THE REDSTART
Volume 32—Number 3
July, 1965

CONTENTS

Page
Purple Martin Roost In South Charleston Norris Gluck ........................................ 86
Articles of Interest In Current Ornithological Journals—Clark Miller .................. 90
Nesting Barn Owls In Preston County, W. Va. Larry Schwab ............................. 91
Book Review ........................................ 92
Albino Snowbird—Constance Katholi .......................................................... 93
The Passenger Pigeon In West Virginia John L. Smith ........................................ 94
Death By Misadventure—Constant Katholi .................................................... 97
How Can I Teach Conservation To Beginners George Ballentine ....................... 98
Red-Bellied Woodpecker Destroys Nest Leon P. Wilson ..................................... 99
Correction ........................................ 99
Field Notes—Spring Season Mrs. Nevada Laitsch ............................................ 100
Cornell Nest Card Program ............................................................. 104

THE REDSTART is published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Harless Printing Company, St. Albans, West Virginia. The official organ of the Brooks Bird Club, it is mailed to all members in good standing. Non-member subscription price is $2.50. Individual copies cost $0.50 except the April issue which is $1.00. Changes of address and inquiries concerning back issues should be mailed to club headquarters, 707 Warwood Avenue, Wheeling, West Virginia. All articles for publication and books for review should be mailed to the Editor.
PURPLE MARTIN ROOST IN SOUTH CHARLESTON

Norris Gluck

General

Occasionally an innocent bystander gets stuck with an assignment for which he is unprepared. So it was that I received the task of reporting on the South Charleston Purple Martin Roost. The principal characters in this story are Anne Shreve, the discoverer of the roost, or at least the one whose curiosity and determination initiated the project and kept it moving; Charles Handley, Sr., who helped explore the area and served as chief consultant in the solution of various and sundry problems; and Connie Katholi, whose ideas and efforts have had an important influence on the activity to date. Last but not least are the Greenlees, Art and Betty, George Koch, who assisted in the installation of the trap, George and Ruth Ballentine, who worked on the installation of the trap, containing branches for perches, open at the top with a window shade-like door. The door was to be closed by pulling a string from a point outside the roost. This trap was elevated to the tree tops, by pulleys, to be used as a roost for the birds in times of extreme confusion.

In August, 1963, Anne, who lives near the roost and often traveled by it, observed a large concentration of Purple Martins in the sky. She located the roost which was only a short distance from Route 69. The only action taken in 1963 was several nightly observations of bird movements and flight patterns overhead and into the roost; also, a cursory daytime examination of the roosting area. It was estimated that the flock had reached, by the middle of August, a maximum number of 25,000. This aroused much interest and considerable reflection on the part of the local bird people, especially the banders, who felt much could be learned from banding a representative sample of the roosting flock. The two principal problems seemed to be: (1) What effect would the presence of banders in the roosting area at night have on the birds, and (2) What banding techniques could be used successfully.

Much thought was given to these problems after the migration season of 1963 and by July, 1964, Anne and Connie had devised a large rectangular screen-wire trap, covered with tall weeds, briars and blackberry vines. Tall Joe-Pye weeds, growing in profusion, were often used as roosts. It was in this open area that banding operations were performed and it was the focal point for the birds as they dropped overhead in scattered groups of 50 to several hundred at St. Albans, Davis Creek, Nitro, Coal River, Alum Creek, Charleston’s West Side and Louden Heights. All of these locations are less than 10 miles from the roosting area. All Martins, at this time of day, then started heading directly toward the roosting area. At about 6:45 EST Martins could be seen overhead in scattered groups of 50 to several hundred at St. Albans, Davis Creek, Nitro, Coal River, Alum Creek, Charleston’s West Side and Louden Heights. All of these locations are less than 10 miles from the roosting area. All Martins, at this time of day, then started heading directly toward the roosting area. At about 6:45 EST Martins could be seen overhead in scattered groups of 50 to several hundred.
7:15 EST the entire sky and horizons, within a radius of a mile or two, were widely
and thickly speckled with Purple Martins, all churning, in rather circular patterns,
but gradually moving toward the roost. The flock reached its peak about 7:40
P.M. and at this time waves of several hundred birds began to drop into the roost.
As the numbers became more concentrated directly over the roost, the flight
appeared to lose the faster and more frenzied; an occasional flight would occur in
the sky. As the first group dropped into the roost, others starting to follow the
pattern, would veer off and rejoin the overhead flock. By 8:10 P.M. nearly all
the birds were down, and the remaining 2,000 or more, would climb higher and
higher into the air, apparently drawn by the light. At about 8:15 P.M., these re-
main ing birds would drop into the roost, sometimes, in one great swoop. If a storm
hastened darkness as much as an hour, the Martins went to roost at that time,
using much less time to descend to the roosting area. One evening a storm came
at 7:15 P.M. and all 30,000 birds came down within 10 or 15 minutes.

Behavior In The Roost

From outside the roosting area, it appeared that the Purple Martins dropped
straight down, grasping the first branch available and remained in that position
for the night. This was disproved on the first visit to the roost. Constant move-
ment continued until long after the birds were in the roost. On moonlit nights, this
activity continued until past 9:30 P.M. The Purple Martins alighted upon the very
smallest tips of branches, preferring box elders and silver maples, always with
the sky overhead and never down into the trees under the canopy of branches.
Roosting was between four and eighteen feet above the ground. When one bird ap-
ppeared to be settled, several others would immediately join it, then others, until
the branch would be blanketed with birds like huge drifts of deep snow.

The roost was extremely noisy. A distant sharp sound would bring silence
throughout the roost for about 30 seconds. At 8:30 one evening, a plane broke the
sound barrier overhead. Complete silence, for more than a minute, settled over
the roost and hardly a movement by a single bird took place during this time.
After such a silence, a wave of notes would begin at some distant edge of the
roost and sweep across its mass in a few seconds.

