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WITH THE BIRDS IN NORTHEASTERN
COLORADO.

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On June 7, 1906, the writer with three assistants started northeastward from Boulder, for a month's geological and biological expedition to the Chalk Bluffs and Pawnee Buttes region in northern Weld County, in the interests of the University of Colorado. It being the nesting season and the majority of the nests containing young birds, we did but little bird collecting, but contented ourselves, so far as our feathered neighbors were concerned, with photographing them and studying them in relation to their environment.

Our course lay at first along the edge of the plains bordering the foothills, then gradually swinging outward through the irrigated valleys to Greeley, then northward over the higher plains, above reach of irrigating ditches, to Chalk Bluffs eastward to Pawnee Buttes, back to Greeley by way of Crow Creek and home by the shortest route.

The great difference in conditions between the streams and timbered valleys of the foothill region and the dry, treeless plains of the northern area was noticeably marked by a change in the avian fauna. Among the pines of the foothill ridges were magpies, Long-crested Jays and Brewer Blackbirds, and on the rocks of the foothill slopes were innumerable Rock Wrens, scolding and singing as we passed by. On dry, open mesas adjoining the foothills between the streams Mourning

Doves and Meadowlarks were abundant, while Lark Buntings, a half dozen at a time, rose into the air and sang their breezy songs as they dropped back to the earth on a long slant, reminding one forcibly of the Bobolinks in moist meadows just east of Boulder—indeed, these Buntings are commonly called Bobolinks by people who are not observant. On these same mesas Lark Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows and Desert Horned Larks crouched on the ground, concealed by the blending of their colors with the dry mesa grasses, testing our ability to distinguish them from each other as they darted from almost beneath our feet, the tail being the chief distinguishing character in receding flight. Western Nighthawks, which at twilight pursued their zigzag courses in quest of insects, at noon-tide were flushed from among the pebbles of the mesas where they remained invisible until disclosed by sudden flight, and their eggs were difficult to see even when the bird left them within a few feet of us. In the artificial groves surrounding "ranches," as every out-of-town habitation is called in Colorado, were found Robins, Yellow Warblers, House Finches, English Sparrows and other birds which haunt the streets of the towns. Wherever there was swampy ground Red-winged Blackbirds congregated, with occasionally a few Yellow-heads. In the pastures Cowbirds followed the cattle as they were once wont to follow the bison in the same region. In woods and brushy patches which line the streams as they break from the mountains into the valley Bullock Orioles called through the treetops, Catbirds, Spurred Towhees and Green-tailed Towhees flitted through the shrubbery and the notes of the Long-tailed Chat and Western Yellow-throat frequently greeted our ears. By watching diligently we could sometimes obtain a tantalizing glimpse of the latter, and the Chat regaled us with weird and plaintive notes throughout the night when we camped near his nesting site. Further out in the irrigated valley, the larger trees along roadsides and ditch banks harbored Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted Flickers and Red-headed Woodpeckers. Lazuli Buntings sang to us from telephone wires, upon which balanced Barn and Cliff Swallows in regular rows so spaced as to barely permit a good spread of wing as they took flight. Crows, which have nearly

disappeared from the foothill region, were sometimes seen here. Around the shores of small lakes and irrigating reservoirs stalked Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Avocets, Bitterns and Wilson Phalaropes, and among the cattails and other swamp vegetation Coots, etc., were found nesting. Killdeer were everywhere in evidence and Spotted Sandpipers were common, a nest of the latter being found at Loveland.

Beyond the abrupt line of irrigated fields, above reach of irrigating ditches, a decided change takes place as we break suddenly upon the open range. Here treeless plains, with tone, color and a fascination all their own, stretch away for miles. Green fields give way to brown, half-dried buffalo grass, cactus and other plants indicative of arid or semi-arid conditions. No perennial streams water or drain these plains. Between storms the stream beds are nearly as dry as the adjacent divides, except for occasional waterholes which retain a little water. A few trees along the channels mark their positions and courses to the plainsman. No words or pictures can convey to the reader a just idea of these plains. They must be seen to be comprehended.

The robins, warblers, waterbirds, shorebirds, flickers, woodpeckers, lazuli buntings, blackbirds, jays, magpies, wrens, finches, catbirds, orioles, towhees and English sparrows have disappeared, but the mesa birds of the irrigated section are still with us—the Vesper Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, Desert-Horned Larks, Lark Buntings and Meadowlarks. In entering upon the open range we at once encounter a bird unseen before, the Mountain Plover, which, despite its popular name, is a bird of the high plains rather than the mountains, though found in mountain parks up to an altitude of 9,000 feet. They were nearly all accompanied by young birds, and now for an unblushing confession. Behold the edifying spectacle of a solemn scientific expedition stopped for an hour on the plain, while four robust, sun-burned, grave and wise-looking fossil diggers fondled and played with a baby plover, photographed it and restored it to an anxious mother, who had watched the proceedings with dark forebodings at a distance of a rod or two. Color

protection, did you say? The young plovers simply disappeared the moment they stopped running.

