

THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

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THE MIGRANT

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No. 1

NESTING OF BACHMAN'S SPARROW NEAR MEMPHIS

By J. SOUTHGATE Y. HOYT

About seven miles to the southeast of the heart of Memphis lies a small patch of woods locally known as King's Woods. These woods are unique in several respects, not the least of which is that they are unimpaired by the ever increasing population in this section of town, being very near the now present Kennedy General Hospital. Among other qualities that these woods hold, are the impressive number of large trees and the way in which but little ecological disturbance has entered this interesting area. I was first introduced to this woodlot by Miss Pauline James, an ardent birder of the Memphis chapter of the T. O. S. and I was very much impressed with the number of various habitats that are here present, even though some are of but small extent. We were at the time looking for nests that I could photograph, especially a nest of the Summer Tanager. As we passed through the woods into the partially grownup and uncut fields to the southeast, we heard the song of the Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) and remarked that they should be nesting nearby.

Having spent a few minutes in search for this nest, we were suddenly aware that off in the distance we were hearing the song of another member of the sparrow family. I had heard this song often while stationed at Charleston, S. C. and was familiar with the song of the Bachman's Sparrow, which to me is one of the sweetest singers of all the sparrows. The Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis bachmanii*) is a sub-species of the Pine-woods Sparrow which is the resident bird of Florida and southern Georgia. In *A Distributional List of the Birds of Tennessee* by Mr. Ganier, the Bachman's is recorded as a "rare summer resident" in west Tennessee, a "fairly common summer resident" in middle Tennessee and a "rare summer resident" in east Tennessee. In view of its status in this area I thought it would be of interest to record the following nesting record.

Having found the individual from which this beautiful song was coming, we then wanted to locate its nest to photograph. As we searched the territory in which it was singing we soon flushed another one of this same species, probably the mate. Still off in the distance we could hear at least two more singing males and thought we heard another in the woods to the back of us. At one time we heard three singing Bachman's and saw one that was not singing. Our search ended in vain that day, though we had searched every foot of ground around there. The next Sunday that I had off from work was a hot one and this time Miss James, Mrs. Hoyt and I went back to this same

spot to renew the search. In spite of the intense heat the bird was singing from a small locust not far from where we had searched so carefully the previous time. We spent some two hours thoroughly looking over the ground in all directions for the singing bird but again with no success.

On July 1 Miss James phoned me that she had luckily found the nest of the Bachman's Sparrow when she was in the woods early that morning. The following day being Sunday, I could get the day off and try my luck at photographing the birds and their nest. The latter was a remarkable structure and most effectively concealed on the ground under the dry grass and not far from where all of us had been looking so persistently. The dry grass that lay all around was so much the same color as the nesting material that one had a hard time seeing the nest unless one knew just where to look. The entire outside of the little domicile was of very light straw colored Tickle Grass or Creeping Grass (*Panicum* sp.) which was arched over the top in such a fashion that the entrance was on the side. The interior was of small pieces of a darker straw-colored grass. Approaching from the south one could look some time before he was convinced that he was looking at a nest, for the entrance was to the north. A small lip ran out beyond the entrance and the edge was raised a little from the ground so that the young were well protected and down inside the nest. There were four young of about five days of age. The parent was almost always found on the nest and stuck tight until one had approached to within a few feet. It would then jump off and run rapidly along the ground with its head down and tail drooping in such a fashion that it hardly resembled a bird at all. It almost always ran into a nearby bush and, uttering a fine squeaky cry, would run back and forth amongst the bases of the weeds and the stems of the bushes. Occasionally it would return to within a few feet of the nest and again start off into the bushes as before.

Photographs were taken with the use of a blind set at about four feet. We then retreated and left the parents to care for their young. Returning just a week later, the four young were well feathered and ready to leave and this they did immediately upon my arrival at the nest. When the young jumped out, each taking a different direction, the parents nearly went wild with excitement. Both parents called and ran around with drooping wings and tail and certainly did their best to distract my attention from the young which had by this time "frozen" on the ground.

I feel quite sure that both birds share duties of feeding the young and caring for the nest as they were always present when I approached the nest and both protested vocally as well as sat around on branches not far from the nest.

KENNEDY GENERAL HOSPITAL, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.



ROOSTING OF CHIMNEY SWIFTS ON BUILDINGS

By BEN B. COFFEY

During a visit to Harlingen, Texas, October, 1944, with Mr. Irby L. Davis, well known bird authority of the Brownsville-Rio Grande border region he mentioned an instance of the flocking of Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) on a narrow nine-story building in downtown Harlingen during the previous spring. A banded Swift had been reported taken there so I undertook to learn

the correct date that the flock was present by an inquiry among banders. With a mutual interest in the migration of Chimney Swifts through Texas, our Editor had shown on Plate 6 of the September, 1944 MIGRANT, two recoveries at Harlingen. Originally banded by R. J. Fleetwood and Erwin Sturgis, these proved to be members of that flock of which Mr. Davis had told me. Dr. Wm. F. Brackmeyer of Harlingen, had been fortunate enough to secure the bands from the two Swifts mentioned and he has kindly furnished me with the following interesting information.

