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DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

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# THE MIGRANT

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## THE MAN WHO TURNED IN THE FIRST CHIMNEY SWIFT BANDS FROM PERU

By HERVEY BRACKBILL

When the wintering place of the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) was discovered in 1944 through the recovery in Peru of thirteen bands that had been put on birds of that species in the United States and Canada—eight of them in Tennessee—there were tantalizing gaps in the story of the recovery. All that could be learned about this was that the birds had been killed by Indians, and the bands had passed from them through the hands of two unidentified persons to the American Embassy at Lima, which forwarded them to Washington.

As a result of an article published by Dr. Herbert H. Beck, director of the museum of Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the "Bulletin" of the Lancaster County Bird Club for June, 1948, and of subsequent investigation on my own part, it is now possible to fill in a little more of the story.

The person who turned in the bands at the Embassy was the late Dr. Harvey Bassler, of Myerstown, Pennsylvania. Dr. Bassler had spent some years in Peru as a petroleum geologist, and from 1934 until his death this year he was a research associate in herpetology of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He was in South America again on war work at the time he received the bands. The person who gave him the bands was a Peruvian trader; this trader got them from the Indians.

That it was Dr. Bassler to whom the bands found their way was a fortunate result of his long previous activity in Peru, I found when I interviewed him late in 1948. He gave this account of the event:

He had been in Peru from 1920 to 1931 as a geologist, was there again from the end of 1933 through 1934, and in 1942 went back once more. As a geologist he spent seven months of each year in the field, and in all covered a stretch of the upper Amazon basin about 1,000 by 250 miles in extent; on these travels he took occasion to make extensive collections in several scientific realms—herpetology, ethnology, and entomology among them. The other five months of the year he spent in Iquitos, and there he devoted his spare time to assembling a library of South Americana. All of these activities made him very well known in Iquitos, where he was often referred to simply as "El Doctor".

The Peruvian who actually got the bands from the Indians did not

know what the little metal objects were. In an effort to find out, upon his return to Iquitos, he first showed them to some other person. That man, equally puzzled by them, referred him to "El Doctor", the naturalist who surely would know. Dr. Bassler explained their nature, obtained them, and gave them to the Lima Embassy.

Because when he handled the bands Dr. Bassler had no idea that he was helping to make ornithological history, but supposed them to be from some species of bird already known to winter in Peru, he regarded the incident very casually; he did not leave his name at the Embassy, and details were not impressed on his mind. In 1948, to his immense regret, he could no longer remember the one of many Indian traders using Iquitos as a base who had brought in the bands; nor could he remember the man who directed the trader to him. Following our interview he began writing to persons in Peru in an attempt to hit upon the identity of these two, but although he pressed this effort for almost a year he never succeeded.

It was upon his eventual return to the United States in 1944 from his last Peruvian trip that he discovered that the bands had come from Chimney Swifts. He heard at the New York museum of the swift bands' recovery, and recognized from the circumstances that those were the ones he had handled. At that time, he recalled later, he mentioned his part in the event to someone in the museum's department of herpetology, but he could not remember whether he spoke of it to any ornithologist.

The fact that Dr. Beck's article in the Lancaster "Bulletin", naming Dr. Bassler for the first time, contains some errors, some divergencies, from earlier information, and some statements inadequately explained, makes it desirable to review the whole matter.

Frederick C. Lincoln had little detail to offer in his initial report of the band recovery in "The Auk". He said merely (1944:607):

"... the American Embassy at Lima, Peru . . . through the State Department, returned the thirteen bands recovered from some swallows killed by Indians on the River Yanayaco in the region between the Putumayo and the Napo Rivers."

Albert F. Ganier, then editor of "The Migrant", sought more details from both the State Department and the Embassy in Lima, and obtained from the former a slight amplification (1944:39):

"The bands were transmitted to the American Embassy at Lima by a student in the Library School of the National Library, who was given them by a friend, who in turn was presented them by the Indians".

Dr. Beck published his article in the Lancaster County "Bulletin" as a matter of local pride, since in 1948 and later Dr. Bassler was engaged in work in Lancaster. In the article, Dr. Beck relates that during a conversation he mentioned the discovery of the Chimney Swift's winter home in South America, and quotes Dr. Bassler as responding:

"One day, in 1944, a trader came into my office at Iquitos in Peru. He had just journeyed about nine hundred miles from a wild region in northeastern Peru. This region is unoccupied by the white man, but he trades there with the Indians. He said to me 'What the devil are these, Dr. Bassler?' He handed me five small aluminum bands, with serial numbers on them, and I immediately knew what they were. When I asked him where and how he got them he said, 'They were handed to me by the Indians with whom I trade in northeastern Peru' . . . (Here follows a purported account by the trader of the way in which the Indians obtained the bands). I took the bands to the American Consul at Lima. He sent them to the Fish and Wildlife Service at Washington and soon it was learned, from the records there, just where these five Chimney Swifts had been banded. . . ."

Through familiarity with the published reports of Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Ganier, I realized upon reading Dr. Beck's article that his identification of Dr. Bassler, if correct, was of more than local interest. But while in its general outline this new account agreed with the previous ones, in some details it differed greatly. The trader was said to have travelled 900 miles from the Indian region to Iquitos; in "The Auk" (1944:609) the Yanayaco River was stated to be "some 40 miles due north from Iquitos" and in "The Migrant" (1944:40) this distance was stated as "approximately 60 miles." The number of bands turned in by Dr. Bassler was said to be only five instead of thirteen.

Wishing to clear up the conflicts among these three published accounts, if that could be done, I got in touch with Dr. Bassler, and he at once agreed to an interview. This took place at his home in Myerstown, on the evening of August 14, 1948. Miss Mary Grebinger, of Millerville, Pennsylvania, a member of the Lancaster County Bird Club, and my brother Donald, of Lancaster, were also present.

