A MESSAGE TO THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

The fact that the Brooks Bird Club and the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union have become affiliated with the Wilson Ornithological Club during my term as president of the last-named organization gives me great personal satisfaction. I have a deep affection for Nebraska, my native State. As for West Virginia, I have the happiest memories of Bethany, our family home for over a quarter of a century; of trips to Tomlinson Run, the Beech Bottom marsh, Canaan Mountain, Gaudineer Knob, and the Cranberry Glades; of campfires and birdwalks at Oglebay Park; of mid-summer outings at Terra Alta. If any member of the Brooks Bird Club wonders how I feel about West Virginia, let him read with care the foreword which I wrote for Maurice Brooks's Check-List of West Virginia birds. The words I used there were more than a discussion of topography and vegetation; they were a peep into a man's heart.

We of the Wilson Ornithological Club are proud to be affiliated with the Brooks Bird Club; that much I should like to say at the outset. We are proud as we remember the gentleness and all-round goodness of A.B. Brooks, the man for whom the Club was named. We are proud of the name Brooks, for the whole Brooks family has for generations played an important part in all things West Virginian. We are proud of the work West Virginia ornithologists have done during recent years – of Maurice Brooks's Check-List, above referred to; of Karl Haller's and William Lunk's painstaking collecting of bird specimens; of William Legg and his interesting periodical, Field Ornithology, which we wish were still being published down at Mount Lookout; of The Redstart, which has continued to give us good bird papers; of the biological work which has been carried on at West Virginia University, Bethany College, and Oglebay Institute; of the progressive attitude of the State's Conservation Commission. Especially proud are we of the vitality of the Brooks Bird Club – of the spirit which has kept the organization together, sending it year after year on its vigorous "forays" into various parts of the State.
Let us make of this affiliation between the Brooks Bird Club and the
Wilson Ornithological Club something far more than nominal. It is my
earnest hope that the Wilson Club's recently appointed Research Committee
will see fit to award one of the Louis Fuertes Research Grants to a West
Virginia ornithologist within the next five years. It is my hope that more
and more West Virginia ornithologists will think of our Wilson Bulletin as
a means whereby the results of their work may be published. Excellent as
The Redstart is, that periodical cannot hope to publish long, illustrated
papers. The Wilson Bulletin exists for the express purpose of reporting
to the scientific world some of the very work West Virginia ornithologists
are doing now.

The Wilson Club has a fine and rapidly growing library which is housed
at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology in Ann Arbor. Any book
in this library may be borrowed by a member of the Wilson Club, and I hope
that an arrangement may soon be worked out whereby members of Wilson Club
affiliated societies also may borrow these books, whether said persons are
Wilson Club members or not.

Affiliation between the Wilson Club and the Brooks Bird Club is a two-way
matter. As a member of the Wilson Club I like to think that I now can turn
to the whole membership of the Brooks Bird Club in case I need information
concerning West Virginia birds. In a sense the Brooks Bird Club has become
part of my working equipment along with my library, binocular, skinning tools
and water-color kit. Every Brooks Bird Club member has a right to feel
exactly the same way about the Wilson Ornithological Club. The Wilson Club
is much the larger and older of the two organizations, to be sure. It is
far more scattered, in the physical sense. But in the Wilson Club are men
and women who can be of real help to West Virginia ornithologists, who can
become part of the "working equipment" of any member of the Brooks Bird Club
who happens to need such equipment. We of the Wilson Club have a sort of
working center here in Ann Arbor. This center now belongs also to the Brooks
Bird Club. A real affiliation between the two organizations, the sort of
affiliation I have in mind, will lead the Brooks Bird Club to put the Wilson
Club to real use. It will also, I predict, lead to some fine and lasting
friendships. Let us all bear such an affiliation in mind and bring it to
pass.

May I, as the Wilson Club's president, and also as an ornithologist far
more than casually interested in West Virginia birdlife, recommend to members
of the Brooks Bird Club the following 10 projects, any one of which should,
I feel, be undertaken at the earliest possible moment?

