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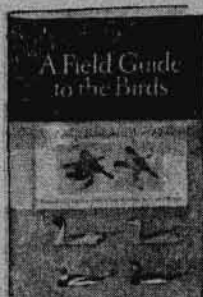
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EVENING GROSBEAKS WINTERING IN ELIZABETHTON, TENN. Photos by Behrend.

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NO. 1

WINTERING OF THE EVENING GROSBEAK IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

BY FRED W. BEHREND

The initially sporadic records of observation of the Eastern Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina*) in Northeast Tennessee following its unexpected appearance in this region the past late fall and early winter, as reported in the December issue of THE MIGRANT, left open to conjecture the question of whether, or how long, these rare birds would stay. When repeat observations in short order by members of the Elizabethton Chapter of T. O. S. pointed to the possibility of an extended presence of the species in Elizabethton, a systematic daily check on the Evening Grosbeak was initiated by the writer early in February. This check, still in progress as this article is written inasmuch as not all of the birds have as yet departed, brought forth interesting results, the most surprising of which was the fact that the Evening Grosbeak made the Elizabethton locality its winter feeding ground, and that its stay lasted much longer than most optimistically could have been anticipated. On a great majority of days the check was conducted twice, for a period of from fifteen minutes to half an hour, in the early morning and approximately half an hour at noontime. Circumstances did not permit spending time on regular checks in the late afternoon or evening hours. However, whenever there was an opportunity to do so, the Evening Grosbeaks were also looked for at that time of the day. The daily checks concentrated, via a circuitous route, on three principal areas within the city of Elizabethton which were frequented by them as in the course of observation became progressively known. These three areas are within a radius of approximately six-tenths of a mile. They lack, however, direct connection with each other in so far as the range of presence or observation of the Evening Grosbeaks is concerned. All of these areas, close to the heart of the City, are characteristically residential sections with an abundance of large shade trees, predominantly Maple. For the purpose of this study they are designated as South Riverside Drive area, North Riverside Drive area (both extending along Doe River which, from south to north, flows through the eastern part of Elizabethton), and the First Baptist Church—Sunset Hill area approximately one half mile to the west. Irregularly, some of the Grosbeaks appeared in parts of the City outside of, but not very distant from, these three main areas.

The Evening Grosbeaks were first observed in Elizabethton on South Riverside Drive, and it was particularly for this area that in the early stages of their stay they had a decided liking. Not only did remnants of the preceding season's seed crop of stately maple trees here prevalent, accumulated on the ground or in roof gutters, offer sufficient food to subsist

on, but spacious lawns invited to feed on in large numbers, for, as proven by observation in this locality, the Evening Grosbeak is a species of strongly gregarious habit. It stays together in flocks and rarely is a stray individual to be seen. In addition to the aforementioned favorable conditions, the closeness of Doe River—its banks lined with a variety of trees such as maple, elm, locust, catawba, sycamore, cedar, cottonwood, willow, etc.—likely was a factor contributing to the preference of the species for this area. Here they could in the crisp air of an early morning be seen feeding on lawns, sometimes scores in number; here they could in the warm mid-day sunshine of a late winter day be found inert or in a state of languor, perched on the branches of trees on the River bank; here they could occasionally be seen descending from limbs or branches of trees extending low above the water's surface to the edge of flat rocks near the river bank to splash the clear water of Doe on their wings. The budding of the maple trees and subsequent shedding of the bud scales as winter was on the way out, provided a plentiful supply of food for the Evening Grosbeaks who seemed to be very fond of this vegetal matter. One of the most delightful pleasures experienced by the writer on a number of occasions was watching them from the car window, with just a few yards intervening, sail gracefully, wings aflutter, out of trees to the ground, singly, in pairs, threes or fours, at times nearly a hundred in number. If, as it frequently happened, the noise of a passing automobile or some other cause interrupted their feeding, they arose with a whir into the air to alight in the nearest tree, only to drop to the ground again to continue feeding until the next approaching car scared them anew. The Evening Grosbeak is a patient and persistent bird as the writer has had occasion to observe when within a few minutes this performance was repeated perhaps half a dozen times.

Locating the Grosbeaks, once their regular whereabouts are known, is an easy matter by practicing in reverse the slogan "Stop, Look and Listen." As one approaches the locality, their call note, a snappy, metallic sounding "Kim" or "Crimp," not dissimilar to the chirp of the English Sparrow but louder, audible at a distance of some 150 or more feet, reveals their presence. Under given conditions they can be readily approached to within some 25 feet or so without showing signs of being disturbed, provided the observer is careful to refrain from sudden movement. If on the ground, it will continue feeding busily. If in a tree, it may eye the observer but not take flight. Although their number in any one place and on any one day varied, the fact was soon established that the flock wintering in Elizabethton was of very considerable size. As many as 80 to 90 birds were counted on various occasions. The largest number observed, not only on one but on several days, amounted to between 110 and 120. Care was taken to avoid duplication and exaggeration in the count of the birds as they moved on the ground or in trees, and the figures established over the relatively long period of observation are to an overwhelming degree based on actual count rather than estimation. In a good many instances the count was repeated, and several times if possible, for verification of the number first arrived at. Occasional checks were made on the ratio of the sexes, and the resulting counts invariably showed a proportion of one male to three females. As spring approached, the number of Evening Grosbeaks began to diminish,

not very perceptibly at first, but gradually. The counts of late March still showed total numbers of about 65. By and by redbud, dogwood, catawba and locust, in addition to fruit trees and shrubs, burst into bloom; yet, surprisingly, the Grosbeaks stayed on, much longer than anticipated. Accurate all-inclusive counts became increasingly difficult as detection of the birds in trees was no longer an easy matter since their plumage blended so perfectly with the fresh green foliage. It might be mentioned in this connection that no change in their plumage from winter to spring was perceptible.