The discrepancy between the correct number of bands, thirteen, and the number five that is given in the Lancaster "Bulletin" article, appears to be due simply to an error of memory on Dr. Beck's part. In our interview, Dr. Bassler said of their conversation concerning the number of bands:

"First I thought there were—well, I didn't remember that. Once I thought eleven, then thought that was too many. Then I thought seven, then thought that too many. Then I decided five, although my first reaction was more than five. I think Dr. Beck said "The Auk" reported only five, and so I said, in effect, 'Well, then there must have been only five' although it seemed as if there were at least seven. I have a horror of exaggerating things, and am much more liable to understate. Even now, thirteen seems like a large number, though there may have been eleven."

Under the circumstances, Dr. Bassler's recollection of having handled about eleven bands seems sufficiently accurate to indicate that those were the swift bands. As a matter of fact, they could not have been any others, for Mr. Lincoln, who at the time was in charge of bird-banding activities, states that no others were received by the Fish and Wildlife

Service through the Lima Embassy on any occasion anywhere near the same date.

The conflict in the statement of distance between the Indian district and Iquitos arose from a slip of memory on Dr. Bassler's part; he recollected, in talking to Dr. Beck, that the trader said he had come from the Putumayo River region which can only be reached from Iquitos in a very circuitous way. Dr. Bassler said in our interview that of course the Yanayaco River location that he originally reported was the correct one.

Dr. Bassler related that at the Embassy in Lima he turned the bands over to a girl employee about twenty-one years old, telling her what they were and explaining that they should go in the diplomatic pouch to Washington for identification. He did not give his name to the girl and thought she probably knew very little about him. Some of the Embassy staff were aware that he was collecting books on South America; whether the girl was, he did not know. However, he at no time was engaged in any activity that would have justified his being described as a library student, and how the State Department arrived at that identification in its letter to Mr. Ganier he could not guess.

As for the manner in which the Indians obtained the bands, Dr. Bassler had no information. The quotation on this point that Dr. Beck attributes to him in the Lancaster "Bulletin" is in error; by some mischance, Dr. Bassler said, a statement he made as mere conjecture got into print as fact. It may be mentioned, however, that the conjecture was identical with one made by Mr. Ganier (1944:30-41); namely, that the swifts were smoked down en masse from a roosting place in a hollow tree.

In this connection, it seems advisable to present here, where Dr. Bassler's denial can also be presented, another distorted version of the band recovery that I was given in Lancaster late in 1949, a version that might otherwise get into print some day in a confusing way. A friend of Dr. Bassler's related to me, and others, that:

"Some time previously—perhaps two years back—Dr. Bassler told him that in South America he encountered Indian children wearing bird bands, along with other objects, on strings around their necks. The bands attracted his attention, he recognized what they were, and asked the children whether they could get him any birds of the kind from which the bands came. In due time a child produced a Chimney Swift, and Dr. Bassler realized that he had discovered the species' winter home, and turned in the bands as proof."

In response to my request for written comment on that tale, Dr. Bassler termed it "a very fine example of how luxuriantly legends concerning us may grow and grow among one's thoroughly virtuous friends. You are entirely correct in your confidence that I never told . . . what (he) so pleasantly related to you."

It was at Dr. Bassler's request that publication of the present article was delayed after our interview in 1948. As late as June, 1949, he still

had hopes of enhancing it by identifying the other key figures in the band recovery, and then perhaps getting some account from the Indian trader. By November, however, he had given up those hopes. On March 14, 1950, he was killed in an automobile accident near Downingtown, Pennsylvania. He was sixty-six years of age.

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- 4609 SPRINGDALE AVENUE, BALTIMORE 7, MARYLAND.

### GOLDEN PLOVERS AT MEMPHIS

By R. DEMETT SMITH

Previous to this year there were only two records of the Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) for the State of Tennessee. On October 9, 1938, two birds were observed by Ben Coffey at Mud Lake south of Memphis (MIGRANT, 1939, p. 15). On March 24 and 25, 1941, he again listed a single bird at old Bry's Airport on the eastern edge of Memphis (MIGRANT, 1941, p. 35). Records from surrounding areas are as follows: In Arkansas, at Fayetteville, March 20 thru 31, 1883, and at Crockett Bluff, October 22, 1882, small flocks were present, while at Hot Springs National Park from March 28 thru April 14, 1936, and Sept. 9, 1936, never over five birds were present ("The Auk", Oct. 1936, and "Wilson Bulletin", Dec. 1938). Northern Mississippi has produced only three records,—one bird on the levee south of Memphis on April 11, 1936 (MIGRANT, 1936, p. 43), and a flock of fifty on March 26, 1944, and one dead on the highway on April 2, 1946, at Rosedale reported by M. G. Vaiden (MIGRANT, 1948, p. 61). I was unable to find other than recent records for Kentucky, but apparently it is at best an uncommon bird there. It was listed on April 24 thru 26, 1935, and May 15, 1937, and in 1940 in Warren County by Gordon Wilson. On May 11, 1945, and May 13, 1946, plovers were recorded from Marion, Kentucky, and on March 30, 1947, 163 birds were seen at Murray ("Kentucky Warbler", Jan. 1948).

On March 11 of this year, on the 5,017 acre Shelby County Penal Farm, four miles east of Memphis, Mrs. Floy Barefield and I found eighty-six Golden Plovers.

Altho there was only an average rainfall of a little over five inches during March, the rain came at the right intervals (always on weekends) to keep small amounts of water standing in the fields which these birds seem to favor. Our first flock was feeding around these small puddles of water in a heavily populated hog lot. This flock was flushed repeatedly but each time circled to return to approximately the same spot.