1. *Dendroica potomac*. Karl Haller's discovery of this interesting
warbler focussed ornithological attention upon West Virginia, especially
upon the Eastern Panhandle. Let us hope that during the coming season a
breeding pair of the birds and their nest may be discovered, photographed,
and reported on in full. My very special interest in this bird is, I believe,
understandable and pardonable.

2. *Limothlypis swainsonii*. Swainson's warbler is not a very well
known bird even in parts of the South in which it is common. Especially
valuable would be a detailed study of its habitat preferences, behavior,
biological success, etc. in West Virginia.

3. Parulidae. A comparative study of West Virginia's wood warblers
should be continued, with an accent on habitat variation at different

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elevations, behavior at range frontiers, hybridism, etc., following Maurice Brooks's surefooted leadership.

4. Anseriformes, etc. Careful observation of the water birds at Cheat Lake should be carried on, especially of (a) those species now establishing themselves there as breeding species; (b) those which are now stopping there regularly in migration; and (c) those which are now regularly wintering there. In connection with any such study numerous stragglers will inevitably be recorded.

5. Charadriiformes. A State-wide collaborative and continuing investigation of all flats, sandbars, beaches, etc. should be inaugurated with the end in view of understanding more fully the shorebird migrations within, and along the borders of, the State. Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, and Maryland ornithologists should assist in this study.

6. Bonasa umbellus. Skins of ruffed grouse shot during the hunting season should be preserved with care. This need not entail collecting of breeding birds. It would be a putting to use of birds killed for sport. Label all specimens fully.

7. Melospiza melodia euphonia. Concentrated banding of song sparrows should be carried on during summer in the Cranberry Glades. Recovery of banded birds in the fall and winter will make possible an understanding and description of this race in its freshest, most complete plumage. Taxonomic studies of this sort are sorely needed, and I should like to see West Virginia ornithologists start and complete such a study. The winter plumage of euphonia must be described not on the basis of winter specimens taken in the Cranberry Glades, nor of specimens which happen to resemble topotypes of the race, but rather on winter-collected specimens known to have bred, or to have been reared, in the Cranberry Glades. Until this method of obtaining a complete picture of a given race is followed, descriptions, discussions, theorizing, etc. are a mere beating 'round the bush. West Virginia ornithologists have a chance to establish a method here, to blaze a trail.

8. Parus. Banding (especially color banding) of chickadee populations should be undertaken, particularly in regions where both P. atricapillus and P. carolinensis nest side by side. Study of banded birds throughout the year should give us a slant on species behavior, tolerance, etc.

9. Loxia curvirostra. Breeding red crossbills should be found in the State and fully reported on. Identification of the race involved should be possible through the careful preservation of one breeding male bird (providing more than one pair is found).

10. Life history studies of little known American birds such as the hooded merganser (Lophodytes cucullatus), Carolina junco (Junco hyemalis carolinensis), Bachman's sparrow (Aimophila aestivalis bachmani), etc., should be completed as opportunity presents itself.

Finally, let me urge all Brooks Bird Club members to attend the coming meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Club in Columbus, Ohio, next November. The meeting promises to be a very fine one. The Brooks Bird Club should be
represented by several papers, including one on the Club and its history, work, future, etc.; one on West Virginia ornithology in general; and several on studies now being carried on here and there within the State.

George Miksch Sutton
President
Wilson Ornithological Club

THE WEST VIRGINIA WILD TURKEY

by
Fred A. Glover

With the beginning of the fiscal year of 1944, the West Virginia Conservation Commission started its Wild Turkey Investigation project. This project was made possible through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act. The initial phase of the investigation was to determine the approximate number and general distribution of the present wild turkey population. The final phase of the project was to assemble additional information to provide a basis for a sound restocking program as well as improved management practices.

Present hunting laws require wild turkey kills to be reported to the Conservation Commission within 20 days after the date of the kill. Questionnaires were mailed to hunters reporting kills and much valuable information has thus been assembled through the use of these questionnaires.

Detailed field surveys, checking the distribution of the wild turkeys in each county and the Monongahela National Forest, were conducted throughout 1944 and 1945. The survey attempted to locate the range of each flock and the approximate number of birds. As a result of the survey and the additional information gathered, it was found that some counties, namely: Hardy, Hampshire, Mineral, and Morgan were suffering from over-hunting. In other counties indications were that a much greater wild turkey population existed than previous estimates of the game protectors showed.

