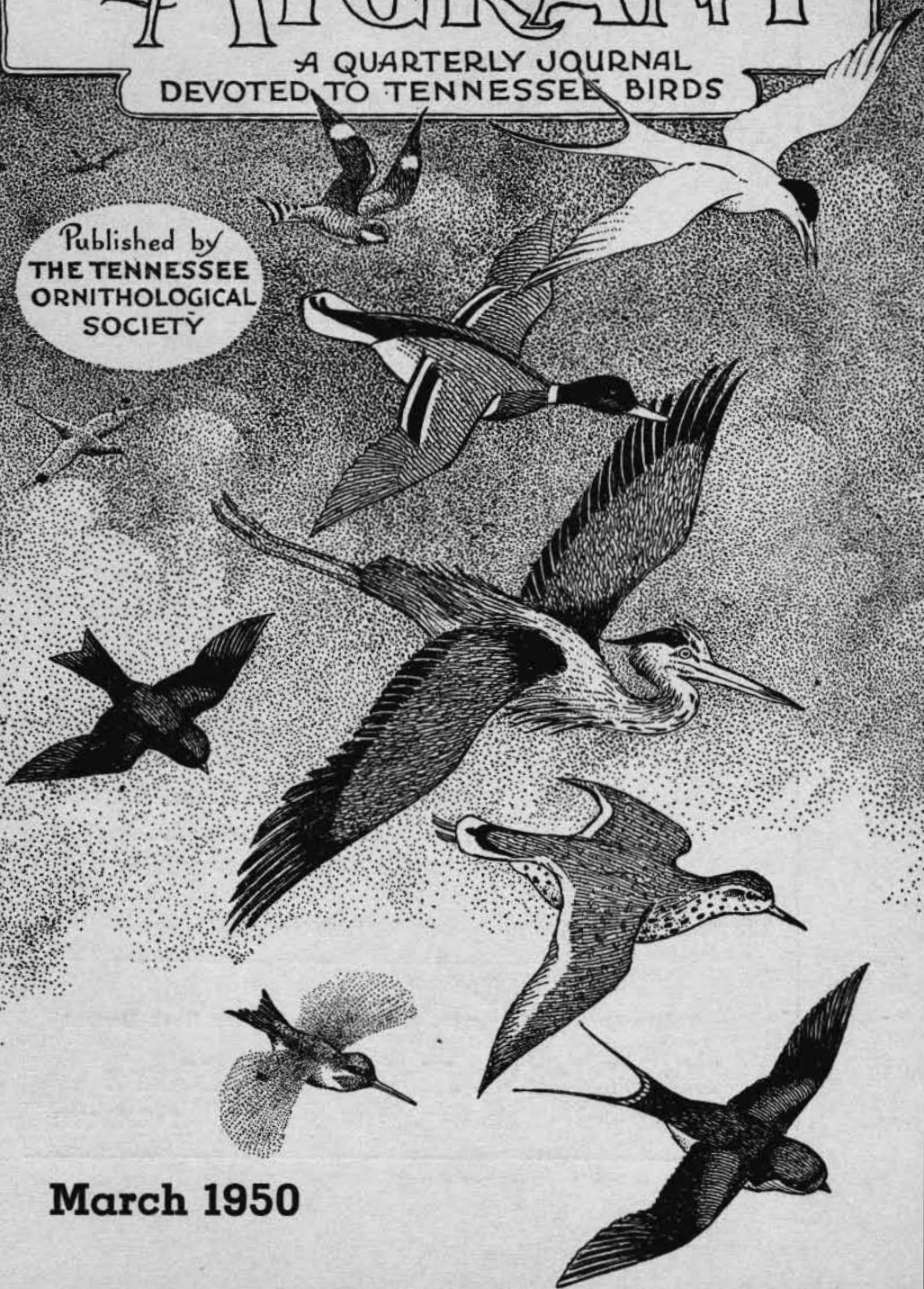


# THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL  
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

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# THE MIGRANT

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## GEESE ON HIWASSEE ISLAND

By DALE WILLIAM YAMBERT

Prior to the late 1800's the Tennessee River system furnished a bountiful wintering-ground for waterfowl which came into the area during fall migration from the Mississippi Valley. Since the Tennessee River maintains roughly an east-west route, it served as a diversion channel for birds traveling between the Mississippi basin and the coastal areas of the Southeast.

As the Tennessee Valley became more thickly settled, the amount of hunting in this area became greater, and more important, the waterfowl food supply was diminished by the general practice of pasturing cattle and hogs in the crop lands following harvest. The combination of these decimating factors resulted in continually decreasing numbers of waterfowl wintering in the valley. This decline continued into the 1930's.

Following the establishment of the TVA in 1933, much of the land bordering mainstream reservoirs was removed from private hands. Although hunting was not prohibited on all such land, the fact that crop lands were no longer so completely cleaned by the harvest-cattle-hog cycle created numerous feeding places for geese and ducks along the river, somewhat less hazardous than in previous times.

The strategic location of refuges makes it possible to obtain maximum beneficial results for wildlife at a minimum of cost and labor and with a minimum size and number of the refugee areas. Accordingly the State of Tennessee entered into contract agreement with the TVA whereby TVA would create refuge areas scattered throughout the valley, which would be maintained, planted, and patrolled by State personnel.

