



The Redstart

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

Vol. V, No. 8

Edited by J.W. Handlan

May, 1938

A TRIP TO HAWK MOUNTAIN SANCTUARY by Charles Conrad

The writer of this article is the first active member of the Brooks Bird Club to have visited Hawk Mountain. As one result of my visit, I personally urge all students of bird life to visit the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary if it is at all possible, for visitors surely will find it worth their time.

Prior to 1932, we are told Hawk Mountain was known to few people excepting a group of so-called "local hunters and their friends." During the next two years, under the leadership of Mrs. Rosalie Edge, chairman of the Emergency Conservation Committee, two square miles of the mountain land was purchased and, in the fall of 1934, this area became the "first sanctuary in the world for the birds of prey." Since that time, cameras and binoculars have been substituted for shotguns and over 10,000 people from the States, Canada and several foreign lands have visited the mountain.

The sanctuary is in part of the Kittatinny Ridge, in Eastern Pennsylvania, near a little village called Dropersville. About 30 miles distant is Hamburg, largest town in the general vicinity. A very rough road leads from the foot of the mountain to the entrance of the foot trail.

At the entrance of the foot trail, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Broun, the sanctuary warden and his wife, have established a pamphlet library and have a registration book for visitors. Three-quarters of a mile up the trail is the lookout point, an outcrop of limestone of which the elevation is 1506 feet with a sheer drop of nearly 1,000 feet to the creek bed below. The view is magnificent and is unobstructed on either side for several miles. Directly to the front, looking North, the view extends about two miles before a cross ridge intersects and it is at this point one first spots migrating hawks as they approach the sanctuary area.

Migration, we were told, begins in September with Broad-wings in the advance guard. Ospreys, Bald Eagles and, mostly, immature Red-tails and Red-shoulders follow soon afterwards. During October the Falcons and Accipiters predominate. The Sharp-shinned Hawks reach their migration peak during the third week and, at that time, as many as 900 have been recorded in a single day. In November, mature Red-tails lead with Goshawks a close second in numbers, followed by such migrants as the Golden Eagle, Marsh Hawk and others in small numbers.

Hawk migrations, we were told, probably are governed largely as to volume and exact flight direction by winds and it is entirely possible that certain species may travel entirely different routes from year to year. During his four seasons at the sanctuary, Warden Broun has recorded over 50,000 raptors and some 17 species. During flights of Broad-winged Hawks as many as 3,000 have been placed on the list in a single day. To some extent, days of heavy migration can be forecast to a degree by accurate scanning of weather charts. If storms occur between the Hudson's Bay region and New England, there usually is a heavy migration two days later at Hawk Mountain. If the barometric pressure is low in New England a heavy flight at Hawk Mountain occurs the following day.

For three seasons, September 17 has been the annual outstanding single migration day. The following information was recorded by Warden Broun, for September 17, "1934 (record incomplete) between 1,500 and 2,000 small hawks were recorded. In 1935, a clear day with gentle easterly and southerly winds, 3,293 individuals representing 10 species were recorded. In 1936, the day heavily overcast all morning, clear after 1:30 p.m., moderate to brisk southwesterly winds, 3,604 individuals with 13 species represented were recorded."

The flights begin between 7 and 8 a.m. and are completed between 4 and 5 p.m. A lull ordinarily occurs between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., however during which time few hawks sail past the lookout point. By measuring flight progress between two points on the ridge, Mr. Broun has been able to estimate the average hawk migration speed at 45 miles an hour. At this rate, birds flying six hours a day would approximate 300 miles travel.

My visit to the Hawk Mountain sanctuary was made in company with Mr. George Thorp, of Pittsburgh, in October, 1937. On October 15, 863 hawks were observed in migration and 184 were recorded the following day. Both days were clear and cool. We recorded 13 species: -- Turkey Vulture, Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, American Golden Eagle, Marsh Hawk, Osprey, Duck Hawk, Pigeon Hawk and Sparrow Hawk.

Saturday noon we counted 64 people atop the rocks at the lookout, representing a number of states, including representatives from as far distant as Alabama. Dr. John May, author of "Hawks of North America," was one of the visitors.

