

THE MIGRANT

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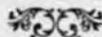
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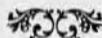
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SUMMER WARBLERS OF SHELBY COUNTY

By BEN B. COFFEY, JR.

If one's study has been carried on chiefly in the two wooded parks of Memphis he would immediately think of the Kentucky and the Hooded Warblers. The student who has skirted the borders of Wolf River, Horn Lake, and various bayous would think of the Prothonotary Warbler. And in more open situations we find the Maryland Yellow-throat. These four, to my mind, are the outstanding beauties which spend the summer with us, although we can find the Redstart if we know where to look.

The Kentucky and Hooded Warblers are always associated together in my thoughts of them. Preferring the same ravine and heavily shaded hillside environments, with a similar liquid quality of tone in their song notes, and with the same colors predominating, this would only be natural. Reed's Bird Guide does not do full justice to the bright yellow underparts of either, and the black crown and ear coverts of the former and black hood of the latter give a brilliant contrast. The Kentucky Warbler is the Overton Park warbler; in the spring its loud, clear "ron-dee, ron-dee, ron-dee" is heard throughout the park woods morning and evening. It is more common throughout the country than the Hooded Warbler and may be found in most damp ravines and wooded creek bottoms. The Hooded Warbler is the Riverside Park warbler, and is very common near the stream course there. Its interrogative "come and see me" is of a liquid tone.

Along Wolf River, Nonconnah Creek, Horn Lake and bayous we find, usually without much delay, the Prothonotary Warbler. The old name of Golden Swamp Warbler is more appropriate, and my Scouts and I call it the "tweet-tweet" bird. Certainly no other bird's notes are as similar to the popular printed conception of a bird's song. The loud, clear, ringing "tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet" attracts instant attention, but when the singer is located its beauty eclipses the vernal freshness of its song. Another song, not so loud, heard in the same localities would cause field glasses to be turned toward the tops of tall cypresses to hunt for the Sycamore Warbler, bearing the yellow throat and black flank streaks. Occasionally he is found in sycamores, the trees that he is more often associated with around Nashville or Hardy (Arkansas), and on two separate trips I heard one at the edge of Piney Woods, half a mile from type environment.

The Louisiana Water-Thrush is often found along our streams with the Kentucky or Hooded Warblers. I have a picture taken May 18, 1928, of four young in a nest found under tree roots at the Raleigh-Wolf River beach, within three feet of a path in continual use by swimmers and picnickers. It has a beautiful wild-spirited song and can be easily recognized by its habit of continually flirting its tail. (Only the Spotted Sandpiper (uncommon) and Palm Warbler (migrant) do likewise.)

The Redstart has been found to be quite common throughout the summer in the wooded bottom lands of the Mississippi itself, west of the Y. & M. V. R. R., south of town, and from the line of bluffs to the river, north of town. "La Candelita" is not seen elsewhere except during migration, when it is very common. The Parula Warbler is found in the same character of environment, but its territory seems to include similar localities throughout the country. During the summer of 1928 one was my "unknown warbler" of Piney Woods. I might add here that this warbler is very common in Overton Park during early fall. The Black and White Warbler is found in late summer in the Redstart's territory, but these may only be migrants.

The Maryland Yellow-throat and Yellow-breasted Chat are found in open country, with thickets. The former, with its "witch-ee-ty, witch-ee-ty, witch-ee-ty," is very common and frequently nests in the bushes of one's gardens. An inquisitive and peppy little body, this black-masked summer resident should be easy for anyone to know. The Chat is our largest warbler, very shy, and hard to see in its rural haunts, but always found on any trip into likely territory through its ventriloquial, mimicking song, with which he leads you a merry chase. A sight record rewards patience.

We have no summer records of the Cerulean Warbler or Worm-eating Warbler. Nor of the Yellow Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Prairie Warbler; these three are found at the Memphis Scout camps (Hardy, Ark.), the first two in the willows along Spring River and the third on the dry scrub oak hillsides. I heard and saw a Prairie Warbler April 26, 1930, at Camp Currier, twenty miles south of town, in Mississippi. The environment was typical; however, I was unable to return for further records.