As spring advanced, the feeding habits of the Evening Grosbeak underwent, by necessity, a change. No longer did the bud scales of maple trees cover the ground as they had been cleaned up methodically in one area after another, and therefore less frequently were the birds seen on the ground. They now fed on the fresh seed pods of the maple trees, and most of their time was spent in the trees. Their food had to be shared with unusually large numbers of Goldfinches and Purple Finches that had drifted in on migration toward the end of March, and the writer observed the curious fact that the Grosbeaks deserted the North Riverside Drive area soon after the Finches had taken possession of the elm trees on whose buds the Grosbeaks had been feeding. Doubtless the supply of food had a great deal to do with their movement within the different areas. Thus, when they had thoroughly worked over the South Riverside Drive area, their leaving there coincided with their regular appearance in the up to then little frequented North Riverside Drive area and a corresponding increase in number in the First Baptist Church—Sunset Hill area. Upon termination of their presence in the North Riverside Drive area a number of them reappeared in the South Riverside Drive area for a brief period. Simultaneously with the abandonment of the latter two areas, they were now seen daily and exclusively in the First Baptist Church—Sunset Hill area. The reduction in total number at this time was indicated through departure of part of the flock. As the supply of food, the seed pods of maple trees, grew smaller and smaller, the number of the Grosbeaks declined, and there was a noticeable shift in the feeding area. From one end of a block to another and around the block, the maple trees furnished sustenance, and, if the birds could not be seen in the dense foliage, aside from their call note, the crunching noise of their breaking open the seed pods gave a clue of their presence.

With respect to the most often referred to favorite food of the Evening Grosbeak, the seed of the box elder tree, the latter was non-existent in this community from the time the Grosbeaks were seen here. There are comparatively few trees of this kind in this region. However, there is a fair number of ash trees in some parts. On the basis of observation here it is believed that the Evening Grosbeak is not fastidious in the matter of food, at least by no means so much so as reputed by the literature. For the sake or satisfaction of curiosity, attention was paid to the Grosbeak's preferences with respect to this, and the writer observed them feeding on the seeds of mimosa and locust trees, on the hulls embedding the blossoms of the catawba tree and on the buds or bud scales of elm trees, all in addition to their most abundant food in the locality, the bud scales and seeds of the maple tree.

Unfortunately, this study leaves two rather interesting questions unsolved; one of which concerns knowledge as to whence the Evening Grosbeaks came here and where they might be going. Neither the writer, nor any other member of the local T. O. S. chapter, was prepared for banding and valuable information that might otherwise have been acquired will thus remain unavailable. The second question is that of their roosting place or places while here. With more time on hand than there was it might perhaps have been possible to develop this. None of the writer's infrequent late-afternoon checks proved them to be in places where they had been seen in the morning and at noon. With one exception, none of the persons who had ever observed them in the community could recall having seen them at a time later in the day than in the middle of the afternoon. In this one exceptional case a resident of North Riverside Drive at whose home the Grosbeaks were seen regularly for some time, stated the Evening Grosbeaks had been singing and roosted in the evergreens (Hemlocks) in the back of their yard on the bank of Doe River at dusk. The writer's check of the place, on some of the immediately following late afternoons, was unsuccessful. The theory is, however, advanced by him that the Evening Grosbeaks might have been roosting on the side of Lynn Mountain not very distant from the Riverside Drive area in as fine a stand of cedars as can be found anywhere in this region. A few times during their stay here they were seen by him headed in that direction and finally lost from sight. If and when they should return to this locality next fall or winter, this will be the subject of a special study.

MILIGAN COLLEGE, CARTER COUNTY, TENN. April 30, 1946.

A MIGRATION FLIGHT OF NIGHTHAWKS

BY ROBERT J. DUNBAR

A large flight of Nighthawks was observed by the writer while attending the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association Matches, held at Friendship, Indiana, September 1, 2 and 3, 1945. Friendship, a small town of about 200 people, nestles between the hills in a narrow valley in the southeastern part of that State. The valley runs nearly east and west and varies in width from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Most of the valley is under cultivation, the exception being the townsite, the wooded banks of a meandering stream and the steeper slopes of boundary hills.

On the morning of September 1 there was a heavy rainfall. By one o'clock the weather cleared, leaving the afternoon rather hot. Near sundown the insect life in the valley became noticeably active. While sitting in the doorway of my car cleaning a hog rifle a movement overhead caught my eye. To my surprise I saw a Nighthawk dip sharply to within 20 feet of the ground not more than 50 feet away. Never before had I been so close to a flying Nighthawk, and a second later I got the thrill of a lifetime: the sky was filled with birds! From the distinct markings on their pointed wings they were at once recognized as Nighthawks. They were everywhere, up and down and across the valley. I checked the time—it was 6:32 P.M., by Daylight Saving time.

