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THE NESTING BIRDS OF NORTHEASTERN TENNESSEE

By ROBERT B. LYLE and BRUCE P. TYLER

FOREWORD: Perhaps no distributional publications are of more value than annotated lists of the breeding birds of states or smaller areas when the data presented are accurate and definite.

Such lists are of value not only as faunal studies, but as helps in working out the detailed geographical distribution of our birds, about which comparatively little is generally known.

The present article on the birds of northeastern Tennessee is such a list, and should meet with a very cordial reception on the part of the students of faunal and distributional ornithology. We have altogether too few of such publications.—HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

In the September, 1933, issue of *The Migrant* the authors of this paper presented to its readers a list of the birds of Northeastern (Upper East) Tennessee, occurring during the months of December, January and February, whether permanent residents, winter residents, visitants or accidentals. The mere fact that these birds appeared here and were recorded during those three months was sufficient authority for listing them. In this, the second paper, only those birds are listed whose nests have been found or are known to exist either by the authors, or by Messrs. Fred M. Jones, formerly of Bristol, Tennessee, or Howard Long of Kingsport, Tennessee, who have very graciously furnished missing data. This opportunity is taken to thank them for their valued assistance.

The territory covered by this paper is the same as that described in our paper on the winter birds above referred to. It embraces portions of the Upper Austral, Transition and Canadian Zones. Our observations have been made within a radius of thirty miles of Johnson City, which has an elevation of about 1,700 feet above sea level. This city lies in the valley of the Watauga River, nestling against Buffalo Mountain on the southeast, and about three hundred feet above and, say, five miles southeast of the river. It is located thirty miles south of the Virginia line. To the north and west stretches the valley, mountains rising again at Clinch Mountain to the mean elevation of 3,000 feet at a distance of approximately twenty-five miles from Johnson City as the crow flies. To the northeast lies Shady Valley, the topography of which is described in a recent paper "Summer Birds of Shady Valley," by A. F. Ganier and Bruce P. Tyler in *The Migrant*, 1934, p. 21. The principal mountains to the southeast are Holston, Iron, Roan and Big Bald. The latter two are on the Tennessee-North Carolina state line, approximately twenty miles southeast of Johnson City, and having a maximum elevation of 6,313 feet on Roan Mountain. More adjacent to Johnson City are Buffalo, Cherokee and Unaka Mountains. The valley is traversed by the Watauga and Holston Rivers, and approached on the south by the Nolichucky River. The Watauga and Holston Rivers are separated by a ridge of minor importance. In this setting the data for this paper have been secured.

In the list of nesting birds enumerated there are species either known

or believed to breed in this vicinity, particularly in the higher mountains, but on which, from lack of actual observation, no nesting data can be given. Notations to that effect are made under each of these species. This abbreviated record must not be interpreted to mean that the birds are not here, for they have been recorded as present during the breeding season when every action indicated that they were nesting, but the nests could not be found. We feel that their inclusion strengthens the value of our observations. Wherever possible with each of the 105 species here listed, will be found the specific dates upon which nests have been found in this locality. In the case of the commoner species, only three or four selected records are given.

The information presented herewith is a summary of data collected over a period of many years of field work, representing hundreds of miles of rough walking, hard climbs, sore and bruised muscles, to say nothing of tattered clothing, fruitless trips or poison ivy.

EASTERN GREEN HERON. *Butorides virescens virescens.*

Fairly common on streams or ponds, where most nests are found. First nesting May 16th, five fresh eggs. Second nesting, June 4th, five fresh eggs; June 18th, five young just hatched; June 20th, five eggs incubated four days.

TURKEY VULTURE. *Cathartes aura septentrionalis.*

Fairly common. They nest as high as forty feet in tree cavities, but mostly on ground in hollow trees and old stumps, or in "pot holes" or small caves in the river bluffs. April 10th, 22nd, 27th and 29th, May 13th and 16th.

BLACK VULTURE. *Coragyps atratus atratus.*

Very abundant in a restricted area on South Fork of Holston River, but not to be found nesting elsewhere. All nests found have been in "pot holes" of the cliffs above the river. They nest about a month earlier than the Turkey Vulture. Will frequently lay a second set in about twenty-one days in same nest if first eggs are taken. March 12th, 20th and 29th, April 2nd, 7th and 15th, and May 2nd.

COOPER'S HAWK. *Accipiter cooperi.*

Fairly common. The farmers are unfriendly to them because of their liking for poultry, and have reduced their numbers. Nests found usually above forty feet, one being collected at the height of one hundred and twelve feet. April 16th, four fresh eggs; April 21, two fresh eggs (spotted); May 1st, five eggs incubated five days; May 19th, four fresh eggs; May 20th, four fresh eggs.

