



The Redstart

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

113 Edgewood St.

Vol. VII, No. 10

Edited by J. W. Handlan

July 1940

THE 1940 SPRING MIGRATION RECORD

A cold, wet spring in the upper Ohio Valley, topping off severe late winter storms in the South Atlantic section appeared definitely to change from the normal, the 1940 spring migration as observers of The Brooks Bird Club witnessed it in the Greater Wheeling area.

Typical of seemingly strange results of observations here were such items as the arrival of the Indigo Bunting, in considerable force, as early as April 7, nearly a month ahead of usual schedule here; and the belated arrival on May 12 of the Red-eyed Vireo, nearly a month behind "schedule". The first record of the Scarlet Tanager for the region was made on the phenomenally early date of April 15.

The annual spectacular migration of Wood Warblers had definite high points from the standpoint of observers and the usual unexplained paucity of numbers of certain species usually well represented. Typical of the last group were the Black-throated Blue and the Black-throated Green Warblers, the latter ordinarily one of the common migrant Warblers here and in 1940 almost "not present or accounted for". A splendid migration of Cape May Warblers, Tennessee and Nashville Warblers was noted May 12. The Bay-breasted Warbler, not frequently seen in numbers here, was exceptionally well represented on May 18. Connecticut and Wilson's Warblers were listed for the second year in succession.

Ninety migrant species were recorded, as compared to seventy-three in 1939. Seventeen active members of the Club and eight corresponding members participated in the record making of the 1940 migration. For the first time, the observers widened their field, including records from any counties touching Ohio County and investigating, particularly, localities quite near to Wheeling and previously overlooked because of concentration of previous activities in Oglebay Park. These localities, incidentally, proved particularly fruitful and promise additional fine opportunities for summer observation.

As usual, the record (on the succeeding page) indicates the dates of first observation. The asterisk (*) marking on the list shows that the "first date" was made in the vicinity of Cadiz, Ohio - most of them being from the region of the developing Tappan Dam area.

BROOKS BIRD CLUB SPRING MIGRATION RECORDS

Pied-billed Grebe	3/10	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4/23
Holbell's Grebe	3/10	Yellow-throated Vireo	5/12
Eastern Green Heron	5/12*	Blue-headed Vireo	5/12
American Bittern	5/12*	Red-eyed Vireo	5/12
Baldpate	3/20	Warbling Vireo	4/29
Blue-winged Teal	3/12	Black & White Warbler	5/7
Shoveller	3/12	Worm-eating Warbler	5/11
Ring-necked Duck	3/31*	Blue-winged Warbler	5/1
Black Duck	3/12	Tennessee Warbler	5/12
Ruddy Duck	3/31*	Parula Warbler	5/12
Canada Goose	3/31*	Yellow Warbler	4/28
Broad-winged Hawk	4/28	Magnolia Warbler	5/9
Pigeon Hawk	3/20	Cape May Warbler	5/12
Virginia Rail	4/20	Black-throated Blue Warbler	5/9
American Coot	4/28	Myrtle Warbler	4/23
American Woodcock	3/26	Black-throated Green Warbler	4/23
Wilson's Snipe	3/12	Cerulean Warbler	5/4
Spotted Sandpiper	4/28	Chestnut-sided Warbler	5/8
Solitary Sandpiper	5/12*	Bay-breasted Warbler	5/18
Greater Yellowlegs	5/4*	Blackpoll	5/19
Lesser Yellowlegs	4/6*	Ovenbird	5/12
Mourning Dove	3/31	Louisiana Waterthrush	4/6
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	5/5	Kentucky Warbler	4/28
Black-billed Cuckoo	5/20	Yellow-throat	5/7
Whip-poor-will	5/7	Yellow-breasted Chat	5/7
Nighthawk	5/22	Wilson's Warbler	5/26
Chimney Swift	3/17	Hooded Warbler	5/4
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5/12	Canada Warbler	5/18
Kingbird	5/11	American Redstart	4/28
Crested Flycatcher	5/5	Connecticut Warbler	5/12
Acadian Flycatcher	5/12	Blackburnian Warbler	5/5
Phoebe	3/31	Redwing	3/12
Least Flycatcher	5/12	Orchard Oriole	5/12
Wood Pewee	5/9	Baltimore Oriole	4/29
Bank Swallow	5/12	Grackle	3/31
Rough-winged Swallow	4/7	Cowbird	3/12
Barn Swallow	4/22	Scarlet Tanager	4/15
Purple Martin	4/6	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/12
House Wren	4/28	Indigo Bunting	4/7
Bewick's Wren	5/22	Savannah Sparrow	5/12
Catbird	5/1	Grasshopper Sparrow	4/30
Brown Thrasher	4/18	Vesper Sparrow	4/14
Wood Thrush	4/9	Chipping Sparrow	4/7
Hermit Thrush	4/21	Field Sparrow	3/31
Orange-backed Thrush	4/9	White-crowned Sparrow	5/5
Veery	5/12	White-throated Sparrow	4/29
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4/21	Purple Finch	5/5
Nashville Warbler			4/29

