

OBSERVATIONS IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA  
MOUNTAINS IN 1886.

BY GEORGE B. SENNETT.

THE locality visited comprises Mitchell and Yancey Counties, North Carolina, and a small portion of Carter County in Tennessee. The greater part of the observations were made from three points in Mitchell County, N. C., viz., Bakersville, Cranberry, which is close to Tennessee line, and Roan Mountain, the summit of which marks the dividing line between the two States. Frequently a bird was flushed in one State and picked up in the other.

The altitudes varied from 2600 feet, the lowest, at Bakersville, to 6400 feet, the highest point of Roan Mountain; that of Cranberry, where I made the longest stay, being 3200 feet above the sea level. The country is densely wooded to the very tops of the peaks, and in general characteristics is so similar to that of Mount Mitchell and vicinity, as described by Mr. Brewster in 'The Auk' (Vol. III, No. 1, pages 97 and 98), that it is desirable to mention only two points of difference. First, the country in the immediate vicinity of Roan Mountain has not as many clearings as has that about the lower slopes of the Black Mountains some thirty or more miles to the south. Secondly, the summit of Roan has extensive table-lands, on which three kinds of vegetation are found, each growing in separate tracts. This vegetation includes groves of balsams (the name used by the inhabitants for spruce and fir trees); thickets of rhododendrons, which are most luxuriant and plentiful here; and tracts of the coarse, thick mountain grass, which grows in immense patches of from one to one hundred acres in extent.

The observations were made during two trips; the first extended from April 15 to 29 inclusive; the second from June 26 to September 4 inclusive. Of the seventy species of birds observed and noted I can claim but eight of them as additions to the lists for this State heretofore given in 'The Auk' by Messrs. Brewster and Batchelder (see Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2 and 3). A few things which are perhaps of interest in reference to the birds already recognized as of this region may also be presented here.

The following eight species have not before been noted from these mountains:

**Totanus solitarius.** SOLITARY SANDPIPER.—Saw several isolated pairs in April, July, and August, in altitudes from 2800 feet to 3500 feet; only once did I see three together, at the base of Roan Mountain, the altitude being 3200; one of these I shot and preserved.

**Buteo lineatus.** RED-SHOULDERED HAWK.—Several seen about Cranberry, 3200 feet altitude; and one on Elk River, 3000 feet altitude. Breeds.

**Falco columbarius.** PIGEON HAWK.—Saw one on April 20, near Toe River, Yancey County.

**Molothrus ater.** COWBIRD.—On April 23, at Bakersville, saw several in company with Redwings in an orchard; again in August saw a few at Cranberry, but they were not common and none were observed in high altitudes.

**Chondestes grammacus.** LARK-SPARROW.—Shot a full grown young-of-the-year of this species on August 9 at Cranberry. When shot it was alone in the top of an aged apple-tree; altitude 3000 feet. The taking of this bird so far from its usual habitat was the most surprising event of the summer. Although no others were identified, it is only natural to suppose that this bird was reared not very far from where it was taken.

**Zonotrichia leucophrys.** WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW.—Only noticed two or three on April 23, on hills near Bakersville, and again on April 24, while making the ascent of Roan Mountain.

**Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea.** YELLOW PALM WARBLER.—Two shot and one female preserved; taken on the hills south of Bakersville on April 19; they were in a clump of young trees along with two or three Grass Finches (*Poocates gramineus*); altitude 3000 feet.

**Regulus calendula.** RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.—A pair of these birds, in immature plumage, was shot at Plum Tree, Mitchell County, April 18, when in company with several more, and the male preserved. Shot several in Yancey County on April 21; altitude 3500 feet.

A partial record of my observations of certain birds already noted as of this locality may be interesting.

**Philohela minor.** WOODCOCK.—I saw a pair of these birds on the summit of Roan in a clump of balsams; the overflow from numerous springs which had their sources at this spot formed an open adjoining marsh of several acres; altitude fully 6000 feet. One or two pairs have been known to breed here every year. Shot a pair of birds of the year at Cranberry, August 27.

On April 27, I saw with my field glass a fine adult *Buteo borealis* (Red-tailed Hawk) sail up the side of Pizzle Mountain, four miles east of Bakersville, and alight on a tree near the summit; altitude fully 4500 feet. This is the highest elevation in which any were observed.

**Falco sparverius.** SPARROW HAWK.—Quite common near Bakersville; a pair found breeding in a large chestnut tree at an altitude of 3000 feet on the 23d of April.

**Trochilus colubris.** RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD.—These were seen frequently on Roan Mountain in June and July; altitude 6300 feet. While at Cranberry, in August, altitude 3200 feet, they were more numerous than I had ever seen them elsewhere.

Two Hairy Woodpeckers were taken; one was shot in a clump of balsams on the top of Roan Mountain, altitude 6300 feet, July 13, and the other at Cranberry, altitude 3000 feet, August 13; both are females, and although rather intermediate between the southern and northern forms, yet more like the southern, and I call them *Dryobates villosus auduboni*.