"About 11 a.m., on May 4, 1944, a "Texas norther" (wet) arrived, although rather late in the season. The temperature dropped from 82 to 56 degrees within an hour and went to 52 that night. At about three p.m., I noticed a flock of about a thousand Chimney Swifts milling around the nine-story Rio Grande building. Quite a few of them flew into the top or fifth story of the nearby Embee building, through open windows. In trying to get out, they would fly into the glass panes of closed windows and temporarily knock themselves out. I picked up thirty or forty and released them after they had revived. On the leg of one of these I found band number 42-147555. Upon reporting this to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it proved to have been placed by Mr. R. J. Fleetwood, at Macon, Ga., on Sept. 21, 1943. Another banded Swift, which had entered a window of the Van Buren Hotel, was killed by a cat and this one had band number 42-144604. The Wildlife Service stated that this band had been placed by Mr. Erwin Sturgis, at Blind River, Ontario, Canada, on July 15, 1943.

This flock, which presumably came from the south, hit this chilly, wet norther and stopped here. They spent the night clinging to the south side and near the top of the nine-story building, in the manner of a swarm of bees. Next morning they left as the weather turned warmer and sunny. Probably not many more than the thirty or forty above mentioned were killed. Another though smaller flock—between 200 and 300—came in during the evening three days later and these I also witnessed gathering and roosting overnight in the same spot. They came in after sundown and left early next morning. However, this time the weather was good and I did not have a chance to handle any of them. There are but few chimneys in Harlingen and these are small; I did not witness the Swifts using any of these."

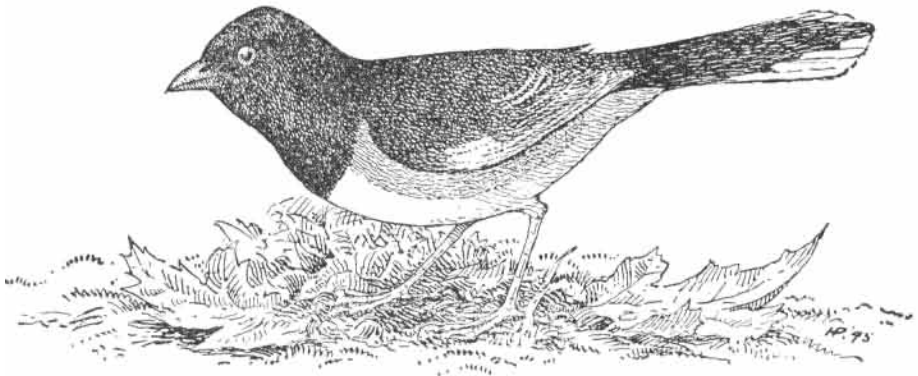
672 N. BELVEDERE, MEMPHIS 7, TENNESSEE. (At present, overseas)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Where Swifts roost, when they leave the chimneys of the United States and fly southward into chimneyless tropical climes, has been an unsolved question and one that continues to be of great interest. A good clue may be found in the above observation and would indicate that upon their northward arrival at our southern border they readily followed a winter formed habit of roosting on the face of cliffs, by clinging to the nearest approach obtainable, viz, the high brick walls of a building. Swifts doubtless winter over a considerable area in vast Amazonia and cliffs are to be found in at least a portion of this region as well as on the route to and from. Where there are no cliffs, however, they must roost in trees or other growth. In THE MIGRANT for Dec., 1936, p. 97, Captain Coffey mentions a fall flock which almost came to roost on the side of a downtown brick building in Memphis, Tenn. In *The Auk* for April, 1945, p. 275, there is mention of a species of Mexican Swift which was found roosting in numbers on the face of a cliff, behind a waterfall in the state of Vera Cruz. Just as we go to press, we are in receipt of additional information from Peru and this will be presented in our next issue.—A. F. G.

TOWHEE — BIRD OF THE BRUSHLANDS

By G. R. MAYFIELD

For more than half a century I have known and admired the "Joree", as he is called by the people of North Georgia, my native home. When a boy, I used to watch the Red-eyed Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) with his robin-red flanks, white underparts, and his shining black and white-marked upper parts; also his modest mate with her softer shades of brownish red and white. His call notes, *towhee*, *joree*, *chewink*, and the like are responsible for the onomatopoeic names applied to his kind in various parts of the United States.



RED-EYED TOWHEE (male), from a drawing by Harry P. Ijams.

His song is cheery and continuous from dawn to dusk, from February to September except for the molting season in August. These notes lingered in my memory vaguely until they came to a vivid reality in June of 1910. The incident took place on the bank of the Swannanoa River opposite Black Mountain Station in North Carolina, where I was engaged in some post-graduate studies. In the midst of my writing I became conscious of a new and exquisite bird song some hundred or more yards below my cabin on the mountain side. As I listened, these notes awakened childhood memories but I could not recognize the bird by the haunting sounds. Laying aside pencil and book, I rushed down to the lower side of the brushy clearing for fear the singer might cease or vanish from sight. But he was still there and in full view on top of a low bush—my boyhood "Joree" singing with all his heart and soul. For at least twenty glorious minutes I listened to his cheery preludes and those tremolo *chee-chee-chee-wees* and the memories of earlier spring days in Georgia came back in full measure. Every day that summer he sang for us and this helped to relieve the monotony of reading and research. Ten years later I began a serious study of bird songs and I found that individual Towhees vary widely in their songs, though all have enough in common to make them easily recognizable. Beethoven himself, master of variations for the same theme, would have reveled in the melodies of the Towhee. At Nashville, the top of Centennial Hill was found to be a favored spot for this species during the years

1921-1924 and a patient, attentive listener, though blindfolded, could have told on which side of the hill he was standing by the notes of individual birds. Each bird had his favorite singing tree and his own technique of rendering the familiar theme.

