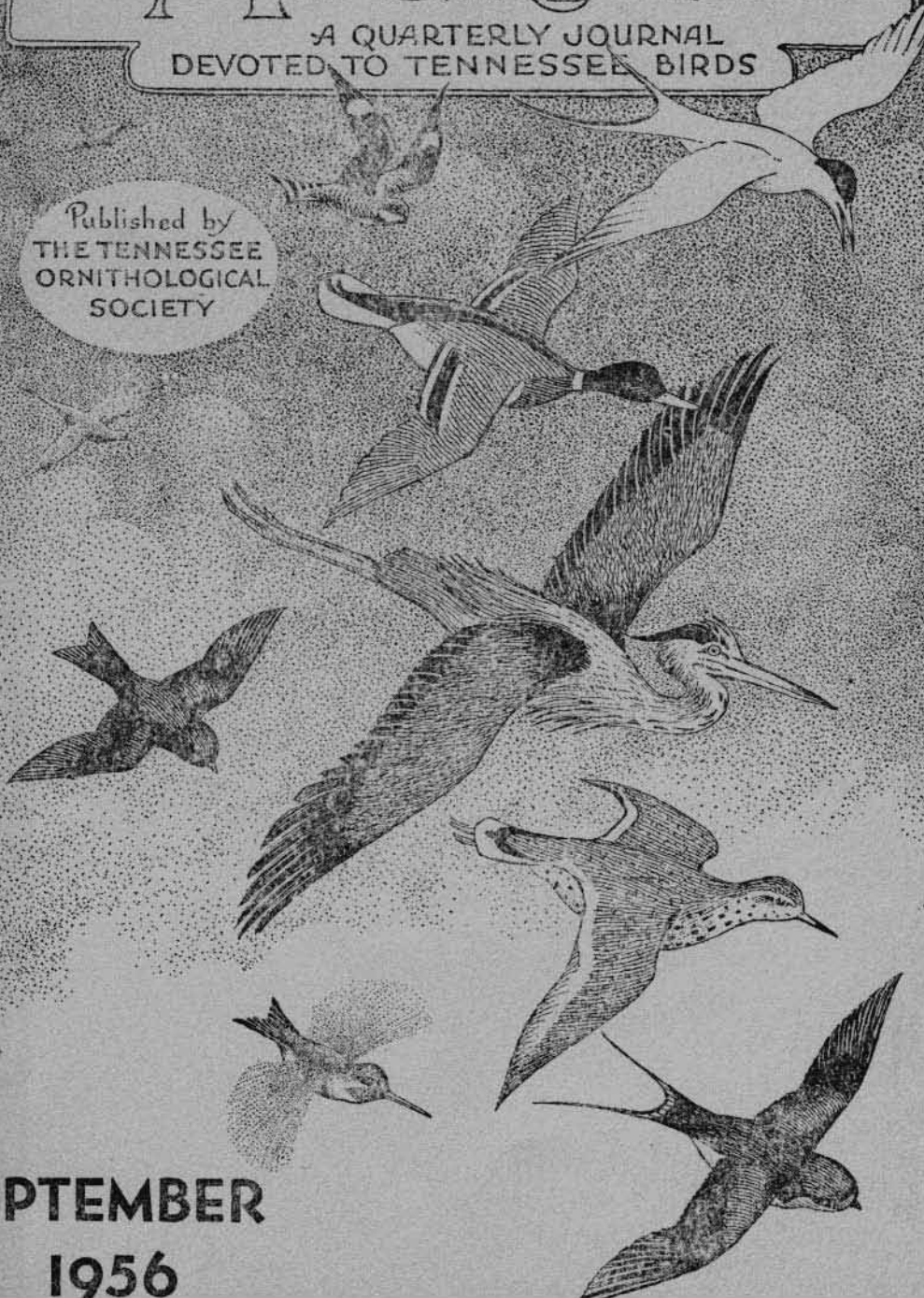


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Nesting Of The Black-throated, Blue And Chestnut-Sided Warblers

By ALBERT F. GANIER

Field work in summer, along the crests of our Appalachian Mountains that mark the eastern boundary of Tennessee, always brings the possibilities of finding nests of some of the warblers that here find their most southerly breeding range. The average observer, concerned chiefly with listing and observing the birds themselves, rarely gives a great deal of time to the more tedious job of searching for their nests. To assist those who would wish to give more attention to that phase of bird study, I have gone through my notes and assembled some of the data that I have gathered on numerous trips to that region, on two species of these warblers. Some of this has been mentioned before in THE MIGRANT and what follows will serve the purpose of consolidation of the references with new material.

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens* var. *cairnsi*). The southern race of this species, known as Cairns's Warbler, ranges from about 3,000 feet elevation to the summits, which are about 6,000 feet, but is uncommon or local at these extremes and prefers to range between 4,000 and 5,000 feet where in many places it is a common bird. Its greatest preference is for the damp gulches where masses of *rhododendron*, *kalmia* (laurel) or *leucothoe* (dog hobble) give it protection and afford a hiding place for their nests, which are built within a few feet of the ground. While the birds appear common at places, the finding of their nests is often like finding the proverbial "needle in a hay stack". The first nest one finds of any species always provides a thrill and such it was when on May 30, 1920, I discovered my first one, in the Great Smoky Mountains years before it became a national park. The nest was located one and one-half feet up in a little hemlock, at 4,000 feet elevation, on a steep slope at the edge of an extensive rhododendron "jungle". It held three nearly fresh eggs and on considering the backwardness of the foliage at that altitude, it was an early date. The females are close sitters and usually allow approach to within a few feet before leaving the nest. They will return after a little while, with frequent "chips" of alarm, and the white spot on their wings provides reliable identification of the otherwise plainly clad female. Unless young are in the nests, more often than not the male will not appear to protest.

On June 14, 1924, and on June 2, 1925, I found two more nests in the Smokies. The first held three eggs incubated four days and was built two and one-half feet up in a laurel shrub at 5,000 feet, on the north slope of Siler's Bald. The second nest held four eggs, incubated five days and was constructed three feet up in a *leucothoe* shrub in a considerable thicket of the same growth. Since two males were singing nearby, I put in some time in

search for another nest and finally found one a short distance away in a laurel. It was new and nearly finished. During the course of the search, I found two nests of the preceding year, one in a *leucodoe* and one in a laurel. The cool temperatures at this altitude preserve old nests for a long time. On June 13, 1938, I found a nest with small young on a *leucodoe* near the foot of The Chimneys. A photo, which I took of this appeared in THE MIGRANT 2, 37, 1938.

