



The Redstart

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EARLE A. BROOKS' BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WEST VIRGINIA ORNITHOLOGY --

AN APPRECIATION

by
John W. Handlan

In his introduction to "A Descriptive Bibliography of West Virginia Ornithology," (#) Dr. Earle A. Brooks writes: "Future work in the field of West Virginia ornithology must depend upon the books, bulletins, pamphlets and published articles of past years. The new generation of workers will make its own original observations, but these must be compared constantly with the records made and published previously. It is well for every active bird student within our state to have in mind, for very frequent reference, the foundation observations of pioneer workers in this field."

Dr. Brooks, who is Associate Professor of Biology in the Boston University School of Education, and a former West Virginia State Ornithologist, proceeds, very modestly, to term his bibliography a "fairly complete list of all the ornithological publications referring to the Birds of West Virginia, a provisional list of printed materials."

"Fairly complete" and "provisional" it may be, but so far as this writer knows, Dr. Brooks has accomplished a sadly needed and entirely valuable bit of work in the compilation of this bibliography. It would be interesting to know, for example, just how many of the growing number of amateur ornithologists of the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia are familiar with (or have any knowledge of) the list of 148 species of birds observed in Brooke County, W. Va., by George M. Sutton --- a list published in The Oologist, Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 5, 6 & 7, May, June and July, 1920 ! Sutton's later "Birds of the West Virginia Panhandle," (The Cardinal, Vol. 3, No. 5, 1933) includes 191 species, but surely

any future compiler of a Panhandle list would wish, also, to peruse the 1920 paper. For that matter such citations as that of a Bald Eagle and Vultures seen near Wheeling (Wilson and Bonaparte, 1831); and such notes by Robert Baird McLain as those concerning Chimney Swifts going into hole in Black Oak tree 5 miles east of Wheeling (1895); taking of a Philadelphia Vireo at Elm Grove, W.Va. (May 16, 1899); the Rose-breasted Grosbeak nesting at Wheeling (1913); and others as interesting would be essential material for anyone attempting a summary of birds of the Northern Panhandle. These notes, and others as interesting, are included in Dr. Brooks bibliography.

In the introductory notes of the publication, its author calls forcibly to mind, once more, the comparatively little work which has been accomplished in West Virginia in an ornithological sense. Western Virginia and, later, West Virginia seem to have been largely neglected by scientists, with notable exceptions, and these last have been largely local in extent of their work.

This much is certain: - had it not been for the distinguished family of which Dr. Earle A. Brooks is a member our ornithological knowledge of West Virginia would still be virtually in its pioneer stage. The names of Dr. E. A. Brooks, his brothers, A. B. Brooks and the late Fred E. Brooks, and son of the latter, Maurice G. Brooks appear very frequently in this bibliography of several hundred titles. We who now enjoy the pleasant task of ornithological observation in West Virginia owe this family a debt of gratitude far in excess of that implied by the wise selection of the name "Brooks Bird Club," for the State's sole ornithological organization.

Every present-day student of bird life in West Virginia should possess, or have ready access to, a copy of Dr. Brooks' "Bibliography" It was privately printed by the author and its cost is very modest.

(#) Descriptive Bibliography of West Virginia Ornithology, A, pp. i-iii, 1-27, published by the author at 166 Plymouth Road, Newton Highlands, Mass., (\$1.00).

Oglebay Park,
Wheeling, W.Va.

FIELD NOTES

American Egret Arriving Early in West Virginia:- During recent years, we have come to expect the arrival of considerable numbers of American Egrets, Casmerodius albus egretta, in West Virginia during July and August, but a recent observation seems to point to an unusually early arrival date for the species in that part of the state which lies west of the Alleghenics.

While driving, on July 2, 1938, along the upper waters of Slaty Fork of Elk River, our party noted two American Egrets. The birds were flying short distances, then alighting and feeding in the meadows along the small stream. The black legs and feet were noted.

My earliest previous record for a point west of the mountains (save for an accidental bird in April) was made on July 26, 1935. East of the mountains, the birds appear much earlier. It is worth noting that in these periodic northward heron movements American Egrets seem to be much more common in western West Virginia than the immature examples of the Little Blue Heron.

--- Maurice Brooks
West Virginia University
Morgantown, W.Va.

Observations at a Nest of the Crested Flycatcher:- As I studied birds at Wheeling Park, Wheeling, W.Va., one day in the early spring of 1938, I noticed that a pair of Crested Flycatchers, Myiarchus crinitus boreus, which frequently alighted in a dead tree nearby were carrying feed. Marking their flight from the dead tree on each occasion of their visit and following as quickly as I could, I finally discovered their nest.