The white on the face is the first field mark that stands out on an otherwise brownish looking plover-like bird. In flight the lack of black axillars and white in the tail distinguish it from the Black-bellied Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*). In no reference to the Golden Plover either in guides or articles have I found mention of a wing stripe, but all observers here agreed that all birds seen showed a definite light wing stripe. Examinations in the hand showed that the wing coverts were faintly tipped with white and also failed to cover that part of the white quill before the webbing started, thus producing a noticeable wing stripe.

On a hurried return to the Penal Farm on the following day (March 12) we were able to find only 25 birds, altho two days later I found 75 Plovers present. While we were making our second trip to the Penal Farm, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Coffey, still not knowing of our discovery, recorded 26 Golden Plovers on Airfield 21, fifteen miles north of Memphis. On March 18 Coffey found only three birds at the Penal Farm, but a check by him on April 1 showed 73 present. He also found 120 at Airfield 21 on March 21 and a flock of 35 on March 25 on the highway near the field.

On the afternoon of March 23 we went to Arkansas, and at the first appropriate field three miles west of the River we found a flock of 156 Golden Plovers, some feeding in a farm milking lot not fifty feet from a busy highway and not twenty feet from a roadside gas station. One bird, the only one seen during the season in other than winter plumage, was predominately black underneath but nevertheless was as well camouflaged as the rest of the flock. On April 8 the Coffeys in an exhaustive search of plowed and stubble fields found several small flocks and one large one to total 312.

South of the State line of Tennessee there are 15,000 acres of rich Mississippi bottomlands which year after year are plowed during late February and March and then planted in cotton. On March 18, one week after our first acquaintance with the Golden Plover, several flocks were seen flying over this huge area. By this time we were familiar with their carolling notes and swift wheeling flight. We realized that somewhere in this broad area the plovers must be feeding. Luck was with us even in the rain, for after less than a mile down a muddy road we found 160 Golden Plovers feeding on a mud flat and in an adjacent field of short grassy stubble. On the following day these plus other birds in a harrowed field totalled 211. Oliver Irwin also made observations at several places in the area during the week, but it was on the weekends of March 25 and April 1 that we were happily amazed. On March 25 a bird which had been considered extremely rare at Memphis was seen in flocks totalling more than one thousand. The natives were well aware of the birds' presence, thinking them to be Killdeer without the bands, and at this time were able to direct us to the areas in which the birds were to be found feeding. Two birds were collected, this date being the first opportune time that I was able to get close enough to secure one. On April 1 the Coffeys recorded the staggering total of 1,460 Golden Plovers in the same fields. A week later, on April 8, (here I think it permissible to say "only") 151 birds were



seen. This week saw the last of the Golden Plovers, for on April 16 one single forlorn bird was seen feeding below the levee.

Altho the Golden Plovers seemed to prefer flat muddy fields or fields with very short grass, they were found at times in grass which was well above their heads. The natives reported their following in the freshly plowed furrows behind the tractors (plowing is seldom done on weekends, thus our not seeing this), and a few birds were seen belly deep in a roadside pond with Pectoral Sandpipers and Lesser Yellow-legs.

One can hardly miss a nearby flying flock for they can be heard for some distance. Flushed birds will circle the field several times as if to gather up any stragglers or to determine if the danger present is cause for leaving. Theirs is a swift flight; William Youngworth of Iowa has clocked them parallel to a highway at seventy miles per hour ("Wilson Bulletin", March 1936).

The passing of Golden Plovers thru Memphis in such large numbers has given us fairly accurate early and late dates of arrival and departure, records for eastern Arkansas, and reason and incentive to look for them in nearby areas in the coming seasons .

It is improbable that the birds have been overlooked before, at least in the past twenty-two years, for during this time there has been a large number of able men (Pond, McCamey, Whittimore, Burdick, Mason, Tucker, and of course Ben Coffey) in the same type fields in March looking for Upland Plover. Rather we would like to think that the actions taken to protect them have caused an increase in their numbers.

P. O. 55, EAST STATION  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

### THE 1950 SPRING FIELD DAYS

Seven Spring Field Days were held over the State this year, from one extreme end of Tennessee to the other. A grand total of 177 species of birds were observed. These figures speak well for both the growing interest in bird study and the greater knowledge of birds in this State. The Memphis Chapter on its Field Day listed the greatest number of species, 129, for any one area. The localities are listed below in the order of the dates on which the Field Days were held.

**Bristol.** April 30, 1950—around Bristol, Tenn.-Va., and Saltville, Va. Cloudy, windy, temperature of about 73 degrees. Most of the shorebirds included on this list were seen at Saltville.

**Memphis.** May 7, 1950—Main body from 9:30 to 12 and 3 to 4:30. Heavy rainstorms the previous day; this day cloudy with rain from 1 to 3 and 4 to 6 P.M. The places usually covered in the afternoon were not done so thoroly this time; this and the fact that the groups were not organized makes the list not representative. Most observations were made at

Lakeview and the number of birds of each species reported from there is indicated in the Table. The number enclosed in parenthesis are for species observed elsewhere than Lakeview, in parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas in and near Memphis. The compiler strongly advises against anyone using the count herein for comparative or statistical studies.

The Wood Duck was flushed from a tree cavity. The Laughing Gull, in adult plumage, was recorded and identified at different times by Demett Smith, Floy Barefield, Plato Tuliatos, and Ben Coffey. It was seen on Mud Island, as was also the Franklin's Gull reported by the Barbigs and Herbert Clarke. The Purple Finch was seen by Luther Keaton.

**Knoxville.** May 7, 1950—5:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Within an area of 7½ miles radius centered on Sharp's Gap. This area was covered by separate parties in the morning, which all met at the home of Harry Ijams at noon. This was the second annual Harry Ijams Day. Weather was overcast in early morning, rain most of the rest of the morning, and overcast in the afternoon. The Northern Waterthrush and Blue Grosbeak were seen by Joseph Howell, the Vesper Sparrow by Robert Hornsby.

