

THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

Published by
THE TENNESSEE
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SOCIETY



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35

June
1946

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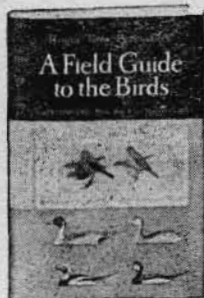
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THE MIGRANT

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

VOL. 17

JUNE, 1946

NO. 2

A KINGBIRD ROOST

By HARRY C. MONK

The most memorable ornithological experience of the nine months spent on construction of the Wolf Creek Ordnance Plant at Milan, Tenn., in 1941 was the discovery of a Kingbird roost at Whitthorne, Carroll County, in September of that year.

Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) had been fairly common in that area all summer, being noticeably more numerous than they are near Nashville, in Davidson County. In August they became much less conspicuous, and it was assumed that they would gradually decrease, until the last was observed some time in September, as is the case in the Nashville area. Accordingly, I was interested in listing birds met with in September, in order to secure a date of departure.

It was several miles from my dormitory in the Administrative Center at the former village of Whitthorne to the time clocks and place of work, and it was necessary to leave at 6:15 a.m.; this was Daylight Saving time, and about the time the sun appeared over the treetops. On the morning of September 5th, Kingbirds were heard from the little grove just to the north where a family of them had lived all summer. This was at 6:15 a.m. Apparently the family were still in their breeding territory. Looking up expecting to see a small group on the wires, I was amazed to see instead, a loose, straggling flock of perhaps two-hundred birds rising from the grove and flying away almost due south, passing directly over the parking lot where I stood. They were climbing at a considerable angle as they left their perches, and rising quite high, as they progressed; judged by the known height of neighboring water tanks, they were already over 200 ft. above the earth. Only a few calls were heard from this group. This flock was about a hundred yards wide by several hundred yards long, and in its general organization and appearance closely resembled the robin flocks observed about their roosts and in winter when they range about our areas. This resemblance was noted repeatedly in observing the Kingbird roosting group.

The next morning the same sight was observed. A flock of the same size left the grove and moved off to the south, quite high as on the morning of the 5th. Again, on Monday morning the 8th, the observation was duplicated. The birds milled above over their roosting site very briefly before going off enmasse; in each case they flew away to the south, and passed on out of sight without alighting. Their high flight in a group southwardly suggested a migratory movement instead of the breaking up of a roosting group, yet they apparently returned to the roost each night. These events focussed attention on the species and some exploration of the area was made during the day, seeking Kingbirds. None could be found. Obviously they all traveled far and did not filter back to the roost during the day.

At dusk on the 8th I visited the roost site. A small grove of trees, six oaks and four hickories of medium size, stood on a low knoll. No other trees of this size stood within a quarter of a mile. On one side of the knoll, John's creek flows thru a narrow floodplain in which corn and cotton stalks of last year's crops still stand. A brook crossing this bottom was bordered by a narrow belt of giant ragweed, ten feet tall and a thousand feet long. Here I found scores of Kingbirds, many in the tree tops, others perched on the dead corn stalks all over the old field and still others were seen diving into the ragweed. This area, entirely indistinguishable to human eyes from a hundred other old fields and tree groups in the area, was evidently a place of regular resort.

On September 9th the same flock left the roost as before described. That evening I was able to spend some time at the site and observe the assembling of this group of Kingbirds. While walking to the roost at 5:45 p.m., two Kingbirds passed swiftly over me at a low elevation, coming from the south. Two more flew in at 5:50 p.m. At that time several score were already in the roost; 8 were counted in one tree. I took my stand out in the open with a clear view of the skyline in all directions, facing the east. It was just in time. At 6:00 four came in from the south, traveling at a high elevation. Two and then three more followed in from the west. These birds traveled swiftly and dived into the trees or weeds as they arrived. They were silent in flight. At 6:05 a flock of over 60 arrived from the south. They settled in the tree tops. At 6:06 counted 130 in a large, straggling flock arriving from the east-northeast. They were first sighted as specks well above tree-tops, proceeding directly to the roost, the count growing steadily as the long-drawn out group came closer. At 6:08, 125 Kingbirds were counted into the roost from the east. These groups were described at this time as loose flocks, resembling Robins more than any other gregarious bird. They alighted in trees, bushes and weeds all about the area. At 6:10 a flock of 50 came in from the north. At 6:12, counted 60 more from the east. At 6:15, 100 arrived from the east while a group of 46 came in from the north-east. At this time several hundred were milling about over the roost site and its vicinity, and so obscured the skyline from the observer in their midst that further counting of arrivals was impossible, tho it seems certain that more did come in. The count totaled 584 at this time, and it is certain that at least 600 were present, while it is quite possible 1000 were actually in the roost that night.

There were many interesting sights in this roost. Thirty Kingbirds were counted in the top of one small honey locust, as closely grouped as a flock of Waxwings. In the tip of one tree, 12 showed against the sky. When the birds in the top of one of the larger trees were disturbed they flushed in flocks as dense as a swarm of Starlings. As new arrivals poured in, seeking a perch in the crowded trees there was continual bill snapping as these newcomers were warned to keep their distance. One stretch of fence a hundred feet long was occupied by 30 birds at one time.

Into the midst of this throng a small raptore, almost certainly a Sharp-shinned Hawk, suddenly appeared. It pointedly stooped at the trees and set scores to flight. This occurred several times, and in between attacks

the hawk sailed about among the milling throng he had put to flight. I fully expected the Kingbirds to "mob" him as they normally do in nesting season, but only one bird made any effort to drive the hawk away, and that one made only a half hearted swoop at the intruder.