To date refuges have been set aside on 115,000 acres of reservoir lands through the cooperative action of the state conservation departments, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and TVA. As a result of this, movements of waterfowl through the valley are increasing.

In addition to their use as available feeding and resting places for migrating geese, these refuges, if properly developed to their full capacity, will in the very near future be able to support much of the waterfowl population that has up till now been wintering on the fast-deteriorating southern coastal marshes.

One of the refuges, established on January 10, 1940, is the Hiwassee Island Game Refuge. Hiwassee Island, known locally as Benham's Island or Big Island, is a 200-acre delta formation located at the junction of the

Hiwassee and Tennessee Rivers near Dayton, Tennessee. In addition to the island proper, the refuge includes nearly 7,500 acres of land and water, which serve as buffer areas to supplement use of the island itself. These lands comprise stretches of water and shoreland extending approximately two miles along the three channels radiating from the island, along the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers.

Before the establishment of the State Game Refuge, TVA had done some experimental tree plantings on the island. These thirteen-year-old plantations of Loblolly and Shortleaf Pine now afford excellent cover and windbreaks on the flat island which is practically devoid of any other woody cover.

Under the terms originally establishing the refuge, the island was to be farmed by tenants on a share crop basis. Due to the presence of canals, occasional Indian mounds, and scattered tree and brush stands, only about 160 acres of the total 200 are tillable. As rental for his agricultural use of the land the tenant left a portion of his plantings—crops suitable as food for geese—unharvested. An example: for the 1948-49 wintering season there were left twenty acres of milo maize, forty acres of soy beans, and twenty acres of barley. The activities of the tenant farming the island are limited to agricultural rights. No one is permitted to live on the island; no hunting or trapping are allowed and the grazing of any livestock is forbidden.

During the 1940-41 season, eighteen Canada geese wintered on the refuge. Each succeeding year the goose population has nearly doubled until the past winter of 1949-50, when censuses of the island yielded a total population estimate of nearly 5,000 geese.

In spite of the establishment of buffer areas on the nearby mainland, the main bulk of the winter flock use the island for both feeding and roosting. Daylight excursions of small flocks can be seen leaving the island, but there is no general exodus of the entire flock to outside grazing lands in the morning and a return to the refuge at night as is generally the case on the smaller refuges in the Northern States.

In its present state of food production the island has reached its carrying capacity as evidenced by the fact that the geese have eaten nearly 100 percent of the available food during their winter stay.

The passage of the Pittman-Robertson Bill, in 1949, furnishing Federal aid to state wildlife restoration projects, has made it possible for the State to take over the operation of the refuge, and to maintain a full time project assistant on the area, and to abandon the tenant farming system. Managed solely for the purpose of waterfowl food production, the refuge can be operated more efficiently. Crops of lesser food value will be eliminated, and extensive areas now occupied by a stand of worthless sedge grass will be sown to a permanent stand of rye grass, valuable to the geese for grazing. Through this more intensive program of food production the island may be expected to support 10,000 birds through a normal winter. In all probability this population will be reached within two more years.

Future policy to be followed in the administration of this and other refuges is as yet undecided. On condition that a peak has been reached in the fluctuating waterfowl population, these refuges of the Tennessee Valley system may be considered sufficient. If, however, this concentration of geese continues to increase at the same rate it has over the past decade, these refuges cannot be expected to support permanently such numbers of geese. If this latter condition proves true, any excess numbers of geese must either be attracted to other refuges or the people of the State must be allowed to harvest them by hunting. While this practice may seem at first to be directly opposed to conservation ethics, actually a much higher total population can be maintained if excess birds are removed from the flock. On the other hand, if the valley becomes filled by an ever increasing population of wintering geese, the feeding areas will soon be destroyed by over use, as has happened to the formerly used wintering grounds of the southern Atlantic and the Gulf coasts.

FOUNTAIN CITY, TENN.

## THE FALL MIGRATION IN THE TENNESSEE RIVER IN ALABAMA

By HENRY M. STEVENSON AND THOMAS A. IMHOF

In several trips to the Tennessee River Valley in the late summer and fall months the writers have been impressed by certain features of the fall migration there. In the belief that observers at other points on this river may be interested in comparing our experiences with their own, these data are presented.

Stevenson has made field trips at Florence intermittently from August to December, 1940; in early September, 1949; and in early July, 1949. He has also worked at Decatur in early September, 1943; and at Gunterville in late June and on October 26 and 27, 1948. Imhof spent an entire day in the field around Decatur on August 29, 1949, compiling a list of 87 species, and made other trips there on November 9, 1948, and October 15, 1949. His five years of experience with shore birds on Long Island well qualify him for the unusual observations reported in this paper.

Certain contrasts with the fall migration in other parts of the South are strikingly apparent. Not only is this true of the waterfowl and shore birds—which are attracted by the abundance of suitable habitat and benefit from the sanctuary offered by the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge—but some other transients as well. Swallows, Swifts, and Nighthawks are regularly abundant around September 1, not sporadically as in other localities. Gulls and terns may also be numerous on occasions. By contrast, most warblers, vireos, thrushes, and many other arboreal transients seem less frequent than in other parts of north Alabama, even in well wooded habitats.