**Greeneville.** May 7, 1950—around Greeneville, including Tusculum College campus, Link's Bottoms, Nevius and Reed Farms. Weather rainy in the morning and clear in the afternoon. Eleven observers in four parties. Of the Kingbirds, twenty-five were seen together at dusk in the tops of oak trees on a wooded hill by Mr. and Mrs. J. P. White.

**Elizabethton.** May 7, 1950—4:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Area around Elizabethton including Watauga Lake and Roan Mountain. Weather overcast with rain. Seventeen observers. Most, if not all, of the birds marked with an asterisk were observed on Roan Mountain at high elevations, except for the Pine Siskins which were all seen in Elizabethton.

**Nashville.** May 14, 1950—8:00 to 4:00 P.M. Indian Lake near Hendersonville, 20 miles northeast of Nashville, and from Lake out to highway. Weather partly cloudy. About eighty observers attended this Field Day and the annual meeting of the T.O.S. The figures enclosed in parentheses indicate that the species was not observed at Indian Lake but at some other point near Nashville. The Wood Duck was observed with young ducklings. Two nests of Hummingbirds were found. The Junco appeared to have a crippled wing.

**Kingsport.** May 14, 1950—from daylight to 5:30 P.M. Area largely confined to Sullivan County. Weather rainy with little wind. Seven observers. The Red-backed Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plovers were observed at a private fish hatchery.

The Red-breasted Nuthatches and Nashville Warblers were observed by Steve Russell and Thomas Finucane on Bays Mountain at 1700 ft. elevation.

### TABULAR RECORD OF SPRING FIELD DAYS

The abbreviation "c" means "common" and "fc" means "fairly common". For further comments on birds marked with an asterisk (\*), see the remarks on the field trip for that locality.

SPECIES	BRISTOL April 30	MEMPHIS May 7	KNOXVILLE May 7	GREENEVILLE May 7	ELIZABETHTON May 7	NASHVILLE May 14	KINGSPORT May 14
Common Loon					4		
Pied-billed Grebe	1				10		1
Double-crested Cormorant		1				1	
Great Blue Heron	2	5					
American Egret		2					
Snowy Egret		(1)					
Little Blue Heron		13					
Green Heron	1	1	2	3	4	2	
Yellow-crowned Night Heron		3					
American Bittern		2					
Least Bittern						2	
Blue-winged Teal	4	76		8	2		
Wood Duck	5	*1	1		4	*1	
Ring-necked Duck					6		2
Lesser Scaup Duck	1	1	1		180		1
Turkey Vulture	18	3	1	5	10	4	7
Black Vulture	3	22		4	1	6	2
Mississippi Kite		2					
Sharp-shinned Hawk					2		
Cooper's Hawk		1	1	1	1	1	
Red-tailed Hawk						1	
Red-shouldered Hawk						2	
Broad-winged Hawk		(1)					
Osprey	1				1		1
Sparrow Hawk	7	2	2	4	5	2	2
Ruffed Grouse	3				2		
Bob-white	4	3	28	10	23	4	
King Rail			4				
Sora Rail		4	1				
Coot	8			2		5	2
Semipalmated Plover							*4
Kildeer	27	5	15	8	14	4	16
Wilson's Snipe	4						
Spotted Sandpiper	16	1	1	7	14		15

### Tabular Record of Spring Field Days—Cont'd

Solitary Sandpiper .....	8	2	8	3	7	.....	.....
Greater Yellowlegs .....	4	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Lesser Yellowlegs .....	15	1	.....	.....	1	.....	2
Pectoral Sandpiper .....	.....	1	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Least Sandpiper .....	1	(14)	.....	.....	.....	2	8
Red-backed Sandpiper .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	*1
Semipalmated Sandpiper .....	6	(1)	.....	.....	.....	.....	2
Herring Gull .....	.....	(2)	.....	.....	19	.....	.....
Ring-billed Gull .....	.....	(64)	.....	.....	2	.....	.....
Laughing Gull .....	.....	*(1)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Franklin's Gull .....	.....	*(1)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Least Tern .....	.....	(3)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Mourning Dove .....	84	9	70	57	49	fc	28
Yellow-billed Cuckoo .....	.....	8	13	5	.....	8	6
Black-billed Cuckoo .....	.....	6	1	3	9	2	2
Barn Owl .....	1	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Screech Owl .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2	(3)	.....
Great Horned Owl .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1	.....	.....
Barred Owl .....	.....	1	.....	.....	2	1	.....
Chuck-will's-widow .....	.....	.....	10	.....	.....	(3)	1
Whip-poor-will .....	6	.....	2	.....	20	.....	1
Nighthawk .....	.....	(4)	12	4	6	(2)	3
Chimney Swift .....	98	30	67	68	100	fc	13
Ruby-throated Hummingbird .....	8	16	5	9	8	*3	3
Belted Kingfisher .....	5	1	3	1	6	1	1
Flicker .....	21	7	33	27	43	2	14
Pileated Woodpecker .....	5	1	6	2	4	3	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker .....	.....	3	7	3	.....	3	3
Red-headed Woodpecker .....	2	5	8	5	.....	1	.....
Hairy Woodpecker .....	2	2	.....	.....	1	2	3
Downy Woodpecker .....	12	4	6	.....	17	4	4
Eastern Kingbird .....	8	2	11	*39	20	3	6
Crested Flycatcher .....	3	12	29	25	2	fc	11
Phoebe .....	37	1	15	14	54	2	8
Acadian Flycatcher .....	1	6	4	.....	11	fc	14
Least Flycatcher .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	21	.....	.....
Wood Pewee .....	1	12	24	11	46	5	18
Horned Lark .....	3	.....	4	.....	4	.....	1
Tree Swallow .....	.....	152	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Bank Swallow .....	.....	10	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Rough-winged Swallow .....	11	67	16	5	59	7	9
Barn Swallow .....	4	24	17	4	4	2	19
Cliff Swallow .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2	.....	.....
Purple Martin .....	.....	11	20	43	10	3	6
Blue Jay .....	42	19	42	66	54	fc	30