The Pine Warbler would be accidental. Records for Piney Woods range from March 11 to June 3, 1928.

Because of the history connected with the two "lost species," Bachman Warbler and Swainson Warbler, a search for them is doubly interesting. Some day we hope to find the former. We have found the latter. A pretty liquid "wee-er, wee-er, chee-wee-er" sent me in search of the singer one April morning (23rd) and a careful study of the little brown bird that I found, caused me to go to Reed's Guide at once to make sure of it. It was found in these low damp woods on several succeeding mornings, and once two singers were seen. Last spring my first record was for April 20th, and as late as May, I went out in the evening and listened to it sing almost continuously for twenty to thirty minutes. Its song resembles one of the songs of the Hooded Warbler, and care is needed if identification is made by song. I didn't have the chance to return later or hunt for a nest. Only a male bird apparently was seen, yet I believe we will find a nest some spring soon. I have heard the song of the Swainson Warbler in several other places with similar small cane growth and wet ground, and have one other sight record, on the Y. & M. V. near Horn Lake.

The study of the Warblers is very fascinating and leads us into some beautiful spots. Most of the summer Warblers are easily learned because of their markings and length of stay with us. The common ones can be studied without undue strain on the neck such as we experience during migration, with the exception of the Parula, and once one of these came down to drink almost at my feet. Little creatures, vague and unknown in our ignorance, become delightful intimates with a little study and a little adventure.

Memphis, Tenn., Feb. 19, 1931.

NESTING DATA ON MIDDLE TENNESSEE BIRDS

PART II.

By VERNON SHARP, JR.

In May our bird-life activities attain their greatest impetus. Not only is this the time to follow our most numerous, varied, and interesting migrants, but also we are privileged to hear a most fascinating group of resident species with us. In the last edition of "The Migrant" an account was presented of those native birds which nest before May 15th, roughly speaking.

As the middle of the month arrives our colorful Warbler friends seek out their favored sites and begin brooding. Among these are the Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Sycamore Warbler and Prairie Warbler, soon to be followed by the Pine Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler and Redstart. No more diverse a selection could be chosen from a standpoint of nest locality. Several, by their name, suggest the probable site, as we find the Prairie in rather open meadows, with a limited amount of scrubby trees and bushes; again the Sycamore frequents the outer branches of the smooth-surfaced sycamore, where a most delicate cup-shaped nest, consisting of the finest vegetable fibers, is placed. As a home the Kentucky Warbler selects a clump of bushes and places her nest of leaves and roots on the ground. Usually an open woodland on a rising hillside suggests the haunts of the Hooded Warbler, for it is here that her nest is located in some upright fork several feet from the ground. As would be expected, the Pine Warbler locates her home on the outer branches of a horizontal pine limb, while the Redstart is rather partial to situations along little streams, where her nest is placed fifteen to thirty feet above the ground.

The regal Kingbird builds about May 15th. 'Tis true that this bird deserves the implication, regal, in view of its appearance, actions and lofty nesting site in the topmost branches of some skyward tree. At this date two of our most different Hawks, the Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged, start incubation. The former is a wary, rapid-flying individual which nests in the pine forests, while the latter is exceedingly tame, more sociable and preferring the large forks of an oak or chestnut.