Visits of ten days each in 1944, 1945 and 1946 to the Unicoi Mountains, by Ganier and Gleason (1946), resulted in the finding of about a dozen nests of this species between the dates of June 13 and 20. Most of them contained three eggs, one held ready, another two and two held small young. These nests were near the crests and ranged from 4,200 to 5,000 feet altitude in this range which is a southward extension of the Great Smokies. The presence of a few cattle along the crestline forest has resulted in the young beech trees being kept cropped a few feet from the ground causing them to be quite thick. These warblers adapted themselves to this type of site and practically all of the nests found were well hidden within them from two to three feet above ground. The birds there were as numerous as further northward.

An extension of the breeding range to the westward was made by the writer in 1923 when he found a nest in the Cumberland Mountains some 120 miles west of the Smokies. This nest was in Grundy County, north of Altamont, at elevation 2,000 feet. It was found May 26, 1922, in an extensive deciduous woodland. The nest held four fresh eggs and was built four feet up in one of a number of little oak saplings which formed a thick undergrowth. The female was flushed from the nest at six feet and on awaiting her return I was able to identify her. The nest and eggs were typical and were collected. Mr. Andrew Allison has written me that he saw one near Monteagle which is about twenty miles south of Altamont and the same elevation. This was in July 1953.

The nest of this species is neatly made and quite distinctive. The exterior conforms to a relatively smooth contour and bark shreds with spider silk added is used to retain the shape. Bits of rotten wood and light colored material are affixed outside as though for camouflage or decoration. The most distinctive feature, however, is the lining which is of dark color, from dark brown to nearly black. Fine dark rootlets and hairlike stems from fruiting mosses are used for the purpose. In the Unicoi nests, hair from black and brown cattle and wild hogs was used for lining. The eggs are very pretty, marked with a wreath of brown and lavender spots and specks on a whitish background.

In Bent's Life Histories of North American Birds (1953), Mr. B. P. Tyler has a good picture of a nest of the species (plate 31) found on Beech Mountain southeast of Johnson City, Tenn., and this shows the typical contour and dark lining. In the same volume (plate 46) he has a picture of a nest of the Chestnut-sided Warbler which shows the characteristics of a typical nest of that species.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Dendroica pensylvanica*). This is likewise a bird of the mountain tops but it prefers the light of the sunshine rather than the gloom of the forests. It has been found during nesting season as far south as the mountains of northern Georgia and Stevenson (1948) records them down their slopes to 2,000 feet. In the Smokies however, Tanner (1955) did not find them below 4,800 feet on the Leconte Creek slope. It is fairly common around the balds, in the clearings and in the burned over areas that have soon become thickets of thornless blackberry stems, bird cherries and other pioneer growth. Here its song persistently announces its presence and to the inquisitive it sounds a challenge to find the flimsy little nest hidden in the bushes. In the Smokies, there are a number of places where fire had licked the cutover mountain sides to the crests and these burned over areas were soon covered with the vegetation above mentioned. Into this ecological association, soon moves a population of Chestnut-sided Warblers and if you would find their nests, stoop down and look upward through the foliage canopy for a wisp of yellow straw and grey weed stems, rather loosely and transparently put together. The lining will be chiefly of light colored fine grass with perhaps some coarse hair added to give it strength. The eggs are four, sometimes three, and are white with a more or less well defined wreath of brown and blackish specks around the larger end. It is usually mid-June when laying begins along the chilly summits. In the Unicoi Mountains, where fire burns were not present, the birds were found to prefer the edges of balds and open woods along the winding ridge road. Here, three nests were found containing four, four and three eggs respectively. Two were placed about five feet from the ground in small crabapple trees at the edge of balds and the other in a thick patch of thorny blackberry briars in an open place in the woods. Two empty nests were also found, one in a clump of maple sprouts and the other among sprouts from a beech stump. As is the case with most warblers, one can best locate their nests by listening for the singing male and observing the location of his favorite singing trees. Then by searching all orthodox locations for the nest, within a circle of four hundred feet in diameter, it can usually be found. A nest frequently does not exist however for there are many bachelor birds holding territory or else for some other reason no nest has been constructed.

Among other warblers which nest along the high mountain crests are the Blackburnian, Canada, Golden-winged and Worm-eating. Even the low-ranging Swainson's will sometimes be found at high altitudes among the cool rhododendron swamps.

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2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville 12, Tenn.

Tempora Non Mutantur

By DIXON MERRITT

Seventy years is probably too short a period to give any reliable indication as to the relative merits of natural selection and controlled breeding in creating varieties. But when it comes to maintaining a species in the same locale, observation over seven decades has convinced me that the natural method is greatly superior.

My grandfather developed on this farm a strain of Southdown sheep and a strain of Jersey cattle. He turned them over to a son who, in turn, passed them on to me thirty-five years ago. I lost the sheep strain ten years ago. I still have the strain of Jerseys but it is easy to see how just one little accident could cause me to lose it with this generation of cows. Meanwhile - over the seventy years - half a dozen species of birds have maintained themselves, in vigor and numbers, at the same spots on this farm.

It might be difficult to satisfy a breed association that my Turkey Vultures of today are direct descendants of the fluff-ball buzzards with which I became acquainted, when I was seven years old. Undoubtedly, there have been out-crossings. But the vultures have nested at the same place - indeed, have been continuous residents there - throughout the entire seventy years of my observations.

A seam of up-thrust limestone, widely fissured, runs for twenty miles, roughly parallel with Highway 231 and separated from it from a hundred yards to half a mile. Just where it approaches my land from the south, it goes off toward the highway in a series of ledges, with numerous overhangs and semi-caves. It is here that the vultures invariably nest, not always under the same overhang, not always even in the same crevice, but always within a few yards of the same spot. After the nesting season, vultures congregate here. The spot appears to be not merely a roost but a base of operations. One white oak that died several years ago stands out now — as seen from my house — stark against the horizon. Rarely do I see it, at any time from dawn to dusk, without vultures on its branches, from one to a score.

To the homeward, which is to say the north side of the vulture rocks, is a long, narrow strip of land that has never been cleared. It is not virgin forest. Timber has been cut on it for 150 years. But it has always contained and still does, some original-growth trees. Nearly half a mile to the north and over a hill is another such area, but nearly square rather than greatly oblong. Both, when I can first remember, were home sites of Pileated Woodpecker

families. They still are. There has never been a time between when they were not. A big white oak spared for a century because it was stooped, gnarled, and hollow, housed the first rereated nest of which I ever knew. It is still there and still houses a nest, not every year, but most.