## Tabular Record of Spring Field Days—Cont'd

Raven									*2
Crow	40	3	54	14	60	fc			35
Fish Crow		4							
Carolina Chickadee	44	4	36	15	90	c			20
Tufted Titmouse	36	9	41	19	80	fc			25
White-breasted Nuthatch	1		1	7				1	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	6							*7	*3
House Wren	18	3		12				*10	5
Winter Wren								(Z)*12	
Bewick's Wren	7	(1)	9	5	1	3			1
Carolina Wren	16	12	55	33	61	fc			17
Short-billed Marsh Wren			1						
Mockingbird	15	7	63	59	35	4			32
Catbird	66	7	32	64	118	1			19
Brown Thrasher	46	7	30	37	44	3			30
Robin	76	9	95	68	165	2			50
Wood Thrush	19	17	49	32	154	8			45
Olive-backed Thrush		2	5		2	fc			7
Gray-cheeked Thrush		(3)							2
Veery	1	(1)						*11	2
Bluebird	15	6	29	23	34	fc			13
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	21	15	29	11	7	fc			12
Golden-crowned Kinglet								*8	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	1	1		3				
Cedar Waxwing		48	15		5	3			4
Migrant Shrike		4	2						1
Starling	75	6	115	220	50	fc			100
White-eyed Vireo	38	16	23	3	23	fc			11
Yellow-throated Vireo	2		13	3	10	5			2
Blue-headed Vireo		(3)						*8	
Red-eyed Vireo	25	33	45	7	118	c			55
Philadelphia Vireo		3							
Warbling Vireo	2	6	1		7	1			3
Prothonotary Warbler		17	2						8
Black and White Warbler	44	2	15	7	49	1			10
Swainson's Warbler		1							
Worm-eating Warbler	2			1	1				10
Golden-winged Warbler	1		1		5				
Tennessee Warbler		18	7			fc			3
Nashville Warbler		1							*1
Parula Warbler	40	10	3		21	1			6
Yellow Warbler	53	10	29	15	84	2			10
Magnolia Warbler		10	10	3	3	3			4
Cape May Warbler			4		11				1
Slate-colored Junco								*41	*1

## Tabular Record of Spring Field Days—Cont'd

Black-throated Blue Warbler				1	35		1
Myrtle Warbler	1	21	19	7	10	1	7
Black-throated Green Warbler	17	22	4	2	12	1	15
Cerulean Warbler						5	12
Blackburnian Warbler	6	7	12	5	9	3	4
Yellow-throated Warbler	7	4	7			4	2
Chestnut-sided Warbler	10	2	8	2	30	3	1
Bay-breasted Warbler	7	12	5	1	25	8	36
Black-poll Warbler		12	12	2	6	6	14
Pine Warbler	1		5	1			2
Prairie Warbler	4		12	3	12		2
Palm Warbler		9	7	3			
Oven-bird	15	8	7	1	66	1	15
Northern Water-thrush			*1				
Louisiana Water-thrush	19	4	8	1	15	3	5
Kentucky Warbler	10	1	14	3	7	3	7
Yellow-throat	47	13	26	17	80	fc	14
Yellow-breasted Chat	34	17	41	12	55	fc	11
Hooded Warbler	21		5		16	6	32
Canada Warbler	3	(2)	5		*16	3	
Redstart	19	27	4	8	22	5	5
English Sparrow	80	6	34	50	100+	1	70
Bobolink		27	8		17	(1)	2
Eastern Meadowlark	41	30	61	86	68	c	27
Red-wing	67	56	59	56	28	fc	10
Orchard Oriole	7	9	12	8	4	c	17
Baltimore Oriole	7	6	2	1	2	2	2
Bronzed Grackle	65	23	58	51	76	5	87
Cowbird	31	18	50	3	33	5	8
Scarlet Tanager	13	6	4	1	47	2	38
Summer Tanager	10	10	29	18	17	fc	10
Cardinal	50	35	96	80	127	c	25
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	6	2		14	1	5
Blue Grosbeak			*1				
Indigo Bunting	13	61	90	26	91	c	27
Painted Bunting		1					
Dickcissel		52				6	
Purple Finch	2	*1					
Pine Siskin	1				*58		
Goldfinch	94	6	153	88	143	12	2
Red-eyed Towhee	71	(1)	57	46	114	5	47
Savannah Sparrow	10	20					4
Grasshopper Sparrow	17	4	42	7	35	fc	8
Vesper Sparrow		2	*1				
Bachman's Sparrow			2		1	1	2

### Tabular Record of Spring Field Days—Cont'd

Chipping Sparrow .....	61	---	32	11	80	fc	15
Field Sparrow .....	22	1	72	21	136	fc	41
White-crowned Sparrow .....	21	---	1	7	4	---	---
White-throated Sparrow .....	23	5	7	2	13	3	3
Lincoln's Sparrow .....	---	4	---	---	---	---	---
Swamp Sparrow .....	6	---	3	---	---	---	---
Song Sparrow .....	97	---	66	37	118	---	41
Total Species .....	108	129	112	87	121	106	110

## THE ROUND TABLE

LATE ARRIVAL OF PURPLE MARTINS AT ELIZABETHTON—Purple Martins, which for a number of years have regularly been nesting in the houses put up for them by Stanley Gregg at his residence on Watauga Pike in Elizabethton, arrived at a late date this year. Two males made their appearance in the afternoon of March 25, and two females were observed additionally in the early morning of March 27, having probably arrived the previous evening. In 1949 the Martins came unusually early, on March 5. In the preceding three years they arrived at their usual date of March 15.—FRED W. BEHREND, 322 Carter Boulevard, Elizabethton, Tenn.