Investigation at the hour of roosting showed the great majority spent the night in the tree-tops, while some others evidently roosted in other trees or bushes scattered about the creek bottom or even in dense weeds. The ragweed tangle was apparently little used.

The next morning (Sept. 10) was overcast, with a cold north wind. It was rather dark at the usual time for Kingbird flight and none were seen before I had to leave. That evening the roost was again visited and only a few birds found present. I counted 27 in view at one time in trees and along fences and felt sure as many more were concealed in trees and weeds. This was the last seen of the Kingbirds; the next morning was clear, but none were seen. It was a typical fall day, chill north wind, temperature in the sixties. On the 12th I made a final canvas of the roost site and found it deserted.

406 AVOCA ST., NASHVILLE, TENN.

FIELD NOTES FROM THE SMYRNA AREA

By CPL. JAMES N. LAYNE

Stationed with the Army Air Forces at Smyrna, 20 miles southeast of Nashville, since last fall, the writer has been fortunate in becoming familiar with a large portion of Middle Tennessee avifauna. The topography of the Smyrna Army Air Base and adjacent territory provides such a variety of landscapes—ranging from hardwood covered hills and cedar forests to broad, open meadows—that a number of birds which differ markedly in their choice of environment have frequently been observed in a few hours time. Such species as Pileated Woodpecker and Dickcissel, Broad-winged Hawk and Red-winged Blackbird, or Red-eyed Vireo and Grasshopper Sparrow often appear on lists made over only a few miles of country. Undoubtedly this variation of cover has been the factor responsible for several recent records which may be of interest.

On May 26 an adult Lark Sparrow was seen in a field within the air base. This field, located near the Post Engineers Incinerator plant, is sparsely vegetated with weeds, clumps of grass, and small bushes. Most of the time the sparrow was under observation it perched about 4 feet high in a weed, but was several times seen on the ground where its actions appeared quite lark-like. On the following day the field was again visited and two Lark Sparrows observed in the same vicinity where the one had been seen the day before. It is believed that the birds comprised a pair; for, although sex could not be positively determined, the one believed to have been the female had less-distinct head markings than the other. Although this locality was covered on successive days no further trace of the handsome sparrows was found. Three Lark Sparrows were identified June 16 in a ploughed field not more than one-fourth of a mile from the air base where the species was first recorded. One bird was perched on some

telephone wires near a road that bordered the field while the other 2 birds were seen on the ground. On June 19 and 23 a single Lark Sparrow was again observed perched on the same telephone wire. Each time the area was checked a search for nests was conducted without success.

A Migrant Shrike nest was found in the same field June 18. The nest was discovered in a bushy, vine-covered tree about 25 feet in height that stood alone in the field. Located near the top of the tree, the nest was placed in a tangled mass of vines and constructed of rather fine twigs and rootlets and well-lined with cotton fibers—evidently procured from cotton bales scattered about on the ground. The nest, probably elongated by the stirrings of the young, measured approximately 3 inches deep, 4 inches wide, and 6 inches long. Although it was unoccupied, numerous droppings both in the nest and around the base of the tree attested to the fact that it had been inhabited, and the presence of a visibly agitated adult shrike gave reason to believe that the young had only recently left. A search revealed two young shrikes perched in the upper branches of the tree and a third was flushed from the bottom of a fence post about 50 yards away. On the following day the young were nowhere to be found although an adult bird put in an appearance.

The nest of a Broad-winged Hawk, which contained one nestling, was discovered June 16 in a strip of woods near Stones River, about two miles from the air base. The nest, approximately 18 inches in diameter, was built in crotch of an oak at a height of some 50 feet. The nest tree stood within 20 feet of a small path, and about 400 yards from farm buildings. When the nest tree was climbed two days later the hawklet, still unable to fly well, backed from the crude platform of sticks and fell about 10 feet before seizing a branch from which it hung upside down by one foot until rescued, banded, and returned to the nest. Dr. Walter R. Spofford and Lt. Kenneth R. Lawless accompanied the writer to the site on June 23. This time the young hawk, probably about 4 weeks of age, scrambled from the nest when the climber was about 6 feet below and struck out, in gradually descending flight, across a meadow to the northwest of the nest tree. Following its landing near the center of the field the party was treated to an interesting sight; for within a few seconds after the nestling had come to earth an adult Broadwing came in from the north in a long, slanting swoop and landed beside the youngster on the ground, remaining with it until the observers drew near. The only traces of food remains found in or about the nest—which was remarkably clean and abundantly lined with fresh foliage—were small bits of fur, several small bird feathers, and two grasshopper legs. During all the visits to the nest site the adult buteos confined their protestations to occasionally soaring over the area or perching close by and uttering their characteristic Wood-pewee-like note. On June 27 the nest was empty and neither young or adults could be located in the vicinity.

Besides the above nesting pair and young, an adult Broadwing in immature plumage was seen April 20, another adult May 4, and 2 on July 7, in the Smyrna region. Three were listed May 12 south-west of Nashville during the T.O.S. Spring Field Day, and 3 more were noted about 8 miles

south of Murfreesboro on July 5. In addition to these, Mr. H. O. Todd of Murfreesboro recently located a nest containing 2 young in that area. On the basis of this number it might well be possible that the Broad-winged Hawk is more numerous in Middle Tennessee than believed.