**Dryobates pubescens.** DOWNY WOODPECKER.—A female was shot on the southern slope of Roan Mountain; altitude 6100 feet.

**Sturnella magna.** MEADOW LARK.—One observed on the summit of Roan Mountain, April 25, at an altitude of 6300 feet.

**Sphyrapicus varius.** YELLOW-BELLIED WOODPECKER.—On April 25 shot a female in an opening in the balsams where timber had been cut away on the south side of Roan Mountain; altitude 6000 feet. Saw two or three more at about the same spot in July.

**Melanerpes erythrocephalus.** RED-HEADED WOODPECKER.—In June one was slightly wounded, but kept alive, on the top of Roan Mountain; taken at 6000 feet altitude. Only one other was seen on the summit of Roan, but in the lower altitudes of Cranberry and Yancey County they were occasionally seen.

**Colaptes auratus.** FLICKER.—These birds, though shy, were found as high as 5000 feet in April and August; secured several young but did not bring home an adult.

**Loxia curvirostra minor.** AMERICAN RED CROSSBILL.—Shot one close to the Roan Mountain Hotel, July 5; altitude 6300 feet. Saw and heard several flocks, but did not find them feeding commonly in the balsams; at Cranberry, in August, altitude 3200 feet, one or two flocks could be seen and heard daily feeding in the hemlocks.

**Pooecetes gramineus.** VESPER SPARROW.—On April 19 I shot two females of this species on the hills south of Bakersville, in different localities, at an altitude of 3000 feet. At the same time I shot several others. An examination showed that the ovaries were undeveloped. They were fat and did not act as if they were migrating; yet they cannot be a common summer resident, for my later trip brought me to certain promising localities, but the marked white tail-feathers of this common northern bird were only conspicuous by their absence.

**Junco hyemalis carolinensis.** CAROLINA JUNCO.—This new variety of Black Snowbird I was prepared to see, and did find in all places above 3000 feet elevation; although not abundant at this last-named elevation, yet on the summit of Roan, at an altitude of 6300 feet, it is exceedingly abundant, outnumbering at this point all other species combined. I found them in the latter half of April when they were paired and building nests, but although many completed nests were discovered, I was not able to find any eggs up to the time (April 29) I left Roan Mountain at the close of my first trip. Although possibly at an elevation of from 3000 to

4000 feet a few sets may be found earlier, yet it is safe to say that in the mountains of North Carolina, May is the season for the first clutch of eggs. Being obliged to leave, I gave directions that a few sets with nests should be preserved for me, and on my return I not only obtained several sets laid in May, but secured additional ones of the second brood. In July, on Roan Mountain, I found both fresh-laid eggs and young in all stages; whenever the almost constantly present and low-hanging clouds would lift for an hour or so, I could deviate from the main road and find a Junco's nest. My experience told me that the first brood was generally four, but often three, while the second brood was three, and rarely four. I found these birds nesting on the ground in all sorts of places,—in the open among the grass hummocks, along the edge of a cowpath, among the rhododendrons, or myrtle tussocks (which look so much like the heather of Scotland), under the balsams, or under the deciduous trees of a lower altitude. Two nests, one of which was five and the other three feet from the ground, were found in balsam trees; and I found one nest at an altitude of two feet, in the roots of an overturned tree. Of the twenty nests and sets of eggs in my collection, no two are alike, either in size, shape, marking of eggs, or lining of nest. The nests are lined with hair of various colors, fine rootlets, red moss, and grass like that of which the body of the nest is formed. At Cranberry, in August, I found occasional pairs of adults and young of the year, but did not come across any nests. I brought back twenty-seven specimens, of all ages from the newly hatched to the adult. This number does not comprise all the specimens shot and examined, for in the lower altitudes in the spring I tried to secure typical *hyemalis*; I did not succeed in finding one. This seems to show that true *hyemalis*, which, together with *carolinensis*, winters there, does not remain as late as April 15, and therefore that the only form breeding in the mountains of Western North Carolina is *carolinensis*. That the two forms are intermingled along the Atlantic States I am led to believe on examining the series of eight males and six females in the collection of Mr. J. Dwight, Jr., of New York City. There is scarcely a typical *hyemalis* in Mr. Dwight's collection, and three males conform as closely, both in size and external characteristics, to *carolinensis* as if they had been taken on the high peaks of North Carolina. Mr. Dwight's three specimens are as follows:

No. 997, male, March 26, Rockaway Beach, L. I.; wing, 3.12; tail, 2.75; bill, .39.

No. 1002, male, April 1, Van Cortland, Westchester Co., N. Y.; wing, 3.13; tail, 2.90; bill, .40.

No. 1308, male, July 26, Albert Co., N. B.; wing, 3.07; tail, 2.80; bill, .45.

Average of 4 males, including type, of Mr. Brewster's specimens from North Carolina (see Auk, Vol. III, No. I, p. 108): wing, 3.165; tail, 2.78; bill to feathers, .435.

Average of 13 males in my collection from Roan Mountain, N. C.; wing, 3.15; tail, 2.87; bill to feathers, .41. Extremes: wing, 3.27-3.00; tail, 3.05-2.70; bill to feathers, .45-.36.

