



The Redstart

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A PRELIMINARY LIST OF SUMMER BIRDS OF HARDY COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
by
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During the week of June 15-22, 1940, some 30 members of The Brooks Bird Club conducted a general nature study foray with headquarters at Lost River State Park, Hardy County, West Virginia. In the Park, the group occupied six of the comfortable cabins available for rental to the public and its members spent most of their daylight hours in intensive nature study. Much of this field work was devoted to the study of the birds of the Park and its immediate surroundings. In addition, various members of the group made bird study observations of interest in the course of brief stops during their motor trips to and from the Park.

It was a duty of the writer to collect and compile all these notes and records of observations and to prepare this brief summary of what is, essentially, a secretarial report of the ornithological notes rather than records kept by one individual. The greater part of the observations deal with the Park itself. Others treat of parts of Hardy County beyond the Park borders and a few notes are recorded beyond the county and are so designated in the summary which accompanies this paper.

At Lost River Park, we found ourselves in a reserve of more than 3,500 acres, of which less than 100 acres are "developed" to permit building of cabins, a swimming pool, playground, etc. The Park is a semi-wilderness area, with its remote sections made comparatively easy of access by bridle paths and foot-trails. This area offered us elevations which ranged from 1,800 feet above sea level to 3,200 feet at the highest point in the Park.

The Park area is generally mountainous and rugged and is covered with a mixed deciduous and coniferous growth with exceptionally heavy undergrowth of Mountain Laurel in most sections. Occasional rocky, barren cliffs and steep declivities occur. A few magnificent Hemlocks and White Pines give some idea of the type of timber which once must have occupied a section of this great area. Forest fires have not touched the Park since its acquisition by the State in 1934, but previous to that time a number of damaging fires occurred in the territory, their scars now covered by the fast growth which ordinarily succeeds such disasters.

Magnificent views from lookout points within the Park, the courtesy and consideration of Mr. Andrew Eye, Park Custodian, and Mr. George Flouer, his assistant, and the novelty of urban comforts and facilities in a wild, mountain section all played a part in making bird study and other "naturizing" in this area a memorable experience.

To return to the compilation of bird records: our combined list reached an even hundred species. We were successful (and fortunate) in establishing a number of breeding records for the Park and the County which, considering that virtually nothing has appeared in print concerning Hardy County ornithology, have considerable importance. Pleased as we were by a varied and large list of species recorded in some five days actual field work, we were particularly impressed by the numbers, the sheer abundance of certain species -- the Ruffed Grouse, for example, and various species of wood warblers known to most of us as migrants only.

In the list which follows, species for which breeding records were established are marked this, (*). Species recorded within Hardy County but not within Lost River Park itself are marked (H); and species recorded elsewhere than within Hardy County are marked (X). No collecting of birds was done and no attempt is made in the list to indicate races, regardless of probabilities in that direction. The technical nomenclature is that of the 1931 A. O. U. Check-List.

Egret ? (H). A white heron was noted in flight above Lost River and was not positively identified, although tentatively listed as an American Egret, Casmerodius albus.

Green Heron. Butorides virescens. (H). Several noted along Lost River and along the South Branch of the Potomac in Hardy County. One seen at Red House, Md.

Turkey Vulture. Cathartes aura. Rather common.

Sharp-shinned Hawk. Accipiter velox. One individual noted.

Cooper's Hawk. Accipiter cooperi. Several individuals seen.

Red-tailed Hawk. Buteo borealis. A few listed.

Broad-winged Hawk. Buteo platypterus. Frequently heard and seen.

Bald Eagle. Haliaeetus leucocephalus. Charles Conrad and Harold Bergner saw a mature example of this species in good light and with the aid of good binoculars. It seems difficult to explain the presence of this bird.

Ruffed Grouse. Bonasa umbellus. (*). Common. Grouse often were heard drumming near the sleeping cabins. Hens with downy young were seen on a number of occasions and various members of the party caught Grouse chicks in their hands for examination before the chicks were returned to freedom. Hens with chicks in charge were uniformly brave in attempting to defend their young.