Summing up those of the last ten days of May, we should expect the following: Nighthawk, May 20th; Crested Flycatcher, May 20th; Scarlet Tanager, May 20th; Least Bittern, May 22nd; Whippoorwill, May 25th; Summer Tanager, May 25th; Dickcissel, May 25th; Indigo Bunting, May 25th; Grasshopper Sparrow, May 28th, and last, and from a standpoint of size only, least, the fascinating little Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Each of these birds have numerous facts concerning their breeding habits that are exceedingly unique, but in so limited a space only two will be noted. The Crested Flycatcher, which nests in a bird box or a hollow limb cavity, invariably includes a snake skin in the composition of its nest. There has been considerable comment and speculation upon this fact, but so far as the author knows, there is no record of a nest when this has not been true. No article on this subject could scarcely be written without some special reference to our minute friend, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Once her nest has been completed it is a most difficult task to detect it, but during the building period, by listening for their faint note, the home site can be located. And here may be seen one of the

most inspiring construction undertakings imaginable. Very fine fibers, down, lichen and cobwebs are used, and, once completed, it is the most delicate structure of all bird life.

During the weeks at this season we expect to find many birds, which first laid weeks earlier, in progress on their second brood. These second nests generally have sets of probably one less egg than those of the first brood. Some species have as many as four nests a season, and these come at any time from the first of May to September 15.

June 1 finds a rapid decrease in the species nesting for their first time. However, among these the following will be found: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, June 1; Chimney Swift, June 1; Wood Pewee, June 2; Acadian Flycatcher, June 2; Gallinules, June 20, Coot June 20, and the Least Tern June 20. One of the most remarkable circumstances is that of the Goldfinch, as this bird is with us the entire year, but doesn't begin nesting until after July 20, and extending after the first of September.

Nashville, Tenn., May 9, 1931.



THE MOCKINGBIRD

By EMILY BARRY WALKER

Our Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos polyglottos* (Linn), is a member of a distinctively American family. Among the many novelties which the discovery of this part of the Western continent first brought into notice, we may reckon that of the Mockingbird. Most of the sixty-odd species of the family are restricted to the tropics, only eleven being found north of Mexico. Some twenty species are Mockingbirds, many of which they say are as talented as ours, although we may be considered quite correct if we doubt this statement.

The Mockingbird of the Southern States is truly celebrated, ranking foremost in the extent and variety of his vocal powers. A permanent resident in the State of Tennessee, he may be found in the city or in the country, along busy streets or in quiet lanes and by-ways, as well as in the wooded areas. Very few are the days through the entire year when, snuggling down in his feathers, he assumes a grouchy attitude and refuses to sing. All the fall he continues his song and on into the winter he breaks forth from time to time. Only the coldest days can hush that magic voice. Throughout October and November his song is the earliest of all the awakening songs of the birds. As spring approaches his manner as well as his song seems to change; a quiet ecstasy pervades him. Mounted on the top of a tall bush or half-grown tree, his song rises pre-eminent over all the springtime songsters. He imitates with marvelous exactness, for what bird student has not been caught by his clever treatment of some favorite bird song and been quickly set aright by the swift change to some other well known melody. The magic of a medley so varied and yet so harmonious can scarcely be conceived. As the season advances he seems unable by a mere vocal medium to give vent to the ecstasy that so entralls his very being. Alexander Wilson has described it thus: "He mounts and descends as his song swells or dies away; he bounds aloft with the celerity of an arrow, as if to recover or recall his very soul, expired in the last elevated strain." Now the day is not long enough and far into the

night, when the moon is shining, the air is fairly vibrant with his unsurpassed music. Only a few short hours and he is up facing the rising sun, ready to greet the new day.

Mockingbirds feed for the most part on vegetable food. Fruit and berries, some seeds and now and then an insect, make up his diet. They seem to have territories throughout most of the year, and these are apparently decided on by the amount of food available. During the fall they feed in flocks on such food as the Southern buckthorn berries. The fruit of a buckthorn contains a stone the size of a cherry, but the bird eats the berry, fruit, stone and all, at one bite. When a territory is once chosen he faithfully abides in the locality, picking out a particular bush or tree and seldom going very far away. Other birds are quickly driven away from his private grounds, and he assumed a quarrelsome attitude in connection with it. In this territory take place all the acts of the little drama of his life. His mating, his flight song, the nest building, the rearing of the young, and the long drowsy autumn days. The nest is made of coarse twigs, weed stalks, etc., and lined with rootlets. The height varies with locality as well as the position of the nesting site. The nests have been found in brush heaps, hackberry trees, Osage-orange trees, trumpet vines and, in fact, almost any bush or tree available. The nest is always guarded with the utmost care. Often its presence is detected by the fierce disapproval of the parent to an apparent intruder. The spotted, bluish-green or greenish-blue eggs, four to six in number, are often deserted on apparently slight provocation. The young are spotted below, making them seem all the more akin to their little cousins, the Brown Thrashers.