In some cases, when the direction of flights could be determined,



it was noted that each species traveled invariably in a given direction, which was often just opposite to the direction followed by some other species. Inasmuch as the Tennessee River flows chiefly in a westward direction through Alabama, species following it flew either east or west, rather than south, at these points.

The following list by no means contains all species recorded in fall at these localities, but includes the most interesting or unusual transients. The White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) and the Yellow-throat (*Geothlypis trichas*), although very abundant on the river banks in late summer, are omitted because they seem almost as common there at the height of the breeding season.

#### Annotated List

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*). Five seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949, may have been early fall transients, although the breeding of the species there is not unlikely.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). At Decatur on an overcast day, October 15, 1949, eighty birds were counted, and all of those in the group flight were going upstream.

American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*). One seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949, may have been an early fall transient, as the species is not known to breed in Alabama.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*). On October 15, 1949, at Decatur, a flock of twenty-nine was heard and then seen dropping in from the overcast. From all indications they had been flying due south. They were apparently among the first geese to reach Wheeler Refuge that fall. On November 9, 1948, more than 300 were seen on the south bank of the Tennessee River.

Snow Goose (*Chen hyperborea*). About forty of these "wavies" were seen among the other geese at the Wheeler Refuge on November 9, 1948. Refuge personnel say that this and the next species stop there regularly each fall and that they have been seen arriving out of the northeast.

Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). With the Snow Geese mentioned above, 25 of the present species were noted.

Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*). The earliest arrivals in fall were forty recorded at Decatur, October 15, 1949, and others at Guntersville, October 27, 1945.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*). At Decatur, on October 15, 1949, 97 birds were counted, and on November 9, 1948, about 225 were estimated to be present.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*). At Wheeler Refuge four seen on October 15, 1949; and on November 9, 1948, there were ten. Evidently this bird is not so common as other tip-up ducks in the Tennessee Valley in fall.

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*). At least forty-seven were counted at Decatur, August 29, 1949—a surprisingly large number on so early a date. About twenty were still present on October 15.

Baldpate (*Mareca americana*). Early arrivals were seen at Decatur, October 15, 1949 (22), and Guntersville, October 27, 1945 (2).

Shoveller (*Spatula clypeata*). Two birds at Wheeler Refuge, October 15, 1949, are the only ones we have seen in the Valley in fall.

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*). A flock of eleven at Decatur, October 15, 1949, constitutes the earliest known arrival date for Alabama.

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). Three were seen flying upstream together near Decatur, apparently in migration, October 15, 1949.

Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus hudsonius*). One was seen with the Cooper's Hawks mentioned above.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). Single individuals, probably migrating, have been seen at Florence, September 6, 1948; and at Decatur, September 2, 1943, and October 15, 1949.

Sora (*Porzana carolina*). One was recorded at Florence, August 28, 1940. Near Decatur three were seen on September 2, 1943, and one on October 15, 1949.

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*). The only records are near Decatur: four on September 2, 1943, and fifteen on August 29, 1949.

Black-bellied Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*). Twenty-two were seen in one slough at Wheeler Refuge, October 15, 1949. This is one of a very few records for the interior of Alabama. All field marks were noted—typical plover shape and actions, conspicuous white areas in wings and tail, and typical "quee-er-ee" call note.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). Although not especially common, this species was seen in small numbers on most of the trips in August and early September.

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*). Status similar to that of the Spotted Sandpiper.

Greater Yellow-legs (*Totanus melanoleucus*). Our only records are near Decatur in 1949: eleven on August 29, and twelve on October 15.

Lesser Yellow-legs (*Totanus melanotos*). Although irregular and occurring in small numbers around Florence, this species appears to be common in the fall at Decatur. On August 29, 1949, 105 were counted, with a single flock containing 80 individuals. Fifteen were found on October 15, 1949, and three on November 9, 1948.

American Knot (*Chalidris canutus*). Three seen by Imhof at Decatur, August 29, 1949, are without precedent in the interior of Alabama. These birds were rather large (size of Killdeer), with a color pattern very similar to the Semipalmated Sandpiper's, except for a small amount of white at the base of the tail. They were rather heavy-set, silent birds with medium-sized bills.

Least Sandpiper (*Pisobia minutilla*). A rather common fall transient in August and September. At least forty were present around Decatur on August 29, 1949, and a smaller number on other trips there and at Florence. Three seen at Florence, December 22, 1942, were probably wintering, and the same may apply to a flock of sixteen at Decatur, November 9, 1948.

Red-backed Sandpiper (*Erolia alpina*). Not only the earliest record for the State, but the only inland record for Alabama, is that of ten seen by

Imhof at Wheeler Refuge, October 15, 1949. These birds, seen in three different places, were easily identified by their typical lead-gray color, slight droop to the bill, and very characteristic call note.

**Pectoral Sandpiper (*Pisobia melanotos*)**. One of the latest and most common of the shore birds in this region. Our earliest date is August 20, at Decatur. The greatest numbers listed were on Decatur field trips: twenty-seven on September 2, 1943, and ten on August 29, 1949. Late birds were seen at Florence, October 5, 1940; Decatur, October 15, 1949 (2); and Guntersville, October 27, 1945.

**Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)**. Our only record is that of eight found near Decatur, August 29, 1949. (Other records in the interior of Alabama are at Leighton and near Birmingham).

**Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*)**. Two were seen near Decatur, August 29, 1949, and contrasted in the field with both species of Yellow-legs. The only other Alabama record also comes from the Tennessee River Valley—four seen by F. W. McCormack at Leighton, August 17 to September 6, 1892 (Howell, *Birds of Alabama*, p. 98).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Ereunetes pusillus*)**. Considering the usual scarcity of this species in the interior, it is surprising that as many as seventy-five should have been found at Decatur, August 29, 1949. Another was seen there on September 1, 1943, and fifteen on October 15, 1949.

**Western Sandpiper (*Ereunetes maurii*)**. Two seen at Decatur on August 29, 1949, constitute the only inland occurrence in the State except at Birmingham.

**Sanderling (*Crocethia alba*)**. The record of two seen near Decatur, August 29, 1949, and six on October 15, 1949, are among the few for the interior of Alabama.

**Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)**. The only record for the State is that of a bird seen by Imhof on White Springs Slough in the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge near Decatur, October 15, 1949. This bird was collected on October 22 by Lawrence Givens, Refuge Manager and the skin will be sent to the U. S. National Museum.

**Ring-tailed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)**. Very early arrivals were seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949 (2-; and near Florence, September 6, 1948.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**. Among forty or more white terns seen flying downstream near Florence, September 6, 1948, at least eight proved to be of this species, others being too distant for positive identification. There are few other records for the interior of the State.

**Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)**. One of the few records for the interior of Alabama is that of one seen at Decatur, September 1, 1943.

**Black Tern (*Chlidonias nigra*)**. Apparently irregular, but common at times. Found in good numbers at Florence, September 6, 1948 (17), and near Decatur, August 29, 1949 (35). Single birds were seen at the latter station on September 1 and 2, 1943. Like the other terns and gulls, these birds were flying downstream (westward).

**Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)**. The migration of this species is one



of the spectacles of the late summer months in the Tennessee Valley—at least at Florence. The numbers increase in August, and large flights may be seen by early September. Our latest record is of three near Florence, September 21, 1940, although the species has been recorded as late as October 8 at Leighton (Howell, *Birds of Alabama*, p. 180). Along the Tennessee River ten miles west of Florence at least 220 were counted in several loose flocks on the afternoon of September 6, 1948, the first flock containing approximately seventy individuals. Without exception these birds flew upstream (eastward), although flocks seen the next day several miles north of the River flew directly toward it.

**Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*).** Although not recorded in extremely large numbers, this species was often seen flying upstream, occasionally associated with flocks of Cliff Swallows. At Central, however (several miles north of the Tennessee River), a flock of about 20 was flying due north on September 7, 1948.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*).** Hummingbirds are noticeably more frequent along the Tennessee River banks than elsewhere, and seem to be migrating there, although the direction was not determined conclusively in most cases. Four birds observed on August 29, 1949, at Decatur, were going downstream. The migration has been detected at Florence as early as July 9 (possibly June 27 at Guntersville) and lasts at least until October 5. The numbers are small, not more than nine having been seen on a single field trip. On September 1, 1943, at least eight were seen on an island in the Tennessee River at Decatur, where trees were few and small, and only eleven other species of land birds were recorded.

**Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*).** Occasionally seen in migrating flocks in late August and early September. The number of individuals were small except for two occasions: twenty near Florence, September 6, 1948; and sixty at Decatur, August 29, 1948. On the latter date the species was migrating downstream, one flock numbering forty-nine individuals.

? **Flycatcher (*Empidonax* sp.?).** Small flycatchers of one or more species are seen in fair numbers in the Tennessee Valley in fall. One seen on an island in the River at Decatur, September 1, 1943, showed the typical markings and behavior of the Least Flycatcher (*E. minimus*), but since it was silent and not collected, its identity remains in question.

**Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*).** Occasionally seen in considerable numbers, the highest estimates being eighty-five at Decatur, August 29, 1949, and fifty at Florence, August 26, 1940. About twenty-five seen at Florence, September 5, 1948, along with three other species of swallows (*Bank*, *Rough-winged*, *Barn*), were flying downstream (westward) even though a wind of more than twenty miles per hour blew from the southwest.

**Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*).** Although 155 were recorded at Decatur, August 29, 1949, Bank Swallows have not otherwise been found

in large numbers. The direction of flight is westward, but perhaps not invariably.

Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*). Definitely the most abundant swallow in August, but seen in only small numbers in early September. About 600 were listed at Decatur, August 29, 1949; and over forty on a trip of one and one-half hours at Florence, August 19, 1940. Apparently some of the birds fly upstream, others downstream. Fourteen were seen migrating at Florence as early as July 1, 1940.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). Probably the most regular of the transient swallows, as it is seldom missed on a field trip in late August or early September. Some have been recorded as flying westward, but in other cases the direction of flight was undetermined. Large numbers (about 100) were seen only at Decatur, August 29, 1949.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*). Irregular, but common on two occasions—thirty seen near Florence, September 6, 1948, when many unidentified swallows were probably of the same species; and seventy at Decatur, August 29, 1949. The direction of its migration was invariably eastward. Although it may be merely coincidental, four species of swallows were seen flying westward in mixed flocks on September 5, 1948, and Martins were also present, but no Cliff Swallows were seen that day.

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*). One of the least common of the swallows in late August and early September, Martins are probably more common transients earlier in the summer. Small numbers were migrating near Florence on July 9 and 11, 1949, those on the former date flying upstream.

