



The Redstart

Published Monthly by the Brooks Bird Club
Oglebay Park, Wheeling, W. Va.

Vol. V, No. 1

Edited by J. W. Handlan

October, 1937

NOTES ON TWO VISITS TO PYMATUNING LAKE AND VICINITY

by
I. B. Boggs

Five of us, Roger Tory Peterson, Maurice Brooks, Chester Shaffer and William Lunk, besides myself, were 'birding' at Pymatuning, on September 4, 1937. We were near the south end of the viaduct which separates Linesville and Pymatuning Lakes. A rail was sighted, one which, at first, we believed to be an example of the Yellow Rail, Coturnicops novaboracensis, so we "closed in" to see this bird, "new" to most of us. As we came together, Mr. Peterson flushed a King Rail, Rallus e. elagans, and, as our semi-circle became smaller, two other rails were driven to the open. One was a Sora, Porzana carolina, and the other was what we had believed to be our "Yellow Rail," actually a young Sora! A moment later a Virginia Rail, Rallus l. limicola, flushed before us.

In other words, we had observed three species of Rails within a radius of 100 feet!

From the intersection of the highway and railroad, just south of Linesville, there is an old road which leads to a promontory of the Linesville Lake area. From the tip of this land point, we observed a flock of 40 American Egrets, Egretta candidissima, with which were two examples of the Snowy Egret, Egretta t. thula. From this same vantage point, 14 Bald Eagles, Haliaeetus leucocephalus, were seen. At one time ten of them were within the field of vision of our binoculars. To those of us who seldom see a Bald Eagle that was really a thrilling experience.

Extending through the grounds of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, at Erie, Pa., there is a winding road. If followed, it will eventually take the traveler to the base of a pier which reaches far into Erie Bay. From there a semi-obscured path leads to the mud flat where numerous shore birds stop for food during migrations. It was to this spot that our party went on September 5, quite early in the morning.

Busily feeding were numerous Sandpipers and Plovers and Turnstones. It would, we knew, take quite a time to identify them to our own satisfaction, so our binoculars were trained on the hosts of shorebirds and minds went to work.

We watched them carefully for more than an hour. By that time, these species had been listed by as careful a field check as we could make:

Black-bellied Plover, Squatrola squatrola, Ruddy Turnstone, Arenaria interpres morinella, Knot, Calidris canutus rufus, Pectoral Sandpiper, Pisobia melanotus, Baird's Sandpiper, Pisobia bairdi, Least Sandpiper, Pisobia minutilla, Red-backed Sandpiper, Pelidna alpina sakhalina, Dowitcher, Limnodromus g. griseus, Western Sandpiper, Ereunetes mauri, Sanderling, Crocethia alba, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Ereunetes pusillus, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Tryngites subruficollis, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pisobia fuscicollis, Greater Yellow-legs, Totanus melanoleucus, Lesser Yellowlegs, Totanus flavipes.

It is to be kept in mind that this variety of shore birds were recorded upon one small mud flat.

On Gull Point, Presque Isle, there were noted a few hundred gulls -- Herring, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's and a few Caspian and Common Terns were lingering with them.

Of the ten species of ducks recorded in the course of this trip, most were found at Pymatuning. There, also, we noted numerous Coots, Florida Gallinules, Great Blue Herons and a few Black-crowned Night Herons.

We agreed that Pymatuning and vicinity is one of the most promising concentration points for birds anywhere in the East. Our bird list for the two-day trip represented more than 100 species.

A second visit was made to Pymatuning and Presque Isle on October 10 and 11, with Robert Murray, of New Cumberland, W.Va. Our first day was spent at Erie Bay and Presque Isle. The mud flat at Erie was somewhat deserted compared with its population of early September, but we noted, nevertheless, a few Pectoral, Red-backed, Least, Western, and Semi-palmated Sandpipers. Present, also, were a few Sanderlings, Black-bellied Plover, Dowitcher and a single Knot.

At Gull Point, two Snow Geese, species undetermined, were observed at close range. Double-crested Cormorants were present in small numbers as were the Ring-billed, Herring and Bonaparte's Gulls. One mature Bald Eagle soared low above Gull Point, providing a beautiful picture.

October 11 was certainly "Baldpate Day" at Pymatuning, Linesville Lake. From one promontory we saw, at conservative estimate, 5,000 Baldpates, in two major flocks. It was a remarkable picture to see half the number rise and settle again in the water near our observation post. The brown and white color-pattern of the birds becomes very striking when given the emphasis of two or three thousand pairs of wings!

Wherever we went about the lake, there were smaller flocks of Baldpates, scores of these flocks, indeed. The air seemed to be filled with moving birds which, when assembled in flocks of any size, made, on the wing, the peculiar sound characteristic of the species.

Other ducks were seen in far less numbers than the Baldpates. There were Mallards, Pintails, Black, Wood, Green-and Blue-winged Teals, Ruddies, Shovellers and Scaups, among others.

In one flock there were, we estimated, a thousand Coots, A few Florida Gallinules remained. A half dozen Bald Eagles ere listed.

West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia.