The Mockingbird has the power to charm the eye as well as the ear. Not striking or gaudy in appearance, the quiet, subdued colors seem in good taste. Wilson describes him thus: "His expanded wings and tail, glistening with white, and the buoyant gaiety of his action, arrest the eye as his song most irresistibly the ear. The ease, elegance and rapidity of his movements, the animation of his eye, and the intelligence he displays in listening and laying up lessons from almost every species of the feathered creation within his hearing, are really surprising, and mark the peculiarity of his genius."

There are many more things that can be learned by closer study and observation of this magnificent bird. Let us cherish, guard and watch this bird, which may be found throughout the entire state of Tennessee.

Nashville, Tenn., May 7, 1931.



Officers of the T. O. S. for 1930-31 are as follows: A. F. Ganier, President; H. P. Ijams, Knoxville, B. B. Coffey, Jr., Memphis, and Wayland Hayes, Nashville, Vice-Presidents; Compton Crook, 2207 Leslie Avenue, Nashville, Secretary; H. C. Monk, Nashville, Curator; George Woodring, Nashville, Editor; Vera Kearby, Nashville, Assistant Editor. The next election will be held in May.

THE ROUND TABLE

The first of two Spring Field Days was held on April 26 at "Cabin-croft," the home of Mr. Dixon Merritt, seven miles south of Lebanon. Clear, cool weather and a picturesque setting among the high green hills made the day all that could be wished for, for tramping and bird listing. Some sixty-three species were recorded and nests of several of these were also found.

Mr. Merritt, who is one of our four charter members, assisted by Mrs. Merritt, served buffet luncheon on the lawn and porch of the ancestral log farmhouse. The twenty-five who made the trip are hoping for another invitation there in the not too distant future.

A report from our Memphis chapter gives us the results of two field trips. One, on April 19, to Wolf River bottoms, about twenty-five miles east of Memphis. Mr. Ben Coffey and Troops Nos. 1 and 50, composed the party. They report the Swainson Warbler seen for the first time; also Rusty Blackbirds, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls on the river at Memphis. There were also Red-shouldered and Sharp-shinned Hawk reported on this trip.

The second trip was just below Memphis, on May 3. Mr. Coffey reports as seen for the first time this season the Bobolink, Dickcissel, Chat May 2, Prairie Warbler, Chuck-Wills-Widow, and Blue Grosbeak. A grand total of sixty-nine species for the day, as follows: Bluebird, Bob White, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Indigo Bunting, Cardinal, Yellow-breasted Chat, Carolina Chickadee, Cowbird, Crow, Morning Dove, Dickcissel, Flicker, Crested Flycatcher, Goldfinch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bronzed Grackle, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-shouldered Hawk, Blue Jay, Kildeer, Kingbird, Kingfisher, Meadow Lark, Mockingbird, Nighthawk, Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Wood Pewee, Robin, Bachman's Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Barn Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Chimney-swift, Summer Tanager, Tufted Titmouse, Brown Thrasher, Olive-backed Thrush, Wood Thrush, Louisiana Water Thrush, Towhee, Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, Chuck-wills-widow, Downy Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Blue Grosbeak, and Black and White, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green, Hooded, Kentucky, Maryland Yellowthroat, N. Parula, Palm, Redstart, Sycamore, Tennessee, Prothonotary and Prairie Warblers.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH IN WINTER: Mr. W. E. Saunders, of London, Canada, passed through Nashville en route to Jackson the latter part of February and renewed an old acquaintance with Mr. Ganier. Mr. Saunders is a Fellow of the A. O. U., having become a member in 1883, and is one of the most proficient ornithologists in the country. This statement is made to pave the way for a very unusual winter record in the way of a Gray-cheeked Thrush, which our visitor found near Jackson on February 22. It had been suggested to Mr. Saunders by letter that possibly his bird was a Hermit Thrush, but he writes in reply: "I was quite right about the Grey-cheek. It was not more than twenty-five feet away and I had the glasses on it. At first I said Olive-backed, as I always do at home, where this species is common and the Grey-cheek is rare, but just then it turned its head and there was no trace