Of the Towhee, it may be said that "he is rooted to the soil" for his favorite feeding place is among the dry leaves and grasses on the ground. There he scratches noisily to the accompaniment of many *cheewink* calls, thus communicating perhaps his luck and in return, learning of the whereabouts of his fellows. Not only does this species feed upon the ground but he often nests there as well or, not far above it.

The first nests must often be built before leaves have clothed the undergrowth and in that event, it will be constructed in a depression scratched into the surface of the ground, and where it will be partially hidden by dead weeds or fallen boughs. Later on, when second nests are built, they are nearly always placed in bushes or in a growth of thick vines. This gets them up out of the path of snakes and other predators. The nests are bulky and are strongly made, consisting of leaves below, followed by vine and weed stems, bark shreds and grasses, all uniformly lined with clean grass stems and "straw". The eggs are usually four though occasionally three in first nests and the latter number is usually found in late nests. Laying begins as early as April first in Tennessee and the last nesting occasionally runs into late July. The eggs are white, thickly covered with small brown specks. The young do not take on their mature plumage until fall, meanwhile they are brownish-drab little birds with spotted breasts and quite inconspicuous.

The Red-eyed Towhee is the form found over most of Tennessee and northward but the Alabama Towhee, a closely related subspecies, has been found to occur along our southern border and from thence southward to the Gulf coast. Our Towhees are believed to be non-migratory but their numbers in winter are augmented by individuals from the north and frequently it is found at that season in flocks of twenty and even more. They join in with flocks of Cardinals, Juncos, Whitethroats and other native sparrows, and range the brushlands, woods and creek banks.

Those who have feeding shelves find Towhees to be patrons at all seasons and in that role they are peaceful and unafraid. Particularly in the male, the rich red iris stands out clearly against the black head feathers, making him deserving of that portion of his name. About our cities and towns he frequently makes his home in suburban areas and many are the phone calls that come from people to know the name of the black-headed bird that "scratches with a hop" and makes so much noise as he does so. The Towhee is truly a bird of exemplary habits and his ever cheerful disposition make him a "first citizen" in every bird community.

WINTERING OF GOLDEN EAGLES IN TENNESSEE

By WALTER R. SPOFFORD

The pages of *THE MIGRANT* record many local occurrences of the Golden Eagle, (*Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*) chiefly through the untiring efforts of Mr. Ganier in securing verification of newspaper and other reports. During recent years, such reports have become fewer, due he thinks to the fact that it has become known that the State game and conservation laws extend protection to all eagles and trappers are fearful of bringing their birds in.

A section of the Murfreesboro area, lying about forty miles southeast of Nashville, has long been known as a favored winter habitat for eagles' and during the past winter, Mr. Henry O. Todd of Murfreesboro got word of more than the usual number of occurrences. In the knobs in the vicinity of Auburntown, four eagles were reported to him as having been trapped and perhaps killed by farmers who claimed they had suffered from their depredations. More specific information was secured from the Pilot Knob section, near the Manchester pike, where in February a farmer living near the knobs gave Mr. Todd a large young Golden Eagle which he had trapped after it had been discovered eating a trapped red fox on the hillside above his home. The farmer reported that two eagles had been trapped and killed in the immediate area earlier in the winter and that two more had been seen circling over the knobs. This farmer spoke of "Brown" and of "Black" eagles and it is possible that the latter were immature Bald Eagles.

On February 18, 1945, Mr. Ganier, Mr. Todd and the writer visited the area around Pilot Knob and were rewarded by a fine view of an adult Golden Eagle circling above the head of the steep valley up which we were walking. The region is characterized by a chain of high, steep hills (knobs), rising about seven-hundred feet above the Murfreesboro plain. The slopes are covered by cedar-grown pasture lands mostly and the summits are usually devoid of trees. From the point of an eagle, it is probably country much to their liking; being relatively wild and uninhabited, the steep slopes furnishing obstructional air-currents of great aid in soaring flight, and also furnishing some "cover" for these large and conspicuous birds. The abundance of rabbits in this area provides an excellent food supply which is easily caught in such open pastureland. Furthermore, carrion is present, and we saw the dead remains of a cow, and further up the valley a calf, making acceptable food for the eagles. The farmers claim that the eagles are present in "lambing time" (February) and blame them for the disappearance of young lambs. This may be true, but it should be pointed out that Seton Gordon, in his remarkable book on the home life of the Golden Eagle in Scotland, states that in that country the eagles eat principally stillborns, and further, that with an abundance of lambs nearby, the eagles feed primarily on grouse, and some hares. Unfortunately, most of the local reports here are based on hearsay evidence, and it is hoped that in the next several years we can get some reliable information on what these winter eagles in middle Tennessee are eating.

