



The Redstart

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A FIELD TRIP IN THE PYMATUNING AREA

by

Harold J. Bergner

Fourteen Wheeling, W.Va., members of The Brooks Bird Club on April 9 and 10, 1938, visited the Pymatuning Lake area of Pennsylvania and Ohio, to study water birds to be found on the Lake and in the vicinity. At their temporary headquarters at Linesville, Pa., they were joined by three club members from Pittsburgh, Pa., and five from Morgantown, W.Va., the latter having planned an expedition to Pymatuning without advance knowledge of plans of the Wheeling party.

Field trips were made by part of the group on the afternoon of April 9 despite the handicap of severe cold and snow of near-blizzard proportions which was driven by high wind and which made visibility poor. Under cool and clear weather conditions of April 10, the entire group remained in the field from 5:30 a.m. until mid-afternoon, taking out time only for breakfast and dinner.

For the author and other Wheeling club members, in particular, the trip was a red-letter occasion, the absence of lakes and ponds in the vicinity of Wheeling making the sight, there, of any waterfowl more or less of an event. Various of the Wheeling group made additions of one or more species of water birds to their "life lists" in the course of their week-end visit.

Sixty-three species were placed on the composite list of the Wheeling delegation. Two of the Morgantown group had been in the area on April 8, also, and their list, which is not available at the time this is written, may have included other species.

Sight records of the following species were made, any sub-specific designations being omitted even in use of the accepted common names;

Common Loon	Hooded Merganser	Prairie Horned Lark
Red-throated Loon	American Merganser	Crow
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-breasted Merganser	Chickadee
Horned Grebe	Turkey Vulture	Tufted Titmouse
Great Blue Heron	Red-tailed Hawk	Robin
American Bittern	Marsh Hawk	Bluebird
Common Mallard	Sparrow Hawk	American Pipit
Common Black Duck	Bob-white	Starling
Gadwall	Ring-necked Pheasant	English Sparrow
Baldpate	American Coot	Meadowlark
American Pintail	Killdeer	Red-winged Blackbird
Green-winged Teal	Woodcock	Grackle
Blue-winged Teal	Wilson's Snipe	Cowbird
Shoveller	Herring Gull	Cardinal
Bufflehead	Bonaparte's Gull	Goldfinch
Redhead	Ring-billed Gull	Junco
Ring-necked Duck	Mourning Dove	Tree Sparrow
Canvasback	Belted Kingfisher	Chipping Sparrow
Scaup (1)	Flicker	Field Sparrow
American Golden-eye	Downy Woodpecker	Swamp Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Phebe	Song Sparrow

Of the water birds recorded, Baldpates, Shovellers, Ring-necked Ducks and Scaups were particularly numerous. Blue-winged Teal, also, were present in considerable numbers. Coots were found to be fairly common.

Among highlights of the week-end visit might be mentioned the sight of at least 25 Great Blue Herons feeding together in a shallow inlet of the lake; exceptionally "close-up" views of Horned Grebes, Baldpates, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks and Scaup; and, for part of the group, a swimming Bonaparte's Gull within 10-foot range.

An interesting sidelight was opportunity for all but one member of the group to make first acquaintance with what apparently was the flight song of a Wilson's Snipe which circled high overhead for several minutes, uttering a "cooing" sound which reminded some of the party of the "cooing" notes occasionally made by the Great-horned Owl as heard from a distance.

Mr. Abe Margclin and Mr. I. B. Boggs, of the Morgantown group, on April 8 listed two examples of the Canada Goose. The same two found the nest and 13 eggs of the Common Mallard.

Members of the group united in the opinion that other field trips should be made to the Pymatuning area in the future. Those present included: Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Black, and daughter, Catherine, of Pittsburgh; Mr. and Mrs. John W. Handlan, Misses Dorothy Conrad, Caroline Conrad, and Messrs A. B. Brooks, A. G. Hubbard, Ralph Bergner, Walter Ammon, Harold Olsen, Leo Tighe, Russell West, Charles Conrad, and Harold Bergner, all of Wheeling; Clyde B. Upton, of Charleston, W.Va.; Mr. and Mrs. Maurice G. Brooks, Miss Anne Fromme, and Messrs Abe Margolin and I. B. Boggs, all of Morgantown, W.Va.

(1) Experienced observers believed that both Nyroca marila and Nyroca affinis were represented in the great rafts of Scaup recorded. Birds were at very close range on numerous occasions.