The birds were flying in an orderly, deployed at random formation, away from the setting sun. Each seemed to have been allotted a certain amount

of air space (approximately 50 feet square by 150 feet long) in which to maneuver. Although the flight as a whole was steady, the individuals would veer a few feet to the right or left, or up or down, to take an insect. Occasionally one would make a complete turn to overtake an insect, after which the Nighthawk would quickly return to its proper place in the extended formation. They were obviously in migration, but were feeding as they went. Not once did I notice two come closer than 15 or 20 feet of each other or separate more than 150 feet. As far as I could see, the cross section of the flight ranged in height from approximately 50 to 400 feet above the ground and extended across the valley from rim to rim.

How long the flight had been in progress before I first noticed it I do not know, but I doubt if it could have been more than a few minutes. At any rate it was well under way, for it continued at approximately the same density for the next thirty minutes, after which it tapered off to a few stragglers, and at the end of another fifteen minutes it was all over. The insects too seemed to have disappeared.

During the first half hour of my observation I made repeated estimates of the number of birds that passed through an imaginary plane at right angles to the flight. A conservative estimate was that at least 50 Nighthawks were passing each second, 90,000 in 30 minutes and another 20,000 during the 15 minute taper off. This gives a total of 110,000 birds to say nothing of those out of eye range on either side of the valley or those that departed before the flight was first noticed. I watched the next evening and the next, but the occurrence was not repeated nor did I see a single Nighthawk in the sky.

106 GLENDALE LANE, OAKRIDGE, TENN.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Reference to a similar migration, west of Pikeville, in Bledsoe County, Tennessee, is chronicled in *THE MIGRANT* for September, 1933, 4:38, as follows: "Late in the afternoon of August 27, 1933, an unusually large migration of Nighthawks was observed. Over almost every clearing, a flock of these birds was seen, each numbering from twenty to more than a hundred. There must have been many thousands of them passing over this section of the Cumberland Plateau, for as we drove southward, we continued to see flocks of them during the half hour before sundown. Mr. Frank E. Morse, of Boston, Mass., passing through Crossville, about 20 miles northeast and at the same hour, reported them also in large numbers at that point."

A JUNE FORAY INTO THE CAROLINA MOUNTAINS

BY LEE R. HERNDON

On June 16 and 17, 1945, Messrs. Fred Behrend, J. C. Browning, E. Lafferty, Lee R. Herndon, Jr., and the writer, members of the Elizabethton Chapter of the T. O. S., and F. W. Pearson of Kingsport, made a bird-listing trip to Grandfather mountain, near Linnville, North Carolina. This mountain is one of the Blue Ridge chain and is approximately twelve miles east of the Tennessee line. We drove up in one car, following the Doe River route and stopped for observations along the way.

Of particular interest to us was the finding of the House Wren, it being heard singing at four different locations. At this date, these birds were doubtless on their breeding grounds. The first was at a farm house across the road from the Wayland school on the State Line road; the second was near the intersection of the Shell Creek road and the State Line road, both points being in Tennessee. The other two were in Elk Park, N. C., one as we entered and one as we left town. The latter two we did not hear on the following day as it was raining when we passed, but the other two were heard singing in approximately the same locations as the day before.

Three Red-tailed Hawks were observed in flight on the way up but no other hawks were observed on the mountain or on the return trip.

Upon our arrival, we pitched our tents several hundred feet below the summit of Grandfather mountain, which rises to an altitude of 5,964 feet above sea level, and observed the birds during the late afternoon. The most prominent of the songs at this time of day were those of the Veery, Indigo Bunting, Carolina Junco, and the Chestnut-sided Warbler. Long after the other birds had ceased their singing, the song of the Whip-poor-will was heard in the distance.

The morning chorus started off with the Robins, at the first sign of dawn, soon to be followed by the Field Sparrow, Catbird, Carolina Junco, and Veery. During breakfast, several species came within close range. These included the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-and-white Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Least Flycatcher, Brown Thrasher, Towhee and Goldfinch.

As we climbed from here on to the summit of Grandfather mountain, the song of the Wood Thrush died out at about the lower limit of the balsam and fir trees, while at approximately the same elevation, the song of the Winter Wren was heard. At least two Winter Wrens were observed; one while singing at close range and two or three others heard singing while we were on top of the highest peak, except one, at an elevation of approximately 5,800 feet.

Birds listed as we traveled along the crest of Grandfather mountain were: Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Towhee, Scarlet Tanager, Carolina Junco, Cairn's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Turkey Vulture, Brown Creeper, Chimney Swift and Winter Wren.

The warblers which we observed, listed in order of their abundance, were: Chestnut-sided 25, Cairn's 12, and the Black-and-white 1. Species of which only one individual was seen were Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Hairy Woodpecker, Chickadee and Black-and-white Warbler.

On the return trip westward, as we stopped to listen for the House Wren near the Wayland school, a pair of Barn Swallows showed extreme excitement. Investigation revealed that we had parked the car within ten feet of a fledgling Barn Swallow, perched on the wire fence by the side of the road. We had looked for nests of these swallows under the eaves of a nearby barn the day before but none was found. This observation was of considerable interest because, with the exception of those found in Shady Valley (MIGRANT, 1934, 5:22), we have no other nesting records of the Barn Swallow in our territory.