A lone Upland Plover (*Bartramia longicauda*) was observed near the north end of the air base June 25. When the locality was revisited the next day a relatively large number of the birds were found to be present. A count taken of the individuals in one strip of territory about 200 yards long and 50 yards wide revealed 34. Cpl. Philip S. Humphrey and the writer attempted to make a fairly complete census of the flock on June 28. The number actually counted reached 70 before the arriving and departing of groups of as many as 10 to 15 or more plovers so confused the watchers that only an approximation could finally be made. It can safely be said, however, that the flock numbered over 100 birds. Since June 28 small groups and individuals have been recorded regularly, and at the date of this writing, July 12, a group of 11 was seen in one area of about 4 acres. The type of cover that the birds seem to prefer are the grassy fields, cropped to a height of 6 to 9 inches and fairly uniformly though thinly grown with weeds of 2 to 4 foot height, which lay between the runways and taxi strips of the air base. Occasionally individuals have been observed on the concrete taxi ways and landing strips. When sought afoot, they would not permit a closer approach than 500 feet.

Perhaps the most interesting of the records made at Smyrna this Spring was the discovery on June 25 of a male Marsh Hawk which had been shot on the edge of a patch of woods about 5 miles north of the base. The harrier, not due to remain here in summer, was well into its molt, and was at least a second year bird because of the fact that the unmolted plumage was adult. According to the owner of the property the bird had been shot by an unknown person a "few" days before. A pair of Marsh Hawks were recorded March 24 within one-fourth of a mile of this locale, but none had been recorded subsequent to this date although this particular section had been covered almost weekly. On July 7 the body of the harrier was re-examined and two primary feathers of the right wing, removed for a permanent record. To the chagrin of the party the remains of a Barn Owl, which had been shot, were found within a few feet of the defunct hawk. As a pair of Barn Owls reside within a mile of this region it is feared that the dead owl might have been of this pair. No investigation has yet been undertaken to determine whether this is the case.

A few additional notes which might deserve mention include a male Ruddy Duck recorded March 24 on Stewarts Creek, which runs through the air base; a Barred Owl nest near Murfreesboro containing 3 small young, April 6; an adult male American Golden-eye Duck in a half acre quarry on the air base, April 10; a female Hooded Merganser in the same quarry, April 13; a Barn Swallow nest approximately 1 mile from base, June 8; a female Wood Duck with 15 young on Stewarts Creek, June 25; and 5 Prairie Horned Larks on the air base, June 28. Horned Larks have been noted almost daily since then.

U. S. ARMY AIR BASE, SMYRNA, TENNESSEE.

CHIMNEY SWIFT NESTS ON WALL IN BUILDING

By HENRY O. TODD

While making photographs of a new building for the Veterans Hospital near Murfreesboro, Tenn., I found an unusually located nest of the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) on June 25, 1946. Instead of being inside of a chimney, as it almost always is when chimneys are available, this nest had been fixed to the face of a brick wall inside of a new building and three feet from the ceiling. The room in which it was located was the penthouse which had been built on the roof level of the three story brick



building. It was 16 by 32 feet with 9 foot ceilings and is used to house the elevator machinery, etc. Exterior openings were two small windows near the top of a side wall permitting entrance thru the sash in which the glass had not as yet been put in. The nest was glued to an end wall about 6 feet from a window. The Swift left the nest, which contained 3 eggs, and flew thru the far window. Next day, while accompanied by Prof. George Davis, the bird flushed and fortunately alit just below the nest, making possible the photo shown above.—106 MAIN ST., MURFREESBORO, TENN.

BIRDS LISTED ON THREE SPRING FIELD DAYS

By MEMBERS OF TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Every spring, during the first part of May, several of our chapters follow the custom of devoting an entire day to listing the birds found present. Such a list includes summer and permanent residents as well as transients, and such winter visitants as may still be about. On Sunday, May 5, 1946, one party of T.O.S. members were listing birds on Roan Mountain, Tenn., (6313 feet above sea level) and vicinity, while five-hundred miles westward another group were listing birds about Memphis at as low as two-hundred feet above sea level. On the following Sunday and midway between, the Nashville group made a similar list. The three lists are reproduced below and form a composite picture of the wealth of bird life present in Tennessee at that season.—Ed.

MEMPHIS, May 5. Brief stops at Mississippi river wharf and Riverside Park thence south to Lakeview for morning near Horn Lake. Afternoon at borrowpits along levee, to Mud Lake. About 50 members listing. Total species 125.

NASHVILLE, May 12. Motoring westward 22 miles to South Harpeth river where day was spent. A few additional species added by small party visiting Radnor Lake. About 50 members listing. Total species 106 (small number due to restricted area covered and time out for business meeting).

ELIZABETHTON and vicinity, May 5, including Doe river gorge and Roan mountain (one observer, F. W. Behrend went to summits spending day there). The Duck Hawks were seen in Doe river gorge. Birds observed on Roan mountain are grouped by altitudes, as follows; "a," on summits, from 6313 S.L. to 5250 at Carvers Gap; "b," between 5350 and 3500; "c," between 3500 and 2500. The Raven was seen at 4000' and a Thrasher at 6000'. Total species 122, individuals 3337, cooperators 19.

The composite list totals 156 species. The designations "c" and "fc" denote common and fairly common. We regret that space does not permit giving the names of all those who cooperated.