420 Warwood Avenue
Wheeling, W.Va.

AWARD OFFERED FOR BEST NESTING OBSERVATIONS

There are at least three legitimate ways to obtain a book: by paying cash for it, by working for it, by receiving it as a gift. Below is outlined a plan for securing a copy of a useful and beautiful book on birds by the second method mentioned. The book offered is the 239-page, fully-illustrated "Birds of America," by T. Gilbert Pearson and his associates.

The object of this offer is to stimulate continued, individual observation of a definite subject, and to test the accuracy of recording such observation. Any active or corresponding member of The Brooks Bird Club is eligible. Persons not connected with the club will be selected to read and pass on the merits of the reports submitted. In case such persons do not consider the report sufficiently good to merit the award, the book will be donated to the Club library.

The observer is to select the nest of any wild, native bird, make a progressive study of it and submit a written report of not fewer than 3,000 and not more than 5,000 words. The observations must be made between May 1 and July 15 and a report submitted to the Club not later than August 1. The observer may use one or more observer helpers, but must report their names and assistance rendered.

Some general suggestions are offered below, but it is not required that they be followed.

1. Record of the building of the nest.
 - a. Time required.
 - b. continuous or sporadic building.
 - c. participation by each bird of the pair.
 - d. source of nesting material.
 - e. materials used -- body and lining.
 - f. location of nest.
2. Eggs and incubation.
 - a. dates of laying eggs.
 - b. dates of incubation.
 - c. by each bird.
 - d. description of eggs.
3. Nestlings.
 - a. dates of hatching.
 - b. weights of nestlings at intervals.
 - c. development of plumage.
 - d. banding of young.
 - e. dates of leaving the nest.
4. Food of Nestlings.
 - a. first food.
 - b. kinds of food.
 - c. frequency of feeding.
 - d. feeding by each parent.
 - e. approach of parents to nest.
5. Singing of male during nesting period.
 - a. singing perches.
 - b. frequency of songs.
 - c. variation of songs.
6. Photographing.
 - a. the nest.
 - b. the eggs.
 - c. succession of photographs of young.
 - d. parents incubating.
 - e. parents feeding young.
 - f. equipment and methods used.
7. Natural enemies.
 - a. parasites.
 - b. molesting of eggs or young by reptiles, birds or mammals.
 - c. conduct of birds toward observer.

-- Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Brooks
Oglebay Park
Wheeling, W. Va.

Ed. Note: In the above it is not made clear that Mr. and Mrs. Brooks are donors of the book offered as an award in this challenging competition, announced here for the first time.

---J.W.H.

FIELD NOTES

Horned Grebes on the Ohio River at Wheeling, W.Va.: On Saturday, March 26, 1938, I noted the heads of two water birds "bobbing up and down" in the waters of the Ohio River at the foot of Twenty-ninth Street, Wheeling, W.Va. I made a slow and cautious approach to the birds, which were near shore, and at about 100 feet distance trained my binoculars upon them and found them to be two male examples of the Horned Grebe, Colymbus auritus. They appeared very quiet and, to all appearances, asleep. I reached the shore line, only 20 feet or less from the birds and, partially concealed, observed that the Grebes actually did appear asleep. Each rested on the water with the head drawn far back and down, the bill being hidden from view in the breast feathers. I whistled sharply several times before one of the birds raised its head and extended its neck to survey its surroundings. I remained quiet and the Grebe, apparently seeing or sensing no danger, resumed its former position. The second bird had not even withdrawn its bill from its breast feathers, nor did it, while I watched the two.

-- Charles Conrad
423 Warwood Ave.
Wheeling, W.Va.

Canada Geese Reported from Martins Ferry, Ohio: - Miss Edna Bowles, teacher at the Zane Junior High School, Martins Ferry, Ohio, reported three flocks of Canada Geese, Branta canadensis, recorded by students of her school engaged in a field trip near Martins Ferry on March 26, 1938. Twenty-one birds in all were reported, one flock of four flying close above the Ohio River and permitting particularly easy identification.

-- Charles Conrad,
Warwood, Wheeling, W.Va.

Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup in Putnam County, W.Va.: - In 1937, engineers of the United States Army supervised construction of a dam in the Kanawha River at Winfield, Putnam County, W.Va. The purpose of the work was to raise the water level in the river to permit navigation to Kanawha Falls. The completion of the dam resulted in several acres of farm land to be submerged above the dam and in "backing up" small streams which entered the river immediately above the site of the dam. As a result, several ponds of considerable size have been created.