Long-billed Marsh Wren (*Telmatodytes palustris*). An early fall transient was seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949. This appears to be the only fall record for the Tennessee Valley in recent years, which is rather strange in view of the spring records at Florence. Probably it is to be correlated with the scarcity of sedges and cattails.

Short-billed Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*). Early fall arrivals were recorded at Decatur, August 29, 1949, and September 2, 1943 (4); and at Florence, September 7, 1948.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*). Fair numbers may be seen in migration along the Tennessee River in late summer. There is some evidence that the migration begins in early July, if not late June, but the presence of breeding birds makes this point difficult to determine. The greatest numbers were recorded near Florence, September 6, 1948 (17), and near Decatur, September 2, 1943 (12).

American Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*). The earliest known record for the state is that of three seen near Decatur, October 15, 1949. On November 9, 1948, twenty-two were present.

Black and White Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*). Fair numbers may be seen in wooded places along the Tennessee River in any late summer month. At Guntersville one was seen in a small flock of mixed transients as early as June 27, 1945, and several were migrating along the Tennessee River near Florence, July 9, 1949.

Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*). One seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949, constitutes the earliest fall arrival for the State. Another, on October 27, 1945, at Guntersville, is the latest record for the Tennessee Valley.

Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*). One seen at Florence on October 5, 1940, is among the few ever seen in Alabama.

Parula Warbler (*Parula americana*). Small numbers apparently follow the Tennessee River in migration, beginning as early as late June (June 27, 1945, at Guntersville). Four was the largest number recorded on a single field trip.

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). Although seldom recorded after mid-August, the present species proved abundant on one occasion when seventeen were counted in two hours of field work on a small island in the Tennessee River at Decatur, September 1, 1943. They not only frequented the small willow trees, but flitted in the mallows and buttonbushes, steadily working in a downstream (westward) direction.

Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*). Apparently not very common although we have too little data for late fall. Early arrivals were noted at Decatur, September 2, 1943, and Florence, September 5, 1948.

Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*). Early fall migrants were seen at Guntersville, June 27, 1945, and Florence, July 9, 1949, apparently following the Tennessee River banks on each date.

Northern Water-Thrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*). Frequently seen in late summer along the banks of the Tennessee River. On the island at Decatur, referred to above, at least three were present on September 1, 1943, although there was little cover except herbs and low bushes.

Louisiana Water-Thrush (*Seiurus motacilla*). Some of the Water-Thrushes seen in late summer on the banks of the Tennessee River were too elusive for specific identification. One seen at Florence on September 6, 1948, proved to be this species, and it seems likely that some others were also.

Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*). In view of the rarity of this species in Alabama, it seems well to mention one seen near Florence, September 6, 1948.

Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*). An exceptionally late individual was recorded at Florence, August 26, 1940.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*). A female seen at Decatur, August 29, 1949, represents an early date of arrival.

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*). A common summer resident in many parts of the Tennessee Valley. Three very late individuals were seen at Florence, October 5, 1940. The latest record known for Decatur is of one bird seen on August 29, 1949.

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*). One seen at Florence on October 5, 1940, was unusually late.

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## THE ROUND TABLE

**AMERICAN EGRET IN TENNESSEE IN FEBRUARY**—On February 18, 1950, I was looking for ducks in the Forked Deer River bottoms, on the land of the West Tennessee Experiment Station near Jackson, Tennessee. I saw a large white bird in a shallow pool and identified it as an American Egret. When I approached closer it flew up and then further into the bottoms. The Egret was probably looking for frogs which were singing at this time.—KILIAN ROEVER, Jackson, Tenn.

**BROAD-WINGED HAWKS OVER HUMP MOUNTAIN** — Persistent trips to Hump Mountain on the Tennessee-Carolina border, eighteen air miles southeast of Elizabethton, for observation of hawk migration, begun in the fall of 1944 and continued each year since, was rewarded with some measure of success on September 24, 1949. At about 3 o'clock on that day, a few minutes after having reached the summit of Hump (5587 ft), I spotted horizontally in front of me a sizeable group of large birds. With the aid of binoculars, they were readily identified as Broad-winged Hawks, and a total of nineteen were counted. Glancing sideways, I saw above the precipitate north slope six more flying in the same direction as the others. Intent on detecting additional ones, I turned to reach the highest elevation of the summit and have a more advantageous view of the surroundings when, along the south slope, even greater numbers of Broad-winged Hawks appeared. Above Bradley Gap, which separates Hump Mountain from Yellow Mountain and Big Ridge to the Southwest, they began circling and spiraling upward to considerable height and then soared speedily in the direction those seen earlier had taken, southwest towards Roan Mountain. Owing to their wheeling and intermingling movements when they were closest to my vantage point, there was some difficulty in counting all the birds, but on the basis of the count made as best as possible I am confident there were not less than thirty in this group. A few minutes later another four were observed soaring along the north slope of Hump Mountain. The total of approximately sixty is the largest aggregation of hawks so far observed on Hump Mountain, and it is of interest that no Broad-winged were seen before among those appearing fairly regularly over Hump Mountain in fall migration (Red-tailed, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Sparrow, Marsh Hawks).

