



The Redstart

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FURTHER NOTES FROM STONY RIVER DAM, W.VA.

by
Maurice Brooks

About a year ago, I recorded in the pages of The Redstart (#) some impressions gathered when a group of us from the 1937 Oglebay Nature Training School visited the Stony River lake territory. On May 29, 1938, Mr. I. B. Boggs, Mrs. Brooks and the writer had another opportunity to visit this interesting region, and some observations worth noting resulted.

As pointed out in the previous article, Stony River Lake is formed by a dam in the river of the same name, on top of the range of the Alleghenies known as "Allegheny Front," and occupies a small part of a great plateau where the elevations vary from 3,400 feet to 4,300 feet. The lake itself is at 3,400 feet elevation. Most of the plateau is in Grant County, with smaller portions in Tucker and Pendleton Counties, all in West Virginia. A portion of the plateau is known as the "Roaring Plains."

On our first visit we recorded such interesting species as Olive-backed Thrush, Purple Finch and most of the Warblers of northern association which are found in the West Virginia mountains. It was disappointing, however, to find the country around the lake so barren, due to destructive lumbering operations and fires. We did notice, on the ridges back from the lake areas, what seemed to be better timber, and it was to these ridges that we directed our attention during the second visit.

When we had gone, perhaps, a mile East of the lake, we entered a region of unusual biological interest. Here are good stands of second-growth spruce, Picea rubra, and a new station for the interesting fir, Abies sp., which occurs at a few scattered points in the mountains.

What interested us most from the botanical standpoint, however, was an open savanna with scattered hawthorn trees, Cretaeagus, of good size, an area similar to, but greater in extent than, the well-known Cretaeagus savanna on the side of Black Mountain, above Cranberry Glades, Pocahontas County. Parts of this savanna are swampy and a most interesting vegetation is found.

In the spruces and balsams, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Olive-backed Thrushes, Juncos, Magnolia and Cairns' Warblers and other Northern species were singing, and along one of the margins nearer the lake a Hermit Thrush was heard. It was pleasant to see, in this mountain setting, a single Herring Gull flying over the lake.

Discovery of such Canadian species as Olive-backed Thrush and Golden-crowned Kinglet in this area raises the question as to how widely these species are distributed in West Virginia -- a question which might, also, apply to the Hermit Thrush. For years we have been limiting the range of these species in the State to a few scattered points in Randolph, Pocahontas, Pendleton and Preston counties, but here is a vast and, biologically speaking, largely unexplored plateau where evidence points to a wide distribution of these and other Northern birds.

Each such discovery emphasizes anew the field which is open to ornithologists and other biologists in West Virginia. In planning individual and group field trips, might it not be advisable for all of us to visit new points rather than to revisit areas of known ornithological excellence? It may be that we will meet with some disappointments, but interesting finds are a certainty.

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West Virginia University
Morgantown, W. Va.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB

Election of officers, reports for the past year and plans for the future are scheduled on the program of the sixth annual meeting of The Brooks Bird Club, to be held at Oglebay Park, on Friday, September 30, 1938. Corresponding Members of the club, as well as other visitors, are cordially invited to attend this meeting.

Officers to be elected include president, secretary-treasurer, and a chairman and four members of the executive committee. The meeting will mark completion of the club's sixth year of activity in the behalf of ornithology in the upper Ohio Valley area, in particular, and in West Virginia and adjacent parts of neighbor states in general.

FIELD NOTES

Whip-poor-will "Caught Napping" at Oglebay Park, W. Va.: - On the afternoon of May 22, 1938, the writer in company with Misses Dorothy and Carolyn Conrad and Mr. Charles Conrad, was engaged in observing the actions of a number of Orchard Orioles and Baltimore Orioles which were flying about in trees at Oglebay Park, Wheeling, West Virginia. Our attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of a bird, much larger than those we had been observing, and which was perched, motionless, about 20 to 25 feet above ground, on a lower branch of a large tree.

Closer observation proved this bird to be a Whip-poor-will, Antrostomus vociferus, which seemed to be asleep. Imitations of the characteristic Whip-poor-will song by the writer was followed by readjustment of the bird's position on its perch when, to all appearances, it again fell asleep. This observation was at 3:30 P. M. and when Mr. Conrad returned to the place one-half hour later, the bird had flown.

The Whip-poor-will is considered an uncommon, or at least a seldom-recorded migrant in the vicinity of Oglebay Park, and the sight record described above was the first for any of our party, although all of us are thoroughly familiar with its song, heard innumerable times while camping in other parts of West Virginia.

Harold J. Bergner
Wheeling, W. Va.