1533 BURGIE PLACE, ELIZABETHTON, TENN.

A NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM FOR NASHVILLE

By HARRY S. VAUGHN

A comprehensive museum of natural history has for many years been the goal of a group of amateur naturalists living at Nashville and the surrounding area. During the past year, the movement for such an institution took on fresh impetus and, under the title of the Nashville Children's Museum, gained the financial support necessary to launch the project upon a firm basis. In order that the work might go forward under the direction of those most interested in its possibilities, its financial support was drawn chiefly from contributions by public spirited citizens. To provide for its growth and to manage its funds, a Nashville Children's Museum Association was formed and of this, Mr. Vernon Sharp, Jr., is serving as its first and highly efficient president.

The new museum is housed in a pretentious old stone building in South Nashville. In itself, the building is more or less of a museum piece, having been erected nearly a hundred years ago (1853) as the main building of the old University of Nashville. After many years of disrepair, including threats of demolition, it was turned over to the museum trustees by the mayor of Nashville for a minimum fee. The city school board, seeing the possibilities for its educational work, arranged for the heating and for other assistance and a carefully planned program of rehabilitation in due time restored the entire first floor to a most attractive condition for the purpose intended. Space does not permit mention of the many special contributions that were made toward furnishings and construction.

The underlying purpose of the museum is to enlist and develop the natural interest in nature which is ever present in the minds of boys and girls and to thus guide them toward a development of such interests, as opposed to less wholesome interests that might be inimicable to their future welfare. In addition to the natural history aspects, the rich early history of Tennessee, both aboriginal and in early settlement, will be treated, and social service is likewise to be a part of the institution's program.

Although open only a short time, a very representative collection of exhibits has been secured and installed. While most of these have been given outright, others have been loaned and the probabilities are that many loaned exhibits will eventually be donated.

Upon entering the building, one sees to the right and to the left, two large wall niches, each about four by nine feet, in which against painted backgrounds of Reelfoot Lake, are displayed examples of its colorful bird-life. These include recently collected specimens of the American Egret, Great Blue (Ward's) Heron, Water Turkey and Red-winged Blackbirds. On entering the hallway, to the extreme left is the large auditorium, finished with acousticed ceilings, theatre seating, and projection equipment for both sound and silent motion pictures.

The main exhibit hall, at the center of the building, is supplied with glass cases in which may be found varied exhibits, including the wild birds and wild quadrupeds of Tennessee. One of the bird cases contains a complete collection of the hawks and owls while another shows representative nests and eggs, including mounted specimens of their feathered owners. Some

of the mammals are shown in habitat groups which depict, in their forest surroundings, such well known ones as the raccoon, opossum, groundhog, skunk, the foxes and numerous others.

One wall case shows a diagram entitled "The Tree of Life," the limbs and branches of which show the relationship of all living creatures, from the lowest marine forms on up the scale to mankind. Other cases show native wild flowers reproduced in wax and plastics in their natural environment; an exhibit of colorful sea shells and other marine life; a case of Tennessee fossils and minerals; and another, containing stone arrows, spears, pots and other aboriginal articles dug from Tennessee Indian mounds. Large illuminated niches flanking the doorway here, exhibit the woodpeckers against a painted background of the Radnor Lake hills; the other showing the squirrels with background portraying the Harpeth hills. Execution of the four niches referred to, as well as the preparation of numerous birds and mammals, is the work of Mr. J. D. Smith, preparator.

The large room at the right end of the central hallway is designated a hall of mammals and includes the Dan Rankin collection of heads and horns of big game, from Africa and from Indo-China. Here too are the larger mammals, secured through the Hornaday Foundation, from the American Museum of Natural History. These include bear, buffalo, cougar, lynx, wolves, otter, beaver, members of the deer family, etc.

An exhibit of especial interest is that housed in the "live room" in the right wing of the building. Here may be found many small live creatures that have been brought in or otherwise acquired and these are kept in natural conditions for study and observation by nature students. The specimens are chiefly snakes, turtles, frogs, alligators, etc., and the smaller mammals, many of which are tame enough to permit handling. Among those which may not be handled, however, are a rattlesnake, a copperhead and a Gila monster.

A hall of Tennessee history, to feature pioneer life among the State's early settlers, is in course of development and occupies a front room. A number of other collections are on hand but not as yet fully displayed for lack of space. These include the fine Truman Ward collection of 7,000 butterflies and moths as well as the writer's large collection of the nests and eggs of North American birds. Displayed in part but not as yet adequately, are the beautifully executed miniature carvings by Dr. J. W. Matthews, of ivory, bone and plastics, also a world-wide collection of figurines carved from wood and loaned by Mr. Wallace Clark, now in the armed services on Pacific duty.

Aside from the exhibits, there is conducted a series of nature education activities, including Saturday hikes, nature-trail work and clubs for the young people pertaining to their particular interests and hobbies. This phase of the museum's work was begun under the direction of Mrs. Sylvia Brockner, lately retired, and is now being carried on by Miss Emily Colvette. The attendance has been beyond expectations; for example, more than 10,000 came through its doors during the first two months after its formal opening on October 31, 1945, and this rate of attendance is now being exceeded.