When starting on the trip, two young friends, Earl Hagie and Finley Caraway, who live above Elk Park, in the shadow of Hump Mountain so to say, greeted me with the information that immediately following a spell of cold rain accompanied by strong winds earlier in the week, they had observed more hawks than ever before. The former stated he had counted seven on September 21 and ten on the 22nd. The latter had seen approximately thirty-five about the summit of Hump Mountain on September 21 while he was on his way into Horse Creek Valley.

My own observations on the ascent from the tree line to the bare summit of Hump were disappointing in that only one adult Red-tailed

Hawk was in evidence on the north slope just below the summit. It was probably the same one seen later, the red of its tail beautifully contrasting with the deep blue of the sky. At lower altitudes on the ascent up to the tree line, one each of Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, and immature Red-tailed Hawk were observed, and from rather far away two unidentified either Buteos or Marsh Hawks, to judge from size, were seen chasing one another over the open spaces below the summit of Hump; a smaller hawk, possibly Sharp-shinned, flew close above them.

Of small birds of interest, one Western Palm Warbler was observed at 5550 ft. immediately west of the summit of Hump Mountain, intermittently on the grassy ground, on rocks, and clinging to sneeze weed. Another Western Palm Warbler and a Pipit were seen east of the summit at 5200 ft.—FRED W. BEHREND, Elizabethton, Tenn.

NOTE.—A letter from Mr. Bruce P. Tyler, Johnson City, describes an observation of a flight of hawks made by him and Mr. Robert Lyle. He writes that on September 24, 1949, they were at the northeasterly end of Unaka Mountain when they saw a flock of about twenty-five hawks settle into the ravine to the west as if escaping from the rather high wind; there were four Sharp-shins in the group and the rest appeared to be mostly Red-shouldered Hawks.—Ed.

RED-BACKED SANDPIPERS ON MIGRATION THROUGH EAST TENNESSEE AND WESTERN PART OF VIRGINIA.—Looking down from Roan Creek Bridge at the shallow northeast end of Watauga Lake in Johnson County, while on an early morning trip to the Lake on October 27, 1949, I observed on the muddy rock-strewn bank, in company of Killdeer and Greater Yellow-legs, five Sandpipers of better than medium size whose bill, compared to the size of the bird, appeared disproportionately long and slightly curved. It certainly was a species different from the Sandpipers ordinarily seen hereabouts. Their appearance corresponded to the illustration of the Red-backed Sandpiper in winter plumage as shown in Peterson's "Field Guide". Upon my returning to the bridge from a drive along the Lake, these shorebirds were still present. I worked my way down to a weed patch near the creek bank, thus obtaining a closer view, and there could be no doubt that the earlier assumption of the Sandpipers being the Red-backed species was correct.

On the afternoon of the following day, Stephen M. Russell of Abingdon, Virginia, and I visited the mud flats at Saltville, Virginia, and there, with Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellow Legs, and Killdeers, we observed nine Red-backed Sandpipers, identical in appearance to those seen by me the day before. Published records of this species in Tennessee appear to be scarce,<sup>1</sup> and it would be interesting to know more

<sup>1</sup>There are three previously published records in THE MIGRANT for the Red-backed Sandpiper in Tennessee, one each for Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville.—Ed.



about its occurrence in this State or adjacent states. Messrs. Burt L. Monroe, Sr., and Burt L. Monroe, Jr., in the November 1949 issue of the **KENTUCKY WARBLER** call attention to the observation at the Falls of the Ohio, Louisville, on October 19, 1946, of about 25 Red-backed Sandpipers and to Dr. Gordon Wilson's records at another locality in Kentucky in spring of the middle and late 30's and 1948.—FRED W. BEHREND, Elizabethton, Tenn.

**CORRECTION.**—Mr. Harry C. Monk of Nashville has called to my attention that the White Ibis record published by Isabel Tipton and I (see **MIGRANT**, 1949, pp. 50-51) is the second record for Tennessee instead of the first. The first record was published by Mr. Franklin McCamey (**MIGRANT**, 1935, p. 68) of a single adult seen near Memphis on September 2, 1935.—J. C. HOWELL, Knoxville, Tenn.

## THE SEASON

**MEMPHIS AREA**—The White-throated Sparrow arrived at Coffey Grounds the same date as last year, Oct. 13, along with the Golden-crowned Kinglet. Oliver Irwin also reported it that date, together with the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, and Hermit Thrush. Earlier he found a Towhee near Bartlett, Oct. 6, and Phoebe and Myrtle Warbler on Oct. 12; then on the 15th the Junco. The following transients of interest were recorded by him: Blue-headed Vireo, one on Oct. 13; Oven-bird, Oct. 5; Black-crowned Night Heron, Oct. 7; small flock of ducks and geese on Oct. 12. On Sept. 30, a Whip-poor-will was flushed at Coffey Grounds. John O'Callaghan reported a Screech Owl back at his boxes on Oct. 14; on Mar. 5 he found that one of this species was the bird banded there Feb. 28, 1948, while another Screech Owl found in a box the day before was previously unbanded. On Oct. 9 a Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen from a downtown swift banding chimney while Howard and Evelyn Barbig reported a Pigeon Hawk (rare) Jan 8 at Bartlett. The first Ring-billed Gull was seen Sept. 16 (very early) but the species failed to appear in numbers until December. . . . The three Christmas Counts in this area produced generally average results; the weather was overcast for the Memphis count and rainy for Moon Lake, Miss., and some bottomlands flooded at both places. The Red-breasted Nuthatch appeared on all three lists,—2 being seen near Moon Lake. (Another in town, Mar. 14, Irwin). We failed to find a Least Sandpiper at the Tupelo, Miss., Fish Hatchery where the species was recorded on 1947 and 1948 lists (and Memphis 1946). Wilson's Snipe was also absent from the Hatchery while duck results on the Tombigbee State Park lake were disappointing and no vulture flock was seen there as in 1947 and 1948. A male Black and White Warbler feeding along and near the leaf litter was seen at the west edge of the Park (December 24) and is the second winter record for the Mid-South (previously at Memphis, Dec. 20, 21, and 23, 1941; see 1942: page 22 and back cover). Demett Smith also found a House Wren there (three