A TENNESSEE WARBLER FOUND IN NASHVILLE IN JANUARY.—A dead Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) was brought to me for identification; no details of its capture nor the name of the captor are available, but on January 28, 1950, the living bird was brought to the Children's Museum with the statement that it was taken in the Belmont section of Nashville. It was placed in a cage where it died later. I found no visible external injury. The specimen was made into a skin for his collection by A. F. Ganier.

This is the first known winter specimen of this species for Tennessee. There are two winter sight records. G. R. Mayfield reported seeing one near his home in Nashville from November 17, 1934, until January 2, 1935 (1935, Migrant 6(1):14). George Foster reported one in Knoxville on January 3, 1936 (1936, Migrant 7(1):24. — AMELIA R. LASKEY, 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville 4.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER AS SPRING MIGRANT.—The Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*), listed in A. F. Ganier's "Birds of Tennessee" as a rare transient, is known to me through fall observation near Clarksville on dates ranging from October 8 to 21 and extending over a period of years. Sight identifications are supported by four collection records. Since in fall plumage even more than that of spring this warbler is not easily recognized by color and markings, his actions became for

me a good guide to his identity. "Bouncing and dancing" conveys an idea of the combination of his vigor and grace.

Published spring records of this species for Middle Tennessee seem to be lacking, so that the following should be of interest. In the evening of May 20, 1949, I was standing with a friend, Mr. H. C. Phillips, near his bird bath on the Austin Peay State College grounds, when a warbler bounced into the bath and danced out of it to a branch overhead, shook himself a moment and did it all over five or six times in quick succession. Points of its plumage observed during this agitated performance were the greenish, lighter underparts, the light brush mark over the eye and the occasionally well visible orange crown, establishing a good sight record for the Orange-crowned Warbler in spring migration.—ALFRED CLEBSCH, Clarksville, Tenn.

**GRACKLES PREENING IN PECAN TREES.**—In "The Round Table" for June 1949 (Migrant, vol. 20:37-38) Amelia R. Laskey gave an account of "A Blue Jay Anting" and added reference to recent literature on the topic. Mention is made of birds using other materials for a performance similar to anting. The following presents an observation of the latter procedure including some unusual features.

The 1949 growing season produced a heavy crop of fleshy fruit and nuts so that vegetarian birds found ample food, from serviceberries and mulberries in June to privet fruit and buckberries the next March. In contrast a pecan tree at my house, for over twenty years a provider of nuts for Downy Woodpeckers and Blue Jays in winter, stood bare for the first time. Like other nut trees it had flowered and set fruit abundantly, but during the summer the unripe nutlets had been put to a new use.

On successive days in the first part of July a noisy group of Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) was noticed in this tree. Owing to the dense foliage a rough estimate of one or two dozen birds in the tree at one time will have to serve, and only three times did individuals give me an unobstructed view of their actions. From a secure perch on a branch the Grackle walks foot over foot out on a twig, soon resembling a tightrope walker about to lose his balance. When a cluster of nutlets is in reach and a fair equilibrium established, the head is stretched forward and the bill grasps one of the nutlets. Feet and legs are braced, the neck arched, and with biting and pulling the nut is severed. Now considerable flapping of wings is needed to keep the bird from doing a somersault on the limber twig. As soon as he sits steady again, the feathers of the back get three or four preening strokes from one side, a lick and a promise from the other. The bird takes a new stance, picks up another nutlet and repeats the maneuver. The breast plumage also gets some vigorous daubs with the bleeding nut fragment. The scene ends with the Grackle flying off. The birds visited this tree at the same time, around 6:30 each morning, for about two weeks. A specimen of a twig was secured showing two nutlets bitten off to one half and a third one taken off short. The Grackle did not leave a single nut to ripen.



As compared to the procedure of anting and the use of substitute materials described by others, the most important variation of these Grackles is that they were off the ground. The fact that back and breast plumage received attention and not the wings or the primaries separately can be a consequence of the birds needing their wings in case of lost balance.—ALFRED CLEBSCH, Clarksville, Tenn.

**A DICKCISSEL WINTERING AT NASHVILLE.**—A Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), banded at my home on December 6, 1949, is apparently the first winter record for Tennessee. The same bird was recaptured on January 19, 1950, and from then on I searched daily for it, recording it on 69 days until its final appearance on May 5. It ate millet seeds at a feeding station close to the house. It had excellent flight, and after its second capture avoided the banding traps. In winter it associated with a group of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) where it could easily have been overlooked on account of its similarity to the female of that species.

This Dickcissel was in female plumage, lacking the black marking on its yellow breast. The flattened wing measured 75 mm. and the tail 50 mm. At 10:00 a.m. on December 6, it weighed 25.5 grams, and at 1:30 pm. on January 19, the weight was 27 grams.

In more than eighteen years of banding, this is the first Dickcissel that I have taken. For many years, none has been seen in this neighborhood. In the Nashville area the species is very rarely recorded after July.

Although the species winters in South America, some published winter records for this country have come to my attention. There is a specimen in the Museum of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture at Baton Rouge which was collected at New Orleans in December 1932 (1938, *Bird Life of Louisiana*, H. C. Oberholser, p. 635). For South Carolina, records were obtained in 1935 and 1940 in Dorchester County. A bird was seen from late January to April 1935, and 2 birds were seen in January 1940 (1949, *South Carolina Bird Life*, Sprunt and Chamberlain, p. 517).