Species	Mem-phis	Nash-ville	Eliz-'ton	Roan Mtn.	Species	Mem-phis	Nash-ville	Eliz-'ton	Roan Mtn.
D-cr Cormorant	1	-	-	-	Olive-b Thrush	10	10	6	-
Gt Blue Heron	4	-	1	-	Gray-cheek Thrush	4	1	-	-
American Egret	2	-	-	-	Veery	3	-	6	a
Green Heron	1	1	4	-	Bluebird	7	fc	30	-
Amer. Bittern	1	-	-	-	Gnatcatcher	35	8	11	-
Blue-wing Teal	3	-	-	-	Gold-cr Kinglet	-	-	8	a
Wood Duck	6	-	-	-	Ruby-cr Kinglet	1	-	7	-
Lesser Scaup	-	2	-	-	Cedar Waxwing	8	6	15	-
Turkey Vulture	5	5	7	-	Migrant Shrike	11	-	-	-
Black Vulture	3	4	-	-	Starling	2	fc	190	-
Mississippi Kite	4	-	-	-	Wh-eyed Vireo	10	fc	34	-
Sharp-sh Hawk	-	1	-	-	Yel-throat Vireo	1	4	7	-
Coopers Hawk	1	1	-	-	Blue-head Vireo	2	-	3	-
Red-tail Hawk	-	1	1	a	Red-eyed Vireo	40	c	80	-
Red-shld Hawk	1	2	-	-	Warbling Vireo	7	-	9	-
Broad-wing Hawk	3	2	1	-	B-&W Warbler	2	6	45	b
Sparrow Hawk	3	2	8	-	Prothon' Warbler	22	fc	-	-

Duck Hawk	-	-	2		Swainsons Warbler	2	-	-	
Osprey	2	1	1		Wormeating Warbler	-	-	18	b
Ruffed Grouse	-	-	2	b	Golden-wing Warbler	4	-	3	b
Bob-white	2	3	20		Blue-winged Warbler	2	2	-	
Sora Rall	1	-	-		Tennessee Warbler	35	-	9	
Amer. Coot	-	1	-		Nashville Warbler	2	-	1	
Killdeer	6	1	10		Parula Warbler	11	5	14	
Woodcock	-	-	1		Yellow Warbler	3	fc	88	bc
Sol. Sandpiper	1	1	1		Magnolia Warbler	3	3	11	
Spotted Sandpiper	1	1	4		Cape May Warbler	-	5	3	
G'r Yellowlegs	8	-	-		Cairn's Warbler	-	-	46	ab
Lesser Yellowlegs	2	-	-		Myrtle Warbler	7	6	20	
Least Sandp'r	1	1	-		Bl-th Green Warbler	4	2	24	
Ring-bill Gull	1	-	-		Cerulean Warbler	6	fc	-	
Mourning Dove	23	3	42	c	Blackburnian Warbler	1	5	3	b
Yel-b. Cuckoo	8	2	6		Sycamore Warbler	6	5	-	
Screech Owl	-	1	1		Chestnut-s Warbler	4	3	36	ab
Great Hd Owl	-	1	3		Bay-breasted Warbler	1	fc	8	
Barred Owl	1	1	-		Black-poll Warbler	3	4	4	
Chuck-w-widow	-	1	-		Pine Warbler	-	-	1	
Whip-poor-will	1	-	8	c	Prairie Warbler	-	3	4	
Nighthawk	3	1	1		Palm Warbler	15	1	6	
Chimney Swift	13	fc	65		Ovenbird	10	-	77	b
Ruby-t Hummer	15	1	14		N. Water-thrush	-	1	1	
Kingfisher	3	1	4		Louisiana Thrush	1	fc	8	c
Flicker	10	2	42	a	Kent, Warbler	7	2	25	
Pileated Woodp'r	2	3	4		Yellowthroat	40	c	47	
Red-bel. Woodp'r	10	3	-		Yellow-br Chat	10	7	45	c
Red-head Woodp'r	4	2	1		Hooded Warbler	10	3	41	
Hairy Woodp'r	7	1	4		Wilson's Warbler	-	1	-	
Downy Woodp'r	6	2	4		Canada Warbler	1	3	18	b
Kingbird	16	1	10		Amer. Redstart	18	6	16	
Cr Flycatcher	13	3	13		Eng. Sparrow	24	6	140	
Acadian Flycatcher	20	fc	7		Bobolink	300	-	-	
Least Flycatcher	-	-	9	b	Meadowlark	92	3	39	
Phoebe	-	fc	31	c	Red-wing	26	4	64	
Wood Pewee	12	fc	59	c	Orchard Oriole	12	2	6	
Horned Lark	2	-	10		Baltimore Oriole	5	2	12	
Tree Swallow	53	-	5		Purple Grackle	-	-	111	c
Bank Swallow	20	-	21		Bronzed Grackle	10	6	-	
Rough-wing Swallow	7	5	14		Cowbird	26	4	46	
Barn Swallow	-	2	40		Scarlet Tanager	2	3	25	b'
Cliff Swallow	-	-	8		Summer Tanager	16	fc	9	
Purple Martin	8	4	18		Cardinal	50	fc	56	
Blue Jay	17	4	73	ab	Rose-b Grosbeak	10	1	30	b
Raven	-	-	1	b	Indigo Bunting	15	c	55	c
Common Crow	2	4	49	b	Painted Bunting	1	-	-	
Fish Crow	2	-	-		Dickcissel	108	-	-	
Car. Chickadee	18	fc	19	c	Goldfinch	16	c	71	a
Bl.-capped Chickadee	-	-	15	a	Towhee	1	4	110	abc
Tufted Titmouse	6	6	27	b	Savan' Sparrow	25	-	1	
Wh-br. Nuthatch	2	1	15	ab	Grasshopper Swallow	-	-	21	
Winter Wren	-	-	22	a	Vesper Sparrow	-	-	1	
Bewicks Wren	2	1	5		Carolina Junco	-	-	100	a
Carolina Wren	12	6	38	c	Field Sparrow	5	fc	68	c
Sh-b Marsh Wren	13	-	-		Chipping Sparrow	-	2	34	c
Mockingbird	8	5	45		Wh-crowned Sparrow	2	1	3	
Catbird	3	3	98	abc	Wh-throated Sparrow	6	2	6	
Brown Thrasher	10	1	52	a	Lincolns Sparrow	5	-	1	
Robin	2	fc	96	abc	Swamp Sparrow	6	-	-	
Wood Thrush	9	fc	63	b	Song Sparrow	-	-	134	bo