When we organized the Tennessee Ornithological Society in 1915, the Pileated Woodpecker was generally believed to be a vanishing species. The incipient IOS expected to find very few of them in the entire state. When I spoke of having at home Pileated Woodpeckers all around me, everybody was skeptical — Mayfield and Ganier particularly so. It took me ten years to convince them. And, really, I do not flatter myself that I did it, even then. They had found out by that time that the Pileated was not exactly a vanishing species.

Pileated Woodpeckers are still all around me, even in the dooryard, in just about the same numbers that they were seventy years ago. There have never been noticeably more or fewer. I suppose the number is what my properly wooded areas will support. If there has been an increase, the surplus population has found homes elsewhere.

And I believe there must have been a steady increase over, say, the past twenty-five years. Within that time, there has been no shooting of Pileated Woodpeckers. Earlier, it was the common thing for anybody out with a shotgun to take a crack at a Pileated. Big, conspicuous, blundering birds, they were easy prey. Why they did not vanish is still as much a mystery as how the Passenger Pigeons did.

Another thing about which, in the early days of TOS, Ganier used to twit me was the supposed statement that I had a nesting Nighthawk on every rock. If that were true, no heronry in the world could rival me for density of bird population. Rocks come pretty close to being what I have nothing else but. Still, I do have and have always had nesting Nighthawks on many of my rocks. The Nighthawks nested this year in the same area where they have nested, to my knowledge, every summer for seventy years. Queerly — but naturally, none the less — it is the same area in which my numerous Killdeers have always nested and still nest.

An eastward continuation of that narrow strip that I described as a Pileated Woodpecker site is open ground, almost clear of trees. Into it flow the streams from six springs, join in the middle of it and go on as a sizeable brook to Sinking Creek. It is a natural for Killdeer nesting. But numerous flinty outcrops make it a natural also for Nighthawk nesting. You walk through the area. A killdeer flops up almost in your face and goes skittering away. You know the nest is there and you look for it. But you find, instead, a Nighthawk nest. Or, as you walk, a Nighthawk slithers in front of you and flutters away on seemingly broken wings. You walk to where the nest is bound to be — and find a clutch of Killdeer eggs. This has not exactly happened to me for seventy successive summers. I have been away from home much of the time. But I believe it has happened to me at sometime during every summer that I have been home.

My Nighthawk population did not decrease during the years when it was the habit, not so much of hunters as of boys and others snooting for fun, to practice on Nighthawks. It has not increased at all during all the years since that deplorable practice ceased hereabouts.

For several summers past, one male Nighthawk has roosted throughout the nesting season on a maple limb, about twenty-five feet high, directly over my front yard gate. My opportunity of observing a roosting Nighthawk has been unsurpassed. I can report to you that he does not wake up, as the books leads you to believe, at twilight. He wakes at 4 o'clock on those long afternoons, though the sun is still two hours or more from setting. He does a little twittering, turns end to end on his limb — Oh, maybe half a dozen times. Then he dozes off again for a while but is on the wing and gone by the time the sun is at the horizon.

Toward the back of the farm, far removed from house and barns, is a spot that since my great-grandfather's time has been a stackyard. It is at the back of a small pasture lot from which four cultivated fields open. Over a gateway, a great old white ash towers. One of my earliest recollections is of Meadowlarks singing their winter song from the branches of that tree. Equally early is my recollection of Meadowlarks nesting in whichever of the four fields happened to be for that year in meadow or lying fallow.

For seventy summers, to my knowledge, the Meadowlarks have rotated their nesting around the entrance ways of those four fields. For seventy winters, to my knowledge, they have made cold weather music from the branches of the old ash.

When, in the drab afternoons of these latter years, the realization comes to me that the world has grown to be a lonesome place; when — like all old men at times — "change and decay in all around I see", I slip away to the stackyard and the singing Meadowlarks.

There, change has not come.

Cabincroft — RFD 6, Lebanon, Tenn.

The Season

NASHVILLE. — Early spring arrivals were few and scattered. The peak of migration was reached April 26 and 27, continuing through May 8, after which only a few stragglers were seen.

Some interesting spring observations were as follows: — Veeries were seen frequently and for longer periods than usual 4-19 to 5-13; and Scarlet Tanagers were numerous. Buena Vista and Ashland City marshes as well as Old Hickory Lake have provided the Nashville Chapter with another profitable season. The latter promises to be a rewarding addition to Nashville bird habitats for marsh and shore birds. Chas. M. Weise recorded 15 species of shore birds there during the spring migration season.

The summer was very pleasant with few excessively warm days intermittent with rains until early September when dry weather began and continued into October. Our migration period seemed very slow and reports of migrants were generally later coming than usual. The total number of species on our Fall Big Day was 87, as compared with 103 in '55 and 101 in '54. This shortage was mostly in warblers, though Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers and four species of water birds, found last year, were missing.

During the nights of July 18 and Aug. 3, Upland Plovers were heard by Harry Monk. He also reports a considerable flight of Green Herons during the night of Sept. 6, to quote "loud squawkings all through the night". We have had no July records of wandering or migrating warblers, but we had several records in August: Black-throated Green Warblers (2) 8-17 and (1) 8-18 (HM); Canada Warblers (1) in two localities (HM and ARL); Pectoral Sandpiper (1) at Radnor Lake 8-12 (JR and RC); Magnolia Warblers (2) 9-2 (HM); Blackburnian Warbler (1) 9-5 (C. Fentress). A cold snap early in September accounts for a wave of warblers on 9-9 including 13 species at Radnor Lake (JR and RC), a rather late date for a wave of Canada Warblers in this area, however two others were seen in other territories the same date. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were first recorded 9-22 (CEP), also 23, 24 and 25 by other observers.

Mrs. Laskey had a singing Parula Warbler at her home from July 7 through August 31. On Aug. 5 a second Parula Warbler appeared for the day — not a singer.

Unusual is the fact that we have records of four House Wrens: one singing in his yard during May (JO); two singers on her street from 5-14 to 7-15 (ARL); and one singing in Centennial Park 9-28 (HM).

Some late summer records are: Ruby-throated Hummingbird (1) 10-1 (AFG); Prothonotary Warbler (1) 9-15 (JR); Hooded Warbler (1) 10-4 (ARL); and Northern Water-thrush (2) 10-4 (ARL).