THE BOBOLINK IN WEST VIRGINIA

by
Earl A. Brooks

In looking through old ornithological magazines, I have found several rather interesting records for West Virginia. These records, though made long ago, should be constantly studied by present day observers. Otherwise, there is danger that some supposedly new record may be found to be no more than a confirmation of observations in years past.

In that ephemeral magazine, The Loon, published by Thaddeus Surber at White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., from January to October in the year 1889, there are few items of real value, but some are records worth consideration. In Vol. 1, No. 3, March, 1889, an anonymous writer (probably Mr. Surber himself) has an article entitled, "A Visit to the Home of the Sand-birds." While much of the discussion is given to a colony of Bank Swallows, the concluding paragraph relates to the discovery of a nest of the Bobolink.

The writer says that he found the nest of a Bobolink, near White Sulphur Springs on June 9 (1888?) and that he took the set of eggs. If this record be true, though it is almost 50 years old, it must be recognized as the first breeding record for this species in West Virginia.

In a recent letter from Mr. Surber (dated June 24, 1936) he says: "As I now recall it, the Bobolink nested several places in that region, but finding of a nest was a rare occurrence." This statement, made in the years of Mr. Surber's matured scientific experience, goes far to establish the correctness of his youthful observation as recorded in The Loon.

Because of very recent observations on the breeding of the Bobolink in West Virginia, this old, published statement is important.

166 Plymouth Road
Newton Highlands, Mass.,

WETMORE'S WEST VIRGINIA OBSERVATIONS

Under the title "Observations on the Birds of West Virginia," Dr. Alexander Wetmore, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, records certain information based on the classification of West Virginia specimens which probably will surprise more than one bird student of this state.

The publication (Proceedings of the United States National Museum, Vol. 84, No. 3021, pp. 401-441) is of especial interest to Brooks Bird Club members familiar with the mountain sections of West Virginia through their associations with the Oglebay Park Nature Training Schools, since much of the collecting done by Dr. Wetmore and his party occurred in localities long familiar to these students.

As an indication of some of the material available in this paper, there are here briefly noted certain records made in West Virginia in 1936.

The northern range of the Black Vulture, Coragyps a. atratus, is extended to Wardensville as a result of the party's observations.

All specimens of Ruffed Grouse taken by the group have been referred to Bonasa umbellus togata, the Canada Ruffed Grouse, rather than to B. u. umbellus, the form which we have assumed to be that found in West Virginia.

An immature example of the Acadian (Saw-whet) Owl was taken in Cranberry Glades. This record of Cryptoglaux a. acadia corroborates R. L. Fricke's record (A.B. Brooks in The Auk, 1933, p. 361) of an immature example taken near Cranesville in 1932, and establishes a new Eastern breeding record for the species in the East.

All Hairy Woodpeckers taken were referred to the typical Dryobates v. villosus, the Eastern Hairy Woodpecker and all Downy Woodpeckers proved to be D. pubescens medianus, the Northern Downy Woodpecker.

From material secured, it appears that the Eastern Crow, Corvus b. brachyrhynchus, gives way from Central West Virginia southward to C. b. paulus, the Southern Crow.

Dr. Wetmore writes: "The robins of West Virginia are an interesting puzzle in allocation, since both the eastern and southern forms nest in the State. In general, the bird of the eastern part of the state, including the mountainous area, may be called migratorius, while the southern form, achrusterus, is found in the lower country in the central and western forms."

EDITORIAL

Reorganization of the Brooks Bird Club:- Mr. Harold Bergner, new president of the Brooks Bird Club, and Mr. Harold Olsen, new chairman of the club's Executive Committee, have taken hold of their new job in a manner which promises a distinct revival of local interest in the work of the organization.

With others of the club they are now engaged in the task of outlining a definite club project to be carried out during the ensuing year and suggesting certain interesting program material for the regular meetings of active members.

Appointments of the executive committee include that of Miss Dorothy Conrad, as membership secretary, and those of Mr. Charles Conrad and Mr. Russell West as associate editors.

Dates for preparation, publication and distribution of The Redstart have been fixed by the new executives and arrangements made to "carry on" when the editor finds himself unable to devote necessary time to the publication in order to have it appear regularly, as was the case during the past Summer.

For this reason, quarterly brief reviews of pertinent Ohio Valley and state material in ornithological journals will appear in November's Redstart instead of in the present issue. The remaining quarterly reviews of current literature will appear in the issues for February, May, and August in each year of publication.

As in the past, club members, active and corresponding, will help materially in prompt publication of this journal by submitting field notes and longer articles for reproduction in The Redstart.

Club Membership:- We are especially anxious to build up the club's subscribing membership. Corresponding members who know folks interested in birds of West Virginia and the upper Ohio Valley will confer a great favor upon The Brooks Bird Club by directing these friends' attention to this journal.

Corresponding membership, it will be recalled, is open upon application and payment of the nominal dues of 50 cents a year. The membership application may be addressed to Miss Dorothy Conrad, 423 Warwood Avenue, Wheeling, W.Va., or to any active club member in care of Oglebay Park, Wheeling, W.Va.