On March 31, 1938, Mr. David Ambler and the writer visited a pond between the towns of Nitro and Poca, where some two and one-half acres of still water lie between the river and State Route 35. Here we found five male and two female Scaup ducks. Examination of the birds with the help of a 7x35 binocular established, to our own satisfaction, at least, that these were examples of Lesser Scaup, Nyroca affinis.

On March 4, I visited a smaller pond, a mile below Nitro, and there saw a pair of Lesser Scaup accompanied by a pair of Ring-necked Ducks. I watched these birds from the concealment of a clump of weeds, using good binoculars at close range. The white marks on the beaks of the Ring-necks were plainly observed, as was the white about the eye of the female bird.

-- Clyde B. Upton
Hubbard Court, Apt. 12
Charleston, W.Va.

The Red-shouldered Hawk Reported for Ohio County, W.Va.:- One of three hawks observed by the writer and some companions from the intersection of W.Va. Route 88 and the Peters Run Road, Ohio County, W. Va. on March 27 was identified by us as an example of the Red-shouldered Hawk, Buteo lineatus. Sight records of this species are unusual for this section. Two other hawks, soaring higher and farther distant than the one observed closely, appeared to be of the same species, but their distance from the observers made identification very difficult.

-- Charles Conrad
Warwood, Wheeling, W.Va.

Great-horned Owl in Ohio County, W.Va.:- The headlights of the automobile which I was driving on a country road near McGraw's Run, Ohio County, W.Va., on the night of March 10, 1938, revealed a Great-horned Owl perched on a fence post alongside the road. The bird subsequently flew across the road, narrowly escaping being struck by the windshield of the oncoming car.

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Handlan reported hearing a Great-horned Owl at Oglebay Park on several occasions the week of March 20. On March 26, traversing the territory from which they believed the owl had called, the Handlan's found two large pellets which they say appeared to be composed entirely of the bones and fur of small rodents, probably Meadow Mice.

-- Charles Conrad
Warwood, Wheeling, W.Va.

Nesting of the Prairie Horned Lark at Oglebay Park, W.Va.:- Mr. R. E. Biery, Wheeling, W.Va. municipal golf professional on March 29, 1938 reported to the writer a bird's nest containing three eggs on the ground on a fairway of the new "second nine" of the golf course, which is under construction at Oglebay Park, Ohio County, W. Va. Mrs. Handlan and the writer examined the nest on that date and flushed a Prairie Horned Lark, Otocoris alpestris praticola. The nest site was again visited on April 3 and it was found that the nest (which appeared to be constructed with somewhat more care than this species often takes) had been removed from the slight depression in the ground which it had occupied. The nest was on the ground nearby its original site. The eggs were gone. A small stake which had been used to mark the site had been removed from the ground and was nowhere near. Apparently the nest had been robbed by human agency.

-- J. W. Handlan
Oglebay Park

Bewick's Wrens near Charleston, W.Va.:— Several Bewick's Wrens, Thryomanes b. bewicki, were observed at very close range along the Hillcrest Road, near Charleston, W. Va. on March 27. The birds appeared quite tame, inspected me at times from a distance within arm's length and sang unconcerned by my presence. The birds I watched were associated with Juncos, Junco hyemalis and Song Sparrows, Melospiza sp., and were first observed feeding on the ground.

-- Clyde H. Upton
Charleston, W.Va.

Bewick's Wrens at Oglebay Park:— Mr. A. B. Brooks, Oglebay Institute naturalist, reported Bewick's Wrens, Thryomanes b. bewicki singing in Oglebay Park, Ohio County, W. Va., on March 22, 1938. The birds were heard for several days thereafter, the last time by Mrs. John W. Handlan on March 29. The species is rare in this section, even in migration, and although nests have been located on occasion in the general region of the Park no records of the nesting of the Bewick's Wren in the Park itself are on file.

-- J. W. Handlan
Oglebay Park

Purple Finches in Kanawha County, W.Va.:— On April 4, 1938, I observed two pairs of Purple Finches, Carpodacus purpureus, feeding in Elm trees on Broad Street, Charleston, Kanawha County, W. Va. On April 6, in the vicinity of South Hills, Charleston, Elm trees of the area were literally alive with birds of this species. I counted 38 individuals in one tree and estimate that I saw at least 300 of these birds within a few minutes time.

-- Clyde B. Upton
Charleston, W. Va.