THE ROUND TABLE

DEPARTURE OF THE EASTERN EVENING GROSBEEK FROM ELIZABETHTON.—The Eastern Evening Grosbeaks' visit in Elizabethton came to an end on May 4. While in the early days of April their number still amounted to 40, more or less; the average dropped to about 18 for most of the latter third of that month, falling off steadily further until a mere five were left in the waning days of their stay beginning of May. It was the privilege of Professor Henry M. Stevenson of Emory and Henry College, Emory, Virginia (formerly of Oxford, Miss.), of Mr. W. F. Pearson, Kingsport, Tennessee, both of whom had arrived early for the annual spring census of the Elizabethton Chapter on May 5, and of Dr. Lee Roy Herndon of the Chapter, last to record the Evening Grosbeaks in the afternoon of May 4, while the writer had listed them on his regular morning check-up of that day in the unexpected company of a number of Cedar Waxings. Ironically, the Grosbeaks escaped being included in the spring census list of the Elizabethton Chapter by one day. It may be remembered from notes in the December 1945 issue of *THE MIGRANT* that they missed being recorded on the midwinter census by one week.

As might have been surmised, other southern territories experienced an influx of Evening Grosbeaks last winter. It has come to the attention of the Elizabethton Chapter that flocks of varying sizes, although by far not as large as that here, were observed near Washington, D. C., Charlottesville, Virginia, and in North Carolina. Of particular interest was the observation of a flock by Professor Stevenson in Abingdon, situated in the southwestern corner of Virginia, some 40 miles northeast of Elizabethton. Here is his account: "I believe I mentioned my plan to look for the Evening Grosbeak in Abingdon—ten miles from here (Emory). This I did on January 26, and, after walking the streets for about 30 minutes, I saw a flock of birds flying into a sugar maple. At first glance I took them to be Waxwings (light conditions were very poor), but I could seem to make out the heavy bills without the use of my field glasses. Thus it was no surprise to find, as soon as I had focused my glasses on them that they really were Evening Grosbeaks. There were 8 of them, at least three of each sex. It was not until later that I found some box elders, several blocks away, and these were practically devoid of seeds. These birds were, of course, a new record for this region." It was learned quite recently that Evening Grosbeaks had been recorded in Abingdon by another observer.

From *The Chat*, publication of the North Carolina Bird Club, I learn that Evening Grosbeaks were recorded in that state during the past winter as follows: (a) at Salisbury, 110 miles S-E of Elizabethton, "a large flock" were present during the last two weeks in January; (b) at High Point, 130 miles E-S-E of Elizabethton, 2 seen on March 4, and 4 on March 19; (c) at Henderson, 215 miles east of Elizabethton, 1 seen on March 20, 13 on April 3 and a single bird on April 9; (d) at Greensboro, 140 miles east of Elizabethton, 1 seen on April 3rd.—FRED W. BEHREND, Milligan College, Tenn.

A BLUE GROSBEAK IN NORTHEAST TENN.—On May 4, 1936, I had the unusual experience of observing a Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) near Elizabethton. So far as I know, this is the only Tennessee record east of Nashville. It was feeding alternately in a low bush and upon the ground and was at such close range that I could not focus my binoculars on it. I had leisurely views at all angles, observed its contour and noted that the chestnut wing patches were very obvious. An Indigo Bunting also alighted in the bush and the difference in size was quite apparent. Incidentally, this proved to be a real Grosbeak day for in addition to the Blue, I also listed the Rose-breasted, the Cardinal and the Evening Grosbeak, this being the last day of the latter's stay here.—LEE R. HERNDON, 1533 Burgie Place, Elizabethton, Tenn.

AN OLD SQUAW DUCK ON REELFOOT LAKE.—On April 12, 1946, a male Old-squaw (*Clangula hyemalis*), in transition plumage, was observed on Reelfoot Lake, Tenn., north of Samburg off Indian Creek. I flushed this bird while rowing a boat, followed it up and again studied it in detail from fifty yards with Bausch and Lomb 8-power field glass. There is a mounted bird of this species at the Walnut Log hotel, said to have been taken on the Lake.—JOHN H. STEENIS, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P. O. Box 313, Paris, Tenn.

SPARROW HAWK NESTS IN A CLIFF.—Enroute to the East Tennessee mountains, on June 15, 1946, we had crossed the Cumberland Plateau and were ready to motor down into the deep valley at Pikeville. The road here drops thru a gap in the escarpment and then runs beneath the bold sandstone cliff that soon towers a hundred feet above. "There was probably a falcon's eyrie in that cliff, in early times," one of us said. A moment later, and to our surprise, a little falcon sailed from the face of the cliff and out over the valley; not the Peregrine to which our remarks referred, but a Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*). Noting the spot where it had left, we stopped and there saw, high up, several small "pot-holes," some of which appeared suitable for nesting purposes. From one of them, the unmistakable food call of nearly fledged young Sparrow Hawks could be constantly heard, thus confirming our assumption that it was a nesting site. By reference to Bent's comprehensive Life Histories, we find no account of its nesting in cliffs, save his quotation from Bendire (1892) that it had been found to do so in the arid West where tree cavities were unavailable.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville and ALFRED CLEBSCH, Clarksville, Tenn.