The range of the wild turkey in West Virginia generally conforms with the more rugged mountain regions of the state. The Class 1 wild turkey range, based upon the resident population of birds, includes the following counties: Greenbrier, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Randolph, Pendleton, Hardy, Hampshire, and Grant. At the completion of the survey it was estimated that there were between 3,500 and 4,000 wild turkeys in West Virginia.

After an analysis of the turkey range in West Virginia, the investigator found that there were two fundamental range types: (1) the low altitude range characterized by an oak-hickory-pine forest; and (2) the high altitude range characterized by a beech-birch-maple-hemlock forest. Potentially the low altitude range appears to offer more to the wild turkey than the high altitude range. Food is more plentiful and the winters are not so severe in the low altitude range as compared to the high altitude range. However, at the present time the high altitude range supports the larger part of the wild turkey population. There are several reasons for this, namely: large forest areas are available; the mountain areas have retarded the growth of industry; and the rugged terrain of the mountains has made farming difficult.
As all West Virginians know, the soils of the state vary widely. The textural qualities of the soils are determined, to a large extent, by the nature of the parent material. Most of the soils are of a sandy, silt, or clay loam type. A comparison of the general turkey range with the major soil types shows a fair correlation. The author believes that there is an association between the wild turkey range and Dekalb-Leetonia soil. The Dekalb-Leetonia soils are covered with the most extensive forest areas. This soil type is not suited to agriculture and the habitat found on the soils apparently is preferred by the turkey.

The particular land use in an area directly affects the wild turkey population. Clearing the land preparatory to farming or grazing is harmful to the wild turkey inasmuch as it reduces the amount of available forest range and subsequently the food supply. Lumbering is harmful as it tends to reduce the food and cover available. Private timber cuttings, for the most part, have been very destructive to wild turkey habitat because they are most extensive and clear in type. The small, selective type of cuttings carried on under the supervision of the Monongahela National Forest apparently have little affect upon the wild turkey. Proper forest management practices generally tend to improve the wild turkey range. Strip mining is considered harmful to the wild turkey range because it is so destructive to the habitat. The mining industry supports a particular type of people who have little regard for game laws and game management. The author believes that the wild turkey population has been markedly reduced by illegal hunting from people living around mining communities. Much of the potential wild turkey range in West Virginia is located in mining areas, but it seems inadvisable to restock wild turkeys until proper education and adequate protection have been provided.

Openings in the forest cover are important to the wild turkey. During the spring and summer the hen uses these openings for rearing her brood. Succulent, green feed and many insects are available for the poults in these openings. Roads and trails provide avenues of travel and places where the birds can obtain the grit so necessary to aid in grinding the food materials.

The availability of food and water is important in the movements of the turkeys. Wild turkeys will locate the natural feed as it becomes available in the forest. Water is a daily must for wild turkeys and they usually range only a short distance from a water source. In the spring the turkeys range around the open fields. As summer advances the poults grow rapidly and soon form a flock. Fall finds the turkeys ranging around the edges of the forest where the berries and summer seeds are available. As cold weather approaches the turkeys travel to the beech flats and up the oak hollows in search of mast. During the severe winter storms the wild turkey will spend much time in hemlock, spruce, or pine groves where he is protected. Even during heavy storms the turkeys are able to locate food along small spring runs and on wind-blown ridges. The wild turkey is a very hardy bird.

It is the firm belief of the author that the numbers of wild turkeys can be increased in West Virginia with wise game management. Recommended practices which will materially benefit the wild turkey are: (1) the maintaining of sod areas from 1 to 50 acres; (2) the maintaining of old roads and forest trails as avenues of travel; (3) the freeing of such important turkey food producers as wild grape, beech, black cherry, oak, and blackberry; (4) the planting of natural foods along trails, old fields, and streams; (5) the cleaning out of
springs to provide water during the late summer and feeding areas in the
winter; and (6) the regulation of the take from hunting. Local predator
control may be needed at times. Emergency winter feeding need not be ex-
tensive and is necessary only under severe, inclement weather.