Those who made possible the purchase and setting aside for sanctuary purposes of Hawk Mountain deserve praise and thanks. The small gift which The Brooks Bird Club made to the cause gives us a part in this work, even if it is a small one, of which the club may well be proud.

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Reference: Broun, Maurice, "Three Seasons at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary."

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Auk, The, Vol. 55, No. 1, January, 1938:— Numerous West Virginia field notes are included in this issue. These include notes on the Snowy Egret at Lake Terra Alta, by Maurice Brooks (the first record for northern West Virginia and the second for the state); White-winged, Surf and American Scoters on Lake Lynn, by Brooks and I.B. Boggs; waterbirds at Leetown, (31 species) by J. Lloyd Poland; heavy flight of waterfowl on Lake Lynn (25 species) by J.T. Handlan, jr. In addition, Maurice Brooks records notes on 15 species of shorebirds on Deep Creek Lake, Garrett County, Maryland, and Dr. J.J. Murray contributes notes on the Yellow Rail at Lexington, Virginia.

Auk, The, Vol. 55, No. 2, April, 1938:— Of especial interest in this issue is that examination of the roll of membership in the A.O.U. shows an increased number of members of The Brooks Bird Club represented there. Evidence presented by W.E. Clyde Todd, of the Carnegie Museum, in a general note, would go to show that neither the Greater Prairie Chicken nor the Heath Hen ever were of occurrence in Western Pennsylvania. (American Ornithologists' Union) -- J.W.H.

Bird-Lore, Vol. XL, No. 3, March-April, 1938:- Aldo Leopold speaks for many of us in "Conservation Aesthetic." This reviewer, himself employed in public recreation and adult educational activities was especially pleased to read the words: "Recreational development is a job, not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind." The various departments, regular features of this magazine, are more voluminous than usual. The reviewer was struck, particularly, by reprints and letters on pages 134-136. Our friend Bayard Christy urges cessation of organized persecution of the Crow. Jack Van Coevering, of the Detroit Free Press, is author of a reprinted article "Wildlife is Not for Hunters Alone," and Jack Speiden, of Benson, Arizona, speaks a good word for the Soil Conservation Service -- a view which happens to coincide with my own opinions formed by personal contact with SCS officials and projects. (National Association of Audubon Societies) -- J.W.H.

Condor, The, Vol. XL, No. 3, May-June, 1938:- Anyone interested in migration or in discussion from other angles of the spread of an introduced species, will read with interest L.M. Dickerson's "The Western Frontier of the European Starling in the United States as of February, 1937." A membership roll of the Cooper Club is included in this issue. (Cooper Ornithological Club) - J.W.H.

Descriptive Bibliography of West Virginia Ornithology, A:- By Earl Amos Brooks, associate professor of biology, Boston University School of Education. Printed by the author at 166 Plymouth Road, Newton Highlands, Mass., April 1938 (\$1.00). To be reviewed in a later edition of The Redstart.

Natural History, Vol. XLI, No. 5, May, 1938:- R. Neumann Lefebvre's "Green Gold," an account of the forest wealth of the nation and our uses and misuses of it is excellently done. The usual excellent photographs accompany the varied natural science articles regularly to be found and of the usual high quality in this magazine. (American Museum of Natural History) - J.W.H.

Raven, The, Vol. IX, No's. 2 and 3, February-March, 1938:- Ruskin Freer writes with genuine feeling of his interest in the bird life of the new country home of his family and himself. J.J. Murray quotes some effective paragraphs from letters of John Bachman on accuracy in scientific work. The usual number of interesting local notes are published in this issue. (Virginia Society of Ornithology) - J.W.H.

Wilson Bulletin, The, Vol. L, No. 1, March, 1938:- J. Lloyd Poland has notes on "Some Unusual Shore Birds in Jefferson County, W.Va., in this issue. There are notes on Golden Eagle records for Ohio, also. The remainder of the material, including the longer articles are of general scientific interest. (Wilson Ornithological Club) - J.W.H.

FIELD NOTES

Speed of Gliding Flight of the Herring Gull:- Four other observers and the writer on April 9, 1938, enjoyed an excellent opportunity to note the speed of gliding flight of the Herring Gull, Larus argentatus smithsonianus, at Pymatuning Lake, Ohio-Pennsylvania. We were traveling in an automobile from Andover, Ohio, toward Linesville, Pa., and were on that part of the viaduct where the Ohio-Pennsylvania line crosses when these observations were made.