We had hesitated to go into the roost at night for fear of driving the birds away
but soon found we could move around among and beneath the branches without
disturbing them in the least. Only clapping hands, shaking the trees or waving a
flashlight beam toward them, caused them to fly. By getting behind the birds
just after they had settled it was possible by hand clapping to drive considerable
numbers toward and into the nets. Attempts at plucking them from the roost by
hand were unsuccessful, except for one bird which was caught by focusing the
flashlight beam on it. One bird, when disturbed after darkness one night, lit on
my cap.

Banding Results

Most of the 1964 banding operation was an experiment to determine the best
method for capturing the birds. The main problems were: What is the best height
above the ground for locating the nets. By observation this seemed to be about
10-15 feet. How to raise the nets to this position and remove the birds from the
nets when located this far above the ground. There was, also the problem of
how to obtain sufficient and proper light at night for banding the birds and for
identification purposes, that is, for determining sex, age, etc. It is hoped that

some of these problems can be overcome, prior to the 1965 migration, by installation
of permanent banding poles, equipped with pulleys for raising and lowering the nets.
The birds were banded and released immediately at the banding station which
was only a few paces from the nets. Banding time covered only 20 to 30 minutes
each night except in a few instances when attempts were made to drive some of
the birds into the nets.

The following are the results of the 1964 banding, for seven (7) nights, between
August 14 and 31:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Number Banded</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purple Martins</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn Swallows</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Swallows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Species Banded in the Roost or Observed in the Vicinity

- Robin—22 banded. About 500 gathered on the south side of the creek each evening
  about 6:30 EST and went to roost just before the Martins, at a location on the
  eastern end of the peninsula where there were a number of wild cherry and apple
trees. The removal of these birds from the nets, at a time when the Martins were
ready to drop into the roost, probably resulted in loss of several Martins.
- Carolina Wren—Two banded. Single male could be heard occasionally.
- Yellowthroat—One Banded. One heard singing.
- Song Sparrow—One banded.
- Starling—A roost one mile west, on the Dunbar Bridge. Starlings gathered around
  the Martin Roost at 6:30 P.M. each evening and departed for the Bridge before the
  Martins descended to the roost.
- Grackle and Redwing—About 30 to 40 of each species followed the Starling pat-
  tern and appeared to go to roost with them.
- Mourning Dove—A pair roosted regularly across creek to the south.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo—A single male in roost during Martin season.
- Green Heron—Two or more seen over roost or along creek during season.
- Nighthawk—Flock of 20 overhead on August 27.
- Duck—One unidentified.
- Screech Owl—One and possibly two in roosting area.
- Red-tailed Hawk—Seen working on the Starlings and Martins during two evenings.

Future Studies

It was not long after we became involved in this operation that we found there
was much information we needed but could not find on Purple Martin roosts, their
flocking habits and their migration. R. E. Stewart and C. S. Robbins had reported
in "Birds of Maryland and District of Columbia", a count of 100,000 Martins during
the third week of July, 1947. J. J. Murray in his "Check List of Birds in Virginia"
has, also, referred to a report of 30,000 birds occupying a roost at Washington,
D. C. In a single night. Bert's "Life Histories" had much enlightening information
in a report by Dr. Sprunt on the habits of Martins and refers to an excellent report
on a typical roost at Cape May, N. J., by Witmer Stone in 1937. This report would
be very helpful if we could locate a copy. But there are many questions which we
have been unable to answer. The following are some which we would like to ex-
plor e further. Some of these we have already answered, in part, and many we
cannot answer by confining our study to the South Charleston Roost only.

How is a roost selected? What determines its location and what attracts the
Purple Martins to a particular roost? Where are the birds from? Is the flock made up of families, colonies, birds from all Eastern United States? What other species flock and roost with the Martins? How early in the season do birds first arrive at the roost? When do last ones leave? What birds arrive first? Young birds? Adults? Unmated? Non-breeding? How long do they stay? Several days, or are new birds arriving and leaving each day? Do old males leave first? Young birds later? What is age distribution at various times during roosting period? Immatures vs adults. What is the sex ratio? How does the time of day, of arrival at roost, vary with: Temperature? storms? Amount of light each day (cloudiness)? Distance travelled from feeding area? How many birds are killed at the roosting site? How? Compared to individual roosts? Do communal roosts give additional protection from predators? Other dangers? Do Martins exercise any rights to the roosting area? Is there any organization within the flock? How far away does the flock forage each day? Where are Martin colonies located in the Charleston area? When do the young leave the nest? How many broods each year? 

Based on some of these questions and the information we have available we hope to develop a few hypotheses for future studies, realizing that our study procedures have many limitations. We know that the roosting area will be destroyed within a few years by an inter-state highway, so our study time may not be long enough to get all the answers. We would appreciate any information from members of the Brooks Bird Club on this subject, including any references to information which is now available.


ARTICLES of INTEREST in CURRENT ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNALS

An article on Cowbirds in the January 1965 issue of the Condor by Robert Payne is titled "Clutch Size and Numbers of Eggs Laid by Brown-headed Cowbirds." This fifteen page article is somewhat technical but very informative. It points out many things that one should observe and record when in the field. The distribution of the Cowbird is universal in our area and it may be that we are missing some worthwhile information by ignoring the Cowbird. The study of this bird was made in lower Michigan.

A very interesting article about the return of displaced sparrows is in the November 12, 1964 issue of Science. L. Richard Mewald of San Jose State College, San Jose, California made the study of the homing ability of three species of sparrows. These were the Golden-crowned Sparrow, Zonotrichia atricapilla, and two races of the White-crowned Sparrow, Z. leucophrys gambeli, and Z. pugnætus. During the winter of 1961-62, 411 sparrows were taken from San Jose to Baton Rouge, Louisiana by jet aircraft. Twenty six of these were recaptured at the San Jose banding station during the following winter. During the period from October 1962 to April 1963 660 birds were similarly transported from San Jose to Laurel, Maryland. Twenty two of these birds were ones that had previously been transported from San Jose to Baton Rouge in 1961-62 and recaptured in San Jose the winter of 1962-63. Of the 660 birds displaced, 15 were known to have returned to San Jose during the 1963-64 winter season. Of greater significance was the return of 6 of the 22 birds displaced to Laurel which had previously returned from displacement to Baton Rouge.