HAWKS GRAPPLING IN MID-AIR.—On November 4, 1945, while at Mammoth Cave National Park attending the field day of the Kentucky Ornithological Society, the writer witnessed an unusual combat or mock-combat between two Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo borealis*). When first seen, a single bird was soaring well above the high forested hills which overlook the Green River ferry. While our group watched this bird with binoculars we perceived another approaching it and as he closed in, each presented its talons and grappled those of its antagonist. Thus locked together, they whirled around in the air with awkward wing-flapping and lost 50 to 100 feet of altitude before breaking away. They then soared upward and

repeated the performance twice again before moving out of sight over the hills. A third hawk came near but did not intervene. No striking with their beaks was observed nor were any feathers seen to fall. At that season, there would seem to be no great urge for territory defense. Experienced observers in our group said they had not previously witnessed such behavior between hawks and believed it to be a demonstration of play between two young of the year.—ROBERT SOLLMANN, Sterling Road, Nashville 5, Tenn.

PILEATED WOODPECKER'S REACTION TO A HAWK.—On January 14, 1946, I watched a pair of Pileated Woodpecker's (*Ceophloeus pileatus*) for about five minutes as they shared the same tree with a pair of Flickers. Both species appeared to drink several times from a hollow caused by the falling of a rotted limb. The Pileated twice gave a weak call similar to that of a Robin. Although I was less than a hundred feet from them, they showed no fear of me, even when I wiped my binoculars with a white handkerchief. Looking about, I happened to see a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) glide swiftly into another tree, about 200 feet to my left. After watching him alight, I looked back for the woodpeckers but could not find any of them at first.

Finally, I discovered the female Pileated and saw that she had swung around to the side of the tree opposite the hawk and clung there as still as if frozen. Her neck was drawn in with the head far back, beak straight up and crest flattened against the back. Her feathers appeared to be ruffled as tho to emulate a dead snag, and she held this position for nearly five minutes, i.e., until the hawk left. Birdlife all about remained quiet as long as the hawk was present but the moment he left, several Tufted Titmice began their scolding notes and flew across the clearing in front of me. From her position behind the tree, the Pileated could not see the hawk leave but she must have realized from the smaller birds' actions that the danger was past and she promptly resumed working the tree.—WILLIAM DALE YAMBERT, Fountain City, Tenn.

THE SEASON AT MEMPHIS.—A rainy winter passed into a rainy spring and thundershowers are now more frequent than usual. Vegetation was several weeks ahead of the average and mild weather prevailed for the second straight season. However, spring arrivals were later than usual and the early species were represented by few individuals. About as expected; Lakeview, Miss., Mar. 9, Lesser Yellowlegs, 30; Greater Yellowlegs, 2; Pectoral Sandpiper, 3. On Mar. 23, 150 Pectorals were seen and new arrivals were Shoveller, 30; Blue-winged Teal, 38; Sora, 1 and American Bittern, 1. A Ruddy Duck was also there and Wilson's Snipes numbered 25 compared with 2 on the 9th. A Leconte's Sparrow was also seen on the 9th. Earlier than usual were a White-eyed Vireo and a Chuck-will's-widow found Apr. 2 in Overton Park by Miss Davant and Mrs. Coffey, and a Broad-winged Hawk seen there on Apr. 5 by David Johnston of Atlanta and on following days by others. On a trip out N. Bellevue to Wolf River on Apr. 7, a Horned Grebe was seen—the first at Memphis, other records being in Mississippi—and 12 Fish Crows. At "Coffey Grounds" on Apr. 21 I saw my first of the season Catbird, Blue-headed Vireo, Indigo Bunting (others a week or more later), and Lincoln's Sparrow. A Virginia

Rail was brought April 20 by a boy; it had evidently been struck by a car and died soon afterwards. Robert Tucker made it into a study skin for the collection of Mr. Ganier. This is the second one picked up injured in the city. An earlier bird, in the Zoo, came from this tri-state area but no record of the locality had been made. Lakeview, Miss. records are Apr. 25, May 2, and May 3, 1934 (MIGRANT, 1936:37), and Oct. 6, 1940 (1940:103). Continuing on Apr. 21 with Tucker to Five Points, where two Swainson's Warblers and other warblers were heard and with the John Ponds to Lakeview where an Osprey was seen. A Mourning Warbler was heard singing in our back lot on May 10 and 11. At late as June 15, four Goldfinches were heard nearby.—Returning transients noted July 21 were 5 Upland Plover at the Municipal Airport where the species is remaining and—at Lakeview—Least Sandpiper, 7; Bank Swallow, 6; and Tree Swallow, 2.—In early July the Barn Swallows had a nest under a wood bridge at Shelby (penal) Farms where a nest was recorded in 1941 and 1942 as our No. 2 site (1941:59). The No. 1 site, towards Whitehaven, used from 1936 to 1940 (1936:69), was visited in May and July; no swallows were seen but a well-preserved nest indicated the site was used in 1945. It was not used in 1941 and 1942, our last previous visits. David Johnston reported a Barn Swallow and a Horned Lark near the Millington naval base in July and we saw a lone Barn Swallow July 28 north of Raleigh.—In the vicinity of Coffey Grounds several pairs of Baltimore Orioles, Orchard Orioles, and Warbling Vireos are found each summer but only about one pair of each was present this year and these nested off our premises. The Sparrow Hawks here have been much in evidence and have been raiding Robin nests for young birds. Raids on a porch nest and a rose trellis nest were witnessed by a neighbor and periods of noisy confusion in the tops of several elms indicated tragedy striking there. However, in early August, over a hundred Robins, mostly first and second broods, were seen on nearby lawns in the evening, more than ever noted before.—The first Maryland Yellow-throat appeared April 7 near Snowden School. Often the first record has been on our rear lot but the first Yellow-throat there this season did not appear until May 5 and it remained with its mate to nest. The reason for its mention here is that the singing male was a Northern Yellow-throat, having the song typical of the birds at Nashville and Iuka (Miss.). This hypothesis is not acceptable to most ornithologists but if a collection of song recordings could be made in the separate ranges of the Mid-South we believe that in this case respective points of difference and similarity would be more readily apparent in the songs than in minor details of plumage. The song of the race at Iuka and northeast has always seemed strange when we first hear it. It resembles the Carolina Wren rhythm more than that of our lowland (Vicksburg to Reelfoot) birds.—BEN B. COFFEY, JR., 672 N. Belvedere, Memphis 7, Tenn.