Harry Monk reports a late nesting date for the Robin. Development of two young birds found on 9-9 indicated they had left the nest about 9-1. He kept a close watch over Mourning Dove nests in the Centennial Park area and reported 9 active nests on Sept. 1. These were vacated on the following dates: 1, 2, 9, 10 (one nest failed), 15, 16, 17, 19 and the last on the 22nd, (2) fledglings.

The only arrival dates for winter residents are as follows: White-throated Sparrow (1) 10-1 (CEG) and (1) 10-2 (ARL); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1) 10-4 (HM); Swamp Sparrow (1) 10-5 (HM) and (1) 10-6 (ARL).

MRS. W. F. BELL, 210 Carden Ave., Nashville.

LEBANON. — Insects have been in dearth, many common kinds apparently absent, most kinds late in attaining their usual numbers. We attribute this to a generally mild winter with recurrent abnormally warm spells followed by keen cold snaps, alternately luring insects from their over-wintering places and then freezing them. The general effect has been good — for instance, the best fruit season in half a century — but the specific effect on our bird population may not have been good.

From an abnormally high Bluebird population over several seasons, we dropped this year far below normal. There were apparently fewer nesting birds throughout the area, fewer birds hatched per brood, fewer broods per pair of nesting birds.

Among purely insectivorous birds, a similar situation has been even more noticeable. Purple Martins did not come at all to some of the boxes where they have nested regularly. Barn Swallows were absent from many of their accustomed nesting places. Where Purple Martins and Barn Swallows did nest, they came later and departed earlier than usual. Chimney Swifts have nested at most of the usual places but in smaller numbers than commonly.

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc? We are certain of the *post* but not of the *propter*. At any rate, other factors than the dearth of insects may have been operative.

Perhaps the high point of our season was the discovery of nesting Lark Sparrows. (see Round Table). Apparently they have not remained near their nesting sites. We have found none since a few days after the young birds left the nest.

Some excitement was caused by the presence of a pair of American Egrets during the nesting season. We are not sure, however, that they nested here.

Drought, unrelieved throughout summer and fall, has not resulted in any diminution in the number of birds about our usual places of observation. However, the drying up of the kind of watering places that they can best use may be the determining factor in the apparent early departure of Swifts, Swallows and Martins.

DIXION MERRIT, RFD 6, Lebanon, Tenn.

CHATTANOOGA. — Summer temperatures were near normal except September which was unusually cool. Rainfall was subnormal though evenly distributed.

The season has been characterized by several unusual occurrences. It was reported to the writer that 9 Canada Geese were still at Hiwassee Refuge at the end of July. Herons were unusually abundant at two locations. The first spring record of a Little Blue Heron was April 21. From August 5 to September 13 up to 9 were seen at one time, the peak being 5 adults and 4 immatures on August 19. From August 15 to 21 Yellow-crowned Night Herons were much in evidence at a marsh and pond bordering a dump in the city. The largest number was 4 immatures and 1 adult.

Lou Boyd, Hamilton County Conservation Officer, reported seeing an estimated 2,500 Nighthawks on October 5 as they passed over Chickamauga Dam for one and one half hours.

The city swamp that produced the night herons also had a family of 5 King Rails feeding in the open and not very shy. There was sufficient size variation to distinguish the immatures from the adults.

A number of species were seen earlier than previously recorded. They are Wilson's Snipe on October 7, Pectoral Sandpiper on August 15, Least Sandpiper on August 19, and Savannah Sparrow on October 6.

New species added to the Chattanooga area list recently are the Semipalmated Plover and Least Tern on August 5 and Semi-palmated Sandpiper on August 19. The Least Tern is the first Tennessee record east of Nashville.

Broad-winged Hawks paraded past Elder Mt. Fire Tower on September 22 to the total of 317. The aid of the fire warden was enlisted in tallying the passage of the broad-winged during the rest of the season. This has also been productive and will be reported to the census coordinator at a latter date.

Quite a few August nests were found this year. Two coveys of newly hatched Bob-whites were seen on August 22. Cardinals were incubating on August 8. Field Sparrows had young 3-5 days old on August 22. Brown Thrashers at the writer's home nested three times and all nestings are thought to be successful. Incidentally, the second nest was used for both the second and third nesting.

ADELE H. WEST, 1625 S. Clayton Ave. S. E., Chattanooga, 11.

KNOXVILLE. — The migrants of late summer and early fall arrived here mostly on schedule. Unusual records were three Worm-eating Warblers, one Cerulean Warbler and a flock of eleven Black Terns. The warblers were seen on September 3. The Black Terns were seen on Loudon Lake on Sept. 14 by J. T. Tanner.

The Knoxville Chapter held its Fall Field Day on September 30, and the eleven parties, consisting of about 25 individuals, succeeded in compiling a list of 90 species. Warblers were few in numbers of individuals, probably because of the warm weather on that day and the preceding one, but several unusual records helped to swell the total list. Eleven Shovellers on Loudon Lake and Stock Creek (JTT) made the first tall record for this duck. On Stock Creek was a flock of 350 Blue-winged Teal, the largest flock of this species I have ever seen; observations of Teal in other areas brought the total count to 430, and this makes the latest record we have for this species in Knox County. Two other latest records were Bobolinks, a flock of 23, and a pair of Blue Grosbeaks. Both species were seen by Paul Pardue and Mrs. E. E. Overton. Other later than usual birds were Little Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hooded Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler. On the other hand, a single Blue-headed Vireo, seen by J. C. Howell, was the earliest fall record we have had. Rare fall migrants were one Bald Eagle, one Osprey, and four Gray-cheeked Thrushes. The bird observed in largest numbers was the Cowbird, with 1300 individuals; Magnolias were the most common warblers.

The weather has been poor for observing hawk flights, but Dick Laurence saw about 140 Broad-wings near mid-September on Clinch Mountain.

JAMES T. TANNER, Zoology Dept., University of Tennessee, Knoxville

GREENEVILLE. — Normal rainfall of the 1956 summer provided a contrast to recent past seasons of drought. No observations substantiate the speculation that there may have been a consequent rise in abundance of food supply for birds.

The first nesting in Greene County of the Baltimore Oriole was observed by Mrs. M. E. Darnell. (see Round Table).

The Sora Rail, seen before as a migrant, was here in the summer; an adult was in a Roaring Fork hay field June 21. On September 13 and for several successive days three immature Sora Rails were seen.

The Darnells found Ravens on Camp Creek Bald in June.