Space does not permit mention of the many people who have given liberally of their time and effort to bring the project into being but readers of this journal will be interested in the fact that some of the most active workers in its behalf are members of the Nashville Chapter of the T. O. S., including President Sharp and Messrs. W. R. Spofford, A. F. Ganier, G. R. Mayfield, Donald Maynard and others*. Especial mention should be made of the assistance of Mr. John Ripley Forbes, director of the Hornaday Foundation, who has actively assisted in many ways since the inception of the project.

NASHVILLE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 724 2nd Ave., So., Nashville, Tenn.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—While Dr. Vaughn has modestly refrained from mentioning his own part in creating the Museum, it should be recorded that he has been its first Director and deserves great credit, not only for the rehabilitation of the old building but of actively assisting in the Museum's program of development.

BIRDS FROM A CONVALESCENT'S WINDOW

BY ALBERT LEIGH POWELL, JR.

It seems that sometimes the only way one can appreciate his fortunes is to have them taken away; this bit of observation can also be applied to birds, the Wilson's Warbler in particular. For years I had been searching for this sprightly little transient but it was only when I was no longer able to tramp my beloved woodlands that I found one.

The summer of 1943 was exceptionally warm and the month of July broiling in the high nineties; it was this particular time that I picked to come down with a pulmonary hemorrhage. My doctor, knowing of my fondness for the fields and woods, reluctantly gave me the discouraging news that there would be no more bird study for a long, long time. No more birds?; well, no more ten-mile hikes perhaps, but as far as the birds were concerned the ensuing months brought me bird observations that many of our most active pedestrians most likely would have missed.

I was fortunate in that there is a patch of woods immediately to the rear of my house and only about seventy-five feet from the windows of my rear room. (Though these woods are a part of Parkway, which completely encircles Memphis, I have always claimed them as my very own.) My side yard contains two sweet gums and a good sized sycamore. Several large and wildly growing privet hedges, accompanied by brush and a few old plums at the far end, complete the picture. My bed was so arranged that I could look out of the side and back windows with ease and, with the aid of my glass, I was able to see a large part of the woods. Of course my bird bath was situated in the privet and was only a few feet from my bedside.

Almost immediately the birds rallied to my bedside, visited me as it were, to let me know how sorry they were that I could not be afield with them. One would think that being confined to bed for several months on a stretch would be very monotonous and discouraging but one would be surprised at the rapid rate that time passed and the many things that one could find to do, especially if he was interested in birds. My bird bath

became a stage and there was constant action going on as the hot weather made it a Mecca for all of the feathered folk in the neighborhood. I saw birds fight among themselves for the bath and fight for the protection of the bath; there are several cats that can testify to that. The first day that I was able to take an active interest in what my feathered well wishers were doing, I saw a pair of Cardinals, several Brown Thrashers, three or four Wood Thrushes, and many more of the common species. The actors on my little stage were well billed and costumed as well as roled in parts depicting both comedy and tragedy. I saw young birds trying to take a bath for the first time, which gave me several laughs. A beautiful Persian cat tried to jump into the bath and the whole thing toppled over on him; presumably the cat is still running. I also saw a Robin flutter to the bath and remain still for an hour or so, just sitting in the water and making no effort to bathe but vainly trying to drink. The bird died at the base of the bath where it had fallen. It was brought to me but I was unable to find the cause of death. The early mornings brought the Wood Thrush with his wild-wood song, a song that I think sounds like a lovely Swiss yodle. The summer wore on with intense heat but it brought a fabulous list of birds that came daily to refresh themselves and to peek in my window seemingly to say "Hello"!

As the season changed to autumn, I anxiously awaited the migrants and they did not neglect me either as I saw numerous warblers and other transients in a constant stream. The list reads almost like a record of a hike afield—Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Green, several Maryland Yellowthroats (replacing the ones that had been here all summer), and of course

The morning of September 17, 1943, brought the one thing that I wanted to see the most. I was searching the woods with my glass and then turned my attention to the bath. I saw a flash of gold in the hedge and down dropped two male Wilson's Warblers in full plumage. There those birds were, a scant ten feet from my bed. I recalled the many times I had been afield and every one locally had found the Wilson's but me. I had tramped miles looking for the little yellow "Black-caps" and now they were bathing and spashing around as if they owned the place. I could not but think that the birds were flocking to me to compensate my illness. The Wilson's were leisurely in their toilet and preened themselves for many minutes while I looked on open mouthed. They hung around all day and then disappeared into the night. Little did those mites know how much I appreciated their animated visit.

As the trees turned color and dropped their foliage, the sparrows arrived and the winter birds replaced their summer relatives. I then recorded the Hermit Thrush, Myrtle Warblers, many Whitethroats, Juncos, Towhees, Song Sparrows and all of the woodpeckers including the Red-bellied and the Sapsucker but excluding the Pileated. The winter troupe played as well as the more colorful summer company and the White-throat's aria was sung with even more vigor than the summer songs.

Time and fortune played its part and I was allowed to sit up a little each day and on one of those days I was sitting in the kitchen having lunch when a small bird slammed itself against the window. I saw the

bird drop to some vines below the window so I stepped onto the back porch to have a look. I was greatly surprised to find a House Wren in a dazed condition clinging to a vine. In a short time it recovered and moved on. Why it flew into the window is a mystery.