THE REDSTART—JULY 1965

NESTING BARN OWLS IN PRESTON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

Larry Schwab

Although the American Barn Owl (Tyto alba pratincola) is known to nest in West Virginia, surprisingly few nesting records exist for this species within the borders of our state. This circumstance may be attributed to the birds almost strictly nocturnal activity and secretive habits. Even though Preston County offers an abundance of suitable nesting sites and adequate food, this bird is apparently at best a sporadic nester, and the following somewhat unusual nesting record is thought to constitute the only report of nesting Barn Owls in Preston County and is one of the few State records.

On July 13, 1963, a group of picnickers at Reedsville, West Virginia (elevation—1500 feet), accidentally discovered five young owls in the belfry of an abandoned Presbyterian Church. At the time of discovery the largest bird was about six weeks old, the smallest about four weeks old. Thus the three siblings were "stepping-stone" in size and age. After the birds were discovered, the owner of the old church, who was using the building as a woodshop, removed all five owlets and confined them to a small wire cage at the steps of the church on the ground. For five days the owlets attracted numerous curiosity-seekers and interested spectators. While the young owls were in the cage, the adult birds faithfully brought wild food nightly to the cage and placed it on the ground beside the wire mesh. On the night of July 22, 1963, thirteen meadow mice were brought to the young owlets. On another occasion a young rabbit and a Meadowlark were brought to the cage during the night. The church owner would then place the prey in the cage every morning. Part of this natural food was consumed by the owlets, but it was never eaten in the presence of a human being. Most of the artificial food offered to the birds was refused. Both adults could be spotlighted easily during their visitsations to the cage as both parents were active hunters. Finally, on July 23, 1963, the church owner was persuaded to return the five grotesque youngsters to the belfry. The owlets were then successfully reared by their parents and the last nestling left the belfry in late September, 1963.

The nestling site was a 6' by 6' church belfry sixty feet above ground level in a grove of trees. Human habitation was within fifty yards of the nesting site, inasmuch as the church is located in the community of Reedsville, West Virginia. Forty-eight pellets were recovered from the nesting site on July 23, 1963. These contained a total of thirty-three skulls. With the assistance of Pervis C. Major, Medical Technologist of The Ohio State University and the Division of Mammals of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., the skulls were identified and counted as the following:

- Meadow Mouse (Microtus pennsylvanicus) .................................................. 27
- Red-winged Blackbird (Agelaius phoeniceus) ........................................ 3
- White-footed Mouse (Peromyscus leucopus) ........................................ 1
- Short-tailed Shrew (Blarina brevicauda) ........................................ 1
- Hairy-tailed Mole (Parascalops breweri) ........................................ 1

The owls did not return to nest in 1964, and there has been no evidence of Barn Owls in the area since October, 1963.

169 Main Street, Kingwood, W. Va.

THE REDSTART—JULY 1965
BOOK REVIEW

The Bird Watcher’s America by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. Published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, 441 pages, 5½x8½ inches, price $7.50. It would be hard to be too enthusiastic about this book. Bird watchers will grab it on sight and they will not be disappointed. It is written for them and it is a veritable feast—a gourmet’s delight.

The concept for this book developed out of Mr. Pettingill’s ideas for a sequel to his Guides to Bird Finding east and west of the Mississippi. He invited forty-four of the leading naturalists to write informally about some of the best birding areas in the United States and Canada. Each author has contributed a bit of unpublished piece in his own style complete with personal recollections and humorous anecdotes. No two articles follow the same format but all are imbued with the infectious enthusiasm of a birder writing about his favorite spot. The stellar names include Allan D. Cruickshank, Alexander Sprunt, Jr., Herbert Krause, George M. Sutton and Roger Tory Peterson. The editor has written the preface and introduced each chapter with a biographical sketch and personal reminiscences of the author. These include teachers, novelists, business men, a newspaper columnist and three housewives all of whom enjoy finding and studying birds.

BBC’ers will be particularly interested to note that Maurice Brooks is represented with a chapter entitled “High Cheat in West Virginia.” Dr. Brooks has done an excellent job in the presentation of his material, covering the geography, geology and ecology of the region as well as the birds to be found there.

The selections take the reader from the rugged cliffs of Bonaventure Island off the coast of Quebec, to the shadowy canals of the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia, to the Florida Everglades, up the valley of the Rio Grande in Texas, over the snowy heights of the Rockies in Colorado, through the prairies and to the shores of the Pacific. The tour also includes Alaska. Rare birds are discovered in remote places and common ones in exotic places. Large colonies of nesting sea birds and great concentrations of wintering birds are described. One section of six chapters entitled “Migration Spectacles” is probably the most spectacular of all. It covers the throngs as they converged on Pt. Pelee in the spring and on Block Island in the fall. Many of these essays invoke an irresistible urge to rush off to see for oneself the drama depicted. The passages describe the habitats so that one can feel the heat of the sun and the coolness of the breeze off the water; smell the pines and the honeysuckle; see the blue and green of the sea; and hear the myriad voices of the birds everywhere. The book is suitable for the savoring of several pages or a chapter at a time. Each article is complete in itself and needs to be enjoyed separately. The pen and ink drawings of John Henry Dick adequately illustrate the text and the birds treated there.

It is both a stimulating and a discouraging book. One gets aspirations which may never be satisfied. The Pribilof Islands, the Aleutians and the Arctic regions of Alaska are inaccessible to most of us. But the goals can be set and vacations planned with some of the places in mind. It should be mentioned that explicit directions for finding birds are not given. One must continue to rely on Mr. Pettingill’s earlier volume.

