scheduled this winter, for T. O. S. members and Scouts. The Wild Turkey, reported in our Christmas census of Dec. 26, at Camp Currier, 20 miles south of Memphis, was seen by Camp Director H. C. Myers



after our party left. During January the Ring-billed Gulls and occasionally a Herring Gull, have been regularly seen on Wolf River, in front of our uptown district. Miss Mary Davant reports that she first saw them about Dec. 1, and believes them to be less common this year than last. On Jan. 24, Sunday morning, 38 species were listed on a trip to Wolf River bottoms, Raleigh. The number of individuals of each species was larger than usual, especially with regard to Bronzed Grackles and Rusty Blackbirds. A close lookout for Starlings was kept, but none was seen. The writer, as a member of the Eagle Committee, is getting some interesting returns from the Bald Eagle Census of the Mississippi Valley. The writer is also conducting a weekly "column" in the Memphis Evening Appeal, entitled "Nature Lore in the Valley."—Ben B. Coffey.

**PINE WARBLERS NOT WINTERING:** The Pine Warbler has been reported as wintering in Arkansas and even in Southern Illinois, so that it would seem they might be found at this season at Craggie Hope, 25 miles west of Nashville, where there is a thick growth of pines on the bluff above Turnbull River. In this strip of pines this species is found in some numbers as a regular summer resident, it being the only locality in the Nashville area where it has been so found. Thinking that the present mild winter would be particularly favorable to its presence, Messrs. Mayfield and the writer canvassed the locality on Jan. 24, and after spending two hours there, found not a single Pine Warbler. It was particularly interesting to note, however, that Myrtle Warblers had taken their places and were feeding among the tops of the pine trees in some numbers. Upon a more superficial examination they might have easily been mistaken for Pine Warblers. Rather deliberate in their actions, at times working about the bark of the trunk and branches and keeping busily engaged with their feeding, they closely simulated the actions of the summer "wardens" of the grove. As the hour for repairing to roost approached, the Myrtles left the pines and betook themselves to a dense growth of laurel which grew near the top of the bluff. Here they allowed a close approach and appeared to be bent on finding lodging for the night among the thick mass of leaves which had fallen in the laurel thicket.—A. F. Ganier, Nashville.

**NOTES FROM MT. PLEASANT, MAURY COUNTY:** Reading the notes in the last issue on Prairie Horned Larks reminds me that I found a nest of that species on my farm here in 1929. I see a few Bartramian Sandpipers here every spring; one year they were so tame that I had to stop my tractor to keep from running over one. There is a little pond on my place where I have seen King Rails several times. In 1930 a pair of Least Bitterns nested there, but something must have happened to them, for they disappeared and I did not find the nest until the eggs were spoiled and the shells broken.—Dan R. Gray.

**LECONTES SPARROW IN WINTER:** On the afternoon of February 6, 1932, I observed one of these birds at the rear of my place on Stone's River. The situation was a small valley (Brown's), which lies north of the bluff and about a thousand feet from the river. High water in the river had flooded much of the lowland and it is probable that this forced the bird to higher ground from what would appear to be its natural habitat. The grassy areas where the bird was found were too restricted to indicate that it had taken up winter quarters here. It was flushed from a ditch bank, along with Juncos, Field and Song Sparrows, and flew across the sedge patch to a small thicket, close to an old rail fence, where I viewed as closely as fifteen feet with my binoculars, and satisfied myself as to its identity. Mr. Ganier was at his camp nearby and, acquainting him with my find, we returned together to view our rare guest. The bird was still

near the old fence and allowed a close view as it sat perched in small bushes, two feet above the ground. This was unusual, for this bird is generally found on the ground, skulking among the grass. We were both entirely familiar with its appearance and its identity was beyond question. In addition to the yellowish frontal portions, the well-patterned back was quite conspicuous. The next morning it was carefully looked for again, but it could not be found. I have two unpublished records, from previous years, as follows: On September 25, 1929, I observed a Leconte's Sparrow in Williams' Field, about a mile north of the location above described, and in April, 1930, in an alfalfa field near Mill Creek, I saw what I am reasonably sure was another bird of this species. In *Wilson Bulletin* for December, 1925, there are published two other records: November 12, 1916, and October 24, 1925. We have heretofore regarded this sparrow as a transient only, and this midwinter record may have been caused by the unusually mild season we have had.—G. R. Mayfield, Nashville.