The winter gave way to spring and to the excitement of another migration. The privet bloomed, the plum blossomed, and the woods sported a tired old dogwood and several redbuds, all of which were the promise of a green and fruitful summer. And fruitful indeed was the summer, for the colorful Painted Bunting and his demure mate arrived one May morning to tell me that he had chosen my vicinity for his home. What a pleasure to have him visit the bath and to hear him sing from a telephone wire. His arrival also brought the Indigo Bunting and of course the Maryland Yellowthroat. The woods resounded with the Hooded Warbler's song and the Redstart stayed around for a brief few days; the Wood Thrush returned and gladdened the hearts of all who would listen to his cheerful lay. This summer, 1944, found me walking around the yard and even a few trips to the little woods became possible, to watch the nesting of the Wood Thrush. The Cardinals allowed me to investigate their nest in the privet hedge and the Catbirds also permitted my prying into their private life. Mourning Doves and a pair of Robins nested in the gum tree but I had to be content with knowing less of their affairs.

In glancing through my "bird log" I came upon this coincidental fact, that on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of September, 1945—just one year later—my bird bath was again visited by Wilson's Warblers. This time there were two males and two females. Recorded also in the "log" was the fact that my yard had been visited by all of the Thrushes except the Veery, and I found him in the little woods at a later date. Space does not permit the actual list of birds that came to see me but suffice it to say that it was large and comprehensive.

The goodness of Providence and expert medical care finally put me in "birding" condition again, but no trip afield will give me the same pleasure as those feathered friends that visited my back room with their contributions of cheer and color.

1429 SOMERSET, MEMPHIS, TENN.

THE ROUND TABLE

TERMINATION OF TWO WINTER BIRD ROOSTS.—In the last issue of THE MIGRANT, two large winter bird roosts were described; one at Martha, 21 miles northeast of Nashville, and the other within the city limits of Nashville. The writer and others made subsequent trips to the first mentioned on January 31, February 3, 9, 16, 23, March 6 and 15, and to the latter on February 12, 18, March 17 and 20, for the purpose of noting changes in their usage.

The birds at the Martha roost were predominantly Starlings in late January and early February. On February 9, with a steady rain falling, I estimated that the Bronzed Grackles had begun to slightly exceed the Starlings in numbers. By February 16 the Grackles had increased to where they now numbered 70 to 75 percent of the birds present and the Starling population

was on the decrease. A visit on February 23, was of particular interest in that numerous small flocks of Redwings were very much in evidence and from 10,000 to 15,000 would be a conservative estimate of their number. The Cowbirds had become more numerous too but were not present in large numbers. The Robin population had now dwindled and the birds were arriving only as singles or in small flocks of from 15 to 25.

The next trip, March 6, found the roost greatly depleted in numbers. Now, perhaps only 100,000 birds came in and their flight from the deciduous trees in which they gathered to the cedars in which they roosted, was accomplished in less than five minutes. Notes and songs emanating from the evergreens told that the Cardinal, Carolina Wren, White-throated Sparrow, and the Field Sparrow were now using the roost in numbers. When we started on our visit of March 15, we anticipated that only a few birds would be there because the Starlings and Grackles had begun to roost throughout the city and country for the past few days. The 900 to 1,000 birds arriving were about equally represented by the Starling and Grackle, with perhaps 100 Robins also present. No Redwings, Cowbirds, or Rusty Blackbirds were observed on this date.

Others have made mention of the thick layer of excrement and broken leaves of the cedars that covered the ground beneath the roost trees. One day, i. e. February 3, after we had covered the territory very thoroughly, I selected two spots, one where the above mentioned deposit was of average condition and the second where there was a very heavy deposit. From an area one foot square at each place, I counted 109 and 217 seed pits respectively. These seed were those of the hackberry and perhaps other stone-like pits. A good many dead birds were found beneath the roost at various times and while these were examined for bands, none were found.

The roost in Nashville exhibited a radical species and population change after the peak period of January 15 to 20. At that time it was used almost exclusively by Robins but they decreased rapidly and by February 12, seventy-five percent of the immense number of birds present had become Starlings. Very few Redwings or Rusty Blackbirds were seen on this visit. An influx of Cowbirds occurred between February 12 and 18, yet on the latter date the total number of birds in the roost had dwindled considerably.

Since the trip to Martha on March 15 showed that roost to be practically abandoned, we visited the roost at Nashville on the 17th and found that it also had waned greatly, there being only a few thousand birds. This flock consisted of Starlings, Robins, Grackles, Redwings and Cowbirds, but only the first mentioned were in any numbers. A final visit on March 27, found this roost to have been abandoned.—W. M. WALKER, 107 N. Park Circle, Nashville.

A LONG-EARED OWL NEAR NASHVILLE.—On a visit to the great "blackbird" roost, 21 miles E-N-E of Nashville, a search for this locally rare species (*Asio wilsonianus*) was made a special objective on February 3 and we were fortunate in locating and collecting a specimen. The roost referred to and described in last issue, covers a cedar woods of approximately 55 acres. The evergreens, offering an excellent hiding place and the presence of countless small birds at night, combined to make the place seem a highly favorable location for finding this nocturnal predator. A group

of three of our party of five, Robert Sollman, John B. Smith and the writer, spent the morning searching the cedars and at about eleven, the first mentioned observer flushed the owl when at a distance of about 20 feet. It had been perched on an elm limb 10 feet above the ground, where large cedars grew closely all about. The bird flew 30 feet and alit on the limb of a cedar. Of the two remaining members of the group, Mr. Smith having the better view, collected the specimen. It is entirely possible that other individuals of this species were present but were not discovered.