A Blue Grosbeak sang as late as August 20, and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was feeding grasshoppers to young in the nest August 25.

Solitary Sandpiper and Woodcock on August 1, Semi-palmated Sandpipers (2), Solitary Sandpipers, Little Blue Heron (1) and American Egrets (5) were seen on August 11 and 12. (MED). She also saw a flight of over one hundred Nighthawks on September 3.

RUTH REED NEVIUS, Rt. 1, Greenville, Tennessee

ELIZABETHTON. — Lacking one inch from being the greatest in the past six years, our rainfall from April first through the third week in October measured 26.87 inches. The wild cherries, wild grapes, dogwood, pokeweed, and spicewood berries were unusually abundant this fall. Because of this available food supply many thrushes, tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks lingered later than usual. For birding in this area, this season has been one of the best.

On our fall census, September 30, one flock of 133 Blue-winged Teal swam on the Watauga River below the North American Rayon Corp. (Lee R. Herndon) Later in the day several smaller flocks of Blue-winged Teals were found throughout our county. Our group logged 97 species that day including 22 warblers — the same number found on our spring census on April 29.

Many of our early and late dates have been altered so far this year, and some changes were extreme: Hooded Merganser (LRH), Oct. 7 (32 days early); Baldpate (LRH, et al.), Oct. 7 (20 days early); Sora Rail (LRH and HPL), May 22 (15 days late); and Connecticut Warbler (HPL, et al.), May 8 to 12 (see Round Table).

Some records extended our dates considerably: Prothonotary Warbler (LRH), April 29 (5 days early) and two Bobolinks, (Mrs. E. E. Overton and HPL), Oct. 7 (7 days late).

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on September 30 (LRH & Gury Bullock), a Summer Tanager on October 7, and a Purple Finch on September 30 (Brownings) extended our early-late dates by only one or two days.

Again this year the Elizabethton Chapter of T.O.S. held an East Tennessee Fall Get To-gether on October 7. Birders from Greenville, Bristol, Knoxville, Maryville and Kingsport helped our chapter to extend early-late dates for four species of birds. All October 7 dates mentioned above were reported on one of the scheduled field trips. Seventy-eight species were recorded. The group accepted the invitation of the Kingsport Chapter to be host for the Fall Get To-gether in 1957.

Several unusual birds for our area were observed that were worthy of special notice. Our choice find was a Surf Scoter on Wilbur Lake (see Round Table). Another first record for our county was a Chuck-will's-willow in Herndon's backyard on June 3 (LRH). On September 25 near a feeding station and at close range, a Philedelphia Vireo was found (HPL). A Long-billed Marsh Wren (LRH) on October 7, our third record; Olive-sided Flycatchers on May 8 (HPL) and September 29 (Mrs. Ruth D. Hughes); and an American Bittern (LRH) on April 22 constitute some of our unusual observations so far this year.

H. P. LANDRIDGE, Rt. 7, Elizabethton, Tennessee

The Round Table

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER.—While doing my early morning work on September 28, I noticed an unusual amount of bird activity in the woods near by. Looking out the window, I saw many Palm Warblers that I had been watching for in migration. The yard and the garden seemed to be alive with the busy little birds. Taking the binoculars and bird call, I went to the woods a short distance back of our home. The first bird to come near was one that I had never seen before. It had a very dark back, all yellow below, dark streaks on its sides below wings, faint white wing-bars, and an eye-ring that didn't seem to be continuous; and it continually wagged its tail. When I found what look like it, I wasn't so sure that I was right about it; so I followed it around for about half an hour while it was feeding in low pines and watching me. Part of the time it was with a Myrtle Warbler and compared closely to the size of the Myrtle. After observing it for some time and studying its description and habits in the three books that we have, I am positive it was a Kirkland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*).

MRS. M. DARNELL, Rt. 7, Greeneville, Tennessee

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW IN CHATTANOOGA AREA.—On October 14, 1956 while visiting Long Savannah Creek, a backwater of Chickamauga Lake, I flushed a sparrow that I expected to be a Swamp Sparrow. However, it was immediately apparent by use of my 8x40 binoculars that this bird was a stranger, or nearly so. It was possible almost immediately to tell that it had a very short tail and the first few glimpses showed an almost orange coloration on face and upper breast, paling somewhat along the flank. The bird first flushed into the base of a small willow with many thin trunks. As I circled the willow, he alternately moved a few inches or ignored me. Apparently I came closer than he could tolerate and he moved a few feet, diving into a thick stand of marsh grass nearly 2 feet high. "Squeaking" brought him to the top in 3 or 4 moves and I was then able to observe him well for several minutes. Much gray was in evidence about the side neck and even on the back. The crown looked blackish from all views. No parting line was apparent. Light conditions were excellent and I was able to approach very closely a number of times. Though my attention was distracted by a group of barn swallows passing by, my arm and body movements did not cause the sparrow to flush.

The Long Savannah Creek area is actually a flat. At this time of year the water level is being lowered by TVA, exposing a sizeable beach frequented by killdeer and a few shorebirds. In places, the beach is bordered with marsh grasses, small willows, and buttonbushes, the latter being scatteringly used by Red-wings for nest sites.

My only previous experience with this species was near Charleston, S. C. about 4 years ago. However, I believe this individual was a Common Sharp-tail rather than one of the other forms.

ADELE H. WEST, 1625 S. Clayton Ave., S. E.

BLUE GROSBEAKS IN ELIZABETHTON. — While Mrs. Herndon was preparing supper on the evening of April 30, she glanced out the kitchen window and saw a male Blue Grosbeak (*Turaca caerulea*) perched on the edge of our feeding shelf-trap. She called for me to come quickly and we both observed it briefly before it flew away. We lamented the fact that it did not linger and feed on the cracked grain on the shelf. While we were eating supper, Mrs. Herndon returned to the kitchen to find the bird feeding in the center of the shelf-trap. She pulled the string to the trigger and captured the bird. We immediately called several members of the Elizabethton chapter of I.O.S., some of whom had never seen a Blue Grosbeak, and invited them to see it. Several arrived within the ensuing few minutes and had an opportunity to observe it at close range and see it banded and released. This was our first opportunity to band a bird of this species. Two other birds of this species had been observed in this area, one 5-4-46 (THE MIGRANT, 17, 26, 1946) and the other 5-13-48 (Not Published).