**EARLY NESTING OF THE KILLDEER IN DAVIDSON COUNTY:** The general early nesting of the Killdeer this year would seem to be worthy of mention. Four nests were found by Harry Monk and myself on February 27 and 28. Two of these nests contained completed sets of eggs, the other two, one egg each. Incubation on one of the sets found on February 28 was found to be advanced, at least ten days. Thus the bird was brooding a complete set on February 18, the earliest record for the region by eight or nine days. A fifth nest was noted on March 6, the bird sitting.

It is interesting that the majority of the Killdeers are still in flocks, sometimes ten or fifteen birds being seen feeding together in the same field with brooding birds.—Compton Crook.

**HERRING GULL AND OTTER AT NASHVILLE:** The high flood of the Cumberland River during the first part of February brought two unusual visitors to Nashville. On Feb. 5, a Herring Gull was observed patrolling the city water front, sailing backward and forward under and over the bridges. On Feb. 4, an Otter, supposed to be practically extinct in Middle Tennessee, was killed in a branch of Sugar Tree Creek, in Belle Meade. Finding the water too shallow in which to hide, he came out on the bank and whipped two dogs, only to fall a victim to rifle bullets. The animal is said to have measured four and one-half feet from tip to tip. With a species so rare, one cannot but have a feeling of regret that man could think of no better fate than death for what may here be chronicled, "the last Otter."

The new Check List of North American Birds, recently issued by the American Ornithologists' Union has added the word Eastern, Common, etc., to the names of practically all of our common birds for which sub-species have been recognized. Thus these forms are now designated Eastern Mockingbird, Eastern Robin, Eastern Yellow Warbler, Eastern Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Golden Crowned Kinglet, Common Sawwhet Owl, etc. This leaves us free to use the names Mockingbird, Robin, Yellow Warblers, Redwing, etc., just as we always have, in our notes, records and field lists. Only where we wish to be very exact need we prefix the names Eastern, Southern, Common, etc., and obviously the average observer is unable to determine the difference in the field between the species and the sub-species. *The Migrant* has therefore settled upon the policy of printing field lists and other notes without the prefixed name except in cases where the contributor has taken the necessary steps to verify his accuracy. The Christmas Census, published in this issue, is an illustration of our present policy.

**WHEN TELLING** of birds, the simple truth is interesting enough. No true ornithologist ever goes beyond it.

**PLANTING FOR BIRDS:** In addition to birds that may be induced to make their homes about our yards, by providing suitable nesting boxes, there are many which prefer a less artificial refuge. A trellis or small cedar pole "wigwam" planted with common honeysuckle, bronze vine or clematis will make an ideal nesting place for Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, Catbirds and Chipping Sparrows. Such refuges will also be gratefully accepted as winter roosting places by the first two species mentioned, as well as other winter birds. The bronze vine bears small berries which are much liked by the birds in autumn. Certain climbing roses may also be used to cover the support; the one which will provide the thickest growth being the Dorothy Perkins. Mrs. Laskey's article in the last number gives valuable hints on planting. Nest boxes should be cleaned out, relocated or renewed, since their users are early nesters.

The Spring Meeting of the Tennessee Academy of Science will be held at Reelfoot Lake on April 24-25, at the site of the new Biological Laboratory at Walnut Log. A symposium of the natural history of the lake will form the greater part of the program. The Curator has been asked to present a paper on birds. The meetings will be on Saturday and Sunday and all T. O. S. Members are invited and urged to attend.

A bibliography of the publications relating to the birds of Tennessee and adjacent states, by Dr. Jesse M. Shaver of Peabody College, Nashville, appeared in the December, 1931, number of *The Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science*. Copies may be secured at 50 cents apiece by addressing Dr. John T. McGill, Sec.-Treas., Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

Dr. H. C. Oberholser of the United States Biological Survey was a visitor in Nashville on March 2. He had spent the previous day on Reelfoot Lake, and, among other things, he counted seventeen Bald Eagles, none of which had reached the white-headed stage of plumage. He has been looking over the duck situation on the coast and reports that the Lesser Scaup is one of the species most seriously reduced in numbers by the drouth.

Our East Tennessee Chapter at Knoxville, according to President H. P. Ijams, had a year list for 1931 of one hundred and seventy-one species of birds.

Upon request of the Editor, Messrs. A. F. Ganier, Ben B. Coffey, George R. Mayfield, Vernon Sharp, Jr., and Miss Mary Beard have been appointed to serve with him in the capacity of an Editorial Board to get out *The Migrant*.

The *Migrant* is sent to all members not in arrears for dues. Active membership is one dollar a year; associate membership is fifty cents. Subscription to non-members is fifty cents. All articles and correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, George B. Woodring, 1414 Stratton Avenue, Nashville, Tenn. Dues should be sent to the Treasurer.

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