On February 24, just a week after our visit to the area, the Pilot Knob farmer caught another eagle, a smaller, adult Golden Eagle, by placing traps around a dead 'possum not far from where the young female (?) had been

caught several weeks earlier. Through the kindness of Mr. Todd, I secured the custody of the birds for a period of observation before releasing. Inasmuch as these two eagles were as radically different as it would seem possible for them to be, within the limits of age and sex variation in this species, it seems worth while to describe their appearance.

The larger eagle weighed 14 lbs., with a folded wing length of 25½ in. and tail length of 14½ in. Presuming the bird to be a female, her plumage was generally dark brown with a distinct purple gloss, and all of her plumage was of fresh new looking feathers, without the age differences that are apparent after a molt has taken place. The flight feathers were much darker than the contour feathers. Most striking was the extensive white area forming the basal two-thirds of the tail, while the terminal brown band was 4 to 6 inches in width. The bases of the inner primaries was also clear white, so that in flight this type of bird displays an extensive white area in each wing, and a prominent white area at the base of the tail. Her feet were deep yellow, as was her cere and gape of her mandibles, and her eyes were brown. Her nape was tawny, from which the "golden" eagle gets its name. This bird would appear to be an unmolted immature, approximately one year old.

The second eagle weighed only 8 lbs., with a folded wing length of 23½ in. and a tail of 12 inches. Presuming the bird to be a male, his plumage was also brown but presented an astonishing mixture of new and very old feathers. Some were new with the purple gloss, others evidently much older, without the purple gloss, but in good condition, while some were faded, very pale, and so worn that the barbs were loose and could be, of slight support in the air. There was a small, clear white "epaulette" above each shoulder which was prominent only when the eagle was viewed from in front as he put his head down to feed. There was no white anywhere on wings or tail, which were very clearly barred in "Goshawk" fashion with brown and gray. Furthermore, without going into details, the pattern of old and new feathers in the primary and secondary remiges was such as to indicate that this eagle did not have a simple molt order such as in the hawk (*Accipiter*) or the slightly more complex order of the falcon (*F. rusticolus* and *peregrinus*). While the pattern of old and new feathers was symmetrical in each wing, yet pairs of new and old feathers alternated in a fashion not explicable in terms of the molts of other raptors which the writer has studied. The feet and cere were much paler yellow than the first bird, and his eyes were practically as red as those of a Goshawk.

It may be pointed out that a reading of readily available American literature offers no explanation of the mixture of old and new feathers in this second eagle. According to Forbush (*Birds of Massachusetts*) and Bent (*Life Histories*) the Golden eagle has a complete annual molt. The same statement is made in the recent authoritative "Handbook" of British birds by Witherby, et al. It would seem impossible to explain the plumage of the second eagle (above) on the basis of a complete annual molt. On the other hand, the account of Sewertzow (Russia) in 1885-'88, states that the molt is incomplete in any one year, and is complete only when the bird is three years old. At any one time, he states, the feathers are of three ages: new (with purple gloss), one year old, and two years old, the last mentioned being very

worn and faded. Nesting birds molt more slowly, and present more old feathers in their plumage than do non-breeding birds. The third molt is complete, according to Sewertzow, at 7 years, and a bird of this age may breed. This latter author also comments on the white "epaulettes" as being very rarely present. In a limited survey, I could find no reference to the latter in American literature, but it is figured in the plate by Naumann in Europe.

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that while the Golden Eagle apparently occurs regularly in winter along the eastern Highland Rim of Tennessee's "Middle Basin", these birds are probably for the most part, visitants from the far north, possibly inland Labrador. Giving some support to this theory may be mentioned the fact that last fall, sixteen (a record) were counted in one day passing over Hawk Mountain, in eastern Pennsylvania, in their migration southward, and that in October, 1944, Mr. Richard Pough, of The Audubon Society, saw seven passing along a ridge in western New Jersey.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, NASHVILLE, TENN.



CRESTED FLYCATCHER NESTINGS

By MAMIE KNOX

Each spring, between April 21st and May 3rd, we are apprised of the arrival of our Crested Flycatcher* by the cheerful though loud and rasping call of the male. He seems to be most happy to be back again at his old home for we have had them as nesting birds in our yard in each of the past five years and think it probable that the male at least is the same individual. His call note is unmistakable but is difficult to spell into a word though *wit-whit*, or *prrip*, uttered in a high, vibrant tone, perhaps comes near to it. At other times they give the call in a lower tone that reminds one of the croak of a rainfrog.

The nest is built each year in one of the two compartments of a nest box that is erected six feet above the ground on a pole. It is near a large china-berry tree which has a good many dead limbs, some of which extend above the nest box. These limbs were a favorite place for the male to perch while the female was bringing in and arranging the nest material. Perched there, he makes an odd picture, with his rounded crest erect, an inquisitive little eye set well back from his beak and titling his head sideways when he wishes to look upward.

Last year, it was on May 14, that I saw the first material carried into the nest. This work was all done by the female, for the male was never seen to assist in this way. He was by no means disinterested however for he seemed to accompany his mate on every trip. As she entered, he would alight on a dead limb above and encouragingly give his *wit-whit* call until she emerged for another trip.

Early morning, mid-day and late afternoon, the building of the bulky nest went on and as it neared completion I imagine she became more particular about gathering her finishing materials, such as soft feathers for lining. Each

* (*Myiarchus crinitus boreus* of the current A. O. U. check list.)

day I lifted the cover and inspected the nest. On May 18, I found that the inevitable snake skin had been discovered and brought in but not as yet tucked in around the rim. The following day it was found to have been neatly woven in place. Just why these birds always include a snake skin about the rim of their nests has long been a matter of discussion.* Adding this appurtenance seems to be the finishing touch however and I have never found eggs until this had been done.