FIELD NOTES

Whistling Swan Flight in Brooke County, W. Va.:- While driving east of Bethany, Brooke County, W. Va., on October 31, 1939, I stopped the car about a mile from town, along Buffalo Creek. No sooner had I left the car than I was aware of distant and, to me, unusual sounds. These reminded me of a group of boys who were shouting, hooting and whistling from the next hill. The sounds came closer and the makers finally were revealed.

Flying low over the hill to the west came a group of 42 birds, with necks outstretched and in V-formation. This flock flew directly over me and so close that I could plainly see black bills and legs, with the aid of my binoculars. I recognized the birds as Whistling Swans, Cygnus columbianus.

These were seen at 10 A. M. At 11:30 A. M., about three miles North of Bethany, I saw a flock of 12 swans flying over. In the afternoon, when I was about four miles East of Bethany, I saw a flock of swans estimated at 75 birds.

The total number of Whistling Swans seen that day was 130, the largest number I have ever recorded in any one day in West Virginia. It was interesting to note that the three flocks seen were flying almost directly Eastward, from the time each flock was sighted until it disappeared from view.

-----Karl W. Haller,
Martindill Apts.
Wheeling, W. Va.

American Merganser Harassed by Gulls:- Mr. T. F. Frankenberg of Power, W. Va. and I were parked in his car on a neck of land which extends into the waters of the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir, created by a dam on the Scioto River, in Delaware County, Ohio. We noted close at hand a water-bird which we observed through good binoculars at a distance of less than 25 yards and identified as a female American Merganser, Mergus merganser.

Herring Gulls, Larus argentatus, were common in the vicinity and we paid little attention to them until, when the Merganser reappeared after a dive below the surface of the reservoir with a fair-sized fish in its beak, we saw three Gulls hover above the Merganser and seemed to try to seize the captured fish. The Merganser dived to escape its tormentors, but reappeared on the surface about a dozen yards from the location from which it had dived. By this time, at least 12 Gulls were hovering above the water, "mewing" and driving down toward the Merganser which still held the fish, or another like it, in its beak.

This performance was repeated three times before the Merganser appeared on the surface without the fish.

Whether the diver consumed the fish, we are not, of course, able to say. The Gulls settled on the water, some of them quite near the Merganser, which presently dived and appeared on the surface with a somewhat smaller fish than that which we first had noticed. The Gulls immediately renewed their attacks, swooping down from the air at the Merganser -- apparently without success in taking its prey. The Merganser reappeared on the surface and once more the Gulls rested near it on the water without apparent discord.

We watched the Merganser dive a number of times, and each time its reappearance was advertised in advance by a group of hovering Gulls although we saw the diver catch no more fish.

----J. W. Handlan,
Wheeling, W. Va.

A Second Short-billed Marsh Wren at Fairmont, W. Va.: It may be of interest to report another Short-billed Marsh Wren, Cistothorus stellaris, observed on September 30, 1939, just West of Fairmont, Marion County, W. Va. and only a few hundred yards from where one of these birds was found on May 19, 1938 (The Redstart, VI, No. 2). The bird here reported was seen in a low, damp corner of a farmyard, where the rank vegetation included spearmint, sedges and willow saplings, along with such plants as Joe Pye Weed and asters.