On May 4, Mrs. J. C. Browning and Mrs. John R. Sheffey observed one and possibly two males near their homes on Carter Boulevard, only a few blocks from the location of the one we banded. They were able to observe one at close range, both with and without binoculars for several minutes in the shrubbery of the Browning's yard. When the bird under observation flew away, a second bird joined it from a near-by maple tree. In flight the birds appeared identical.

Late in the afternoon of our fall census day, 9-30-56, Gary Bullock and the writer observed a female of this species near the north end of Holly Lane at the Watauga River. We were able to approach within about 40' of the bird perched in a small elm bush. The brownish color of the under parts and wing-bars together with the heavy dark bill were unmistakable. In the near-by trees and horse-weeds there were numerous Rose-breasted Grosbeaks with which it compared favorably in size. This is the only fall record we have for this species in this area.

LEE R. HERDON, 1533 Barge St., Elizabethton.

LARK SPARROW NESTING NEAR LEBANON. — On May 20 of this year, Frank Holloway found a Lark Sparrow's (*Chondestes grammacus*) nest in a pasture lot on his farm five miles south of Lebanon on Highway 231. The nest contained four eggs which were already being brooded when found. Despite repeated visits over a number of days by members of both Lebanon and the Nashville Chapters of TOS, each visit causing the mother bird to leave the nest, all four eggs were hatched and the young reared successfully. They left the nest June 8.

Though the mother bird always left the nest at the approach of visitors, she invariably flew to a brushy fence row less than a hundred feet from the nest and usually remained perched in plain sight.

The nest was under a clump of prickly pear on a rocky outcrop in a pasture containing numerous trees. The surrounding country is hilly and wooded with both plowed and mown fields interspersed, wholly different from the prairie-like area near Gladeville on which Lark Sparrows have been observed for the past several summers. It is, however, similar to the area in which I established the first winter Lark Sparrow record last Christmas. This nest is about five miles, straightaway from the Gladeville area, hardly more than a mile from the site of my winter find.

On June 16, when the Lebanon Chapter held its monthly meeting at the Holloway home, a pair of Lark Sparrows was observed carrying nesting materials in an adjoining pasture. Jennie Riggs of the Nashville Chapter and I had observed one and we thought two Lark Sparrows at about this spot while the nest above described was being brooded. Whether this nest-building is preparation by the same pair for a second brood or is the work of another pair remains undetermined.

The first Lark Sparrow that I knew of was spotted here at my place by Raymond Evans of Granville, Ohio—Dennison University in April 1952. Though I had worked with Evans in Ohio, Maryland and the District of Columbia and knew him as a careful observer, I hooted when he called "Lark Sparrow". That bird, however, was about as accommodating as the brooding one at Holloway's. It waited for me to get a good view. I regarded it as a freak of migration, until Prof. James W. Shaw of Cumberland University found Lark Sparrows on the Gladeville flats.

The time is too short, one nest studied and individual birds observed at three widely separated spots is not sufficient data to justify a statement that Lark Sparrows are becoming established as nesters in this area. But I believe that to be the fact.

DIXON MERRITT, R. F. D. 6, Lebanon, Tennessee

NOTE: Lark Sparrows were found nesting near Gladeville as early as June 4, 1933. (THE MIGRANT 4, 22, 1933). Ed.

A SUMMER RESIDENT HOUSE WREN AT NASHVILLE. — On May 14, 1956, a male House Wren arrived at my next-door neighbor's home where he sang and carried material into a nest-box nailed to a tree trunk. On May 29, a singing Bewick's Wren arrived at a nest-box near the one on the tree. The House Wren left immediately although the Bewick's Wren stayed only two days; but Charles Hunt found the House Wren singing at a nest-box near his home, about two-tenths of a mile from the tree-box. Charles or I heard him daily in that vicinity until July 15. In June, another House Wren appeared and sang for a month at nest-boxes seven-tenths of a mile west of the other male. No females appeared.

This is the first known instance of a House Wren in July at Nashville; but in June of 1952, Eldie Gleaves observed a wren which sang and carried nest material into a box near his home on Murphy Road for about three weeks. At that time, he did not realize the significance of the record and failed to report it until a long time afterwards although he believed that his bird was a House Wren. Since then he has heard the songs in Ohio and is sure of his identification.

It seems inevitable that House Wrens will be found nesting in the Nashville area as they are extending their breeding range to the south. Anne Stamm has summarized the published records of House Wrens in Kentucky and has found only one nesting record prior to 1930, but in the last two decades, a considerable number of records has been published of nests in northern, central and southern Kentucky (1951, *Ky. Warbler* 27 (4): 47-56).

In 1950 one male and two female House Wrens nested at Athens, Georgia, raising several young in three nests (1951, *Auk* 68 (3):357-366).

AMELIA R. LASKEY, 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville, Tennessee

NOTE: See THE MIGRANT 27, 22-30, 1956 for complete review of the status of the House Wren in Tennessee. —Ed,

REPORT OF YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS IN NORTH CHATTANOOGA. — On Aug. 23, '56, Mrs. Jack W. Thompson, a member of T.O.S., telephoned me that her mother, Mrs. Mary-Sims Taylor, had seen a flock of unfamiliar birds in their yard about noon that day. Mrs. Thompson was in a hurry to leave for an engagement and didn't take time to look at the birds. When she returned from the engagement some hours later, her mother described the birds and showed her the picture of the Yellow-headed Blackbird.

The newspaper agreed to publicize the report and readers were asked to telephone me if they had seen the birds. I received five calls and believe that two of the callers actually may have seen the birds, judging by their answers to my questions. All information received indicated the observations were made on the same day in the same general area.

Two days after the original report, I searched that part of the city without success.

Mrs. Taylor said there was a tree full of birds. Every one she looked at had a yellow head. However, it is not certain that all the flock consisted of one species.

All members of the Thompson family are very bird conscious. They have a well visited feeding station and are very familiar with all the resident birds and many of the migrants. Unfortunately, there is no scientific proof of the visit of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, but even a "doubting Thomas" would wonder with what species it could possibly be confused.

ADELE H. WEST, 1625 S. Clayton Ave., S. E.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER NEAR ELIZABETHTON. — Shortly after dawn on May 8, 1956, an unusual song and call note attracted my attention. The song and the harsh "tich" call note came from dense low bushes near my home. Brief glances at the partly hidden quick-moving bird only served to whet my curiosity and confirm my suspicions that this bird was new to me. Finally the bird hopped into the open within eight feet. It was a Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*).