It is, in the last analysis, a wish book for birders. It is the seed catalog in January, the travel poster in March. It is the lure of faraway places and the call of adventure. Every reader will have his favorite chapter. Whether the essays are too specialized in their heavy slant toward ornithology to appeal to the general public, I do not know. However, there is an ever increasing army of bird watchers whose appetites will be stimulated—Constance Katholi

The Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife is publishing a comprehensive book on waterfowl under the title “Waterfowl Tomorrow.” This informative work is the result of the cooperation of 103 authors and wildlife resource experts representing 42 public and private conservation agencies in the United States, Canada and Mexico. It is a hard bound book containing 784 pages, has 194 photographic illustrations, and 38 pieces of art work by the well known wildlife artist Bob Hines. It is available for sale by the Supt. of Documents, Washington D. C. 20240. Chuck Conrad

ALBINO SNOWBIRD

Constance Katholi

Junco hyemalis #108-81847 is a partial albino. I first observed him feeding on the front lawn with a flock of normal juncos late on the windy afternoon of April 14, 1964. My impression was that they showed some hostility toward him. Because of the high wind the net which I hastily erected acted like a trampoline with the result that I failed to capture him. On the following morning, however, when to my delight he appeared again, I was able to flush him into the net immediately.

His appearance was startling—not to say comical! His plumage was over all an even, slate gray, not darkening on the head, nor lightening on the rump, with no fluffy feather edges anywhere, which may have been an indication of positive adulthood. The gray portions were identical to those on normal juncos (with one exception, as we shall see) and furthermore the lower breast, abdomen, and undertail coverts were the normal unmarked white. The wings, too, were gray. In the tail, however, while the outer two pairs of rectrices were white as usual, additionally, on the right side only, feathers numbered 7, 6, and 5, were also white toward the base, and slightly barred throughout. A few flecks of white occurred over the rump and crown. The bill was a pronounced pinkish-red and the legs and feet were pinkish brown. The eyes were reddish brown.

The unusual albino marking was roughly in the shape of a four-leaf clover which could be appreciated best when viewed head-on. The first “leaf” was generally the area of the forehead, with the white curving upward in a petal shape; the second and fourth “leaves”, those on each side of the head, included the auricular and malar regions, the white extending backward and downward from back of the eye, then curving forward and upward to the hind margin of the jaw opening. The gray malar stripes like the “moustaches” of the song sparrow separated these two from “leaf” #3 which included the chin and part of the throat, being very similar in appearance to the “throat-patch” of the White-throated Sparrow. Narrow white and then gray stripes above the eyes completed the delineation of the strange pattern. Seen from the front with the red bill centered in this white clover-leaf, he presented a fantastic, clown-like appearance.

I observed him again on April 15, but after that he apparently continued his northward journey.

930 Woodland Ave., South Charleston, W. Va.
THE PASSENGER PIGEON IN WEST VIRGINIA

John L. Smith

Every bird student has heard or read the fabulous stories about the passenger pigeon (Ectopistes migratorius). Even persons having no knowledge, or interest in bird study are acquainted with this bird that stands as the classic example to show no species is indestructible. Many bird students are familiar with Audubon's vivid description of the merciless slaughter of the bird at roosts on the Green River in Kentucky. Nearly everyone has heard of the flight of over two billion pigeons Alexander Wilson saw near Frankfort, Kentucky, in 1810. Earlier he saw flocks of them while traveling down the Ohio River. Audubon saw a flock nearby three years later which numbered exactly half of Wilson's calculation.

What about the former occurrence of the bird in West Virginia? Did it occur here as it did elsewhere? Even though records are lacking it doesn't seem so meager, as is so often the case with species now extinct, the information that has come down to the present day is as equally unbelievable as the observations of Audubon and Wilson. As to the nesting of the bird in the State, Brooks (5) writes, "We have accounts of extensive nesting areas in the Ohio and Little Kanawha River Valleys." The bird also passed over in phenomenal numbers and roosted at a number of places in West Virginia on its way to and from vast breeding grounds further north.

In W. Va. Place Names (7) this writer found references to four streams either presently, or formerly, with names relating to the passenger pigeon. A branch of the Right Fork of Stone Coal Creek in Upshur Co., is called Pigeon Roost Fork. In regard to this roost, we have what may be the earliest reference to the bird in West Virginia. McWhorter (8) writes, "In April, 1781, Matthias, Simon, and Michael Schoolcraft visited a pigeon roost on Stone Coal Creek where Passenger Pigeons nested in vast numbers. This was perhaps the first recorded nesting place of this species in this region of (West) Virginia. 11.'Ten and boys would go to these roosts at night as Pigeon Roost, which, however, as claimed by a local resident, did not acquire its name until during the Civil War. While returning to the fort (Buckhannon), they were fired upon by Indians, Matthias was killed and the other two were taken prisoners."

McWhorter adds further, "There were many pigeon roosts throughout the mountain region of (West) Virginia. Men and boys would go to these roosts at night and by the light of torches slaughter the birds by the thousands. The last great flock of pigeons occurred in 1873. I well remember this never repeated scene, as they passed over the little valley (Buckhannon Run) where my father then lived. One autumn morning a deep roar was suddenly heard, and a great cloud of pigeons swept over the wood-crested hills on the north. For an hour, with brief intervals, the sky was darkened in every direction as flock after flock, in countless myriads, poured southward."

In Braxton Co., a branch of the Sleeth Fork is called Pigeon Roost Fork. An additional note in Place Names reads that the Clarksburg Exponent for May 30, 1937, stated; "Pigeon Roost in Braxton Co., was the stopping off place for thousands of pigeons in their memorial exodus of 1874." Concerning the bird in central West Virginia, Sutton (10) writes, "Persons who have visited the pigeon roosts say they were never quiet; that limbs of trees were constantly breaking and often whole trees were crushed to the ground by the weight of the birds. It was dangerous to go under the roosts on account of the falling timber. When a limb would break or a tree fall, thousands of pigeons would become diglossed and flutter around, thus disturbing others, and the roost would be in movement all night. Parties have been known to visit the roosts and gather sack loads of pigeons. The meat of the wild pigeon is of poor quality. They were often cooked and made into 'pot pie' and greatly relished by the natives."

As to the location of the Braxton Co. roosts, he writes, "There was once a pigeon roost on the mountain between the Little and Big Birch Rivers. How many seasons they occupied that locality, we have no definite knowledge, but the land was very fertile. There was another roost on a branch of Fall Run in Braxton, now called Pigeon Roost."

In Geary District, Roane Co., there is a Pigeon Run, and a post office which took its name from the stream. Bishop (1) says, "Some three or four places and small streams of this county bear the name 'Pigeon Roost' because of having been used as a general roosting place by these birds on their migrations."