Upon dissection, following preparation of the skin by the writer for his collection, the bird was found to be in lean condition although the stomach was well filled with a mass of feathers which would have been regurgitated later in the form of a pellet. These feathers, when washed out and dried, were readily identified as those of a Starling. There were only a few bits of bone among them, showing that the skeleton had been carefully picked of its flesh. On the ground under the roost trees, several such picked skeletons were found, each amid piles of feathers. With plenty of smaller species present, it seemed strange that this small owl would have elected to tackle so strong and tenacious a bird as a Starling. The owl proved to be a female and, while there was the normal slight increase in size of the ovaries due at this season, no units were advanced in enlargement as would have been the case if nesting were in early prospect. This is the 7th State record and the 2nd for the Nashville area.

On February 23, W. M. Walker visited the roost and near where the first owl was found, he flushed near at hand what he felt certain was another of the same species. Again, on March 5, he heard an owl calling among the cedars and, from the description given in Bent's Life Histories, believed it to be a Long-ear, probably the male in each case. Exploring the possibility that it might secure a mate and remain to nest, we searched the area thoroughly on March 31 and, after climbing to all of the six old Crow nests found, decided the owl had migrated northward.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER IN SOUTHWEST TENN.—While on a visit of several days at Counce, Hardin County, Tenn., I was so fortunate as to list an individual of this species (*Dryobates b. borealis*), on March 31, 1946. It was in a mixed woodland consisting of pines and hardwoods, on the hill at the rear of old Red Sulphur Springs. Mr. Ganier and Dr. Mayfield searched for it here some years ago without success but John B. Calhoun found several 30 miles due west, near Pocahontas, Tenn., and it has been recorded about 15 miles south, near Iuka, Miss.—CYNTHIA C. COUNCE, Western State Hospital, Hopkinsville, Ky.

RAVENS IN THE GREAT SMOKIES.—On September 15, 1945, while on a motor trip in the National Park, I saw 8 American Ravens flying and sailing over the road at Collin's Gap. This was at elevation 5,720 feet and about 2 miles east of the Clingman's Dome parking area. The birds were relatively unwary, coming to within a few hundred feet, and the size, shape and call-notes made identification certain. One of the birds settled in the top of a tall spruce some distance away.

A while later, my wife, brother and I went on to the Dome parking area (6,300 feet elevation) and, while I made an excursion by trail to the

summit, the others saw 2 more Ravens come over at a distance of as little as 40 to 50 feet away. One bird was making a display of his flying prowess by "tumbling" in the brisk wind currents. The birds appear almost as large as Vultures, their wedge-shaped tails and distinctive shape of head were readily noted. At such close range the size appears much greater than that of a Crow. The croaking Raven note was heard several times and at different locations. Anyone could readily see these birds from the Skyline Highway, between Newfound Gap and the Dome, as they appear to frequent this location regularly, particularly at Collin's Gap.—RAY C. WERNER, 758 Wildwood Rd., Atlanta, Georgia.

THE HOUSE WREN IN THE KNOXVILLE REGION.—Because the House Wren, (*Troglodytes aedon*) is only rarely recorded in the Knoxville area, where I formerly resided, the following records of its occurrence may be of interest.

On April 29, 1939, Mrs. Meyer heard and saw a single bird at the Island Home Sanctuary. From 1939 to 1944 I have no records of this bird; however, Mrs. Meyer's diary of May 12, 1944 states: "I was attracted by the familiar song of the House Wren so common at home in Illinois and discovered one carrying sticks and grass into the rustic bird-box near our outdoor oven." This bird was in our yard daily through June 11. During this time it sang so frequently that its bubbling chatter at times became monotonous. It also carried nesting materials into four different bird-boxes but a complete nest was not made in any of the boxes. Between June 12 and June 17 this bird was not observed or heard in the area. From June 18 through July 4 this same wren (or a different one) regularly visited and sang in our yard. During this entire period of time May 12 through July 4 only one House Wren was seen or heard at any one time, and we concluded that our visitant was an unmated bird.

As far as I know there are no winter records of the House Wren for Knoxville. A note from Mr. William Walker reports a House Wren seen and heard in the Island Home area on March 24, 1945. This is our earliest Spring record. He found this bird near a shed on St. James street. Since then Mr. Walker has observed the House Wren in that area on March 27, April 1, and April 3. On April 1 and 3 he reported the wren going to roost in a clump of honeysuckle "a few minutes after sunset."