On May 25, two creamy, purple-streaked eggs had been laid and subsequently two more added. From this time on and until the young birds were ready to leave the nest the old birds kept very quiet and one would hardly know they were still about the premises. On June 21, however, the male became noisy again and it was on the afternoon of this day that the fledglings left the nest. I never saw them back in the yard after this date but sometimes I would hear them in the trees which fringed a nearby meadow.

In the spring of 1941 a pair of Mockingbirds built their nest back of the Flycatcher's box, in a rambler rose that ran along the fence. When the Flycatchers attempted to begin their nesting they were persistently driven away by the Mockingbird and this caused them to be late at beginning. As soon, however as their pugnacious neighbor had brought off her fledglings they went to work and nested successfully. It was noted that the birds occasionally brought nest material by mistake into the other compartment until they finally had a floor covering. The male was frequently seen in the unused side while his mate was incubating. Each spring I look forward to the return of our Flycatchers for they are cheerful and interesting birds to observe.

MILAN, TENNESSEE.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Birds which nest late and in cavities, as Crested Flycatchers do, would ordinarily have their nests robbed quite frequently by snakes and flying squirrels and their practice of finishing up with a shed snake skin is rarely departed from. It would seem logical that this final touch was added to the nest to intimidate the above mentioned and perhaps other enemies, from entering. Snakes, at least during the spring season, are unsociable toward their kind, some species even preying upon others. If a snake skin is in the nest, it would be reasonable evidence to an intruder that the owner of it had been there, that perhaps the cavity was on his "regular beat", and even that the owner of it might be under the nest debris awaiting the entry of some hapless victim. Wild creatures inherently avoid entering places where they might be cornered by an enemy. Flycatchers, by posting this further notice of danger, certainly do the one thing that would help them ward off enemies against which they would otherwise be defenseless.—A.F.G.



In an early issue we hope to publish a list of holders of complete files of THE MIGRANT. Readers holding such files will kindly drop us a card so stating. We know of three members whose files lack only the March 1934 issue and they will gladly pay a dollar apiece for them. Other scarce issues are, all of 1931, March and September 1933, March and June 1934, March 1935, December 1936, March and December 1938, March 1939, June and December 1940. We would be glad to hear from those having unwanted copies of any of these.

THE ROUND TABLE

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE AT MEMPHIS:—On Sunday, March 11, 1945, 3 of the above species (*Anser albifrons gambeli*) were identified here in a flock which also included 3 Snow Geese (*Chen hyperboreus*) and about 300 Blue Geese (*Chen caerulescens*). These observations were made by Mrs. Hoyt, Miss Pauline James and the writer, using 8 power binoculars in good sunlight. The geese, presumably this flock, had arrived on March 8 and were last seen 9 days later. In watching them on March 15, at least one of the white-fronted species was again seen in the flock. The location was Mud Island which lies on the east side of the Mississippi river, at the mouth of Wolf river, from the east bank of which we were able to approach to within 100 yards of them. The island had been cleared of willows and planted in winter grass the previous fall and, although nearly covered in March by high water, there remained a narrow strip of grass upon which the geese fed. The white faces of the White-fronted Geese made them stand out from the Blues and they also appeared distinctly different in flight. At about this time, it was reported that a larger flock of geese were feeding on President's Island, a few miles downstream.—SGT. J. SOUTHGATE HOYT, Kennedy General Hospital, Memphis, Tenn.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The above is the first definite record of White-fronted Geese in Tennessee although it had been expected that they should occur along the Mississippi as a rare and erratic transient. Many of them winter on the Louisiana-Texas Gulf coast, from whence their spring migration route follows a northwesterly course through the plains states to their nesting grounds in and about Alaska.—A.F.G.

NOTES FROM THE MEMPHIS AREA.—The season has been unduly mild with more than normal rainfall since the last week in October and this has limited the amount of field work that could be done.

Seven miles from the heart of the city, near the city limits and adjacent to the new Kennedy General Hospital, is a tract of land known as King's Woods. Several types of habitats are here represented, including second growth timber and open woods, sedge grass patches, cane thickets, hedgerows, small plowed fields and grass-plots, all drained by large ditches. This territory was found to be a favored spot during the winter months for many of the native sparrows, including the Swamp, Fox, White-throated, White-crowned, Lincoln's, Song and Field. The White-throat, White-crowned and Song were heard singing off and on all through the winter and the Fields were heard singing from mid-February on. The Lincoln's was a frequent visitor to a feeding shelf. On March 14, a Bachman's had joined the aggregation and was heard singing on that date.

Along the Mississippi river, Great Blue Herons were seen on several occasions, from the bluffs of Riverside Park, as they fed on the mudflats of President's Island. A flock of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, varying in numbers from 40 to 60, made the northern tip of this island their headquarters, arriv-

ing after our Christmas census. Flocks of geese were first observed on March 8. (These are described in the preceding note.)