Average of *hyemalis*, 4 males from New England: wing, 3.02; tail, 2.66; bill to feathers, .405.

Since the building of the hotel on the summit of Roan Mountain, numbers of these Juncos remain there all winter. In the winter of 1885-86, although the thermometer registered 24° below zero, they were particularly numerous, feeding on the refuse from the kitchen and on the hayseed in the loft of the barn. A gentleman who had passed the winter in that bleak spot told me that on the coldest and stormiest days he could always see them, and they sometimes came into the house. When I was there in April I frequently saw as many as thirty about the kitchen door or barn-yard, and one that had flown in through the open window was caught alive for me in the dining-room. On April 29, at the close of my first visit, there were large bodies of snow and ice under the balsams where the sun could not reach, and two days after my departure there occurred a fall of snow which covered the mountain to a depth of several inches. In July it was generally wet, and the thermometer ranged between 50° and 60°, more frequently remaining in the neighborhood of from 50° to 55°.

**Cardinalis cardinalis.** CARDINAL GROSBEAR.—On April 29, while waiting for a team to take me down the mountain, I took my gun and two half charges of dust, and felt my way through the clouds down among the balsams on the northern slope of Roan Mountain; only a few rods from the hotel I secured and brought back a female Cardinal and a male Wren; altitude 6200 feet. Occasionally seen at lower elevations, but not abundant.

**Ampelis cedrorum.** CEDAR WAX-WING.—Common in July on the southern slope of Roan Mountain, among the scattered balsams where timber had been cut away; altitude 6200 feet.

**Mniotilta varia.** BLACK-AND-WHITE CREEPER.—On July 27, during a storm which was raging at ten o'clock in the evening, this bird flew against the window of the hotel on Roan Mountain and was caught alive. This species is common at the base of the mountain.

**Galeoscoptes carolinensis.** CATBIRD.—Two of this bird's nests with eggs were brought me, having been taken at Carver's Gap, Roan Mountain, at an altitude of 5400 feet.

**Troglodytes hiemalis.** WINTER WREN.—Common in the balsams of Roan Mountain; at all hours, rain or shine, the exquisite song of this shy bird could be heard even from the balcony of the hotel. I remember hearing four males at one time from as many different directions. I was constantly in search of their nests, and frequently saw them carrying building material, and food to their young, but the clouds, which were only absent at long intervals from the summit of the mountain, would close about me like a veil and I would be obliged to practically feel my way home again, always unsuccessful.

**Certhia familiaris americana.** BROWN CREEPER.—On April 24, while ascending Roan Mountain from Bakersville, on the south, saw plainly a pair of these birds building their nest in the loose bark of a tree close by a road which wound through heavy timber, at an altitude of 4500 feet.

**Parus bicolor.** TUFTED TITMOUSE.—Everywhere common up to about 4000 feet elevation. At Bakersville and Cranberry I seldom took a stroll without hearing the whistle of this bird or seeing it with its young.

**Parus carolinensis.** CAROLINA CHICKADEE.—This bird was not frequently seen, and not observed at all above 5000 feet altitude.

**Regulus satrapa.** GOLDEN-CRESTED KINGLET.—On July 23, shot a young of the year at an elevation of 6000 feet; it was in company with the rest of the brood and the parents. Not common.

**Merula migratoria.** ROBIN.—Rarely seen in the lowlands, but common on the summit of Roan Mountain, where I found two nests with eggs in the balsams; altitude 6300 feet; others were brought to me which had been taken in the woods far from any habitation.

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## DESCRIPTION OF A NEW *EUETHIA* FROM OLD PROVIDENCE ISLAND.

BY CHARLES B. CORY.

### *Euethia grandior*, sp. nov.

SP. CHAR. —General appearance of *E. bicolor*; but larger, the wing is much longer, and both mandibles are black.

*Adult* ♂ (Type, No. 10,274, Coll. C. B. Cory):—Head, throat, breast, and upper belly black; a patch of dull yellowish white from the belly to the vent; flanks and under tail-coverts dull olive green; back and rump olive green; quills brown, edged with olive green; tail greenish above, slaty brown beneath, and showing numerous indistinct bands when held in the light; bill black.

Length, 4.50; wing, 2.45; tail, 2; tarsus, .60; bill, .40.

The great length of wing seems to be constant in sixteen specimens from Old Providence. I have compared it with forty-four examples of *E. bicolor* from other localities.

*Habitat.* Island of Old Providence, Caribbean Sea.

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

The New Canadian Ornithology.\*—Decidedly the best we have is this

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\*The | Birds of Ontario, | Being a list of Birds observed in the Province of | Ontario, with an Account of their Habits, | Distribution, Nests, Eggs, &c., | —By— | Thomas McIlwraith, | Superintendent of the Ontario District | for the | Migration Committee of the American | Ornithologists' Union | — | Published by the Hamilton Association. | — | Hamilton: | A. Lawson & Co., Printers, 10 York Street. | — | 1886. 1 vol. 8vo. pp. 1-304, i-iv, i-iv, i-vii.