In Massachusetts, one came to a feeder in Amherst from November 25, 1947, to January 7, 1948 (1949, *Audubon Field Notes*, p. 36). At Northampton, one was banded October 23, 1948. One was banded at Wyncote, Pennsylvania, on November 29, 1948, and another on January 6, 1949. The banding records appeared in *EBBA News*, 1949, 12(1);4.

Alfred O. Gross made a study of the Dickcissel in Central Illinois (1921, *Auk* 38 (1):1-26 and 38(2):163-184). He says (p. 12): "The fall migration of the Dickcissel has been given but scant attention by observers in Central Illinois. The silent departure of these birds in autumn is nevertheless quite as interesting as their more heralded coming in the springtime. In August, at the close of the nesting season, the Dickcissels rove about for a short time as family groups, these soon unite with others, which in turn may join still larger aggregations to form roosts of several hundred individuals. In 1908 a roost, which contained considerably more than 300 birds on August 20, had very few representatives on September

1, and by September 10, all had left, presumably for the southland." He described a roost under observation in 1918 along the banks of a large drainage ditch, the sides of which were covered for nearly a mile with giant rag-weeds and horse-weeds, eight to ten feet high. A few could be seen feeding on the seeds or bathing in the water almost any hour of the day, but the mass of individuals came in at twilight. On August 5 there were about 50 birds, on August 8 about 125, but on August 10 he counted 485 adults and young, and believed that more than twice that number were concealed in the dense weed growth. By August 15 the number had decreased and he believed that the migration had begun. His latest record was of a young male bird collected October 2, 1907.—AMELIA R. LASKEY, 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville 4, Tennessee.

**BACHMAN'S SPARROW AT HIGH ALTITUDE IN SOUTHERN APALACHIAN MOUNTAINS.**—To the bird student regularly in the field during all seasons, there comes once in a while the thrill of some particularly interesting observation at an unexpected time in an unexpected place. This was the happy experience of Stephen M. Russell and Fred W. Behrend of the Bristol and Elizabethton chapters, respectively, of T.O.S., on their trip to Cold Spring Mountain on April 23, 1950.

The crest of Cold Spring Mountain forms the dividing line between the southeastern part of Greene County in Tennessee and the northeastern part of Madison County in North Carolina. Cold Spring Mountain is predominantly a "bald". Its highest point (4838 ft) is known as "Big Butt".

A short distance southwest of "Big Butt", on a bare rounded knob at approximately 4700 ft., the observers noted a sparrow fly off the ground and into a small hawthorn tree. Having previously on the hike listed some ten Field Sparrows, the offhand thought was that the bird was just another of this species, but a glance through the binoculars revealed this was a different bird. In contrast with the Field Sparrow's, its bill was dark and appeared rather large. The rusty crown, finely streaked and revealing an indistinct center stripe, extended down to the blackish striped back. The bird's tail, at times flicked, was long and rounded, the legs and feet of pinkish color. When the bird changed its position, permitting a frontal view, we noticed its unstreaked breast was buffy, its sides of the same rusty color as the crown, and there was yellow discernible in the feathers on the bend of the wing. A pronounced buffy stripe showed above the black eye.

Several opportunities were had to observe the bird at close range, once at a distance of only six feet. Part of the time the bird walked or ran along the trail or thru the weather-beaten weeds and grass and at other times it was in rhododendron bushes, where it once emitted a clear, melodious song.

The observers concluded that the bird was a Bachman's Sparrow, and the conclusion was confirmed when returning from the trip we studied the literature on this Sparrow. It may be noted that there have been reports

from Blountville and Johnson City, Tennessee, of the apparent breeding of the Bachman's parrow there at altitudes of approximately 1600-1700 feet.—FRED W. BEHREND, 322 Carter Boulevard, Elizabethton, Tenn.

### THE 1950 ANNUAL MEETING

The 35th annual meeting of the Tennessee Ornithological Society was held in Nashville on May 13-14, 1950. The morning of the 13th, Saturday, was given over to a field trip at Radnor Lake and another to a Black-crowned Night Heron rookery, and to open houses at various places in Nashville. At 1:30 P. M. the business meeting of the directors of the Society was called to order; the important business transacted at this meeting and at the annual meeting of the members held on Sunday is described below.

After the business meeting, a program session was held in the auditorium of the Nashville Children's Museum. The following short papers were presented: "Notes on Warbler Migration", by Mrs. Robert A. Monroe of Knoxville; "The Status of the Song Sparrow in Tennessee", by Dr. L. R. Herndon of Elizabethton; "Recent Bird Observations about Tennessee-Kentucky Lake", by Eugene Cypert of Paris; "Golden Plover Migration in the Memphis Area", by Demett Smith of Memphis; "The Chimney Swift Banding Program in Tennessee", by Ben B. Coffey, Jr., of Memphis; and "A New Black-crowned Night Heron Nesting Colony near Nashville", by Albert F. Ganier of Nashville. These papers were all enjoyed by those present. Following the meeting everyone had an opportunity to examine an exhibit of bird paintings by Robert Tucker, Richard Parks, and Robert Mengel.

On Saturday evening the usual dinner was held after which the members present were introduced. Seventy-seven people were present, including four visitors from Birmingham, Alabama. The introductions were followed by a talk on "Some Birding Jaunts into Old Mexico", given by Mr. Ben B. Coffey, Jr., and illustrated by kodachrome slides taken along the way.

The annual meeting of members was held at Indian Lake after the field trip and lunch. The important business transacted at the directors' meeting and this meeting is described below.

