

BIRD NOTES FROM THE BIGHORN MOUNTAIN REGION
OF WYOMING

BY JOHN W. ALDRICH

During the summer of 1930, I spent the months of July and August collecting birds for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in the central northern part of Wyoming. During about six weeks of my stay I made my headquarters on the Bear Claw Ranch which is owned by Dr. Gordon N. Morrill, of Cleveland. This ranch is located on the northeastern slopes of the Bighorn Mountains four miles northwest of Dayton, and about seven miles south of the Montana border. The elevation of the ranch varies from 4,500 to 5,500 feet. The other two weeks were spent in the mountains themselves at altitudes varying from 7,000 to 11,000 feet.

The birds obtained on this trip have been carefully identified by Dr. Harry C. Oberholser by comparison with large series of specimens. The nomenclature used is as given by him. The following annotated list is comprised of such species as were deemed worthy of report because of the unusualness of their occurrence in the region described or because the locality was close to the supposed limits of their range. In most cases specimens were taken and when this was not the case the bird is not here recorded unless it is one with which I am very familiar in the field.

CANADIAN LONG-BILLED CURLEW. *Numenius americanus occidentalis*. Two juvenile specimens, male and female, were taken on the open prairie at Bear Claw Ranch, altitude 4,500 feet, on July 20. These two specimens were taken from a group of three birds seen on several preceding days near the same place.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO. *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*. On July 3 two of these birds were seen in the fringe of aspen and box elder bordering Smith Creek at about 4,500 feet. On almost every day thereafter one individual was observed up until July 20. No specimens were taken, but on one occasion, when I was not collecting, I was successful in calling the bird up to within fifteen feet of where I stood by imitating its call. At this distance the red eye-ring was clearly visible and identification positive.

WESTERN RED-HEADED WOODPECKER. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrophthalmus*. Only one of these birds was seen on the trip. It was a juvenile male specimen collected on the Tongue River near Dayton on July 26.

WESTERN KINGBIRD. *Tyrannus tyrannus hespericola*. This species was seen regularly all over the countryside below 6,000 feet. One

pair nested near the ranch house. One or more birds were seen on every trip around the ranch. On August 6, eight kingbirds were seen in the vicinity of Dayton.

CATBIRD. *Dumetella carolinensis*. In brushy places about the ranch one might expect to run into this species fairly regularly. On July 3 and 4 I saw six birds each day. One was seen almost daily in the flower garden beside the house.

AMERICAN PIPIT. *Anthus spinoletta rubescens*. Above timberline (10,000 feet) on the rocky alpine slopes of Elk Peak, which was climbed on July 16, this was the only bird recorded. Six pipits were constantly flying nervously about from rock to rock "pipping" continuously. It is assumed that their actions denoted the presence of young birds in the vicinity. Certainly the flocks of pipits which I observed in August behaved in an entirely different manner. The latter birds, which were observed at about 9,000 feet, ran along quietly on the ground and would not have been noticed had they not been flushed by my approach, so closely did their colors harmonize with their surroundings. Even in flight they were absolutely silent. The flock contained both pipits and Western Vesper Sparrows (*Poocetes gramineus confinis*). The records of pipits seen in the Bighorn Mountains are as follows: July 16, Elk Peak, altitude 11,000 feet, six; August 12, twenty-five miles west of Dayton, altitude 9,000 feet, five; August 13, at the same locality, about fifty. One specimen was collected on August 12.

WESTERN YELLOW WARBLER. *Dendroica aestiva morcomi*. In the low willows bordering streams at the lower altitudes this was a very common bird. It was frequently heard singing in the shrubbery about the house. On July 31 a specimen was taken on Bear Claw Ranch at an altitude of 4,500 feet. On August 15 two yellow warblers were seen in the willows along Fool Creek in the Bighorn Mountains at an elevation of 8,000 feet. These individuals probably did not breed there as they had not been seen previously at so high an altitude.

AMERICAN REDSTART. *Setophaga ruticilla*. This species was seen on four occasions in the box elders fringing Smith Creek at an elevation of about 5,000 feet, not more than one pair being seen on any one day. The dates of observations were between July 3 and 29.

BOBOLINK. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*. Several pairs of these birds were found nesting in the alfalfa fields at Bear Claw Ranch between 4,500 and 5,000 feet. On July 11, I found a young Bobolink just out of the nest and unable to fly more than a few feet. On August 6, a flock of approximately twenty-five juvenile Bobolinks were observed

feeding in the hay fields near Dayton. One of this group was collected.

BRONZED GRACKLE. *Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*. During the first few days of July a few scattered grackles were seen about the ranch. On July 6 a juvenile specimen barely able to fly was collected near the ranch house. By July 21, flocks of grackles had begun to gather and were seen roosting about in the trees and feeding in the hayfields. These flocks grew steadily in size and on August 27 I estimated 500 birds seen in the vicinity of Dayton. Fifteen specimens of Bronzed Grackles were collected on July 6, 24, 26, and August 2 and 3. All of these turned out to be juvenile birds in various stages of molt.

WHITE-WINGED JUNCO. *Junco aikeni*. On August 12, a juvenile female specimen of this species was collected from a flock of Pink-sided Juncos (*Junco mearnsi*) in the Bighorn Mountains, twenty-five miles west of Dayton at an altitude of 9,000 feet. If this example represents a breeding record, as it seems to do, it is an extension of the breeding range of the species from the Bear Lodge Mountains in the northeastern corner of Wyoming.

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CLEVELAND, OHIO.

WATER BIRDS OF A VIRGINIA MOUNTAIN COUNTY

BY J. J. MURRAY

A mountain county in Virginia seems an unpropitious place for the study of water birds. And it is true that as compared with the coastal regions of any of the Atlantic states or with the lake country of the north our water bird life is not large. But in the course of a considerable amount of field work, with special reference to water birds, I have been struck with the number both of species and individuals that can be found here. So little work has been done in this section during the migration period that the results of this field work may be of some interest.

The county on which this study is based is Rockbridge County, Virginia, and the data were gathered over a period of five years, from 1928 to 1933. Rockbridge County, taking its name from its famous Natural Bridge, is centrally located in the Valley of Virginia, just south of latitude 38°, and about two hundred miles from the coast and the great tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay. The northern boundary of the county is the watershed between the Shenandoah and James River systems; the eastern is the crest of the Blue Ridge; while the western runs along the top of some outlying ridges of the Alleghanies.