of buffy on the head or throat. I am too old a field man to be unable to differentiate between these two species."

IMPRESSIONS OF A VISITOR: In order that he may share his love of nature with his fellow-citizens, Mr. Saunders contributes a weekly column to the London paper, and upon returning from his trip he wrote up some impressions of our state. It is always of interest to hear how nature's aspect in this latitude impresses a visitor from a Northern clime, so we print below that part of his write-up which deals with birds:

"Our destination was Jackson, Tenn., where we arrived on Feb. 21st, and stayed for two days. We were of course most deeply interested in the birds, but there was little that differed from the Ontario fauna. The Carolina Chickadee is like our own, but a trifle smaller and with a little different voice. The Tufted Titmouse is a large Chickadee, with a uniform slate color and with a neat little crest. His Oriole call was heard a number of times, and once a pair of them came to the roadside and chattered and played for a moment before flying away. Those were the only two species that we do not regularly see in Ontario. The most conspicuous and one of the most abundant birds was the Cardinal, which was in full song, and the woods rang with his varied melodies. The Carolina Wren, with a whistle quite similar, was often heard. He makes more noise for his size and is perhaps nicer music and none too easily distinguished from that of the Cardinal.

"A special feature of the bird world is, of course, the Turkey Vulture, which was seen every day as we drove along, sometimes as many as five together, sailing around with no apparent object, but doubtless with eyes open to the possibilities of locating food.

"Among small birds, the notable sparrows were those of our own fields, the Song and Field Sparrows being most common. The Chewink (Towhee) was heard at almost every stop in the country, and we also found the White-throated, White-crowned and Swamp Sparrows. The Mockingbird, unfortunately, had not yet begun to sing, and we were disappointed to miss that outstanding treat to the Northern bird-lover."

Two outstanding meetings of the past spring were those held on the evenings of March 16th and March 30th. On the former date the Society met with Misses Hollinger and French at Ward-Belmont College at the Del Ver Club house on the campus. The beautiful assembly room, cheered by a rousing log fire, made the setting ideal, and the large number who attended had a most pleasant evening. Preceding the Round Table discussions, Miss Susan Towles, of Henderson, Ky., gave a talk on Audubon and particularly of his life at Henderson, on the Ohio. She brought with her a number of the one hundred original prints, owned by Henderson, of the first elephant folio edition of Audubon's *Birds of America*, these being hung on the walls to enable careful inspection. These plates, printed and hand-colored in England, proved a rare treat for those who delight in the technique of perfect reproduction.

On March 30th the meeting was held in honor of Sir William Hardy, who is delivering a series of lectures at Vanderbilt University. Since Sir William expressed the wish to see how our meetings were conducted rather than to be heard himself, the program was devoted to summing up the results of our activities during the past sixteen years. Four charter members and five past presidents were present, the former being Messrs. Dixon Merritt, A. C. Webb, A. F. Ganier and George R. Mayfield. Brief talks by each of the above mem-

bers was followed by a review of the story of the finding of the nesting grounds of the Blue Goose, given by Miss Vera Kearby. Sir William was then presented with a souvenir of the meeting, and he responded by giving a most interesting talk on his experiences with some British birds.