Just on the outskirts of the city, a male Pileated Woodpecker was found to be roosting regularly during early October in a large sycamore. The roost hole was on the west side, approximately 40 feet above the ground. The bird was observed coming to the roost between 5:10 and 5:30 (c.w.t.) each evening.

To date, a few of our spring migrants have arrived ahead of schedule. On Feb. 23, the first Purple Martins arrived at Mr. and Mrs. Guth's nesting boxes. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, March 17 (Miss Pauline James). A Chimney Swift on March 18 and 35 on March 24. 150 Cedar Waxwings in Overton Park on March 19 (Keeton). A singing male Sycamore Warbler on March 25 (Sgt. and Mrs. Hoyt and Miss James). La. Water-thrush, March 28 and 31 (James, Keeton). A Philadelphia Vireo on March 31, was observed at close range in good light (James, Keeton). An ovenbird, March 31. A first year Male Orchard Oriole was recorded April 2 (James).—SGT. J. SOUTHGATE HOYT and LUTHER KEETON, Memphis, Tenn.

PRAIRIE HORNED LARKS NESTING IN WEST TENNESSEE: At the suggestion of our editor, the writer made an effort to ascertain whether or not the Prairie Horned Lark (*Otocoris alpestris praticola*) nested in this northeast corner of the State. Messrs. Coffey and Monk have previously reported them during the breeding season in West Tennessee, the former at the Memphis airport and the latter in May at Milan, both instances being recorded in this journal.

Throughout the months of February and March of the years 1943 and 1944, these birds were seen and their notes heard at various places on the Halls Army Air Field near here. On April 17, 1944, I listened to the song of one and surmised that it might be a nesting bird. One month later, May 17, 1944, time permitted a more thorough search of the region and three pairs of them were found in definitely established territories. Although these birds could be found singing in their respective areas at most anytime, lack of sufficient time for a search for the nests was the only thing which prevented their discovery.

In early June, three young birds were found alongside of one of the Base roads although no adults were then in evidence. But on July 17, 1944, an adult Prairie Horned Lark was observed feeding a young one. The writer watched them for perhaps twenty minutes from a distance of twenty-five feet or even closer. Although the adult busily gathered and carried food to the young one, the latter occasionally was seen to pick among the dirt and gravel of the roadside. This young bird was unquestionably of a second brood or nesting for there is no doubt that earlier broods were raised here on the Army Air Field. The above data establishes the fact that the Prairie Horned Lark is a breeding bird in West Tennessee and is perhaps a permanent resident. At the present writing, Nov. 29, 1944, these Larks are much in evidence and were noted in September and October as well.—BURT L. MONROE, Captain, U. S. Army Air Field, Dyersburg, Tenn.

NOTES FROM REELFOOT LAKE: For several days in early May, 1944, the writer was the guest of Dr. Pickering at his clubhouse on Blue Basin, at Reelfoot Lake, where the unusual bird-life of the region was enjoyed to the

fullest. On May 1 a nest of the Bald Eagle was seen to contain three large young, whose heads could be seen above the nest edge. The old eagle flew around in some excitement, and once as she perched in a tall tree she was "dive-bombed" repeatedly by a pair of Crows.

On May 4 an Osprey was seen just below the biological station boardwalk; it is possible that this bird nests around the lake, but his nest has not been recorded. Barred Owls and Red-shouldered Buzzards were common as usual, while a Red-tail was seen at the same location as recorded the two previous years. Two young Great-horned Owls were seen near where they have nested previous years. A new record, however, was the nest of a Barn Owl at Gray's Landing, on the west side of Blue Lake. At night the owl was watched as she dropped in to feed her young in a hollow tree. When she saw the observers below, she sounded a repeated high pitched scold "cleek-cleek," or "clic-clic-clic!" Perched further away a peculiar call was traced to her. This was a nighthawk-like "snarrk," difficult to describe.

Although the main heronry was not visited, some deep water wading at Otter Basin revealed that Great Blue Herons, American Egrets (and cormorants?) are again using "Little Cranetown." On the lake a few Gadwalls and Blue-winged Teal were seen, and the same small number of Scaup, and one Ring-neck. Wood Duck were present in the the wooded swamps and nearly two dozen Semipalmated Plovers fed in the wide muddy fields. A general bird list recorded over 100 species, including two Swainson's Warblers and one Golden-wing. The Veery was heard in song.—WALTER R. SPOFFORD, Nashville, Tenn.

WOODPECKERS FEEDING ON WILD GRAPES: The presence of a wild grape vine, loaded with fruit, at this time of the year, November, furnishes a fine source of material for bird study. Having discovered several in a wooded area near the Air Base, the writer has visited them on numerous occasions. A sizeable number of birds, including Hermit Thrushes, Fox Sparrows, Robins, Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings and many others, are always in evidence and does not ordinarily appear to be worthy of much note but when they are accompanied by four species of Woodpeckers simultaneously, it may warrant a brief comment.

On November 24, 1944, I was sitting near a tall tree, the top of which was covered with the vines of the wild grape. Two Flickers were there feeding along with other birds when they were joined by a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Seconds later, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker came in to swing upside down on a bunch of grapes as it picked them off. But when these were joined by a Pileated Woodpecker (*Ceophloeus pileatus pileatus*) the feathered gathering was thereby raised to a high point of interest.

