



The Redstart

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J. Harold Olsen, Editor

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SOME ADDITIONS TO THE LIST OF SUMMER BIRDS
OF HARDY COUNTY, W. VA.

by

Polly Handlan and Charles Conrad

Last year, 1940, during the week of June 15-22, some 30 members of the Brooks Bird Club conducted a general nature study "Foray". Most of the week was spent in the field with the study of birds being outstanding, since very little work, ornithologically speaking, had been done or published. As a result one hundred species were listed with 25 breeding records being established. A summary of the results of this field trip was prepared and published by Mr. Harold Olsen in The Redstart of August, 1940 (Vol. VII, No. 11, pp. 68-75).

The Brooks Bird Club sponsored a nature study Foray again this year (1941) and returned to Hardy County, W. Va. and as before, made headquarters at the Lost River State Park. The set-up was much the same as was the program except that we did have the records from the previous year to serve as a working base.

In reviewing Mr. Olsen's article, we find that 100 species had been recorded, but however, six of these were records from outside of Hardy County, made by campers on their way to or from camp. Of the 94 species (correct total for the county in 1940) no less than 75 were listed in Lost River State Park. Of the 25 breeding records established for the county, 23 were made in the Park.

In comparing the above records with those made by the 30 members who attended the 1941 Foray, much progress can be noted. Although the compiled list of 92 was two less than in 1940, it did however, include seven new species for Hardy County that were not included on the previous list. The additions were:

Black Vulture, Coragyps atratus. One individual was observed within the Park boundaries by Charles Conrad. The bird, with two Turkey Vultures "sailed" over being very low for this species. Two other examples of this species were noted first inside the county line on the road to Harrisonburg, Va.

Wild Turkey, Meleagris gallopavo. Listed in the Park on Big Ridge by Don Keyser.

Woodcock, Philohela minor. This bird was heard and seen by several members of the group. Mr. George Flouer, Park Ranger, reported seeing the Woodcock perform its sky dance numerous times in early spring.

Great Horned Owl, Bubo virginianus. Was heard several times during our stay at the Park.

Red-headed Woodpecker, Melanerpes erythrocephalus. A group on their way home just beyond the park limits on top of the mountain saw two "Red-heads."

Pine Warbler, Dendroica pinus. The Pine Warbler was listed for the first time by half the group.

Junco, Junco hyemalis. This bird was quite common on Big Ridge on the way to Miller's Rocks.

Another item that should be noted is the addition of eleven species to the Park list, namely: Black Vulture, Wild Turkey, Woodcock, Great Horned Owl, Nighthawk, Belted Kingfisher, Mockingbird, Bluebird, Pine Warbler, Yellowthroat and Junco. With the addition of these birds, the Lost River State Park compiled list stands at 86 species.

As a matter of record some comment should be made on the bird life as compared with last year. It was the opinion of the group that bird life in "general" was about the same, with the exception of the Golden-winged Warbler, which was perhaps the outstanding bird in 1940 but was on the scarce side this year. For 1941, the Redstart, Chestnut-sided, Prairie and Parula Warblers, Wood Thrush, Least Flycatcher and Ovenbird were the "stand outs". Just as last year, we were particularly impressed by the numbers of the so-called "rare" birds that are known to most of us as migrants only. Bird study at Lost River Park really is ideal.

In the summary of the nests our records show that a total of 132 nests were found by the 1941 group. Of this total, 68 were located in the Park and the remaining 64 in Hardy County. Again referring to the total nests, 132, we find it represents 36 nesting species of birds with 28 different kinds found building nests in the Park and 11 outside its boundaries. We were fortunate in repeating the 1940 list with the exception of two species, Worm-eating and Golden-winged Warblers.

One of the most outstanding achievements, expressed by many campers, was the fact that 13 additional breeding records were established making a total of 28 for the Park and the grand total of 36 for the county. These 1941 additions include:

Wild Turkey, Meleagris gallopavo. The nest of the Wild Turkey was found by Don Keyser on Big Ridge. The adult and four young were noted.