The nest was in a Sugar Maple from which all lower limbs had been trimmed to a point nearly 50 feet from the ground. A cavity at the base-scar of one of the severed limbs, about 25 feet above ground proved to be the nest. This tree is less than 20 feet from a broad pathway regularly used by thousands of visitors and a busy children's playground is less than 150 feet from the nest location. The nearest tree to the nest tree is 50 feet away and a closely-clipped lawn surround this formalized city park area.

I managed to climb to the nest site and, despite poor light conditions, managed to see three young birds with grayish-black plumage and broad, gray bills. When I made a squeaking sound with my lips and the back of my hand, the young raised and opened their mouths, begging for food. I observed that feathers were included in the nest lining, but was unable to locate the expected, discarded snake skin in the nest. It may have been beneath the feathers or in such small pieces that I was unable to detect them in the poor light.

Upon reaching the ground again, I observed the actions of the adults for a considerable time. I noticed that neither adult flew directly to the nest cavity. Invariably they alighted in the very top of the tree, first. From this point they dropped swiftly and silently, close to the trunk of the tree and disappeared into the nest opening without, apparently, perching at its edge. Upon emerging from the nest opening, the adults flew either directly across the small artificial lake nearby and thence into a wooded hillside a quarter-mile distant, or would flutter and sweep for a few minutes in trees near the nest tree. On these latter occasions, the male often spread his tail widely.

I was interested to note that, at times, the adults flew as slowly and silently as an Owl, often moving so silently one momentarily expected them to drop from lack of speed and power. Occasionally the adults responded to "squeaking" by their sharp call notes which sound to me like "Wheep! Wheep!"

On one occasion, the adult female, starting to leave the nest hole, remained half-way inside and turned and twisted its head from side to side. This proceeded for nearly three minutes. She left the nest then, flew into the nearby trees, but immediately returned to the nesting cavity, after flying to a point about 30 feet directly above it. The head-turning and twisting took place once more, the movements of the bird occurring so quickly that they were difficult to follow.

-- Harold Olsen
Elm Grove, W.Va.

Tameness of a Brooding Mountain Vireo:- During the 1937 camp of the Oglebay Park Nature Training School at Terra Alta, W.Va., we journeyed to Swallow Falls, Garrett County, Maryland. Here the state has established a small park, much of it including virgin timber, and has built various trails, one of which leads to Muddy Creek Falls, highest in Maryland.

A number of us, while walking along a trail in the Park, discovered the nest of a Mountain Vireo, Vireo solitarius alticola (#) about seven feet up in a Hemlock. When the nest was discovered, a brooding female adult was covering four eggs. The brooding bird remained close as we approached. Movement of the limb upon which the nest was located failed to dislodge her from her duties. She then continued to remain upon the nest while many of us touched and stroked her head and back.

As if to prove the lack of fear of this bird was no accidental circumstance, a second brooding bird of this species, located later in the day, likewise permitted observers to touch her without attempting to leave her nest.

-- Dorothy Conrad
Warwood, W.Va.

(#) Blue-headed Vireos resident in the section described by Miss Conrad presumably may be assigned to southern mountain race, V.s. alticola. - Ed.

Savannah Sparrow in Pocahontas County, W.Va.:- On July 2, 1938, a singing male Eastern Savannah Sparrow, Passerculus sandwichensis savanna, was observed at the Little Levels of Pocahontas County, near Hillsboro, W.Va., Burleigh and the writer have recorded this species in Cranberry Glades, in the same county, but the observation noted above was made at a point slightly farther south, and nearly a thousand feet lower in elevation, than former ones. Thus, it seems that the range extension for this species is still in progress, although the bird may formerly have been overlooked at many points where it is now known to occur.

--Maurice Brocks
W.Va. University
Morgantown, W.Va.

A Nest of the Savannah Sparrow at Oglebay Park, W.Va.:- A nest of the Savannah Sparrow, Passerculus sandwichensis savanna, was found on "Telescope Hill," Oglebay Park, June 15, 1938, by Robert Murray, Walter Rybeck and the writer, all students of the Oglebay Park Nature Training School. Many others subsequently saw this nest, which contained two newly hatched young. This would appear to be the fourth breeding record established in the state for the species and the third occupied nest to be reported from West Virginia.

-- Beth Anne Waddell
Wheeling, W.Va.

Two Additions to the Eastern Panhandle Bird List:- This note is to report two recent additions to "A Preliminary List of the Birds of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia" (Redstart, Vol. V, Nos. 10 & 11, pp. 64-75).

White-eyed Vireo, Vireo griseus griseus. On September 9, 1938, I saw a bird of this species at Leetown. It sang many times and was feeding in the low, shrubby growth at the upper end of the reservoir.