Almost "showy" in fresh Fall plumage, the individual bird noted seemed a little less shy than most individuals of this species and permitted me several good opportunities to inspect it. I watched it at very close range while it was moving among the weed stems and over the lower wires of a fence. The very buffy underparts and fine striping on back and crown showed to excellent advantage and a number of times the bird was heard singing the almost unmistakable song which first attracted my attention to it.

----William A. Lunk,
Fairmont, W. Va.

Winter Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Fairmont, W. Va.: Shortly after noon on December 23, 1939, while making a Christmas Bird Census at Fairmont, Marion County, W. Va., Mr. David Patterson and I observed a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Corthylio calendula, on the campus of West Fairmont High School where there was, as usual, quite a concentration of birds.

Catching a glimpse of this Kinglet and, at the same time, hearing its husky, two-syllabled call, I wondered at first if the Golden-crown (which we had expected to find but failed to locate) might occasionally utter such a note. Then the Kinglet came closer to us and we both were able to see that it was a Ruby-crown, showing no indication of a crown-patch or of head-striping and having a fairly well-defined eye-ring. Using 7X binoculars whenever I was not too close to focus them, I watched the bird for some time to be certain I had not mistaken its identity.

----William A. Lunk,
Fairmont, W. Va.

Fall Cardinals at High Elevation: While collecting birds at Cheat Bridge, Randolph County, W. Va., I was delighted to find three Cardinals, Richmondia cardinalis, a male and two females, at an elevation of nearly 4,000 feet above sea level on October 13, 1939. The birds seemed very wild and were approached with difficulty.

----Karl W. Haller,
Wheeling, W. Va.

Black-bellied Plover and Stilt Sandpiper in West Virginia:- Two "new" birds for the Eastern Panhandle were collected at Leetown, in Jefferson County, W. Va. on August 19, 1939. It had rained steadily the night before. At the Federal Fish Hatchery large numbers of shorebirds were noted about the ponds, Yellow-legs, Pectoral Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers and Least Sandpipers were especially numerous. With these birds were two Black-bellied Plovers, Squatarola squatarola, and six Stilt Sandpipers, Micropalama himantopus. One each of these two species were collected, both specimens proving to be females.

In searching for previous records of these birds in West Virginia, I find only the following:

(Auk, Vol. 53, No. 1, p. 96; M. G. Brooks, September 5, 1936, near Volga, Barbour County, W. Va.)

"Black-bellied Plover ----- . Although we saw several flocks of large, dark Plovers, only two individuals were seen close enough to make identification certain. With our glasses, we particularly noted the white rumps and tails and the black axillary feathers. I do not know of any previous report of this species in West Virginia."

(Auk, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 88; William C. Rives, M. D., New York City)

"I have lately received from Mr. Thaddeus Surber, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, a young male specimen of the Stilt Sandpiper -----, which was taken on November 2, 1896, near Caldwell P. O., on the Greenbrier River, six miles from the above-mentioned springs-----."

----J. Lloyd Poland
Dept. of Botany and Zoology
West Virginia University
Morgantown, W. Va.

1940 BROOKS BIRD CLUB FORAY

"I want to thank every one of you for helping me to spend the finest week of my life - so far. I say, so far, because I intend to return next year." These words were spoken by George Arner at the final meal of the camp.

"I write this with a deep sense of the privilege I have enjoyed in knowing and working with the group. That out of the divergent backgrounds, trainings, tastes, and occupations, this group, that can do so many things so well, has been formed, is a source of endless wonder to me. With free men assailed over much of the earth, it is fine to have known a group that has proved that freedom will work if you put enough imagination, tolerance, and intelligence into the job." This is quoted from a letter from Theodore Frankenberg, another 1940 Foray member.

These two quotations attest to the success of the 1940 Brooks Bird Club Foray. Additional proof may be found in forth-coming issues of THE REDSTART and the separate report on the Foray which will be mailed in the near future to all members of the Brooks Bird Club.