Mourning Dove, Zenaidura macroura. A small nest apparently not built by a dove, but confiscated, was observed with the bird brooding. The nest built on the overhanging limb of a small elm growing in a bank along the side of the road was discovered by Virginia Thayer.

Pileated Woodpecker, Ceophloeus pileatus. A young example of this species was brought into camp by George Breiding. Several pairs were observed but no nests were located.

Red-headed Woodpecker, Melanerpes erythrocephalus. Adults of this species were seen going in and out a nest hole located in a dead chestnut tree.

Downy Woodpecker, Dryobates pubescens. A nest, containing young, built in a telephone pole was reported by Charles Conrad on the road to Mathias.

Chickadee, Penthestes sp. A nest was found at the barn which contained four young birds.

House Wren, Troglodytes aedon. A bird house erected by a farm boy was occupied by this species.

Cedar Waxwing, Bombycilla cedrorum. A nest about 75 feet off the ground was sighted by Chandler and West in a large pine tree below the playgrounds. Both adult Waxwings were observed about the nest.

Yellow Warbler, Dendroica aestiva. A small nest made of grasses located about 20 feet up in an apple tree was observed by the group. The male bird of this species sang in the territory.

English Sparrow, Passer domesticus. Nest located about 40 feet from the ground in crotch of big oak tree in Mathias with an adult on the nest.

Grasshopper Sparrow, Amodramus savannarum. West found the nest of this species containing young in an open field inside the Park.

Field Sparrow, Spizella pusilla. On the road to Mathias an occupied nest with three eggs and adults feeding young was reported by George Breiding and Charles Conrad.

Song Sparrow, Melospiza melodia. A nest containing four young was found in a tree about five feet off the ground. Another nest was found in the bushes along the side of the road. Both were located between the Park and Mathias.

One other item of real importance, showing how thoroughly the work on nests was carried out, is the fact that accurate nesting data was kept on more than one hundred of the nests found. These notes and those of the 1940 Foray, along with other records on file will be used later to compile and publish a year-round list of the birds and breeding records for Hardy County.

In reading over the notes turned in for the 1941 nests, some comments worthy of publication should be made. For example: five nests of the Wood Thrush

were found. Three of the nests were about normal, being built between six and ten feet above the ground. However, another was built between 25 and 30 feet in a gum tree and the remaining one, built on the limb of a white pine directly over the main park road some forty feet above the ground. The nest contained four young, one of which was an albino. Two weeks later, Nick Flouer, vacationing at Lost River State Park with his son, George, observed what appeared to be same albino some distance from where the nest was located. Apparently despite discoloration, it was thriving.

Again this year on several occasions adult Louisiana Waterthrushes were observed feeding young. During 1940 we observed young not yet able to fly but failed to find a single nest.

In 1940 only one nest of the Least Flycatcher was found and then identification was made only after the nest was under observation for several days. This year five nests were found with building heights ranging from seven to 40 feet. Identification in all cases was made through the adult males singing close by the nests.

This year, although great effort was put forth to locate the nest of the Golden-winged Warbler, we failed. During our stay in 1940, three nests of this species was found and considered one of our most common birds.

Of all the nests found during our week at the Park this year, the outstanding one was that of the Parula Warbler. Observations made at the last campfire will stand to confirm this. The nest was built near the top of a small hemlock, about 15 feet high growing from the bank of a small creek, along the main road in the park. Observations on the nest, which was in clear view, were made from a stone wall which placed the observer, one might say, on an even level with the nest and about 10 feet distant. Both parents were seen at the nest numerous times as they carried food for the young occupants. Neither male nor female Parula seemed too much disturbed over our presence, in fact, the male sang from his favorite perch over and over. This nest was observed by many of the group. Two other nests of the same species were found, compared with but one for last year.

In conclusion it can be said that our week of June 14-21, 1941 at Lost River State Park was enjoyed just as much, if not more, than in 1940. In addition, the records as written and compared in this article do show that the 1941 Brooks Bird Club Foray was a step of progress.