Conservation Commission
Elkins, West Virginia

RED CROSSBILLS ON GAUDINEER KNOB

A series of meetings at Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, West Virginia, in
November, 1946, gave me my first opportunity to see the Cheat Mountain
country, about which I had heard so much. On the way to Elkins, on November
11, I drove to the top of Gaudineer Knob for a quick visit, with the hope of
finding red crossbills or at least of seeing some pine siskins. From
the standpoint of birds the trip was pretty much of a failure, but I did see
the mountain under interesting conditions. It was a cold day, with
intermittent showers and a thick fog drifting across the summit. There
were few birds anywhere. On top of the mountain they were particularly
scarce. Golden-crowned kinglets, chickadees and juncos were fairly common;
a few blue jays were travelling through the spruces; one tree sparrow was
calling at the parking place; this was the score.

Being fortunate enough to strike a bright, warm morning for the return trip
on November 15, I spent an hour or so along highway 250, east of Shaver's
Fork of Cheat River, stopping at half a dozen places to walk around. At
one stop a red-tailed hawk was soaring over a nearby ridge; a ruffed grouse
was drumming from a hillsise; and a pileated woodpecker called from far
away. Blue jays were abundant everywhere. Every time I stopped the car the
nasal calls of red-breasted nuthatches could be heard from the spruce groves.
In a damp thicket one fox sparrow was seen and several others heard. The
woods were full of small birds. Flocks of (Appalachian) chickadees, tufted
titmice and golden-crowned kinglets were working their way through the lower
branches, while higher up the tips of the branches were shaking with purple
finches, goldfinches and pine siskins. The sight of the siskins filled in
a bad gap in my field experience. For years I had been looking in vain for
this bird, until I was ashamed to say that I had not met with it in my life.
This has evidently been a siskin winter. Since then I have seen them a num-
ber of times, once in my own front yard, and again at my cabin in the country.

Later in the morning I spent a hour on Gaudineer. Although the day was
mild, there were still only a few birds on top. Blue jays and golden-crowned
kinglets were common, and red-breasted nuthatches now abundant. I searched
in vain through the spruce cap on top for my particular prey. Coming down, I
made several unsuccessful stops, until finally at the fountain, about half
a mile below the tower, I found my red crossbills. There were six of them,
in a remarkable variety of plumage: a very bright male, a mottled male, a
bright female, and these immature birds, two of them dull and one fairly
bright. Quite tame, they came at times within ten feet of me as I stood by
the side of the road. I watched them at my leisure while they flew back and
forth between the ground and the lower branches of the trees, restless but
remaining in the same area. They were feeding on the rocky, brier-covered
slope across the road from the fountain. After ten or fifteen minutes,
without any warning, the flock flew away out of sight.

J. J. Murray,
Lexington, Virginia
RUSTY BLACKBIRDS

Friday, February 28, while foot-traveling Cranberry Trail just below the Federal Prison, I flushed from a marshy spot made nearly free of snow by running water, a nervous bird I assumed to be a catbird, but changed this idea after watching it for some time as it perched about sixty yards away. After referring to a bird guide, I strongly suspected it was a rusty blackbird (Euphagus carolinus), but was not sure of this identification since I had never encountered a "Rusty" before. Two weeks later, March 13, in the same area, I had an opportunity to examine at close range, this time with binoculars, two birds identical with the one that had been a puzzle before. In a minor way I was thrilled at the view, as is any bird student seeing a species for the first time. Rusties they were and their striking, white eyes were plainly visible.

On the same day and in the same territory I also observed one red-winged blackbird, one meadowlark and two starlings. The altitude is a little less than four thousand feet. W. R. DeGarmo informs me migrants such as the red-winged and rusty blackbirds sometimes appear in suitable habitats at this elevation as early in spring as they do at lower altitudes.