During subsequent observations of the bird on May 10, 11, and 12, it was continually found within four feet of the ground in or near dense underbrush. The song did not resemble "beechee, beechee" as stated by Peterson, but more like the "free-chapple, free chapple, free chapple, whoit" mentioned by Chapman in Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America. To me the song had a horned-lark quality.

In this same area on May 12, several members of the Elizabethton Chapter of T.O.S. found the warbler and heard its song. For only other spring record see (THE MIGRANT 21, 66, 1949).

H. P. LANGRIDGE, Rt. 7, Elizabethton, Tennessee

SURF SCOTER. — On the occasion of our East Tennessee Fall Get-together, on October 7, a bird was observed on Wilbur Lake which caused considerable discussion and speculation as to its identity. In addition to a variety of binoculars, the bird was observed through a 35X spotting scope by all who cared to look. While under observation the bird spread its tail, twice, somewhat in the manner characteristic of the Ruddy Duck. It had two white spots on the sides of the head, one in front of and the other behind the eye. The tops of both spots were about on a level with the eye. Also the extremely heavy bill was noted. Since we were running late for lunch, it was tentatively identified as a Ruddy Duck, although Canvasback and Scoter were suggested as possibilities. On our return trip, later in the afternoon, the telescope was brought into use; and the bird was studied in more detail. The identifying features of the bird were the very thick bill at the base, the practically straight line from the tip of the bill to the top of the head, the two separate and distinct white spots on the side of the face, and the almost black crown which ran from the eye level up and from the base of the upper mandible over the top of the head and in a narrow strip down the nape.

No white was visible in the wings although a silver lining was distinctly visible when it flapped its wings. The fore part of the wing appeared less silvery than the hind part. The wings, back, and tail appeared darker brown than from the wings down to the water line. Because of the uncertainty of the identification and since only one Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) had been reported for Tennessee. (THE MIGRANT, 22, 33, 1951), H. P. Langridge and the writer returned to make further observations on the morning of Oct. 9. The bird was at the same location and was observed for about 45 minutes through telescopes with 35X and 60X and compared in size with a Pied-billed Grebe which was in the telescopic field simultaneously. The bird in question was appreciably larger than the Grebe. We were able to observe it in good sunlight and could discern the feathers that extended about one-half inch along the top of the upper mandible. When the bird turned up on its side to scratch its head with its foot, the foot and leg appeared dark and the belly a dull white. After the first few minutes of observation, the tail-spreading act was never repeated during the three periods of observation totaling more than an hour. After careful study and consulting all available literature, we concluded that the bird was an immature Surf Scoter. The bird remained in approximately the same location for about a week and was last seen on October 13.

In a personal letter from Mr. Preston W. Lane, Refuge Manager of the Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge, Samburg, Tennessee to H. P. Langridge dated October 29, 1956 he states:

"Two surfscoters were inspected by Mr. C. K. Rawls, Jr., of the Tennessee State Game and Fish Commission, Tiptonville, Tenn., during the waterfowl hunting season in 1954. These birds were taken by a hunter on the Mississippi River, approximately six miles west of Reelfoot Lake."

In "Birds of Reelfoot and Lake Isom National Wildlife Refuges" the Surf Scoter is listed as having been recorded only one or two times.

We know of no other records for this species in Tennessee.

LEE R. HERNDON, 1533 Burgie Street, Elizabethton, Tennessee

SNAKE GRABS A DOWNY WOODPECKER. — About 10:30 a.m. July 18, 1956, as I stood at the edge of a blackberry thicket, overgrown with vines, in Percy Warner Park, I heard a thud as something near me struck the ground. Beneath the end of a dead tree which had fallen to a nearly horizontal position, but still remained about five feet above the ground, overgrown with vines, a large dark-colored snake had dropped from the log. In its jaws was a fluttering, struggling Downy Woodpecker, held by its rump. As I stepped a bit nearer, the bird gained its freedom and flew across the road to distant trees, apparently unharmed.

Probably the snake had been resting on the tree trunk when the woodpecker arrived without discovering it and became engrossed in the search for insects, thus giving the snake an opportunity to grab it from the rear.

AMELIA R. LASKEY, 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville, Tennessee

BIRDS EATING BAG WORMS. — A tall arbor-vitae tree planted near a window of our home about 25 years ago became heavily infested for the first time with bag worms (*Thyridopteryx*) in June, 1956. Soon it was evident that numerous birds were feeding in that tree several times each day during the infestation period and for that reason, I did not use a spray recommended to kill the bag worms for fear of poisoning the birds. The chatty calls of Carolina Chickadees were frequently heard as three of them arrived together. Each would bite off a cocoon, transfer it to a twig under their toes to peck out the larvae. Titmice, Carolina Wrens and at least one Blue Jay fed simultaneously in a similar manner. Twice in July, I watched a male Parula Warbler that joined the group. He was seeking a meal also, but his feeding habits had not adapted him to extracting concealed larvae from a hanging cocoon so he tried to rob a species smaller than himself, a Chickadee. Each time the Chickadee flew in haste with the worm in his bill and the warbler in pursuit. In one chase, the Parula got so close that he pecked the other bird on the back, but the outcome of the chases is not known because the birds would fly behind a building. Daily, I found the empty cocoons caught among the arbor-vitae leaves.

AMELIA R. LASKEY, 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE NEAR GREENEVILLE.— The last week in May a male Baltimore Oriole was heard singing several times in the Mt. Pleasant Community. Soon a female appeared busily carrying nesting materials. A long piece of white wrapping twine she evidently needed quite badly was fastened between two trees. She returned and tried to pull it loose several times. She quickly took it as soon as it was made available for her. A few days later the nest was located about 18 feet from the ground on the end of a hickory limb. On June 10 the female appeared to have the nest completed and the business of producing the eggs begun.

Vacation interrupted the observation. The Orioles were not seen after July 4. On Aug. 1 the limb was cut. The nest is a typical Oriole nest made of fine grasses, rootlets, white chicken feathers and the long twine was woven mostly around the top of the nest and around twigs and leaf stems in truly remarkable ways.

ELVA DARNELL, Rt. 7, Greeneville, Tennessee

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT VISITS BIRD BATH. — Early this fall I had the happy thrill of seeing a Yellow-breasted Chat take his morning dip in the bird bath only a few feet from my bedroom window. It was 7:00 a.m. and near the first of September. Twice before, I had seen him in the cedars and shrubbery back of the house, but never expected that he would make use of the bath on the less protected side of the house. I had never heard him make any of his calls, so evidently his nesting-site was nowhere near. I live on a farm and have heard a chat down the creek (about one-fourth mile away) where there is plenty of undergrowth.