Bishop relates the experience of a Thomas Tanner who visited one of these roosts in 1854. "We got there about nine o'clock at night; on nearing the place it sounded just like a windy rain storm in the woods; they were so crowded on every branch of some two or three acres of trees, that here and there, every once in a while, a branch would break, bringing to the ground most of its load of birds; these joined those yet searching for an alighting place, filled the air all about our heads; one had to shout loud if he had anything to say to his nearest companion; they made a noise like a roaring in the head, they were so thick about us! All we had to do was to reach out and grab them on the fly and stick them in the bag; this we did, breaking their necks or heads with thumb and fingers one at a time. Caught the first pigeon and we drove him out of the company."

On the disappearance of the bird from Roane Co., he adds, "But only a few years after the year just mentioned, this migration of such interest and beauty ceased to come; twenty years later many said it ceased all at once; which was not quite correct, but it ceased altogether by the year 1863."

Near Princeton, Mercer Co., there is a Pigeon Creek. Straley (9) writes, "When I was a small child their annual roosting place was in a swamp between Princeton and Augusta and between the old baseball park and A. M. Sutton's residence. This section, then, was heavily timbered. I think I do not exaggerate when I state that I have seen pigeons by the thousands (possibly millions) in autumn afternoons flying to this roost. Their numbers were such that the light of the sun would be obscured. Large oaks would crash to the ground from the weight of the birds. Princeton always turned out en masse, at night, with sacks and pine torches, for a raid on the pigeon roost." Straley had this to add about the size of the flocks, "To indicate the immensity of these flocks of birds, during the last season that the passenger pigeon roosted in Mercer Co., my old friend R. F. Karnes, states that one afternoon, while standing on the bank of Rich Creek, above Spanishburg, a flock of pigeons passed. He estimated this flock to be one mile in width and it was forty-five minutes in passing one point, flying with the rapidity of an arrow, and absolutely obscuring the heavens."

Even though McWhorter has written that 1873 was the year of the last great flight, if Brown's (6) recollection is correct, there was no absence of pigeons in Nicholas Co. three years later. He recalls witnessing the flight of pigeons near Pool in the Wilderness District in the autumn of 1876 and writes, "On several days about an hour before sunset the sky was completely covered by a vast multitude
of pigeons pouring into the roost with the roar of wings like a heavy windstorm. Trees were broken down at the roost by the weight of the birds, and foxes and other wild animals feasted on the wounded birds falling to the ground. The land where the roost was located was enriched by the droppings of the birds.”

In a review of A. W. Schorger's *The Passenger Pigeon* (1939), Maurice Brooks has this to say concerning a little-known habit of the bird. “This volume contains much information which is not, I believe, known to most bird students. Let me cite an example. When I was a small boy I remember my father’s receiving a letter from a mountain hunter in which the writer was positive that he had seen a flock of about twenty ‘wild pigeons’ (this would have been around 1909). The ‘cracker’ or punch-line was properly reserved for the last: he concluded that one reason he thought they might not be wild pigeons was that they flew down and alighted on Elk River. I have told this story many times, and no bearer has told me that the writer was within the bounds of possibility. On page 24 of Dr. Schorger’s book I learned that Passenger Pigeons regularly alighted on bodies of water.”

The last passenger pigeon in the Kanawha Valley was shot by A. Sidney Morgan near Winfield in 1895, but Morgan goes on to report seeing a few after that date. The specimen has been lost, but a portrait of the bird, painted by Morgan’s mother, hangs in his museum. E. A. Brooks (3) writes that Cecil Coburn saw a flock of thirty near French Creek, Upshur Co., in March of 1897, 1909, the year that Brooks relates that the hunter saw a flock of twenty alighting on Elk River, is a remarkably late date for the bird to still be present. An unusual report, and one that seems in almost certain error about the date, is where McWhorter writes of reading in the “local press” where a flock of 500 were seen hovering over the treetops near Addison (near where Webster Springs is now located) in October 1907. What makes this so unusual is that the last known bird died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914 and a flock that large surviving so late seems most remarkable.

4400 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Bibliography

THE REDSTART—JULY 1965

DEATH BY MISADVENTURE
Constance Katholi

In November I received a telephone call from a new neighbor, a young Norwegian woman, who said that she had found two dead banded birds. Because of the bands, she had felt an obligation to report their deaths to the proper authorities. The Department of Natural Resources of West Virginia which she contacted referred her to me. It was, consequently, only because of my banding activities that I learned of the following strange story.

The birds were wearing my bands; one, an adult chickadee, had been originally banded a year earlier in November 1963; and the second, a titmouse, had been banded as an immature in August of this year (1964). In our telephone conversation I had difficulty understanding the cause of the tragedy, so was considerably surprised and dismayed to discover that the birds had met death in the interior of a child’s backyard swing or gymnasium set! Their bodies had been found when the equipment was moved for winter storage and indications were that the birds had been dead varying lengths of time.

This particular outfit which has numerous adaptations for swings, rings, and a slide is not a home-made affair but a standard commercial product. The apparatus consists of four open-ended steel tubes, each 2¾ inches in diameter, forming a pair of “A” frames, which support a sealed horizontal member to which the swings, etc., are attached. (See accompanying diagram). The holes at the top of the “A” frames invite curious, shelter-seeking birds to enter—those birds which would use nesting holes anyway—and on proceeding down the diagonals, whether by intent or accident, are unable to retrace their paths.

I was told that a third bird of unknown species had been fatally trapped, but being unbanded, it had not been saved for my examination. A fourth bird had been trapped in the same manner the previous summer. Luckily, this bird was still alive when found by children playing in the yard, who heard it fluttering in the pipe. The bird was rescued by tilting off the ground the supporting leg in which it was imprisoned.

Unfortunately, the holes at the top of the frames were not immediately plugged with rags or paper—as they are now. This is a simple home remedy to be sure, but one which should not be necessary if the outfit had been properly designed in the first place. Many of these swings are currently in backyards and playgrounds all over the country.

A little publicity on this subject, coupled with an appeal to manufacturers to cap the hollow tubes in the factory, could save many birds in the future.