On May 15 Mrs. Meyer's diary again reports the House Wren singing in our yard. We hoped it would stay and acquire a mate, but a nesting record does not seem to be imminent for the bird has not been seen again.—HENRY MEYER, 307 Spaulding Ave., Ripon, Wis.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON MIGRATING RAPTORES AT NASHVILLE, TENN.—On Sept. 30th, 1945, approximately a dozen Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo p. platypterus*) were seen circling at several hundred feet overhead, gradually moving southward. While watching them, the writer saw a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) pass beneath them with steady, quick wing-beats, soon disappearing southward over the hills toward Radnor Lake. Other Broad-wings were seen, a few at a time, throughout the day. Mrs. Laskey saw a larger flock of perhaps 75 Broad-wings on Sept. 27 while at Radnor Lake and, while watching them circling like so many flies overhead, a large falcon, presumably a Peregrine, passed south-

ward beneath them. Both of the two observations mentioned above were made at about 10 a.m.

On the morning of Oct. 1 at 8:00 A.M., Mr. Adams on Brighton Ave. near the West End High School, reported many Broad-wings both in flocks overhead, and also in the trees around his house. Many seemed to be coming out of the few acres of wooded land just north of his house, where he thought it probable they had passed the night. One bird, an immature, was shot and is now in Mr. Ganier's collection. Reports of this flock recorded the birds as in "thousands", and while this is no doubt exaggerated, there may have been several hundred in all. The area where this group was seen is in the heart of a suburban residential section, and it is difficult to understand how they penetrated so far into the suburban areas without being more generally seen. Presumably they may have spent the night a few miles to the north, perhaps as far away as Paradise Ridge, and were just getting underway for the days flight. Many of them had not gotten any elevation, and it was too early for the formation of thermal currents to lift them, as occurs later in the day.

In late September, thousands of Broad-wings and smaller numbers of many other raptors are reported annually in flyways along the Appalachian mountain system much further northeast, and there is one observation of many hundred Broad-wings seen leaving a woods in early morning in southern Louisiana but observations of the birds passing through this State in numbers in the fall seem to be largely unrecorded. Probably most of the birds come from Canadian forests, but they nest regularly over the eastern United States and are regular though uncommon summer residents throughout Tennessee. Both the Broad-wings in the east and the Swainson's Hawk in the plains states migrate in flocks and go to South America for the winter months, while most other raptors have much less spectacular flights and winter in the southern states.—WALTER R. SPOFFORD, Nashville, Tenn.

BIRDS OF THE MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK, is the title of a 24 page booklet recently prepared by Dr. Gordon Wilson of Bowling Green, Kentucky, which by reason of its accuracy and arrangement should serve as an adequate guide for years to come. Perhaps the most commendable thing about this publication is the fact that the author, over a period of years, has really done the proper amount of field work in the area treated to enable him to cover his subject in an authoritative manner. An annotated list of the 163 species actually recorded in the Park covers 7 pages and in addition to the Park list, there is included a supplemental list of additional species that the author has recorded at nearby Bowling Green. With a view of enlisting the interest of a maximum number of Park visitors, the author includes chapters setting forth the attractiveness of bird study as a recreation and tells of the best localities to visit in search of unusual species. Eight illustrations are included, also a map which shows the localities referred to and the roads by which they may be reached.—A.F.G.

We are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Behrend for contributing the expense involved in reproducing the frontispiece in this issue.

ERRATA.—In the mid-winter Bird Census, published in last issue, there was omitted from the column covering list made in the Great Smoky Mountains Park; Blue Jay, 11, and Horned Lark, 16. Readers will please insert these figures in the December issue.

THE MIGRANT

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*The simple truth about birds is interesting enough;
it is not necessary to go beyond it.*

ORNITHOLOGY A CENTURY AGO

More than a hundred years have passed since the first handbook of birds was published, viz., Thomas Nuttall's "Ornithology of Eastern North America." True, the pretentious works of Wilson and Bonaparte had preceded it but the price of these volumes and their size, precluded their use as a "handbook" such as evolved finally into the incomparable Chapman's. Coming to our point, however, it is from Nuttall's introduction to his book, in 1832, that we wish to quote, for the purpose of showing that bird study at that early time inspired the same interests and invitation to the enthusiastic field worker that it does today.

"Of all classes of animals by which we are surrounded in the ample field of nature, there are none more remarkable in their appearance and habits than the feathered inhabitants of the air. They play around us like fairy spirits, elude approach in an element which defies our pursuit, soar out of sight in the yielding sky, journey over our heads in marshalled ranks, dart like meteors in the sunshine of summer, or, seeking the solitary recesses of the forests and the waters, they glide before us like beings of fancy. They diversify the still landscape with the most lively motion and beautiful association; they come and go with the change of season; and as their actions are directed by an uncontrollable instinct of provident Nature, they may be considered as concomitant with the beauty of the surrounding scene. With what grateful sensations do we involuntarily hail the arrival of these faithful messengers of spring and summer, after the lapse of the dreary winter, which compelled them to forsake us for more favorable climes. Their songs, now heard from the leafy groves and shadowy forests, inspire delight, or recollections of the pleasing past, in every breast. How volatile, how capricious, how musical and happy, are these roving sylphs of Nature, to whom the air, the earth, and the waters are alike inhabitable. Their lives are spent in boundless action; and Nature, with an omniscient benevolence, has assisted and formed them for this wonderful display of perpetual life and vigor, in an element almost their own."

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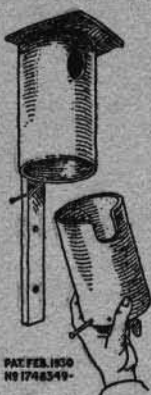
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