COURTSHIP BEHAVIOR OF WHIP-POOR-WILLS.—An old table is just outside the east window of my cabin in the Glades. Often lately just at dusk, a Whip-poor-will has come to this table and settled in about the same spot and given his call. I can hear the "chuck" which goes with each "whip-poor-will" and can see the bowing motion of its head. On other

occasions he has sat for some time, springing into the air two or three times for an insect before moving on to another spot. On his visit of June 15th he had no more than given four calls, and I had taken my stand near the window, when a female flew in and settled near him. No more calls after this but his chucking was continuous and soon he started a dance. He would strut back and forth before her, keeping his tail feathers spread and stretching out the feathers of first one wing and then the other as though to display the handsome patterns of their brown markings. Meanwhile, his head was kept bobbing up and down with guttural "chucks" given at each bob, and the outer tail feathers showing pure white in the semi-darkness. The female made no noise, moving along the table twice before flying away with the male close behind her.—MRS. JUANITA ALLEN, Gatlinburg, Tenn.

NOTE:—This was indeed an unusual experience. In Bent's Life Histories of N. Amer. Birds, there are a few such additional observations.—ED.

SWIFTS ATTRACTED BY SMOKE.—On the afternoon of August 5th, 1946, at 5:45 p.m. (Cent. std. time) I observed a group of perhaps a dozen Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) engage in an interesting behavior. I was on my way into the Smyrna Army Air Field mess hall, when I noticed a Swift hovering near the top of the fifty foot high mess hall smoke stack while others wheeled about in wide circles at lower altitudes. The birds would climb, usually one at a time, almost to the top of the stack then hover, in the manner of a Sparrow Hawk, a foot or so to the lee of the stack and just below the black plume of coal smoke that was spewing out. As soon as one bird left its position at the top of the stack, another would replace it. Occasionally two or three Swifts at a time could be seen hovering just under the smoke. The performance was repeated by the birds many times during the several minutes I watched. I did not re-observe this strange behavior when I left the mess hall a little while later, as it was dusk and the Swifts were preparing to enter the chimney of a nearby barracks where they undoubtedly roosted for the night.—CPL. PHILIP S. HUMPHREY, Army Air Base, Smyrna, Tenn.

NOTE.—Your Editor once observed (MIGRANT, 1934, 5:28) Swifts flying in and out of "thin" smoke above a chimney at mid-day and concluded at that time that they were attracted by the warmth. This was about noon on April 22, 1934, during a drizzling rain when the day was raw and windy. Since such conditions did not obtain at the time of Mr. Humphrey's observations, another reason must be sought. Perhaps the nesting season had left the birds infested with parasites and that they hoped to abate the annoyance by literally "smoking them out." A bit later, during the course of their normal practice of roosting in chimneys, their plumage would be permeated with the fumes of well smoked soot with perhaps a similar effect accomplished. Further observations and reports would be of interest.—A. F. G.

A CRESTED FLYCATCHER'S BROOD.—Shortly after the first "wheep" of the Crested Flycatcher sounded from a tall tree on April 18, I put up a nest-box that Mr. H. P. Ijams had made for me, hoping but not too greatly expecting that the Flycatchers would find it. The box was cylindrical in form, about 5" in diameter and 10½" long, affixed horizontally

against a tree some 15 feet from the ground. The 2" entrance hole was in the center of the end. On May 17, a pair started to build a nest. They were very noisy and seemed not to mind our proximity on the porch and in the garden. Incubation started about May 27 and sometime later the young "wheeps" could be heard in the nest.

On June 16, I heard a commotion and saw both Flycatchers pursuing a Sparrow Hawk from the nesting box. It alighted on our mail box about 200 feet away from the nest and then immediately resumed its flight across the street with the Flycatchers attacking it. On the pavement below the mail box were two nestling birds. They were covered with blue-grey down and the short wing and tail feathers were of the same color. As they appeared to be uninjured, I enlisted the help of a small boy to replace them in the nesting box and soon the parent birds were taking in food. The next evening, my husband and I again heard the calls of one of the young at some distance from the nest and finally found it on the ground among the leaves. We replaced it quickly but, while eating dinner on the porch, saw it or another tumble out of the entrance hole to the ground below. We put it back, observing that the nesting material had raised the floor level even with the entrance hole. Next morning, we put in a new end piece with a hole provided near the top. This necessitated having the box on the ground for ten minutes or more, turning it end for end and replacing the nest material along with the three youngsters, all of whom seemed to be quite healthy. The parents made considerable protest but immediately resumed feeding and on June 23 the young left the nest. Considering all of their adventures and misadventures, we came to the conclusion that young "wheeps" are very durable.—MRS. R. A. MONROE, 3345 Tugaloo Dr., Knoxville 16, Tenn.