IOWA BIRD-LIFE, published quarterly by the Iowa Ornithological Union, and edited by Mr. Fred J. Pierce, Winthrop, Iowa, is an outstanding journal on the bird-life of the Middle West States. The March number opens with an interesting account by E. D. Nauman of the Birds of Early Iowa. The author takes the reader back to the days of the Passenger Pigeons and Wild Turkeys. Dr. F. L. R. Roberts writes on "Our Vanishing Birds of Prey." "Field Notes" contains various records of rare and unusual occurrences. The Christmas census was outstanding by the fact of a compiled list of fifty-three species. This is a good record for an inland territory. Under the title of "Membership News" is covered the personalities of the Union. We are always glad to read a publication like Iowa Bird-Life, because it means another link in the fast welding chain of bird conservation. G. B. W.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. A. L. Applegate, 208 Lamar, Memphis; Miss Sue Ammerman, Cynthiana, Ky.; Miss Lillian Bayer, Thomas High School, Cumberland City; Miss Mary Beard, 406 E. Fifth Avenue, Knoxville; Miss Georgia Broward, Box 325, Peabody College, Nashville; Miss Phoebe Clark, Madison; Cecil Crawford, 1267 Faxon, Memphis; Miss Bess E. Dalton, 782 Peabody College, Nashville; Miss Margaret Fain, City Librarian, Dandridge; Mrs. Goddard, care Dandridge Banner, Dandridge; F. M. Jones, P. O. Box No. 44, Bristol, Va.; Prof. Jas. L. Major, Thomas High School, Cumberland City; Mrs. Henry Marius, 1180 Edgewood Avenue, Knoxville; Miss Ada Maxwell, 507 E. Fifth Avenue, Knoxville; Miss Eloise McCorkle, Western State Teachers' College, Consolidated Training School, Portage, Mich.; Geo. M. Moulder, Superintendent of City Parks, Nashville; Eugene Odum, Chapel Hill, N. C.; James W. Ogier, Observatory Drive, Nashville; George Parkins, 2720 East Moreland Boulevard, Toledo, Ohio; Miss Mildred Poole, care Girl Scouts Headquarters, Memphis; Miss Ethel Purcell, 587 Moreland Avenue, N. E. Atlanta, Ga.; Bailey Rascoe, 2113 Westwood Avenue, Nashville; W. E. Saunders, 352 Clarence Street, London, Ontario, Canada; Ed Schreiber, Tennessee Industrial School, Nashville; Mrs. J. S. Scott, 424 Market Street, Dyersburg; Miss Frances Sinclair, 2525 West Linden Avenue, Nashville; Claudius Smith, 1414 Gartland Avenue, Nashville; Miss Margaret Sullivan, 2803 Blair Boulevard, Nashville; Miss Valerie Staples, 206 South Third Street, Pulaski; Mrs. Thomas, West Dormitory, Peabody College, Nashville; A. L. Walker, Porter-Walker Hardware Co., Columbia; J. P. Warnock, 132 North Main Street, Mt. Pleasant; Mrs. Lois L. Wells, 414 Fairfax Avenue, Nashville; Joe Young West, care Peabody College, Nashville; Miss Charlotte Wilkins, 1713 Primrose Avenue, Nashville; Miss Martha Willford, 190 South Cox Street, Memphis; Miss Billie York, Sommerset, Ky.; Gerald Capers, 2203 Union Avenue, Memphis; Robert Carter, 2087 Lee Place, Memphis; Miss Jaqueline Hall, 25 North Watkins Street, Memphis; Willard Hayes, Bank of Commerce Building, Memphis; Mrs. E. T. Hendrix, Route 1, Hernando Road, Memphis; Arnold Houston, Collierville; Dr. and Mrs. O. W. Hyman, 437 Stonewall, Memphis; Mrs. Lee D. Jones, 534 South McLean Street, Memphis; Miss Jennie S. May, 1521 McLemore Street, Memphis; Dr. C. E. Moore and Mrs. Amy Weedon Moore, 631 Hunter Street, Memphis; and Miss Virginia Rogers, 765 Polk Street, Memphis.

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