--418 Warwood Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia
and
Keenan, West Virginia

Additional Hardy County Field Notes:

During the week of June 29-July 5, Mr. George Breiding spent another week in Hardy County, West Virginia, with headquarters at Baker. Most of his time was spent in the field covering the territory in the vicinity of the county 4-H Camp and the lowlands through which Lost River winds its way about.

Immediately upon his return, Breiding departed to do service in the United States Army and requested his notes be published along with the Foray Report.

The following are the additional notes of birds and nesting observations as handed to me by Mr. Breiding:

1. Mallard Duck, Anas Platyrhynchos. Three were seen in flight. One lone female was observed where Lost River makes its underground entrance at Sandy Ridge. It was believed to have young near by.
2. Sparrow Hawk, Falco sparverius. Single example observed near Wardensville.
3. Red-bellied Woodpecker, Centurus carolinus. Two individuals of this species were seen at Camp Baker.
4. Bachman's Sparrow, Aimophila aestivalis. Heard and seen in the lowlands along Lost River and the open woods on the grounds of Camp Baker.

Two Hardy County nesting records were established:

Blue-headed Vireo, Vireo flavifrons. Found in a pine tree about twenty feet above ground. The nest was occupied.

Carolina Wren, Thryothorus ludovicianus. Nest was located in the hole of a tree.

In addition young birds of the Prairie, Blackburnian, Pine and Golden-winged Warblers were observed. Also observed, but listed last year, were the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

--Charles Conrad
418 Warwood Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia

Ed. Note - With additional notes handed in by Mr. Breiding the following totals are correct for Hardy County - Birds, 98 species and nesting records total 38.

FIELD NOTES

Sight Record of Northern Horned Larks in West Virginia:

On March 9, 1941, Hillsboro Community in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, was the feeding ground for hundreds of Horned Larks and scores of Meadowlarks. The ground was covered by a five or six-inch snowfall and only the highway was bare. The larks were feeding along the edges of the road and in the fields where hay had been scattered for livestock. Just below the home of Henry Beard, on the edge of the village of Hillsboro, a considerable flock of these larks was observed, among them twenty or more Northern Horned Larks, Otocoris

alpestris alpestris. Their bright sulphur-yellow markings were quite distinctive in comparison with the white markings of the Prairie Horned Larks, Octocoris alpestris praticola, with which they were feeding. They were observed by me at a twenty-foot range from the car, for several minutes. Later, on the same day, these birds were observed by Herman and Lucretia Bowers, of Marlinton, who reported similar findings.

--I. B. Boggs
Oglebay Hall
Morgantown, West Virginia

Rough-legged Hawk, Marshall County, West Virginia:

On Sunday, April 20, 1941, a party of five were walking in Marshall County, West Virginia, near Jack Bass Fishing Club. Over the hill on the northern side of the valley our attention was centered upon a group of crows flying about and making a good deal of noise. Hovering above the crows was a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Accipiter velox. While watching this bird, another hawk flew suddenly into view which was immediately recognized as a Buteo, but seemed to be much larger, with longer curved wings and a longer, rounded tail than the Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks we were accustomed to seeing. It was identified as a dark phase of the American Rough-legged Hawk, Buteo lagopus sancti-johannis. The listing of this species of bird at this time of the year is unusual when compared with previous records in THE REDSTART that show, with the exception of one migration note for April 18, 1937, that all the records for this bird have been in the late fall and winter months.

--Byrne Waterman
15 Edgewood Street
Wheeling, West Virginia

Quail, Crow in Busy City:

On the evening of May 19, 1941, I was walking to my home in Warwood and passed a house located on the corner of two very busy streets. As I passed, a Bob-white, Colinus virginianus, flew immediately in front of me, crossed the street, flew between two houses, and from there to the near-by hillside.

On the following day as I crossed the corner of Twenty-second and Market Streets, Wheeling, my attention was called to an excited "squeaking." Upon investigation I found a Crow flying low overhead with a live mouse squirming, but tightly held in the Crow's grasp.