R. Wayne Bailey
Conservation Commission
Charleston, W. Va.

GOLDEN EAGLE OBSERVED IN CRANBERRY GLADES

An immature golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos canadensis) was observed by Fred A. Glover and R. Wayne Bailey near a clearing along the upper Cranberry Glades on March 12, 1947. The large bird was soaring in ever-widening circles searching the valley below. Seven wild turkeys were feeding under Crataegus and around bare spots along the river bottom but showed no evidence of being harried. The eagle was sighted again the following afternoon by Mr. Bailey in approximately the same area. It was noted that the wild turkeys were not feeding as extensively as previous to the appearance of the golden eagle.

Fred A. Glover
Conservation Commission

TWO AVIAN ACCIDENTS

From time to time we read accounts of birds meeting with misfortunes that result in death. I recall witnessing one such event. Another was called to my attention. In both cases wire screening indirectly caused the tragedies.

The first observation was on April 9, 1944, Big Wheeling Creek, Marshall County, West Virginia. As I approached one of the unoccupied summer cottages along the stream, a series of high pitched rapid calls of a phoebe (Sayornis phoebe) were heard. The bird was imprisoned on a porch that had been enclosed with screening. The phoebe, perhaps in search of a nesting site, gained entrance in a small space between the top of the door frame and the screen door that was slightly ajar. When I opened the door the bird made a frenzied escape. On the porch floor I found two more phoebes, both of them dead. They were emaciated and in the state of decomposition. Apparently they died from starvation.

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The other instance concerned two male ruby-throated hummingbirds (*Archilocus colubris*). Dr. Laurence Snyder, Ohio State University, found two dead individuals, one on May 16, 1946, the other three days later, May 19. They flew into a screen, (at Dr. Snyder's home, Worthington, Ohio) got their bills stuck in the mesh and died in that position. How and why the birds were there is unknown. The only thing in back of the screen was a piece of cheese.

George H. Breiding  
Ohio State University  
Columbus, Ohio

**WINTER OCCURRENCE OF EVENING GROSBEAK**

Further evidence of the wintering of the evening grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) in the higher mountains of Randolph county has been received through observations of H. S. Rhodes, resident wildlife manager on the Beaverdam Wildlife Management Area in the Monongahela National Forest, and James S. Lindsay, Assistant Game Technician for the Conservation Commission. Since shortly after January 1, 1947, these birds have been more or less regular visitors at the manager's cabin on Middle Mountain. Their numbers vary greatly, but at times are said to approach as many as 200, and exhibit their characteristic fearlessness of man.

The author visited the area late on the afternoon of March 20, 1947, but was unable to find any of the birds. Rhodes reports that the birds usually appear in the morning and are apparently attracted by a block of salt near the cabin. They feed regularly at this salt block, pecking at it vigorously. He has not noted the birds' feeding on any other type of food, thus they apparently visit the spot for salt only. The salt feeding habit of this species has been recorded from its breeding grounds in the northwest, but to the knowledge of the author, has not been reported during its eastern winter migrations. With the possible exception of mountain ash (*Sorbus americana*), none of the commonly known winter foods of the evening grosbeak are known to occur in the higher mountains of Randolph county. It is even possible that the birds reported on Alleghany Mountain by Fred A. Glover (The Redstart, Vol. XIV, No. 6, March, 1947) could have likewise been seeking salt where it is known that sheep are salted on the sod areas of the mountain top bordering U. S. Route 33.

Russell DeGarmo  
Charleston, W. Va.

**BROOKS BIRD CLUB ANNUAL FORAY**

The 1947 Foray, the week of June 8 to 15, will be held this year at Camp Caesar, Webster County, W. Va. Sponsored annually by the Brooks Bird Club since 1940, the club is looking forward to a record camp. Over the week-end of March 22, a committee from Wheeling joined with members of the Charleston Chapter and made a tour of inspection of Camp Caesar. Unanimous approval was given the set-up with the expression as being the "best" we have ever had in the matter of accommodations. Then too, we have the full cooperation and experience of Mr. Jack Burton, who has managed Camp Caesar for many years. From the camp site several field trips will be made to such interesting places as Red Oak knob, the Coven pond and Cranberry Glades. The Foray Folder will be mailed by mid April, and if you have any friends who are interested in receiving it, let us know.

Charles Conrad  
Foray Director