Footnote: In talking to a retailer of these products, I learned that the manufacturer of another brand of different construction which has open ends on its horizontal member supplies elastic caps to cover them. I am told, however, that these are not very satisfactory, as they tend to deteriorate or are misplaced. The
designer in this case would seem to have recognized the possible hazard. Furthermore, the retailer mentioned that locally this past summer another serious problem had developed with the open pipes, as they proved a haven for yellow jackets.

390 Woodland Ave.
South Charleston, W. Va.

HOW CAN I TEACH CONSERVATION TO BEGINNERS
George Ballentine

Many of the Brooks Bird Club members are giving bird programs to Scout and 4H groups and to school children. Are we taking advantage of this opportunity to teach conservation?

Recently I gave a program to a 4H group of 30 boys and girls. There were over 100 slides, including 40 species of birds; calling attention to habitat, food, nestlings, identification of species, age, sex, trapping and banding. The program lasted about an hour and was followed by nearly a half hour of questions. The program was stopped by the leader who reminded us that next day was a school day and some still had lessons to prepare.

One question stumped me: “What can we do in our back yard to aid in the conservation of birds.” The program had held the interest of every child and they wanted to know more. But it had been sadly lacking in purpose because it had no climax. I had told them about my hobby but could not answer “What can I do.”

I have thought a great deal about an answer to that question. The children have nesting boxes and feeders as many of the homes in most towns. The feeding of birds is usually little more than entertainment. If the children could become thoroughly familiar with the habits of every species of bird in their back yard they would have a desire to protect those birds. That would be a good start in the direction of conservation. Suppose we ask the student to select one species out of the eight or ten that come to the feeder. It should be a bird that is in the yard summer and winter—a permanent resident, and one that is easy to recognize. Suppose the Cardinal is chosen. It is the State Bird of West Virginia and is peppy and attractive. He would study the habits and characteristics of the Cardinal for several months. From personal observation, he might find answers to questions such as the following:

1—What sort of a bill do they have.
2—What is the color of body, wings and tail of male and female.
3—What do they like best to eat.
4—Do they like to eat on the ground or high up.
5—What natural food, found in your yard, have you seen them eat.
6—Do they spend most of their time on the ground or high in a tree.
7—Do they preen their feathers and keep them neat.
8—Do they chase other birds from the feeder.
9—Does the male chase the female or vice-versa.
10—How many calls or songs do they have.
11—Are these calls common to both sexes.
12—During courtship what special attention does the male give the female.
13—Does the male have a special song at nesting time.

14—Where is the nest built.
15—What material is used for nest building; what is the construction.
16—Do both sexes incubate the eggs; does the male feed the female during incubation.
17—Which sex feeds the young.
18—Do the young birds have to be taught to fly.
19—Do the parents take feed from the feeder to the young.
20—Do the adult birds ever lose their feathers.
21—How long do the young birds stay with the adults.
22—Do the male and female stay together after the young leave the nest.

These questions are just suggestions for a beginner. The student will observe many more things. Then another species can be selected and the process repeated.

He will soon become aware that birds are not mechanismized puppets with colored feathers but are living things that experience fear, hunger, curiosity and even affection. He will begin to think of their real needs such as a place to live where they can find their own food and nestling places. He will want to do something about it; he has become a conservationist.

268 Oakwood Road.
Charleston, W. Va.

RED-BELLED WOODPECKER DESTROYS NEST
Leon P. Wilson

On July 4, 1964 while taking an early morning bird walk in the group camping area of Kentucky’s Carter Cave State Park, Maxine and Ben Kiff and I observed an unusual incident which may be of interest to others. We had discovered an Acadian Flycatcher nest in the fork of a small maple tree about twelve feet above the ground. Both flycatchers were making a fuss about our intrusion, when a Red-bellied Woodpecker which had been moving up a nearby snag, flew to the limb on which the nest was located and began inching its way along the limb toward the nest accompanied by much diving and bill snapping on the part of the flycatchers. When we realized that the woodpecker’s intention was to destroy the nest, we took action and scared it away, then we moved back to observe the flycatchers. In approximately five minutes the woodpecker returned, flew directly to the nest, quickly punctured the eggs and incidently tore a hole in the bottom of the nest through which the broken eggs dripped. It finally impaled an egg with its bill and flew away before we could do anything but yell.

This is the only experience I have ever had of any “predator instinct” in a woodpecker, nor have I found any reference to such actions in books I have read. Perhaps this was an isolated case, but it surely proved that there is always something to be learned from our wild neighbors.

Box 105, Ona, West Virginia

CORRECTION

The Editor learned recently that the article, “Insects Collected at the 1964 Foray” found on page 70 of the April, 1965 Redstart (volume 32) was written by Leon Wilson and not Maxine Kiff. While the mistake was unintentional, the Editor is sorry that it was made.
The Spring migration period was ushered in by a cold wet March followed by varied weather in April when there were cold and rainy spells but rainfall was still below normal. It ended with a very warm and a very, very dry May.

Migrants were not far off schedule and the waterfowl flight appeared to be the best in several years. No great waves of land birds were reported. Several reporters commented that migrants sang more than usual.

Grebes and Herons—Common Loons were considered scarce in the Morgantown, W. Va. area for the second straight year (GAH). Eight were seen on Lake White, Pike County, Ohio on April 11 (GAR) and twenty-three were on Guilford Lake near Lisbon, Ohio on the same date (ERC-NL). A Red-throated Loon was seen on Cheat Lake near Morgantown, W. Va. on April 25 (GAH). Both species of Grebes seemed scarce. A Common Egret was in the Scioto River bottoms near Portsmouth, Ohio March 25 (MT) and a Snowy Egret was in the same vicinity on April 9. Green Herons were common in the Charleston, W. Va. area by April 13 (AS). A Black-crowned Night Heron was seen frequently from March 28 until mid-May near Portsmouth, Ohio (MT) and one was observed at Lake Terra Alta in Preston County, W. Va. on May 9 (GAR). A Least Bittern was recorded at Altona Marsh, Jefferson County, W. Va. on May 23 by the BBC group.