We noted a single Herring Gull gliding with the wind close to the excellent roadway and parallel to it. The bird accompanied the car for about one-half mile. At 45 miles an hour, as recorded by the car's speedometer, we slowly lost ground to the Gull. At 47 miles an hour, the car drew level with the bird which then kept pace with it at that speed. At 48 miles an hour we slowly pulled ahead. Brief repetitions of these experiments with the speed of the bird convinced us that the Gull was gliding at an even speed of 47 miles an hour.

None of the four observers in the car who kept their eyes upon the bird detected a single wing-beat or other motion of the wings of the Gull until it "banked" and turned back as the car left the viaduct and reached land. The observers were Mrs. Handlan, Clyde B. Upton, Walter Ammon and Harold Olsen.

-- John W. Handlan
Oglebay Park
Wheeling, W.Va.

Behavior of Male Flickers in Ohio County, W.Va.:- Flickers, Colaptes auratus, are common at Oglebay Park, Wheeling, W.Va., and their courtship antics and what appear to be squabbles over territory are familiar to those who frequent the Park in Spring. On April 13 I watched two male Flickers behave in a manner which seemed to me to be out of the ordinary. I watched two Flickers flying in great circles, around and around the Mansion-Museum at Oglebay Park, barely above the level of the big building's roof. As I neared the Mansion, the two birds alighted on a tree nearby and I observed that both were male birds. Presuming they were engaged in a territorial squabble, I stood watching them for about 10 minutes. Leaving the tree, the two again became pursued and pursuer in circling flight about the Mansion. As I watched, the circle was abruptly reversed -- and the pursued bird became the pursuer. This change of role occurred four times during the time I watched. The circling was interrupted five times by perching in trees, the birds close together and without display of plumage, calling or other notes beyond a few, softly uttered "wi-chew" calls. The two birds remained, still engaged in what seemed their game, when I was forced to leave my observation. The entire performance strongly suggested play.

-- John W. Handlan
Oglebay Park

American Pipits in Marshall County, W.Va.:- Several small flocks of American Pipits, Anthus spinoletta rubescens, were listed by three others and the writer in Marshall County, West Virginia, on March 27, 1938. The birds were feeding in a field just beyond the third bridge crossing Big Wheeling Creek above Elm Grove, W.Va. Twenty birds were counted. Russell West, one of our group, remarked he had recorded Pipits in the identical location just a year before.

-- Charles Conrad
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Migration of Yellow-throated Vireos in Kanawha and Putnam Counties, W.Va.:- The Yellow-throated Vireo, Vireo flavifrons, has appeared to be particularly common in migration this Spring in parts of Kanawha and Putnam Counties, W.Va. I saw several examples of this bird for the first time this spring on April 16, 1938, at Nitro, Putnam County. On the same date others were found at the foot of Tyler Mountain in Kanawha County. On April 17, 1938, Yellow-throated Vireos were very abundant in the American Elms which line Broad Street, Charleston, well within the city's corporation limits.

-- Clyde B. Upton
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A Young Towhee Out of the Nest in Mid-April, in Belmont County, O.:- From 1938 Spring migration of observers of birds in this locality it would appear that transient and summer resident species are arriving far ahead of normal dates this year. Also, some early nesting dates have been recorded. Nevertheless, it was with considerable surprise that the writer observed a young Red-eyed Towhee, Pipilo e. erythrophthalmus, on April 15, 1938.

The bird obviously was just out of the nest and its power of flight was very limited. The black streaks of nestling plumage were plainly evident upon the back of this bird. The observation occurred on the hill above Kirkwood, Belmont County, Ohio, in a woodland where this species occurs very commonly.

Chapman's "Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America," (2nd rev. ed., p. 518) gives no date for full sets of eggs of the Red-eyed Towhee earlier than May 2 (Rosetta, Ills.) and for a locality comparable in geographical situation with that in which this observation occurred the date of May 17 is given (Montgomery Co., Pa.)

-- Tom E. Shields
Bridgeport, Ohio.