Bob-white. Colinus virginianus. We established few records in the wooded park for this species, but they apparently were very common in the nearby Lost River Valley.

Killdeer. Oxyechus vociferus. (H). A few were noted at Moorefield and near Mathias.

Spotted Sandpiper. Actitus macularia. (H). In same situations as the above species.

Rock Dove. Columba livia.

Mourning Dove. Zenaidura macroura.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Coccyzus americanus. The only cuckoos seen under good conditions for identification were of this species. We failed to record the Black-billed Cuckoo in Hardy County.

Barred Owl. Strix varia. Occasionally heard at night within the Park.

Whip-poor-will. Antrostomas vociferus. Abundant and very tame. Individuals sang persistently from the vantage point of window sills and from other perches within a very few feet of observers.

Nighthawk. Chordeiles minor. (H)

Chimney Swift. Chaetura pelagica.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Archilochus colubris.

Belted Kingfisher. Megaceryle alcyon. (H).

Flicker. Colaptes auratus.

Pileated Woodpecker. Ceophloeus pileatus. Heard and seen in the Park on numerous occasions, this fine species actually appeared to be fully as plentiful there as the preceding species.

Hairy Woodpecker. Dryobates villosus.

Downy Woodpecker. Dryobates pubescens.

Kingbird. Tyrannus tyrannus. Apparently quite common in lower altitudes within the Park and the County. A few noted at elevations up to 3,000 feet.

Crested Flycatcher. Myiarchus crinitus.

Phoebe. Sayornis phoebe. (*). On June 17th, two nests of this species were found; one, empty, on the porch of Cabin 18; the other, containing three eggs, on a cliffside near Camp Hardy, CCC encampment just beyond the borders of the Park. On June 19, a nest with five eggs was located on the porch of Cabin 2 in the Park.

Acadian Flycatcher. Empidonax virescens. (*). A nest of this species containing three young birds was found on the Dead End Trail in the Park on June 19th.

Least Flycatcher. Empidonax minimus. (*). A nest high in an elm, which had been under observation for several days, was identified on June 21st as that of the Least Flycatcher. The nest was near the motor road leading to the Park stables.

Wood Pewee. Myiochanes virens. (*). A nest of this species which held four eggs was found June 18th near Cabin 6 in the Park. On June 20th, another nest was located in the Park and one was found at the Trout Pond in the George Washington National Forest. On June 21st, the group located a nest near the information booth at the Park entrance. Two adult birds were seen feeding young, just from the nest, near the Bird Club cabins, during the the week.

Horned Lark. Otocoris alpestris. (H).

Bank Swallow. Riparia riparia. (H).

Rough-winged Swallow. Stelgidopteryx ruficollis. (H).

Barn Swallow. Hirundo erythrogaster. (*). Two nests of this species were found under the eaves of a barn near Wardensville, in Hardy County, on June 20th.

Cliff Swallow. Petrochelidon albifrons. (H).

Purple Martin. Progne subis. (H).

Blue Jay. Cyanocitta cristata.

Raven. Corvus corax. Clyde Upton reported close views of an individual which flew above him as he was adjusting a camera along a trail in the Park.

Crow. Corvus brachyrhynchos. Comparatively uncommon in this heavily wooded area.

Chickadee. Penthestes sp. ? Chickadees heard singing in the Park sang a two-note song, said to be characteristic of the Black-capped Chickadee, P. atricapillus. We had expected to find P. carolinensis in the Park and its environs, presumably the northern race of the species described by Sutton and Todd as P. c. extimus.

Tufted Titmouse. Baeolophus bicolor. Apparently more common than the last species.

White-breasted Nuthatch. Sitta carolinensis. (*). Two adults were seen feeding young on June 22nd.

House Wren. Troglodytes aedon. (H).

Bewick's Wren. Thryomanes bewicki. (H). An individual was heard singing about a house in Mathias, Hardy County.

Carolina Wren. Thryothorus ludovicianus. Seemingly uncommon in the Park. A few heard at lower elevations there.

Mockingbird. Mimus polyglottos. (H).