Russell West
113 Edgewood St.
Wheeling, W. Va.

COMMUNICATIONS

Notes concerning rare birds and unsupported by tangible evidence obviously are to be regarded with skepticism. The Redstart received, within two days of one another, the communications which are published below. The writers are themselves competent observers and well-grounded in ornithology. This journal offers their contributions, for what they may be worth, in the same spirit in which they were submitted to us:

Whooping Crane, Grus americana. From Mr. Chester Shaffer of Romney, W. Va. comes the following:

"On January 9, 1936, I listed for the first and only time, the Whooping Crane. Thrilled by the sight of a 'new bird', the incident was recorded in my notes as another step in my acquaintance with birds. Some 18 months later and while discussing Florida birds with Mr. Roger T. Peterson, I was informed that no Whooping Cranes had been reported for Florida in years. I confessed that I had not reported my 'sight record' simply because I was ignorant of the real scarcity of these birds. This matter was brought orally to the attention of groups of students of the Nature Training Schools, but never previously has been submitted to an ornithological journal. Here are the notes I made shortly after seeing the Cranes:

"January 19, 1936. Driving along the Vera Beach Road, east of the Kissimmee River, two friends and I noted white objects far out on the prairie and brought our car to a stop. With the aid of 8X binoculars I was able to discern the carmine foreheads of two large, seemingly pure white Cranes stalking about among grazing Brahma cattle. The two birds remained close together and stuck closely to the cattle. The birds carried their heads to a height even with and in some instances above, the backs of the grazing cattle. They stalked about in true Crane fashion, which is quite different from that of the Herons. I would not expect to find Herons in an open, dry pasture such as that in which these birds moved about. The two examples were decidedly larger than the Florida Cranes, Grus canadensis, which were rather numerous on the prairies at that time, removing the birds observed from the possibility of being albino Florida Cranes, particularly since two white birds were present. My companions were sportsmen rather than bird students, but we agreed on what we saw.'

"The facts of the case convince me that I really saw Whooping Cranes. I treasure the fact that for 15 minutes I viewed these birds which so few present-day ornithologists have seen and which many may never have the privilege of seeing. Over a period of seven years I have frequently visited the Kissimmee Prairie but have never caught another glimpse of a Whooping Crane."

Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Campephilus principalis. Mr. Karl W. Haller of Wheeling W. Va. contributes this communication:

"Although records for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker are virtually non-existent for West Virginia, I have the following information (admittedly not beyond question) which seems to be of enough interest for publication.

"During several visits to Mason County, West Virginia for bird study purposes, I became acquainted with the late Rev. Father C. Delaux, of Mason City. Often, as I skinned birds during the afternoon, Father Delaux would come to visit and usually brought with him his bird books, several of which were in French. From these he read to me about various European or African birds which he himself had seen during his travels in France, Spain, Italy and Egypt, many years ago. Often we talked about the birds of West Virginia. Father Delaux was a keen observer and knew his birds well.

"He told me that about the year 1900 he was riding horseback between two small towns (Fink and Clearwater) in Doddridge County, West Virginia. The trails he rode took him through virgin timber of large size and extent. Very few farms had been cleared in this wooded area and only occasionally did he meet anyone in his travels. This gave him ample opportunity to study birds during his journeys in this territory. "Father Delaux was told by a farmer that 'birds like the Indian Hen, but larger and with white bills' were 'good eating.' The farmer told him, also, that the white-billed birds were very scarce but that he might be able to shoot one. After several weeks hunting, Father Delaux shot and killed one of the white-billed birds, but told me he did not agree with the farmer about it being 'good eating.' Father Delaux said he felt sure that the bird he shot could have been nothing than an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, as he carefully read about the species in his bird books. He said, also, that it was quite unlike the common Indian Hen (Pileated Woodpecker, Ceophloeus pileatus.)

"I see no reason why this account should be entirely discounted. Even today the somewhat remote section of West Virginia in which Father Delaux's bird was taken is comparatively wild and the Pileated Woodpecker is rather common there. There are still several thousand acres of virgin timber remaining."