EASTERN RED-TAILED HAWK. *Buteo borealis borealis.*

Fairly common in the heavy timber. Nests placed at very greatest heights in largest trees. The majority lay about March 25th, but nests have been found to contain eggs until June. March 25th, two eggs incubated twenty days; May 25th, two fresh eggs; April 1st, one egg incubated twenty days; April 4th, hatching; April 1st, two fresh eggs.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK. *Buteo platypterus platypterus.*

Rather rare. April 29th, three fresh eggs; May 2nd, three eggs incubated five days; May 3rd, three eggs incubated five days; May 6th, two fresh eggs; May 9th, two eggs incubated three days; May 16th, four eggs incubated ten days.

DUCK HAWK. *Falco peregrinus anatum.*

Three pairs nesting near Johnson City—all in cliffs above rivers. May 1st, 1929, three young almost grown, in brown and white plumage; April 14th, 1933, one egg; May 13th, 1933, three eggs—second nesting. (See *The Migrant*, 1933, p. 43); March 29th, 1934, three young and two eggs.

EASTERN SPARROW HAWK. *Falco sparverius sparverius.*

Fairly common. Of late years occasional nesting sites have been chosen in suitable holes in brick buildings in the heart of business sections. Usually

THE ROUND TABLE

THE SEASON AT MEMPHIS: Late Summer and Fall trips have been generally uneventful and infrequent, due to the drying up of Mud Lake, our favorite "hunting grounds," and other bodies of water, and to lack of time, which also prevented our notes from reaching the September *Migrant*. Supplementing the Mud Lake list of July 8, included in the account of the Hudsonian Curlew at Memphis of the September issue, we will include summer notes at this time. Immediately following our red-letter "Curlew" day, visitors from Chicago arrived on July 11, and I rushed them down to show them the great assemblage of birds seen three days before. About 150 Little Blue Herons and a few Egrets were on hand, and later an Anhinga was also seen, as well as shorebirds. As we were leaving, bemoaning the absence of any Wood Ibis, fourteen large black wing-tipped birds appeared overhead. Instead of Wood Ibis, however, they were seen to be White Pelicans, a species usually recorded here not sooner than late August or September. Mud Lake's usual waterbird contingent promised to become even more alluring than in previous seasons, but unfortunately the following week found this shallow lake dry and even the waders gone. Enthusiastic invitations to "come and see our pelicans, etc.," were hurriedly amended and we sorrowfully watched the drouth continue to play havoc with our few small ponds remaining. . . . On September 23, we visited Horseshoe Lake, Ark., a large body of water 30 miles southwest of Memphis. Just after crossing the Mississippi we saw 3 White Pelicans, and nearby, while tramping the receding shores of Mound City Chute, 26 others passed over. In the evening we saw 130 of these Pelicans on a sand-bar in the Mississippi just southeast of Horseshoe. At Mound City Chute we also found 8 Short-billed Marsh Wrens, 9 immature Little Blue Herons, 2 Blue-wing Teal, and 1 or 2 Red-shouldered Hawks. Long Lake was almost dried up, and we braved the stench of decaying fish to count about 22 Egrets there and 9 Pectoral Sandpipers. At Horseshoe Lake an adult Bald Eagle soared over us at one time and later at Porter Lake, one of this "Five Lakes" group, and just south of Horseshoe, we saw an Osprey and a Wood Ibis. Totals for the trip included 55 Egrets, 90 Little Blue Herons, 9 Great Blue Herons 110 Double-crested Cormorants, 60 Black Vultures, 15 Turkey Vultures, 10 Sparrow Hawks, and the usual list of common small birds. In the late evening as we drove along the river levee below the lakes, the swallows seemed to fill the air in certain places. We distinguished about 150 Bank, 50 Barn, 30 Cliff, 400 Tree, and 2,000 Rough-winged Swallows; the total of all swallows was about 5,000. . . . An immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron was seen on Lake Cormorant, Miss., on September 9th, and an adult was seen at Lakeview on October 28th. . . . At Camp Carrier, Miss., 25 miles south of town, on October 7th, a House Wren played hide and seek with us; a rare visitor which took a liking to the cabin and environs. Many winter residents were seen for the first time that day, including both kinglets. On October 2, we saw an Osprey at the camp lake and a lone Cormorant came there often. In company with many migrating warblers, a Philadelphia Vireo was seen. . . . On October 28, a fall field day was held at Raleigh, about 28 bird students attending; 64 species were listed for the day, including several winter sparrows for the first time this season. . . . Our first Memphis record of the Wilson's Warbler was made when Franklin McCamey trapped an adult male over a bird bath on September 16. It was duly banded. McCamey found the Canada Warbler common this fall. Redstarts and Black-throated Green Warblers were very common as usual. . . . At Lakeview, on November 4, four Bald Eagles were seen over the lake, three of them being in adult plumage. —BEN B. COFFEY, JR., Memphis.