Nest and Eggs of the Northern Raven in Monongalia County, W. Va.:-

In the early part of 1938, we made numerous field trips to the vicinity of Cooper's Rock, Monongalia County, W. Va., in the hope of finding a nest of the Northern Raven which we had reason to believe existed there. Finally, on March 13, 1938, we noticed signs of frequent visits by birds to a large rock on which, we had been informed, Ravens had nested in 1935. As we approached the spot, a Raven left. By climbing a tree which was nearby, we noted a nest in which we could see no eggs. On March 19, the nest was again visited and contained at least three eggs. On March 19, the nest was again visited and contained at least three eggs. The nest was situated only about 10 feet from the ground, but the rock on which it was built was so shaped that a ladder would be necessary for use in permitting us to inspect it closely. A ladder was constructed and, on March 27, we inspected the nest at first hand. It then contained five eggs which, to our eyes, appeared blue with brown specks.

The nest was built on a rocky ledge and was constructed of sticks about a half-inch in diameter and two feet long, this material being proportionate smaller near the center of the nest, which was a rounded structure about 20 inches in diameter. The center of the

nest was lined with grapevine bark, horse hair and tufts of a cottony material.

Our next visit was on April 10 and, on this occasion, we found that eggs and nest had been destroyed by an agency unknown to us.

Frank Conner
John Pattison
Morgantown, W. Va.

Nest of the Louisiana Water-thrush in Hancock County, W. Va.:- On Sunday, June 5, 1938, a group of nature students led by John Handlan, of Wheeling, W. Va., located, at Tomlinson Run State Park, Hancock County, W. Va., a nest thought to be that of the Louisiana Water-thrush, Seiurus motacilla. The nest was later identified as such by the author. It contained two young birds and an infertile egg. There appear to be no published records for the nesting of this species in the Panhandle, although the species is comparatively common in this section.

Robert Murray,
Morgantown, W. Va.

Mourning and Connecticut Warblers in Ohio County, W. Va.:- What would appear to be two "first sight records" for Ohio County, W. Va., were made on May 21 and 22, 1938, when the Mourning Warbler, Oporonis philadelphia, and the Connecticut Warbler, Oporonis agilis, respectively, were observed.

The Mourning Warbler was observed by the writer on the hill above Warwood, Wheeling, W. Va, on May 21, flying about in the underbrush and small bushes in a small clearing. Attention was first attracted by the song of the bird, with which the writer became quite familiar while in camp for two weeks in June and July, 1935, on White Top Mountain, near Cheat Bridge, Randolph County. At this point the campers had heard Mourning Warblers singing, daily, and a breeding record was established for the species when a young Mourning Warbler, noted by Miss Paulinebelle Wyss and Mr. Russell West, was noted near a nest which it had apparently just left.

Upon hearing the typical song of this species, I observed the bird closely and found that my first association of the bird seen and the song heard had been correct. The blue head and breast, the distinctive dividing line between yellow belly and upper parts of the bird, and lack of a white eye-ring (to distinguish it from the Connecticut Warbler) were all carefully noted in identification of this bird.

The morning of the following day, May 22, 1938, the writer was one of a group of about ten persons, the majority of them experienced observers of birds with from seven to ten years experience in this field. Along one of the bridle paths at Oglebay Park, Wheeling, W. Va., we were stopped by a loud, clear, warbling song with which none of us was familiar. It seemed to have some similarity to the songs of the White-eyed Vireo, Yellowthroat, or Kentucky Warbler.

We virtually surrounded the clump of blackberry briars, elderberry bushes and small pines from which the song continued to come and were soon rewarded by opportunity to observe the singer. The bird was identified by its blue head and breast, yellow belly and very distinct white eye-ring as a Connecticut Warbler. All of those present obtained at least glimpses of the bird through field glasses and binoculars. The locality was visited in the afternoon of the same day by the writer and two or three additional observers, anxious to see for themselves the rare visitor which had been reported. The bird, or its prototype, was located in the same situation as before and all had opportunity to examine it with the help of glasses, as it flitted around in the bushes.

I have been informed that an example of this species was collected by Dr. George M. Sutton, of Cornell University, at Beech Bottom Swamp, Brooke County, W. Va., about 12 miles North of Oglebay Park. Our sight record is, however, apparently the first for Ohio County.

Harold J. Bergner
Wheeling, W. Va.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Nature Reunioners!:- The Redstart extends a very cordial good wish to those who participate in the annual reunion of students and instructors of the Oglebay Park Nature Leaders Training Schools, to be held at Oglebay Park Camp on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2. To visitors at this enjoyable annual event we extend greetings with the hope that they, too, will join the "alumni" group in the years to come.

Big things are in store for those associated with the Nature Schools and with other details of the public program of nature study operated at, and from, Oglebay Park. A permanent mountain camp base for the Nature Schools, a headquarters building for nature study enthusiasts at Oglebay Park, a new series of Winter lecture programs -- these and other things are on the new program of activities. May they enjoy the success they deserve.