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNALS

Auk, The, 57, No. 2, April, 1940:

Dr. George M. Sutton, an honorary member of the Brooks Bird Club, appears as senior author, with Thomas D. Burleigh, of a paper on "Birds of Las Viga, Vera Cruz," foot-noted by The Auk as the first of a series of papers on the 1939 John B. Semple expedition to Eastern Mexico." Most of the longer papers are of technical interest and "General Notes" refers to territories largely well-removed from activities of the Brooks Bird Club. Book reviews are of especial interest in this issue and include a review of the "Craighead boys'" "Hawks in the Hand", of which G. M. Allen writes: "On the whole, the book is a thoroughly creditable production, particularly when the factors of the youth of the authors and the difficulties under which they worked are considered." A list of officers and patrons, fellows, members and associates of the American Ornithologists' Union is included in this issue. (American Ornithologists' Union).

Bird-Lore, XLIII, No. 2, March-April, 1940:

Robert Cushman Murphy advances an interesting discussion of outdoor sport and sportsmen as applied, respectively, to bird-hunting with binoculars and those who find sport in so doing. This is included in the regular "President's Page." William Hillcourt's "An Isle a-Calling You," is nothing if not an enthusiastic account of the Audubon Society's annual Nature Camp -- almost over-enthusiastic --

as a matter of fact, for general consumption! There may be more thorough masters of prose backed by general sound knowledge and straight thinking than Donald Culross Peattie, who again writes of "The Nature of Things," but the reviewer has not yet encountered them in print. Roger Tory Peterson contributes the first of a series on bird photography among other regular features. Ward of the Audubon Sanctuary Tours and of plans for the Cobb Island may put ideas into the heads of Brooks Bird Clubbers. (National Association of Audubon Societies.)

Condor, The, XLII, No. 2, March-April, 1940; XLII No. 3, May-June 1940:

Both issues contain the usual admixture of technical papers and popular discussions of far Western birds, with general emphasis upon the former type of preparation. In No. 3's usual list of classified advertisements (free to members of the Cooper Club) There is one concerning Field Ornithology, the printed monthly dated at Mount Lookout, West Virginia. (Cooper Ornithological Club.)

Natural History, XLV, No. 5, May, 1940:

Excellent reproductions of spectacular photographs by Olin Sewell Pettingill, Jr, illustrate his contribution "Adventures in Puffin-Town," included in this issue of a fine periodical. The photographs and material which accompanies them had their genesis on the Machias Seal Island off Maine. (American Museum of Natural History.)

Wilson Bulletin, The, 52, No. 1, March, 1940:

Maurice Brooks and Dr. George M. Sutton contribute a brief paper on "Red Crossbills Summering in the West Virginia Mountains," to the general notes in this issue. Sutton and Thomas D. Burleigh describe "A New Tufted Flycatcher from Hidalgo." Longer papers in this issue are generally of a technical nature. Among the book reviews, this department was amused by Mrs. Margaret Nice's politely acid handling of Virginia Holton's "The Beeps: The Flights and Cruises of Three Missouri Tree Sparrows." -- and thoroughly approves this spanking for the author. Considerable space in this issue is given to the annual meeting (1939) of the Wilson Club at Louisville, Kentucky, with a brief resume of papers presented, including Maurice Brooks' "The Breeding Warblers of the Central Appalachian Region." It is noted, also, that there are only 13 West Virginians on the rolls of the Wilson Club, whereas Ohio has 96 and Pennsylvania 51. It is to be expected that these more heavily populated states would outrank West Virginia, but there seems enough genuine interest in this state so as to boost that membership several notches. (Wilson Ornithological Club.)

----J. W. H.

The Redstart is published by and for the members of The Brooks Bird Club. Active or Corresponding Memberships are \$1.00 per year which includes twelve issues of The Redstart. Sample copies will be mailed free upon request. Back issues may be obtained of most numbers at a price of ten cents each. Mailing address is: The Brooks Bird Club, 113 Edgewood St., Wheeling, W. Va.