Waterfowl—In spite of the lack of reports from several important waterfowl areas enough observations were made to be certain of large good flight. On March 21 a severe snow squall occurred throughout most of the region. Good numbers of ducks appeared on Guilford Lake, Lisbon, Ohio, Cheat Lake, Morgantown, W. Va. and on Lake of the Woods in Preston County, W. Va. On April 3-4 a party of 50 Bonaparte's Gulls appeared more common than usual. Fifty Bonaparte's Gulls were near Morgantown, W. Va. on April 11 (GAH) and “many” were seen at Guilford Lake, Lisbon, Ohio on the same date (ERC-NL). Several were seen at Charlestown, W. Va. on April 19 (CK).

Cuckoos and Owls—Both Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos were late in arriving and were considered very scarce. The remains of a Snowy Owl was found in the South Hills section of Charleston, W. Va. on April 1 (COH). The bird had been dead for several days and it could not be determined whether it had been killed or died of starvation. A Long-eared Owl was banded at Charleston, W. Va. on March 25 (RKB). This was the first one Bell had ever seen.

Swifts and Woodpeckers—The first arrival date for Whip-poor-will was April 11 at Charleston, W. Va. (PH). Chuck-wills-widow was recorded at Lake Adams,
Adams County in southern Ohio on May 30 (MT). Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts appeared on time and seemed plentiful. Red-bellied Woodpeckers appeared more plentiful than usual in the East Liverpool, Ohio area (NL) and Red-headed Woodpeckers seemed to be increasing in the Charleston, W. Va. locality (AS). A good migration of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers passed through East Liverpool, Ohio on April 17 (NL).

Flycatchers and Swallows—Kingbirds had arrived in good numbers in most localities by May 1. The first date for Great-Crested Flycatchers was April 22 at Charleston, W. Va. (NG). They were listed at East Liverpool, Ohio on April 27 but not until May 2 at Morgantown, W. Va. Trillium's Flycatchers are increasing in the Morgantown, W. Va. area (GAH) and although they were late at East Liverpool, Ohio and Chester, W. Va., the population appeared normal. Least Flycatchers did not arrive until May 1 in the northern part of the region where they were considered scarce. The April 24 date for Wood Pewees at Morgantown, W. Va. (GAH) was an early one. Tree Swallows were found at Pymatuning Lake, Pa. April 3 (NL). Large flocks of Bank Swallows were seen near East Liverpool, Ohio April 24 and at Morgantown April 25. Rough-winged Swallows were at Clarksville, Pa. April 12 (RKB) and were listed at Charleston, W. Va. April 30 (AS). April 7 was earliest date for Barn Swallows (RKB). Purple Martins were first listed at Charleston, W. Va. on March 22 (AS) and at Clarksville, Pa. on March 28 (RKB).

Nuthatches and Wrens—Red-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers were rare during migration. House Wren arrival dates averaged April 20. A pair of Bevick's Wrens were at Morgantown, W. Va. for the first record there in some years (GAH). Long-billed Marsh Wrens were found near Lisbon, Ohio April 25 (NL) and at Altona Marsh in Jefferson County, W. Va. May 23 (BBC).

Mimics and Thrushes—Catbirds were at Charleston April 22 (COH) and had arrived in other localities by April 29. April 5 was the first date for Brown Thrasher at Charleston, W. Va. (CK). The arrival date at Clarksville, Pa. was April 9 (RKB). The earliest date for Wood Thrush was April 6 at Charleston, W. Va. (CK). Hermit Thrush was seen at East Liverpool, Ohio occasionally between April 9 and 23 (NL) and at Charleston, W. Va. April 18 to 20 (CK). There was, apparently, a good Swainson's Thrush flight throughout the region and an unusual amount of song. A Veery remained at East Liverpool, Ohio until the end of the period and was heard singing on June 7 (NL). Bluebirds appear to be increasing in most localities and their numbers have greatly increased in the Greensburg Pa. area (VO).Generally their numbers appeared normal. Warbling Vireos arrived at Charleston, W. Va. April 20 (NG). Solitary Vireos were rare during the period.

Warblers—Black and White Warblers were at Charleston, W. Va. April 11 (AS). Swainson's Warbler was listed April 22 at Charleston, W. Va. (NG) and were considered common there this Spring (AS). Golden-winged Warblers were found Charleston, W. Va. April 24 (PH) and at Morgantown, W. Va. May 2 (GAH) with numbers appearing normal. Blue-winged Warblers were common around Charleston, W. Va. after May 1 (AS) and a Brown-headed Cowbird was seen throughout May in the Berry Hills section of Charleston (AS&CK). Both Tennessee and Nashville staged good flights. Parulas appeared in increased numbers. Listed at Charleston 11 April 13 (AS) and Morgantown first on April 25 (GAH). Yellow Warblers arrived April 13 at Charleston, W. Va. and about ten days later in the northern areas. Magnolia Warblers seemed scarce during migration but were found common at Cranberry Glades, Webster County, W. Va. (AS) and the Cheat Mountain brook. Myrtle Warblers were considered normal numbers April 22 at Charleston, W. Va. on the Kanawha River Valley April 27-29 (NG). The usual great numbers of Myrtles did not appear this spring in the East Liverpool, Ohio area. There was a good migration of Black-throated Green Warblers through Morgantown, W. Va. April 22 (GAH) and East Liverpool, Ohio on the same weekend. An early date for Cerulean Warbler was April 12 at Charleston, W. Va. (AS). The Blackburnian migration was good enough through Charleston, W. Va. and they were at East Liverpool, Ohio in good numbers May 6 and 16. A few were still present in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia May 22-23 (BBC). Yellow-throated Warblers arrived at Charleston, W. Va. on April 6 (AS) and were very plentiful. The first record for Monongaht County, West Virginia was established on April 24 when one was at Morgantown (GAH). Listed near East Liverpool, Ohio on April 30 (NL). They were found near Harpers Ferry, W. Va. by BBC Sutton Seekers on May 22. The following week Oliver Johnson found them abundant around the Warf at Harpers Ferry and later on the Shenandoah River Bridge at Harper's Ferry. They were not found on the land bridge over the Potomac river. Blackpolls were on time and in good numbers. Ovenbirds and Kentucky Warblers were in the southern parts on April 24 and were in the northern areas a week later. Yellow-breasted Chats and Hooded Warblers arrived early (April 23) at Morgantown, W. Va. for the second consecutive year (GAH). Canada Warblers did not seem plentiful. Redstarts arrived at Charleston April 22 (PH) and in the northern region by May 1.