Association with the nature program at Oglebay Park has brought to many of those who participate, the healthy urge to associate themselves, also, with other regional, or with national, science organizations. Particularly is this true of the amateur ornithologists of the Upper Ohio Valley area with a center at Oglebay Park. A half-dozen national, regional or state ornithological clubs now are represented on the roster of The Brooks Bird Club -- a condition unheard of for this section just a few short years ago.

Much of this fine broadening of ornithological interest must be traced to the various Nature Schools, with the ornithological knowledge and fine contacts they have brought to the membership of The Brooks Bird Club. May they long continue!

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNALS

Auk, The, Vol. 55, No. 3, July, 1938:- This is the first issue in several years which contains virtually nothing directly applicable to the ornithology of West Virginia or the upper Ohio Valley. There is a note concerning nesting of the Raven in Rockbridge County, Va., by Dr. J. J. Murray. Feature articles include Dr. G.M. Sutton's "Some Findings of the Semple Oklahoma Expedition." (American Ornithologists' Union, Lancaster, Pa.)

Bird-Lore, Vol. XL, No. 3, May-June, 1938:- An interesting comparison of the work of a "naturalists' artist" and an "artists' artist" is Aaron Moore Bagg's "Two Masters of Wildlife Painting." Robert Cushman Murphy's "Posterity's World" needs reading by all conservationists. "The Season" department is of especial interest.

Bird-Lore, Vol. XL, No. 4, July-Aug., 1938:- Harrison F. Lewis cites a unique example in "Where Business Helps the Ducks," a story of the treatment now being accorded the American Eider in the name of business. The usual interesting departments are included. Of particular interest for teachers or designers of exhibits is Roger T. Peterson's article on electric bird games. (N.A.A.S., New York)

Cardinal, The, Vol. IV, No. 8, July, 1938:- Most of the issue is devoted to Maurice Brooks' interesting "Notes on the Lark Sparrow in the Upper Ohio Valley." It is of especial interest to note that although breeding records exist for Monroe, Belmont and Harrison counties, of Ohio, none exists in Pleasants, Tyler, Wetzel, Marshall, Ohio or Hancock Counties of West Virginia, and that for Brooke County, W. Va. and Greene and Allegheny counties of Pennsylvania, only possible breeding records exist. Under "Notes," Bayard Christy reports the taking of a Great White Heron, *Ardea occidentalis*, at Lake Pymatuning, Pa. (Audubon Society of the Sewickley Valley, Sewickley, Pa.)

Condor, The, Vol. XL, No. 4, July-August, and No. 5, Sept.-Oct., 1938: The two issues present interesting contrasts. The first is largely devoted to technical papers of a "laboratory" nature; the second to bird behavior. In the latter, there are excellent photographs of the Texas Nighthawk. In this same issue (No. 5) there is reported the deaths of two California Condors as the result of a heavy fall of hail near Santa Barbara, California. As there are believed to be some half-hundred of these birds still alive, only, this item takes the rank of major importance. Most of the "From Field and Study" notes refer to West Coast observations (Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, California.)

Prothonotary, The, Vol. 4, Nos. 5, 6 and 7, May, June and July, resp. The usual interesting notes of the Buffalo, N.Y. region, announcements of meetings and field trips and other activities of the area's ornithologists. (The Buffalo Ornithological Society, Buffalo, N.Y.)

Raven, The, Vol. IX, Nos. 4 to 9 inclus. (May-Sept. inclus.) 1938:- Numerous notes in these fine, mimeographed journals refer to records in counties of Virginia bordering West Virginia and are of particular interest to Redstart readers in consequence. The Raven now is including many county or state-sectional lists, among them annotated lists for Chesterfield County by W. R. DeGarmo and one for Amelia and Brunswick Counties by John B. Lewis. In the No. 6 issue, Dr. J. J. Murray is author of an excellent summary of present-day knowledge of Virginia ornithology. Energetic workers of the V.S.O. in the Lexington-Roanoke vicinity and continuation of summer activities at Mountain Lake in Giles County, make the Virginia periodical of particular interest to West Virginians. (The Virginia Society of Ornithology, Lexington)

Wilson Bulletin, The, Vol. L, No. 2, June, 1938:- Maurice Brooks' paper, "Bachman's Sparrow in the North Central Part of its Range," is one of several longer articles of unusual interest in this issue. Paul Errington and W. J. Breckenridge bring some fresh material on the "Food Habits of Buteo Hawks." Maurice Brooks reports on a novel device for studying and photographing Chimney Swifts. Lawrence Hicks notes the taking of a Piping Plover in inland Ohio at Buckeye Lake, one of the few ever taken inland in the state. Several "Redstart" articles are mentioned in the reviews of ornithological journals. (The Wilson Ornithological Club, Sioux City, Ia.)

The Redstart is mailed to all members of the Brooks Bird Club, free of charge, including Honorary Members, who pay no annual dues; Active Members (who are elected to membership and who pay dues of \$1.00 annually); and Corresponding Members (membership upon application and payment of dues of 50 cents annually).

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