CRESTED FLYCATCHER DESTROYS CATERPILLARS: It is generally believed that the Cuckoos are about the only birds that will attack tent caterpillars and remove them from their webs. It was of interest therefore to me when I witnessed this being done, on July 14, 1945, by a Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*). The web was about midway up in a large black walnut tree at the extremity of a limb and appeared about ten inches in diameter. The flycatcher would alight on top and seize the "worms" by probing within or by probing the sides while suspended in flight after the manner of a hummingbird. During the ten minutes I watched, the bird returned four times; after each visit flying back to some large trees a hundred yards away where there may have been a brood of young. The caterpillars were small grey wooly ones, about an inch long. On each visit, the bird seemed to secure several of them and it is probable that it finally rid the tree of the pests.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

The competition for poems about birds, conducted by Mr. Robert Sparks Walker of Chattanooga, was recently concluded after the submission of more than 3,000 poems about birds from 1,800 authors. Mr. Walker hopes to have the best of these published in book form and no doubt the receipt of additional poems would be acceptable.

NOTES, HERE AND THERE

The American Ornithologists Union will hold its first full Annual Meeting since 1942, on September 2-5, in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois.

Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, 56, Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1935, has retired and was succeeded by Albert M. Day, his assistant. Dr. Gabrielson, a native of Iowa, has always been an active ornithologist.

To Mr. Henry O. Todd, of Murfreesboro, we are indebted for the cut of the oddly located Chimney Swift's nest.

STATE OFFICERS, TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

At the annual meeting at Nashville, May 5, 1946, the following officers were elected and will assume their duties as of July 1st, 1946.

PRESIDENT: Dr. Lee R. Herndon, 1533 Burgie Place, Elizabethton.

V-PRES, WEST TENN.: Lawrence Kent, 1896 Cowden St., Memphis.

V-PRES., MIDDLE TENN.: Harry C. Monk, 406 Avoca St., Nashville.

V-PRES., EAST TENN.: Mrs. R. A. Monroe, 3345 Tugaloe Dr., Knoxville.

EDITOR-CURATOR: Albert F. Ganier, 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville.

TREASURER: Alfred Clebsch, 838 Gracey Avenue, Clarksville.

SECRETARY: Luther F. Keeton, 75 North Cleveland St., Memphis.

The Editor was elected by the Board of Directors and accepted with the request that a successor be chosen at the close of the present year.

— EDITORIAL —

THE ROLE OF THE UNUSUAL

Apparently there is a universal appetite among readers of all publications for happenings out of the ordinary. While this is found in its most pronounced form in newspapers, yet we find it in more conservative form even in scientific journals. Records of the unusual presuppose that the reader is acquainted with the orthodox and that record of any variation from it will be received with more than ordinary interest.

The pages of this little journal contain such records in nearly every issue; for example, the wintering of the Evening Grosbeak in our State and described in our last issue or an unusual nesting of the Chimney Swift described in this. Some might take the position that our contributors should use our space to record the orthodox and thereby acquaint their fellow readers with the real life histories of birds rather than the occasional happenings. While there are two sides to the argument, yet it must be borne in mind that in the numerous available bird books the everyday life histories of each species has been fully treated, at least for the region with which their authors are acquainted. In our particular region, however, adequate texts have not as yet been produced and we are still in the process of learning. We learn wherein our region differs by comparing its avian happenings with the accepted orthodox.

For example again, we have learned that while in Middle Tennessee the Sycamore Warbler nests in the orthodox sycamore, yet in our mountains it prefers the pine. Not so many years ago we did not know that the Long-eared Owl wintered so far south as Tennessee but in recent years we have

THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF TENNESSEE BIRDS
PUBLISHED BY THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Free to members. To subscribers, \$1 per year; single copies 30c.

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Albert F. Ganier, Editor, 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville 5, Tenn.

The Tennessee Ornithological Society was founded, October 1915.

Publication of THE MIGRANT was begun, March 1930.

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

piled up seven records and by now many conclude that it is a regular though rare winter resident. Since our first publication of the nesting of Cliff Swallows on a man-made concrete structure we have learned that these birds are rapidly adapting themselves to such locations and are now nesting under many of the river locks and on bridge piers. It was regarded as unusual that the Grosbeaks should come to us, to remain so long and in such numbers; let us hope that they will continue to do so in order that such reports will no longer be cast in the role of the unusual. Had Mr. Todd's writeup of a Swift's nest been published several hundred years ago, it would probably have told of the nest being built in a *chimney* rather than in the orthodox hollow tree.

In migration too we have learned much by recording the unusual. In the earlier years of this Society there were a number of "out-of-line" first dates passed in by our members, some of which may have caused the lifting of eyebrows. Ten years ago when the writer compiled (MIGRANT, 7:6) the twelve earliest arrival dates for our fifty best known spring migrants, he found that most of the gaps had been pretty well filled in and that the average had moved well upward on the calendar. Palm Warblers, earlier classified as transients, have been found through numerous winter records to be regularly expected at that season and in West Tennessee a similar status may yet have to be accorded the Mourning Warbler.

A review of our columns would doubtless bring to mind dozens of similar examples but enough have been cited perhaps to illustrate. While discussing this topic, however, we would feel guilty if the impression had been conveyed that records of the unusual were at a premium. This might lead to careless identifications or to a lack of appreciation of the care we take to publish only well substantiated records. When in doubt, it is often well to consider the oft-quoted words of Shakespeare who wrote, in effect, that at least upon some occasions, "the wish may be father of the thought." The number of unusual records that come to any observer are almost always directly proportional to the number of hours spent afield and the years of experience that lie back of them.—ALBERT F. GANIER.

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