Insistence upon the idea of color protection seems to have been overdone in some cases, and the subject may never be perfectly understood. In the woods and brush patches, where hiding is so easy and color contrasts so abundant, there are many apparent anomalies. For instance, why should the Green-tailed Towhee among the brush patches of the foothills wear a coat of such a color which so blends with the foliage as to render the bird nearly invisible while the Spurred Towhee in the same habitat is very conspicuous as it darts through the shrubbery? However, no matter what theories we may have or how we may disagree in our attempts to account for seeming anomalies found where cover is plenty, when we reach the open range we may at least agree on the great central fact that the birds and mammals of the plains are rendered inconspicuous and thus protected by their lack of conspicuous colors. We are here dealing with facts, not theories. An animal the size of an antelope, if it were black or white, would instantly attract the attention of every hunter, two-legged, four-legged or winged, whereas, in its proper dress it is overlooked in the majority of cases until it moves or spreads its flash disk, and even the flash disk helps it to disappear when it suddenly at a distance changes its course and "closes" the disk. The coyote and jackrabbit are safe if they keep their nerve and remain quiet. This is true of the plains animals generally, but the bison, which was in need of no such protection, was a conspicuous object—yes, was, for he is no longer conspicuous in the land which once knew him. Among the plains birds the Plover, Desert-Horned Lark, Vesper Sparrow and Lark Sparrow are exceedingly difficult to distinguish until one flushes them. In the sage brush near Slayton's Ranch, Brewer Sparrows blended so perfectly with the shrubbery that it required sharp vision to locate them even when they were singing as if to attract attention.

Among the Tertiary bluffs of northern Weld County another change of conditions takes place, accompanied by a change in the avifauna. Abrupt bluffs rise from the plains, dissected by gulches several hundred feet in depth, the rocky walls bearing

small pines and cedars, the gulch beds in many places covered with dwarf chokecherry trees, rose bushes and other shrubbery. Throughout the irrigated section we had seen numerous Kingbirds (*T. tyrannus*) and Say Phœbes, but these had been left behind. Throughout the bluff region there were great numbers of Arkansas Kingbirds, but not one of the other members of the family did we see there. Early the first morning in camp we were delighted to hear the Mockingbird which we had missed up to that time during the whole journey of 150 miles. They were abundant all along the bluffs and often gave us moonlight matinees in addition to the daylight concerts. White-rumped Shrikes were resting in the gullies. In this region, however, the birds of transcendent interest were the hawks and White-throated Swifts. On every inaccessible pinnacle or ledge of rock we were sure to see a nest of some species of hawk. On one occasion a member of the party was let down from the top of a cliff to a ledge, from which three young hawks were hoisted to the rocks above, photographed and then restored to their nest. Here we had our first and only experience with White-throated Swifts, which nest in holes in the rocks in such situations that we did not succeed in reaching them in a single instance, though we could at almost any time see them flitting to and fro. Clinging to the walls in many places were the mud habitations of Cliff Swallows, which, unlike the Swifts, nested within easy reach. Turkey Vultures, which were once abundant throughout the region traversed by us, were seen on this trip only on one or two occasions, a pair being constantly in sight of our camp at the Davis Ranch, ten miles east of Grover.

As we drove down Crow Creek, we noticed ahead numbers of Great Blue Herons passing each other, some headed southwestward, others northeastward. This is a familiar sight every summer among the big cottonwoods on the St. Vrain, Big Thompson and other streams where water is abundant, but was somewhat surprising miles from running water. Never did we expect to see a heronry in such a place, yet in a few moments the trees, in the dry channel of Crow Creek, came in sight, every tree bearing several heron nests, all containing young birds waiting the results of parental fishing excursions

to the Cache la Poudre River. The unusual situation of this heronry and the small size and gnarled appearance of the trees which supported the nests, made this the most interesting one we had ever visited.

THE BIRDS OF CLEVELAND, OHIO, AND VICINITY.

[The list of birds which follows has come into my hands without the name of the author attached, and without any internal evidence of who the author may be. I judge that it must be something more than ten years since the records upon which the list are based closed. The lack of an author's name and the lapse of time since it should have appeared in print may seem to make the printing of it at this time inadvisable or even questionable. However, the clear internal evidence that it has been prepared with considerable care and after a long period of study, and apparently after consultation with at least two other bird students of the same city whose high standing in bird studies is unquestioned, and because the region has never been fully covered in any published list, seem to me sufficient arguments for placing it on record now. If any reader can throw any light upon its authorship such information will be greatly appreciated.

The list which follows has been edited only to the extent of bringing the nomenclature up to date, and in the elimination of the Yellow Palm Warbler, which is given as rare, but without the record of specimens; the elimination of the "Black Scoter Duck, rare migrant. Noted one inside breakwater, October 16, 1886," because it is not possible to determine which of the two Ohio scoters is meant; and in the elimination of the "King Eider," given as a tolerably common migrant on Lake Erie, because such a record seems wholly improbable. A few verbal changes have been made, but none which in any way affect the list as I have it.

I cannot forbear a few comments upon this very interesting list in the light of some familiarity with a region only thirty miles to the west, which presents practically the same conditions, except the presence of a large river whose course lies