Catbird. Dumetella carolinensis. (*). A nest of this species with three young and one sterile egg was found in a Hemlock six feet above ground one June 17th. Another nest in a similar situation, found on June 21st contained five eggs. Two adults were observed feeding young near Cabin 11 on June 21st.

Brown Thrasher. Toxostoma rufum.

Robin. Turdus migratorius. (*). Six nests, all occupied, were found in the Park in locations varying from projections on cabins to the one which was over 50 feet above ground in a tree.

Wood Thrush. Hylocichla mustelina. (*). Young examples of this species were noted on June 16th and 21st; adults were seen feeding young which obviously had just left the nest.

Veery. Hylocichla fuscescens. (X). Heard and seen near Terra Alta, Preston County, W. Va. enroute to the Park and return.

Bluebird. Sialis sialis. (*). A nest was observed near Mathias, Hardy County on June 18th.

Cedar Waxwing. Bombycilla cedrorum.

Migrant (?) Shrike. Lanius ludovicianus. (H).

Starling. Sturnus vulgaris. Sparingly distributed in the wooded Park.

Yellow-throated Vireo. Vireo flavifrons. (*). A nest of this species was found June 22nd in a pine tree, 30 feet above ground on the Piney Ridge Trail. Its situation forbade examination but the nest obviously was occupied.

Blue-headed Vireo. Vireo solitarius. Apparently rather common in the Park. Observers along the trails seldom were beyond sound of the voice of this species, but no nests were found.

Red-eyed Vireo. Vireo olivaceus. (*). One nest was found in a sapling, three feet above ground on June 17th.

Warbling Vireo. Vireo gilvus. (H).

Black and White Warbler. Mniotilta varia. (*). Young of this species, some of them obviously just from the nest, were noted on a number of occasions and in many instances adults were observed feeding these young birds. The adults were among the common warblers noted in the Park.

Worm-eating Warbler. Helmitheros vermivorus. (*). A nest of this species, containing five well-grown young, was discovered along the Sulphur Spring trail on June 16th. The nest was constructed of oak leaves on a steep hillside and was partially roofed over by the same building material. By June 18th the young had left the nest.

Golden-winged Warbler. Vermivora chrysoptera. (*). A nest with three young was found June 17th at the junction of the Staghorn Trail and Cabin Drive, in tall grass concealed by heavy undergrowth of Laurel and deciduous saplings. A nest found on June 21st was so close to the automobile parking lot for Cabin 11 that we marvelled that cars had not crushed it. This nest contained two well-grown young and one egg. This warbler was especially common along the Cabin Drive with a pair in possession of virtually every 50 feet of "territory" along the way for a distance of about a mile. On numerous occasions adults were seen carrying food.

Parula Warbler. Compothlypis americana. (*). On June 18th a nest of this wood warbler was located over 50 feet above ground in a Hemlock tree near the Sulphur Spring, and clearly visible from the Dead End Trail in the Park. Adults were observed feeding an undetermined number of young in the nest which was inaccessible for closer inspection. At least two birds of those found in the Hemlock woods sang the "double song" of the Parula described by Karl Haller as that sung by the male example of his newly described Sutton's Warbler, Dendroica potomac. Neither of these singing birds were closely observed at any time, inasmuch as they kept well in the tops of trees 75-80 feet in height.

Yellow Warbler. Dendroica aestiva. Very few members of our party reported this species from the Park and it appeared to be rather scantily represented in the Lost River valley between Mathias and Wardensville.

Magnolia Warbler. Dendroica magnolia. (X). One homeward-bound motor party found individuals of this species at Swallow Falls, Maryland.

Black-throated Blue Warbler. Dendroica caerulescens. A few individuals of this species were reported from the Park but it appeared to be comparatively uncommon.

Black-throated Green Warbler. Dendroica virens. Wherever pines and Hemlocks grew in numbers in the Park we found Black-throated Greens, which seemed common in local areas there. Adults carrying food were seen on a number of occasions, but in no case did any lead us to nests nor were young birds seen.