The following individuals were elected to be Honorary Life Members: Mr. H. P. Ijams of Knoxville, Dr. Harry S. Vaughn of Nashville, Mr. A. C. Bent of Taunton, Mass., Mr. H. C. Oberholser of Cleveland, Ohio, and Dr. Alexander Wetmore of Washington, D. C. The first two men have long been active in ornithology within the State, and the last three are nationally known ornithologists who have been corresponding members of the T. O. S. It was moved and passed that individuals who had been members of the Society for 35 years, or who had been members for 25 years and were 65 years of age should become members in good standing with no further payment of dues. Five members were thus honored.

Section 2, Article III, of the Constitution of the Society was amended so that the first sentence now reads: "There shall be elected from each chapter a Director for each ten members or major part thereof, and each Director shall serve for two years or until a successor is elected". In the discussion concerning this amendment, it was concluded that a major part of ten was six or more. It was also concluded that only paid memberships were entitled to be counted in determining the number of directors for a chapter; family memberships based on the payment of one \$1.50 for dues are therefore to be counted only as a single membership.

Section 1 of Article VI, which states how the Constitution should be altered, was changed to simplify the method of making amendments. Section 1 now is:

"Sec. 1—Any Chapter thru its Secretary, or any Active Member, may propose an amendment to the Constitution by notifying all Officers, Directors, local chapter Presidents and Secretaries, of the proposed change, in writing by first class mail, thirty days before a meeting of the Board of Directors. The Secretary shall furnish names and addresses of these parties on request. The President shall present the proposed Amendment to the meeting of the Board of Directors, who may, by two-thirds vote, accept, reject, or revise, in whole or in part, the proposed change. If accepted as presented or revised, the Board of Directors shall, thru the President, present the resulting proposal to the following regular meeting of the membership. If rejected, the proponent may present the proposal to the membership, provided the foregoing notification requirement has been met. In either case the proposal would become an Amendment to the Constitution if approved by two-thirds of the Active Members present at the regular meeting."

A motion was made and passed that members not paying dues for the oncoming year shall receive the March MIGRANT, be notified of their delinquency, and then be dropped if their dues are not paid; in short, members delinquent in dues for three months will be dropped.

The following slate of officers of the Society for 1950-51 was submitted and approved: President—Mrs. Ben B. Coffey of Memphis; Vice-President from West Tennessee—Mr. Kirby Stringer of Memphis; Vice-President from Middle Tennessee—Mr. B. H. Abernathy of Nashville; Vice-President from East Tennessee—Mr. Fred Behrend of Elizabethton; Secretary—Mr. E. D. Schreiber of Nashville; Treasurer—Mr. Lawrence Kent of Memphis; Curator—Mr. A. F. Ganier of Nashville; Editor—Mr. J. T. Tanner of Knoxville. The following directors at large were elected: for West Tennessee—Mr. Eugene Cypert of Paris; for Middle Tennessee—Mr. Henry Todd of Murfreesboro, for East Tennessee—Mr. Arthur Stupka of Gatlinburg. Mr. Al Mayfield of Nashville was elected chairman of the Finance Committee.

The 36th annual meeting of the T. O. S. will be held on May 12-13, 1951. It is being considered that the meeting will be held at Standing Stone State Park.

## A ROUND-UP OF CHAPTERS AND MEMBERS

Since a similar "Round-up" appeared in THE MIGRANT a year ago, the number of chapters of the T. O. S. has increased by one, with the formation of the Bristol Chapter. At the annual meeting of the Directors of the Society on May 13, the chairman of the Membership Committee, Dr. L. R. Herndon, reported that the membership of the Society had increased by twenty-four during the past year despite the dropping of many members for non-payment of dues. There follows a brief summary of the chapters of the T. O. S., giving the approximate number of members and as best as possible the names of the officers.

Nashville Chapter—70 members. President—Al H. Mayfield; Vice-President—Miss Helen M. Howell; Secretary-Treasurer—Miss Penelope Mountford; Chairman of Program Committee—Albert F. Ganier.

Memphis Chapter—89 members. President—Miss Nelle Moore; Vice-President—Miss Mary Davant; Secretary—Miss Ella Hutcheson Ragland; Treasurer—Brother I. Vincent; Curator—Mr. Ben B. Coffey, Jr.

Knoxville Chapter—36 members. President—Dale W. Yambert; Vice-President—Andrew J. Meyerriecks; Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. E. E. Overton.

Greeneville Chapter—13 members. President—C. M. Shanks; Vice-President—Richard Nevius; Secretary—Mrs. J. B. White; Treasurer—Mrs. Willis Clemens; Statistician—Mrs. Richard Nevius; Publicity Chairman—C. E. Anderson; Historian—Mrs. Willis Clemens.

Elizabethton Chapter—28 members. President and Statistician—Mrs. L. R. Herndon; Vice-President—Mrs. Avery W. Evans; Secretary—Miss Margot Schlien; Treasurer—Mrs. E. M. West; Publicity Chairman—Fred W. Behrend; Historian—Mrs. J. C. Browning.

Kingsport Chapter—21 members. President—Thomas W. Finucane; Vice-President—Albert Wilkes, Jr.; Secretary—Miss Ruth B. Dunn; Treasurer—Mrs. Robert W. Pugh.

Bristol Chapter—34 members. President—Dr. B. H. Barrington; Secretary-Treasurer—Miss Esther A. Hilton; Statistician—Stephen M. Russell; Historian—Miss Virginia Burton.

There are 33 members in Tennessee who do not belong to an active chapter, and 103 corresponding members residing outside of Tennessee. Subscriptions to THE MIGRANT come from 28 libraries and similar institutions, and exchange and complimentary copies of THE MIGRANT are sent to 36 addresses.

### CORRECTION

The title of the article published by Henry M. Stevenson and Thomas A. Imhof in the March 1950 MIGRANT should have read "The Fall Migration in the Tennessee River Valley of Alabama". Instead of Ring-tailed Gull on page 6, should have been, of course, Ring-billed Gull.

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