Pine Warblers were inadvertently omitted from the count as sent in to Audubon Field Notes). On the Memphis count Demett Smith recorded a Chipping Sparrow, rare at this season. The usual Count at Hickory Flats, Miss., was not made this year but Mrs. Floy Barefield reported 8 Brown-headed Nuthatches there Dec. 24.

It rained practically all January and on the 5th froze as it touched objects. Tree limbs cracked for about 30 hours. Roosting places were coated and bent to the ground and as a result some local decreases in birds were noted. A Barn Owl was pictured in a local newspaper, frozen to a wire, while some mockingbirds and others lost their tails by being frozen to a perch. Irwin found a Woodcock at separate locations in Forest Hill Cemetery on Jan. 28 and Mar. 1. Wilson's Snipe numbered up to 100 at the Lakeview "highway pit" in February, probably because all bottomlands were flooded. On the evening of Feb. 25 we heard a small flock of Blue and Snow Geese moving north over the city. Purple Martins were reported at the last of February, altho on Mar. 13 none had arrived as the boxes of some of our members. The next arrivals included shore birds. On Mar. 11 Demett Smith and Floy Barefield found 86 Golden at the Penal Farm, east of town, 25 on the 12th and 75 on the 14th. On Mar. 12 the Coffeys found 18 Golden Plovers and also 25 Pectoral Sandpipers, at Field 21, north of town. Demett also recorded an Upland Plover on his visit of the 12th which is three days ahead of our earliest previous record; a Western Meadowlark on the 11th and two there on the 12th (second West Tennessee record), Victor Julia found a Mourning Dove nest with one egg in Overton Park on Mar. 11; Irwin noted a Cooper's Hawk placing a stick on its nest in Forest Hill on the 14th.

R. D. Smith found a flock of 160 Golden Plover on March 18 at Lakeview, Mississippi, and other and smaller flocks were found on the same and next day. Upland Plovers were also observed on these days. Eight Least Sandpipers were recorded very early, on March 11 at the Penal Farm by R. D. Smith.—BEN B. COFFEY, JR., Memphis.

KNOXVILLE — The winter months were far warmer than usual, with no snow persisting on the ground more than a few hours and no prolonged freezing weather. March, in contrast, has been cool. There have been no unusual numbers of any species except for a few ducks, Shovelers, Redheads, and Buffleheads. Scarceness of some birds has been notable; Myrtle Warblers, Pipits, and Purple Finches have been few in number compared with previous years. There have been no records of wintering Catbirds or Brown Thrashers since December 4. Pine Siskins were absent this year altho they have been seen in fair numbers in the Great Smoky Mountains. Red-breasted Nuthatches were much more common than usual in the Fall and early Winter around Knoxville, but their numbers decreased in January and February. Robins, on the other hand, were scarce until mid-January when they became relatively common. Some arrival dates are: Pine Warbler, Feb. 5; Redwing, Feb. 12; Purple Martin, March 15;—all of these birds were seen more or less regularly from the date

given to the time of this writing. A Palm Warbler was recorded Feb. 15. A Lesser Scaup, probably a cripple, has lived all winter on a small pond in the middle of Fountain City.

On Feb. 26 the Knoxville Chapter made a field trip to the wildlife refuge at Hiwassee Island (see article in this issue) and saw of particular interest: Great Blue Heron, 23; Canada Goose, 600-700; Bald Eagle, 1; Great Horned Owl, one sitting on nest; Short-billed Marsh Wren, 1. —JAMES T. TANNER, Knoxville.

GREENEVILLE — Mild weather with heavy rainfall and a lack of snow characterized the past season. Notably scarce this winter were the Myrtle Warblers and Cedar Waxwings, and to a lesser degree, Purple Finches and Juncos. It appeared that Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets were more abundant than the previous winter, while only one Ruby-crowned Kinglet was recorded. Unusual records for the winter were Red-breasted Nuthatches, four individuals being intermittently observed from November 13 thru January 28.

Among spring arrivals from southward are Grackles, the first being seen on Feb. 7; Redwings, first reported on Feb. 21 and a flock of forty males reported on Feb. 28; ten Wilson's Snipe seen by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. White on March 1, and a flock of over a hundred Cedar Waxwings that have congregated daily to feed upon holly berries near the home of Mr. and Mrs. White. Bird song began with rises in the temperature. Robins were heard singing in the morning and evening of January 25 and 26 and subsequently except during unfavorable weather. On January 24 a banded female Cardinal over seven years old was heard in soft but lengthy song; this seems worth noting as an early date for song in the female. Mourning Doves were heard cooing January 21; a week later song had become common. On March 28 a Mockingbird sang and has continued to sing frequently each springlike day.