Cerulean Warbler. Dendroica cerulea. This species was present in the Park in considerable numbers.

Blackburnian Warbler. Dendroica fusca. This species appeared in scant numbers in notes secured for this compilation, occasional single male birds accounting for most of the records, although pairs occasionally were reported.

Chestnut-sided Warbler. Dendroica pensylvanica. (*). Adult birds were seen feeding young on June 18th and another family was observed out of the nest on June 22nd. One nest was located which, on June 22nd, contained three eggs. Clyde Upton secured a splendid close-up photograph of a brooding bird at this nest.

Prairie Warbler. Dendroica discolor. This warbler proved rather common in lower elevations of the Park and, though birds seldom were observed closely, the characteristic song of the species was heard frequently throughout the week.

Oven-bird. Seiurus aurocapillus. (*). This ground-haunting warbler was among the most abundant birds of the Park and one seldom was out of hearing of the voices of these birds while in the big reservation. A nest, with two eggs, was found on June 17th on Dead End Trail. On numerous occasions Oven-birds were noted feeding young which were unable to fly.

Louisiana Waterthrush. Seiurus motacilla. (*). Adults of this species were observed feeding young on several occasions, the young in some instances not yet able to fly.

Yellow-throat. Geothlypis trichas. (H). This bird was not seen or heard in the vicinity of the high mountain "balds" in the Park, but was recorded just beyond the Park borders in the river valley.

Yellow-breasted Chat. Icteria virens. Common at lower elevations.

Hooded Warbler. Wilsonia citrina. (*). One nest of this species was noted on June 18th, the nest containing four young birds. This family was located along the Copse Cove Trail, the nest some two feet from the ground in Mountain Laurel. A second nest was found near the Park's western boundary on June 21st, this containing two eggs of the Hooded Warbler and two of the Cowbird -- the latter the only case of parasitism noted in examination of some 47 nests in the Park.

Canada Warbler. Wilsonia canadensis. (X). One party observed this species near Swallow Falls, Maryland.

American Redstart. Setophaga ruticilla. (*). Four nests of the abundant Redstart were found by the party, two on June 16th, one on June 17th and the fourth on June 21st. One was too high to be accessible to observers (at least 40 feet above ground in an oak). Two others contained well-grown nestlings, and the fourth nest was still in the process of building on June 21st with a male and a female both participating in the work. Two adults were seen feeding young out of a nest on June 21st.

English Sparrow. Passer domesticus. A few birds of this species usually were to be seen near the stables.

Bobolink. Dolichonyx oryzivorus. (X). Near Redhouse, Maryland.

Meadowlark. Sturnella magna.

Redwing. Agelaius phoeniceus.

Orchard Oriole. Icterus spurius. (H)

Baltimore Oriole. Icterus galbula.

Grackle. Quiscalus quiscula.

Cowbird. Molothrus ater.

Scarlet Tanager. Piranga erythromelas. (*). A nest of this species was found high in a pine on June 16th.

Summer Tanager. Piranga rubra. (X). One party found this species in the Smoke Hole near Upper Tract, Pendleton County, W. Va.

Cardinal. Richmondia cardinalis. We found this species uncommon in the Park.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Hedymeles ludovicianus. Very scantily represented in the Park.

Indigo Bunting. Passerina cyanea.

Goldfinch. Spinus tristis.

Towhee. Pipilo erythrophthalmus. (*). A nest was found on June 18th, four feet above ground in a sapling. The nest contained four eggs.

Grasshopper Sparrow. Ammodramus savannarum.

Vesper Sparrow. Poocetes gramineus.

Junco. Junco hyemalis. (X). Individuals were seen on Spruce Knob in Pendleton County, W. Va.

Chipping Sparrow. Spizella passerina. (*). Six nests of this species were found in the vicinity of the "developed" area, two nests containing eggs and the others young birds.

Field Sparrow. Spizella pusilla. Uncommon.

Song Sparrow. Melospiza melodia. Surprisingly uncommon.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Bird Club Foray:-- Within a few weeks, members of The Brooks Bird Club will receive copies of the general report of the 1940 Club Foray. Indeed, the Hardy County ornithological summary of which this issue of The Redstart principally consists will reappear in the general report as its ornithological section.