--Charles Conrad
Warwood Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia

Ducks Wintering at Castalia, Erie County, Ohio:

Castalia, Ohio is noted for its famous "Blue Hole" which is best described as an underground river coming out of a peculiar rock formation. The water maintains a constant temperature well above the freezing point, and flows

into a small "L" shaped pond. After the surface of the water of Lake Erie freezes over, many wild ducks gather there to spend the winter. They become somewhat accustomed to people and may be observed to good advantage from the highway nearby.

Nine species, totalling about 300 birds were seen at this place on March 2, 1941, by a group of observers which included the writer. The list, with approximate numbers of each species found, follows: Common Mallard, 1; Black Duck, 2; Gadwall, 20; European Widgeon, 1 (a male); Baldpate, 150; Pintail, 50; Green-winged Teal, 16; Shoveller, 10; American Golden-eye, 10. The ducks fly out to feed in the fields of nearby farms. Observation conditions on the small pond we found ideal.

--Merit B. Skaggs
Julian Road
South Euclid, Ohio

Feeding of Red-tailed Hawk at Tappan, Ohio:

Some of the Brooks Bird Club Members, returning from the field trip to Tappan Dam, Ohio, in the month of March, were privileged to see a Red-tailed Hawk, Buteo borealis, dive upon and catch a small mammal which we presumed to be a field mouse.

We first noticed the hawk motionless above the hill side, facing the wind, and seemingly intent upon watching the particular portion of the field over which it was suspended. After watching for a minute or so we saw the bird partly close its wings, drop quickly to the ground, and a second later rise in flight with the squirming mammal secure in the talons. The Red-tail flew to a nearby oak tree and from the motions of its head as seen through our binoculars, we supposed he was tearing the "meal" into bits before swallowing them.

--Donald Keyser
National Road
Wheeling, West Virginia

Specimen of Wilson's Snipe, Marshall County, West Virginia:

Five of us, members of the Brooks Club, were "working" the field famous for pipits in this section -- on the Rude Farm, Big Wheeling Creek, Marshall County, and found what we presumed to be a female Wilson's Snipe, Capella delicata, dead, with the long bill partly in the then dried-up earth.

The specimen was already partly decayed, but was easily identified as that species. The species has been found in the same field at about the same time -- April 13-- for the past three years, feeding in the marshy grass.

--George Breiding
Hdq. & Hdq. Squadron ACTS
Lowry Field, Colorado

THE 1941 REUNION, OCTOBER 10-11-12.

It is not very often that it is necessary for the Brooks Bird Club to make changes in plans after announcements have been sent out, but this is one of those rare occasions. The 1940 Reunion was held at the Jesters Club on Big Wheeling Creek near Wheeling and here, everyone had a good time. This was partly due to the excellence of the surroundings - the kitchen, the dining room and the living room with its big fireplace all helped to make the week-end enjoyable.

So it was that an application was placed for the same location for the 1941 affair. But our application was not accepted for another group had already reserved the property. But - the Jesters Club was available for the following week-end. So, we had the alternative of accepting a less suitable location or postponing our plans for one week. We believed that the corresponding members would prefer the latter course.

We are sorry that some who had already planned to visit Wheeling during the announced dates must change their schedule. But we hope that the revision will enable others to come. We assure our friends and members that the 1941 Reunion, October 10-11-12 will be an enjoyable affair.

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

THE U. S. ARMY

On the same day that President George Breiding left to serve his year (or longer) in the Selective Service Army, George Arner of Chester, W. Va. who has been very closely connected with the field activities of the Brooks Bird Club, was assigned to service in a technical division in Virginia. For an indefinite period, his address will be Private George Arner, 4th Medical Training Battalion, Company A - T-651, Camp Lee, Virginia. We presume that his buddies at Camp Lee should be kept in ignorance of Private Arner's well-known propensities for the dissection of rattlesnakes during the Forays?

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

THE REDSTART is published monthly by and for the members of the Brooks Bird Club. A corresponding membership may be obtained upon payment of one dollar which includes a twelve-month subscription to THE REDSTART. All members are permitted to contribute field notes for publication. The Brooks Bird Club, 113 Edgewood St., Wheeling, W. Va.