Blackbirds, Orioles and Tanagers—Bobolinks were in southern Ohio April 24 (MT) and were on their normal breeding grounds in good numbers the second week in May. Eastern Meadowlarks and Red-winged Blackbirds were in the northern part of the region on March 1. Orchard Orioles were reported at Charleston, W. Va. April 24 (PH) and one was banded at Morgantown, W. Va. on the same date (GAH). Baltimore Orioles were plentiful and generally distributed by the first of May. Many reporters deplored the ever increasing populations of Grackles. Brown-headed Cowbirds were too plentiful by mid April. Scarlet Tanagers were listed at Charleston, W. Va. April 13 (COH). E. D. Ruff (COH) reported that a flock of 50 to 75 Scarlet Tanagers and probably 15 to 20 Summer Tanagers were seen near Logan, W. Va. on April 27.

Grosbeaks and Finches—A Rose-breasted Grosbeak on April 28 at East Liverpool, Ohio was early for that locality (NL). Most reporters considered the migration light. Indigo Buntings were on time in normal numbers. Dickcissels were at Portsmouth, Ohio April 30 (MT) and one was found at Morgantown, W. Va. May 15 (LS). Purple Finch were definitely scarce during migration.

Sparrows—Two Savannah Sparrows were listed at Charleston, W. Va. on April
1 (NG). One was at Greensburg, Pa. April 19 (VO). The earliest Grasshopper Sparrow reported was at Charleston, W. Va. April 19 (CK). Henslow's Sparrows were plentiful on their breeding grounds near East Liverpool, Ohio by mid May. One was found singing at Morgantown, W. Va. on May 16 (LS&GAH). A considerable migration of Vesper Sparrows was noted at Charleston, W. Va. March 27-31 (NG). Slate-colored Juncos were gone by last week of April. Bell banded his "first" Oregon Junco at Clarksville, Pa. on April 2. A Field Sparrow was banded at Clarksville, Pa. on March 4 (RKB) but the main migration did not occur until after the first of April. Both White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows moved through the region in large numbers, lingering longer than usual and singing quite a lot. Many of us heard the full song of the White-crowned for the first time. A number of Fox Sparrows were at Charleston, W. Va. March 24 (NG) and several were in full song at Willoughby, Ohio from April 10 to 19 (MS). Lincoln Sparrows were banded at Morgantown, W. Va. May 1 and 15 (GAH). Contributors—Ralph K. Bell (RKB); Brooks Bird Club (BBC); Everett R. Chandler (ERC); Evan Dressel (ED); Norris Gluck (NG); George A. Hall (GAH); Polly Handlan (PH); Charles O. Handley, Sr. (COH); Oliver Johnson (OJ); Constance Katholi (CK); Virginia Olsen (VO); Merit Skaggs (MS); Larry Schwab (LS); Anne Shreve (AS); Marie Trowbridge (MT) and (Mrs.) Nevada Laitsch (NL), East Liverpool, Ohio.

CORNELL NEST CARD PROGRAM

The North American Nest Card Program is winding up the 1965 nesting season and many nest cards have been returned. There are still many cards in the hands of individuals, however, and these should be returned to us as quickly as they are completed. Cornell is preparing the data for transfer to IBM cards and a large bulk is needed for the first run. Please send your completed cards to Headquarters as soon as you have finished collecting the data. We will glean information of interest to the BBC and forward the cards to Cornell.

REDSTART EDITORIAL POLICY

Original papers in the field of natural history are published in the Redstart. Papers are judged on the basis of their contributions to original data, ideas, or interpretations. Scientific accuracy is most important and to this end an Advisory Board, selected by the Editorial Staff, will review submitted papers. Papers should be typewritten, double spaced and on one side of the paper only. Clarity and conciseness of presentation are very important.

SUGGESTIONS TO AUTHORS

TITLE. The title should be descriptive and concise, preferably containing not more than ten words. Avoid scientific names if possible.

REFERENCES. References should be listed at the end of the paper in the same numerical order as they are referred to in the text.

TABLES. Keep tables simple and easy to follow so they may be understood without reference to the text.

ILLUSTRATIONS. Illustrations should be suitable for reproduction without retouching. Sharp, glossy prints with good contrast reproduce best. Attach to each a brief legend. Do not write on the back of photographs. Line drawings and diagrams reproduce best if in black ink.

REPRINTS. Authors may request reprints of the time papers are submitted. Cost of reprints will be paid by the author.

The editor is responsible for putting the paper in final form for publication. This will include corrections suggested by the Advisory Editorial Board.

At the risk of producing steno-type manuscripts, the following outline is given as one method of arranging material.

INTRODUCTION. Reasons for conducting the research as well as background material relating what others have done.

DATA. The actual results of the investigation along with the methods used for collecting the information.

CONCLUSIONS. Interpretation of the data.

FUTURE WORK. As a result of the investigation, what work remains to be done.

SUMMARY. For longer articles it is desirable to present a brief summary.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Many papers will not fit this type of presentation. Sometimes a simple sequence-of-events arrangement (chronological etc.) will suffice. In any event, authors should strive for continuity of thought and clarity of expression.

BROOKS BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP

The Brooks Bird Club is a non-profit organization whose objective is to encourage the study and conservation of birds and other phases of natural history. Membership includes subscriptions to the REDSTART and MAILBAG and entitles one to all the privileges offered by the Club. Classes of membership are: Student, $2.00; Corresponding, $3.00; Active, $5.00; Family, $7.00; Sustaining, $10.00; Life, $50.00; Patron, $100. Checks should be written payable to the Brooks Bird Club and mailed to 707 Worwood Avenue, Wheeling, West Virginia.