The smaller woodpeckers did not hesitate to swing from the grape bunches but the large Pileated made a weird sight by grasping a vine in each foot and hanging upside down as it picked off the fruit. The entire scene of the many birds feeding here, with the woodpeckers dangling upside down, was remindful of the spirit and action depicted by Audubon in many of his paintings.—BURT L. MONROE, Captain, Army Air Field, Dyersburg, Tenn.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CHIMNEY SWIFTS: Swift banders become familiar with some traits of their birds that, although fully recorded in

the special literature on the subject, may be of interest here. Handling the birds is not nearly as dirty a job as the common dislike for soot and its association with chimneys would suggest. The banders' hands become only slightly blackened even after handling many hundreds of Swifts. They are gentle creatures that hardly struggle while they are held and the band is applied, they are totally inexperienced with the dangers that lurk on the earth's surface and of which other birds have become wary. Their tarsi are short and the tiny feet are often closed like a fist and buried in the plumage or one foot gripping the other. When children are around during banding, they delight in decorating themselves and others with live Swifts by hanging them on hats or clothing where they may stay a quarter of an hour if the person is fairly quiet. Then there are the "squealers", individual birds that with a shrill little call set many others into action. The banders use them to stir up a packed mass of cowering Swifts at the bottom of the trapping cage to prevent any birds being smothered. As a rule Swifts are quite late in going to roost and swirl out of their chimney at the break of day. This first impulse to leave must be used to trap them or else a portion of the flock will be reluctant to come out and thereby test the ingenuity of the banders to get it into the trap by the use of spotlights, clanging noises or even a little smoke. On cold days, particularly if they are dark and cloudy, Swifts may stay in till late or not come out at all, and if a bright day turns unpleasant, they will flock and "turn in" at unusual times. Several such cases have been reported in this vicinity during the spring flocking around the middle of April. I know of one instance where a cold raw temperature caused a thousand Swifts to enter a chimney in Nashville at high noon one April 11th, and they were trapped and banded the next day.—ALFRED CLEBSCH, Clarksville, Tenn.

PHILADELPHIA VIREOS IN MIGRATION: On September 23, 1944, I had found a small group of migrating Warblers in a little swamp of overcup oaks and willows in the Cumberland River bottoms when an unfamiliar song came from rather low regions. It had sweet richness and was plainly of Vireo tone color. Directly a deep-yellow fronted bird turned up among the higher Warblers swinging as nimbly as any of them from branch to branch. It proved to be a Philadelphia Vireo and made with the singing male the first of this species discovered in nine years of watching the fall migration. Careful search showed three more of these rare, small Vireos in the same swamp. The hooked bill, the thick, bluish colored feet, and the yellow under tail coverts aided more in identification than the distinction between Vireo and Warbler behavior.—ALFRED CLEBSCH, Clarksville, Tenn.

GULLS ON THE TENNESSEE RIVER:—The series of high dams built by the T.V.A. on the Tennessee River have become a popular wintering place for Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. The churning waters below, result in injured or temporarily stunned fish which form easy prey. Numerous dead fish are also thrown out of the power houses where they have become lodged on the strainers. The lock walls and concrete power house substructures form a convenient resting place between flights and the latter afford a safe roosting place at night. On February 27, 1945, while passing through the locks of the Guntersville, Ala., dam, I counted a score of Herring Gulls resting on the lock walls or flying nearby and across the river, on the power house founda-

tion, were about 80 more gulls, the identify of which, as between the above mentioned species, could not be determined. I was told that numbers had been present there all winter. Similar reports have come to me from several of the other dams.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

A DUCK HAWK EYRIE ON THE TENNESSEE RIVER:—On February 27, 1945, the writer observed a Duck Hawk or Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) perched on its nesting ledge on Paint Rock Bluff, overhanging the Tennessee River. This site is eleven miles northwest of Guntersville, Ala. The bird was viewed from the deck of a steamboat as it passed upstream, a few hundred feet away and with 8-power binoculars, its markings could plainly be seen. As the boat approached, one of them was seen flying about the face of the cliff and this may or may not have been the same bird seen perched as I came opposite. On the nest ledge were two loose boulders, behind which there was probably a suitable place for the eggs. These boulders, on one of which the bird was perched, were whitened with excreta as well as the face of the cliff just below, thus giving evidence of constant usage. Mr. A. H. Howell in his "Birds of Alabama", 1924, p. 140, mentions the Ft. Deposit cliff (5 mi. N-N-W of Guntersville) as a nesting site. He wrote that "at Ft. Deposit, Marshall Co., Ala., on the Tennessee River, I saw two Duck Hawks, June 18, 1913, and was informed by a resident of the locality that the birds had nested for many years in the high cliffs along the river. One of the birds observed was flying over the river and the other was flushed at dusk from the face of the cliff." Paint Rock Bluff is a massive and spectacular cliff that rises perhaps 300 feet and immediately above the water. Its name is derived from its varied shades of sepia and brown, surmounted with an ever-green brow of green cedar. The cliff faces south. The nest ledge would be quite inaccessible without the use of extensive rigging and tackle.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