Early spring nesting activities, and perhaps also observations, seem to have been retarded by the colder weather being experienced. Doves are to be seen in pairs. On March 18 a pair of Carolina Wrens were near their completed nest in which no egg had as yet been deposited.—RUTH AND RICHARD NEVIUS, Greeneville.

KINGSPORT — The winter which is now about to end has been unsatisfactory in several ways. The weather has been unpleasant; unusually prolonged periods of rain have been followed by cloudy weather with cold winds. Needless to say, this is discouraging to ornithologists. We have had only a few light snows, none of which stayed on the ground, and not more than five days during which the temperature failed to rise to 40 degrees. Thus it was a poor feeding station winter as well as a poor field trip winter. Last winter was also quite mild, but Myrtle Warblers and Cedar Waxwings which were very common then have been almost entirely absent this winter. We had a group of at least forty Wilson's

Snipe and a flock of more than 100 Horned Larks last year which were seen on many occasions. These flocks as well as smaller ones of these species were not here this winter. The flock of Canada Geese observed by Dr. Herndon and Mrs. Pugh on the Christmas Count was the only really exciting record for our group in Sullivan County.—THOMAS W. FINUCANE, Blountville.

ELIZABETHTON — The weather for January and February, 1950, was very mild with average temperatures of 51 and 46 degrees, F., and rainfall of 4.09" and 6.77" respectively. January min. 20 degrees on the 8th, max. 80 degrees on the 25th. February min. 22 on the 5th and max. 76 degrees on the 14th. March has been slightly colder to date. The cat-bird observed on our Christmas Census Jan. 1, 1950, was present on Jan. 7, 1950, but not observed on subsequent dates. Pied-billed Grebes, about 25, have spent the winter on Watauga Lake. This is the first winter we have had these birds present all winter. Other bird life was almost entirely absent from the lake from the end of the hunting season, until near the end of February, the only birds observed being a few gulls. Myrtle Warblers, Cedar Waxwings and Ruby-crowned Kinglets have been and are still very scarce as compared to the past few winters. Fox Sparrows have been more abundant than usual. On one occasion 14 were in sight at one time at the thicket along Wilbur Lake and one was observed at Lake Phillip Nelson (3500') in mid-February. Also a Mockingbird was observed on the same excursion at the same altitude. White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows are present in about the same numbers as previous winters. The Woodcock was first heard on the evening of February 21 when only one "peent" was heard. On the 24 it was heard to call 76 times between flights. On March 4 after the annual dinner, about 10:00 p.m., approximately twenty of those attending the dinner went out to hear the woodcock. The moon was shining brightly and the bird called several times at close range but was not observed in flight as it did not take off during the short period we were at the location.

For many of the group this was the first time they had heard a Woodcock sing. . . . The first ducks to appear in appreciable numbers were Ring-necked, about 200 being observed on Watauga Lake February 26. On the field trip preceding the annual dinner, March 4, the first Grackle, Horned Grebe and Wilson's Snipe were observed and Fox Sparrows were singing. On the day following the annual dinner, the find of the day was an Orange-crowned Warbler at the Tan Bark pile in Elizabethton. This was the first record for this bird in this area. Species observed on Watauga Lake included: Pied-billed and Horned Grebe, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Mallard, Black, Red-head, Canvasback, Ring-necked and Pintail Duck and Hooded Merganser.; on Wilbur Lake, 2 Golden-eye and 130 Ring-necked Ducks, Baldpate and Bufflehead were first observed on March 12th.—LEE R. HERNDON, Elizabethton, Tenn.

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**The simple truth about birds is interesting enough;**

**it is not necessary to go beyond it.**

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### **NOTES HERE AND THERE**

**BINDING OF "THE MIGRANT.**—The December 1949 issue of THE MIGRANT completed a series of three volumes, Volumes 18, 19, and 20, and included an index to those volumes. This has been customary because three volumes make a convenient group to be bound together for those individuals and libraries who wish to preserve their MIGRANTS in good condition. A title page for the three volumes is being printed which can be bound in with the numbers. A copy of this title page will be sent to any member or subscriber requesting one from the Editor. Information on binding may also be obtained from the Editor.

**A NEW CHAPTER OF THE T. O. S.**—Largely because of the efforts of Dr. L. R. Herndon of Elizabethton, a new chapter of the T. O. S. has been established in Bristol, Tenn.-Va. The new chapter took off on a roaring start with about thirty members, and their success should continue.

**THE 1950 ANNUAL MAY MEETING OF THE T. O. S.**—At last year's annual meeting the dates for the 1950 meeting were set,—May 13 and 14 (Saturday and Sunday), in Nashville. Make plans to attend! Information on the meeting will be forthcoming to officers of the various chapters, or it may be obtained by writing to Miss Helen M. Howell, 818 Kirkwood Lane, Nashville 4, Tenn.



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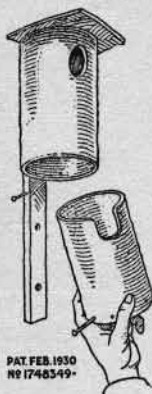
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