This report will be as complete as we can make it but we have begun the task of assembling and mimeographing its pages with full knowledge that it must be incomplete. There are certain intangible things which, more than any others, contributed vastly to the 1940 expedition which unfortunately, cannot well be expressed in words. Words are poor mirrors to reflect such things as high morale, solidarity and good humor of a camping party, of the unselfishness with which volunteers gave what they had to make the Foray the splendid success that it was.

Those things have much to do with the fact that every member of the 1940 party voted for a Foray in 1941 and, further, asked that they be considered, at once, as applicants for registration for such an enterprise.

Comfortably housing and adequately feeding any camping party is elementary camp leadership, despite the hard work these items may involve. Planning a program and carrying it through without paid leadership offers no particular difficulties to the active membership of a club so thoroughly imbued with the ideal of avocational interest in nature study, with the ideal of adult education in the outdoors, if you please, as is the active membership of the Brooks Bird Club.

The Foray experience was a demonstration, to quote one member of the party, that the democratic processes still work and that there exists still the American spirit to accept democratic processes -- even to insist upon them! Every member of the group had as much "say" as any other and none spoke for the group without ascertaining its viewpoints and securing its permission. Elected leaders of the party carried through their assigned duties with a strong consciousness that the group consisted of self-reliant adults, entitled to an absolute minimum of interference with their personal wishes and interests.

Before the date of the expedition, some of us were warned, in a friendly manner, that we "couldn't do it." We did do it -- and we can and will do it again. Members of the Club who have not yet had first-hand accounts of the Foray may

rest assured that it was a credit to this organization and that it represented something far better than just a pleasant vacation for those who took part. We say in all sincerity that the Foray did much to further the interests of the entire organization.

--John W. Handlan

GENERAL NOTES

Foray Reports:-- The Bird Club acting at the request of the 1940 Foray Committee has appropriated from its general treasury, funds sufficient to mimeograph and distribute to members of the Club, one free copy, each, of the 1940 Foray Report. This report now is in process of preparation.

It will include summaries of the party's activities in ornithology, botany, herpetology and entomology; notes on mammals observed; a daily journal; a roster of the entire party; and a financial summary. The Club feels that its entire membership is entitled to this record of the organization's most ambitious activity to date.

A limited number of extra copies will be available, but these will be sold at 50 cents a copy to any who care to purchase them at that rate.

Note that these will be sent to paid-up members only. If you are behind in your dues, we suggest that you send them in at once. If you are in doubt about your status, drop us a line and we will give you the information. Those whose copies of The Redstart have been coming irregularly, or not at all, are in arrears.

Nature Reunion:-- October 5-6, 1940 are dates for the annual reunion, at Wheeling, of amateur nature study enthusiasts. The reunion appears this year under slightly different circumstances (and in a new location) than in years past. Its headquarters will be the Jesters Club, on Big Wheeling Creek, four miles from Elm Grove, a part of Greater Wheeling. This splendidly equipped set of buildings is the property of a Shrine organization and offers a general assembly hall, a dining room with fine kitchen facilities, a theater with seating accommodations for 200 plus sleeping quarters.

The Alumni Association of the Nature Schools conducted from 1928-1939, inclusive by the West Virginia Nature Association has requested the Brooks Bird Club to plan and carry out the reunion program. The Club gladly has assumed this responsibility. As a matter of fact, members of the Bird Club have for years constituted the active, local section of the Alumni organization and have always carried out the reunion programs.

The general plan of the old reunions will remain unchanged. Saturday evening, October 5, will be devoted entirely to fun, with an informal dinner, a song-fest, showing of a fine set of colored slides of the Foray by Harold Bergner, an "opry" a dance and an informal party. The following day, a reunion breakfast, a brief business meeting, field trips and Sunday dinner will make up the program.

The committee, already hard at work and with the "opry" in rehearsal, declare that this reunion will be tops in interest and in entertainment over all previous ones.