SPRING MIGRATION AT NASHVILLE:—Due to an unusually warm March, early vegetation advanced rapidly and some of the early migrants came earlier than usual while early nesters began nidification prematurely.—Mrs. Amelia Laskey reports the following migration data: March 6, Brown Thrasher, Chipping Sparrow 3, and Phoebe 2; 3/16, Vesper Sparrow 2, La. Water-thrush 2; 3/17, Bachman's Sparrow; 3/25, White-eyed Vireo; 3/26, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Black-and-white Warbler (both common); 3/29, Chimney Swift (flock of 12 at 7 a. m., Ward-Belmont school); 3/30, Red-eyed Vireo and Solitary Sandpiper. Her March nest records were: Bluebirds, first egg laid 3/11, in another nest 5 eggs hatched 3/28 and on 3/26, 35 of 56 nest boxes in Warner Park were found to contain eggs; Carolina Chickadee, on 3/24, first egg laid of a set of 6; Red-eyed Towhee, first of 3 eggs laid on 3/24; Phoebe, on 3/30, 3 nests with 4, 4, and 1 eggs found; Brown Thrasher, on 3/30 the first 2 eggs of a set had been laid and Robin, 2 eggs on 3/29 and 1 on 3/31.—G. R. Mayfield reported Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Purple Martin, La. Water Thrush and Black-and-white Warbler on 3/24; White-eyed Vireo on 3/25; Chimney Swift on 3/27; Sycamore Warbler on 3/28 and Bachman's Sparrow on 3/31.—W. R. Spofford reported Woodcock on 2/19 and heard its twilight flight song on 3/12; Bachman's Sparrow (several in song) and many Vesper Sparrows on 3/24; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher,

Cowbird and Black-and-white Warbler on 3/25. On 3/26, the Sparrow Hawk nesting in his yard had begun to incubate and a Bluebird began the following day.—Dr. Katherine Anderson reported a La. Water-thrush on March 16.—A.F.G.



REVIEWS

THE BIRDS OF GEORGIA, A preliminary Checklist and Bibliography of Georgia Ornithology. Compiled by Earle R. Greene, William Griffin, Eugene P. Odum, Herbert L. Stoddard and Ivan R. Tompkins. (Pub. for Ga. Ornith. Society, by Univ. of Ga. Press, Athens, Ga. \$2.00).—An annotated distributional list of the 400 species and subspecies of birds that have been recorded in Georgia covers 42 of the 111 pages in this useful reference book. This list is followed by a hypothetical list of 23 pieces. (Georgia's avian population is considerably augmented by its oceanic coastline). Thirty-two pages are devoted to a bibliography of all known papers that have been published on the birds of the State and the value of this section is measurably increased by its annotated form. An historical narrative, by Dr. Eugene Murphy, outlines the activities and writings of those who have been active in developing Georgia's ornithology. The excellent state map which is included, shows counties, topographic divisions, and the points most frequently referred to in the text. This is a feature that should be included in all such lists and state bird books. The volume is bound in cloth, printed on good paper and the typography is excellent. The reviewer's only criticism is the lack of a condensed species index which would save time for the user. The work of compilation was entrusted to a committee of five careful and conscientious Georgia ornithologists and they have here done a splendid job, thus laying a firm basis upon which to build further. The checklist is to be used to supplement the standard bird guides and handbooks and should be in the hands of all bird students interested in distribution.—A.F.G.



NOTES, HERE AND THERE

The chairman of our Endowment Fund Committee, Mr. B. H. Abernathy, announces the recent receipt of forty dollars which was raised and contributed to that fund by our Memphis chapter. When \$450 has been raised, it will be matched by an equal amount being held in trust and from there on to our first thousand should be an easy step. The T.O.S. has proven itself to be a going institution with an expanding program and it is therefore a worthy cause for donations and for legacies. Mr. Abernathy would like to get in touch with prospective donors; his address is Hobbs Road, Nashville 5, Tenn.

Notice of a proposed constitutional change, to make the payment of fifty dollars cover the dues of Life Members, will be presented at the annual meeting of the Society at Nashville, on May 6, 1945, and will be finally acted upon at a subsequent time. Any comments on the proposed action should be addressed to our Treasurer who will in turn transmit them to our President. Meanwhile, Life Memberships will be tentatively accepted at the rate mentioned.

THE MIGRANT

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LOST, IN THE NATION'S ARMED FORCES

Pfc. AUSTIN W. BURDICK, Germantown, Shelby County, Tenn.
Reported missing in action, December 18, 1944, in Belgium;
later, officially reported as killed in this action.

1st Sgt. LEWIS FRELAN GODDARD, Fountain City, Tenn.
Killed in action in France, August 7, 1944.

Pvt. CONRAD HASTON JAMISON, JR., Nashville, Tenn.
Killed in action in Germany, February 25, 1945.

2nd Lieutenant JOE T. MASON, JR., Memphis, Tenn.
Killed in action, in Germany, February 18, 1945.

Sgt. BENJAMIN C. WELCH, JR., Memphis, Tenn.
Killed in France (with the Rangers), October 30, 1944.



It is with poignant sorrow that we must record the passing of these splendid young men and fellow members. They were all promising young ornithologists and the Society as well as their friends will keenly feel their untimely loss. In a future issue, there will be published a biographical sketch of each.

GLENHAVEN

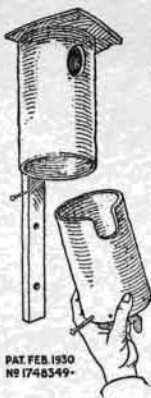
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