MRS. HENRY WATERS, Box 326, Greenwood Farms, Lebanon, Tenn.

MAGNOLIAS UNDAMAGED BY ROOSTING STARLINGS. — The use of the broad-leaved tree, *Magnolia grandiflora*, by Starlings and House Sparrows as a favored roosting place in winter is well known. As use of these trees continue into the winter the Starlings, if in large numbers, gradually break off most of the leaves, whiten the branches and leave the trees in such condition that we often wonder if they are not permanently damaged. Such a condition has prevailed during the past several winters on the narrow lawn in front of the Nashville post office, which fronts on busy and well lit Broad Street. Most of the several thousand Starlings using this roost concentrated in two of the young magnolias which are about 25 feet tall and efforts to drive them out were unsuccessful. By February 1956, the trees were nearly stripped of their leaves, but I am now glad to report that during the following summer they have grown new leaves and are again in fine foliage.

ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville 12, Tenn.

LAWRENCE'S WARBLER REPORTED NEAR CHATTANOOGA. — Although I have never seen a Lawrence's Warbler, I have two birdwatching friends who recently reported the species independently of each other. They live less than a mile apart on a peninsula of Chickamauga Lake. The first report came to me just before May 26 when I was leaving for a 6 - week absence. I neglected to record the exact date because I did not feel it was desirable to report the incident for publication. However, soon after my return to Chattanooga (July 8) I received full details of the second observation by two friends (one of whom accompanied me on field trips before the chapter was organized). The two saw the bird together, watched it for some minutes, and claim to have seen it very well. They then went to the house and each took a different bird book and simultaneously located on the color plates what they had seen. As one voice, they said, "I've found it. It's a Lawrence's Warbler."

All the observers referred to have and use binoculars regularly and are conscientious bird students. In addition, the bird was close enough for easy observation. I personally believe they all saw a Lawrence's Warbler. The couple making the second report could not furnish an exact date, but could say for certain that it occurred on either June 3 or 10.

ADELE H. WEST, 1625 Clayton Ave., S. E.

The five references to Lawrence's Warbler occurring in *THE MIGRANT* are as follows: **20**, 31, 1949; **21**, 65, 1950; **23**, 8, 1952 and **27**, 31, and 34, 1956. —Ed.

Book Review

THE FLAMINGOS: THEIR LIFE HISTORY AND SURVIVAL. — By Robert Porter Allen. National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Ave., New York 28, Research Report No. 5. 285 p. \$3.95.

If some present-day naturalist were able to describe a flamingo to us for the first time, we would not believe him. For here is a bird with the proportions of a heron, a most unlikely bill, and the voice of a goose; one that lives in large flocks in saline lakes where few other birds survive, and eats, or all things, mud; and so to accentuate its oddities, its plumage is mostly red. It is no wonder that many myths have arisen about flamingos; this report disproves many of these, but the facts described make flamingos no less bizarre.

This report describes research that was undertaken primarily to find ways of conserving the West Indian Flamingo. Its author extended his work to deal with the six flamingo species of the world, and by doing so he was able to provide a background against which observations of the West Indian species were made more meaningful. Topics discussed include distribution and movements, numbers, food habits, breeding cycle and behavior, causes of mortality, and conservation. The book is illustrated by a color plate of the flamingo species, painted by Roger Tory Peterson, color and black-and-white photographs, and many drawings. Numerous early descriptions of flamingos and their habits, some quite fanciful, are quoted or summarized. Thus the report has breadth in space and time, resulting in a bulky volume and occasionally in a diffuse treatment of the subject that makes it difficult to follow the main course; though it has lost in this way, it has gained in thoroughly covering the history and biology of flamingos. This is one aspect of the work, and the report is a valuable repository of knowledge about flamingos. The other aspect concerns conservation; besides the information necessary for the preservation of flamingos, the report expresses ideas and concepts that should be read by anyone interested in the philosophy of conservation.

Most of the field observations by Allen were made in the Bahamas where two-thirds of the estimated 21,000 West Indian Flamingos survive (in 1955). This is only about a fifth to a fourth of the numbers that once lived in the West Indian and Caribbean area. The history of flamingos in the Bahamas in the last few years helps to explain the disappearance of the birds from other areas. Allen has shown clearly that the activities of men have been directly responsible for much of the decrease in flamingo numbers, but that many of the people responsible should not be blamed for their depredations because their poverty forced them to acquire food however they could. The flamingo conservation problem is also a human conservation problem.

JAMES T. TANNER.

Reichert Lectures On Binoculars

There will be a talk on "Binoculars for Birding" by Mr. R. J. Reichert, covering: How to use your glass to best advantage, how to choose the model best suited to your purpose, and how to check a glass — both for condition and for the claims made for it. He will also briefly review the binoculars

currently available, with reference to their country or origin. He will have a simple chart and diagram to illustrate details every birder should know, and an assortment of binoculars and scopes of various types and powers including a couple of "phonies" as examples of misrepresentation.

Mr. Reichert will also show some color slides of birds he has photographed through binoculars (the new Bino-Fotography).

Members who would like to ask Mr. Reichert about their personal glasses, may bring them along, and consult with him after the meeting. Mr. Reichert is the author of "Know Your Binoculars" published in Audubon Magazine, as well as numerous other articles, and is listed in "Who Knows — And What" as an authority on binoculars.

Dates of Mr. Reichert's Lectures:

Memphis Chapter — Friday, December 14, 1956

Nashville — Monday, December 17, 1956

Knoxville — Tuesday, December 18, 1956

NEW TELESCOPE OFFERED BIRD STUDENTS AND CONSERVATIONISTS. — Bird students, conservationists, and others interested in using telescopes will find authoritative information in the new 48-page manual, "The Telescope," published Monday, Aug. 27 by the Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., Rochester, N. Y.

Major sections of the new manual have been devoted to outlining the use of telescopes in nature study and the problems involved in choosing the right telescope for every purpose.

Also included are chapters covering the use of telescopes in astronomy, photography, trophy and varmint hunting, target shooting and for "just plain looking" by outdoor fans and hobbyists.

Prepared under the supervision of experts in each of the fields covered, the manual is said to be the most complete ever published on the use of telescopes in such a wide variety of activities.

Copies may be obtained free by writing the Bausch & Lomb Optical Co., 635 St. Paul St., Rochester, N. Y. Ask for Manual G-36.

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