Long-billed Marsh Wren, Talmatodytes palustris palustris. Two were seen in the marshy growth of the reservoir at Leetown on Sept. 9, 1938. Both birds were observed at close range.

-- L. Lloyd Poland
Martinsburg, W.Va.

EDITORIAL

A State-wide Organization:- From Mr. Maurice G. Brooks comes the following communication:

"I hope that the Editor of The Redstart will permit me to supplement and second his recent editorial on the excellence of the field notes now being sent in to that journal. I know that the active members of The Brooks Bird Club have long cherished the hope that The Redstart would some day be a really state-wide publication. That desire is now coming closer to realization.

"There are a number of reasons for this broadened scope of study. Clyde Upton is in a part of the State (Kanawha County) which has had relatively little study in recent years. His notes give us a much clearer idea of the birds of the lower Kanawha Valley and will admirably supplement the earlier work of the Morgan brothers. There is particular need for the study of winter bird life of this territory, since we know that a number of species which are not found in Winter farther north in the State are occasional, or regular, residents along the Kanawha.

"The George F. Fleuer's are located in an area (Lost River Park in Hardy County) where almost any observations which they make will be new. M. Graham Netting informs me that the Carnegie Museum at Pittsburgh has very few Hardy County herpetological specimens and this is symptomatic of our general lack of knowledge of the region. East of the Alleghenies there are certain to be wide differences in times of migration, in the winter residents, etc.

"The work of I.B. Boggs, of Morgantown, takes him into all parts of the State, and his observations help to fill in many gaps in the ornithological picture. William Lunk, at Fairmont, is starting studies that have already been fruitful, and are certain to be more so. Poland's observations in the Eastern Panhandle have been noteworthy.

"In the last analysis, it must rest on the group around Wheeling to do the editorial work of The Redstart, and to carry on with the fine spirit in much of the activities of The Brooks Bird Club in West Virginia, as well as one of the most loyal and important contributors to this monthly journal.

Active members of The Brooks Bird Club for some years have visioned the possibility that active chapters, other than that at Wheeling, might be formed in West Virginia, if not in territories adjacent to the State and prominent in club activities, and membership. Due largely to Maurice Brooks' interest there is, for example, a rather large representation of Corresponding Members of the club located at Morgantown. There, surely, exists an opportunity for the organization of an active chapter of the Club. It would be interesting and helpful, to all concerned, if there could be active chapters located in the vicinity of Charleston, in the Eastern Panhandle, and at various other strategic points.

Officers of The Club for 1938:- Mr. Harold J. Bergner has been re-elected president of The Brooks Bird Club for the 1938-39 year, as a result of the annual election held on Sept. 29, 1938. Miss Carolyn Conrad has also been re-elected to serve as secretary-treasurer. Mr. Charles Conrad is the club's new chairman of the Executive Committee and Messrs Tom E. Shields, Harold Olsen and Russell West have been elected committeemen. As this is written this committee still has to select an additional member and an editor and associate editors remain to be designated by the Executive Committee.

The Redstart heartily congratulates the club's new officers and wishes them continued success as leaders of this active organization. It is especially encouraging to hail the "return to the fold" of Mr. Shields, formerly active in work of the Club, to a place in which he may assist in guiding the Club's work. An encouraging factor, also, is the presence of new, young active members on the rolls. The Club's active membership is comparatively small, considering its excellent representation in the territory beyond the Greater Wheeling Area. It is not too much to hope that, by the close of the present year, the Active Membership will have been increased to 50 or more.

A Sportsmen's Magazine "As Is.":- This journal lifts its editorial hat in a very sincere gesture to the monthly magazine "Pennsylvania Game News" and its editor, Lee A. Luttringer, in particular, and to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, in general.

More worthwhile information and more interesting news have been published in each of the several recent editions of this sportsmen's periodical than in any two or three of its nationally known contemporaries. This is one sportsmen's magazine which does not hesitate to print both sides of any issue; which appears regularly to call upon recognized, scientific authorities; and which impresses this average reader as a reliable and fair-minded editorial instrument.

Published by the Commission, the magazine has no advertisers and on this point appears to hang at least part of its very excellence. One will find few stories of "How I Got My Deer," or bear, or moose, or tiger, or what-not. Readers will peruse, as did this one in the October number, for example, an illuminating article upon Tularaemia; a reprint from "Natural History" by Donald Culross Peattie; Paul Errington's suggestion on "Management of the Red Fox in Iowa;" and notes, news and pictorial information of timely interest and high quality.

It is a job of the Editor of The Redstart to peruse numerous sportsmen's magazines each month. None of them gives such pleasure and a sense of worthwhile-ness as does "Pennsylvania Game News." The Editor unhesitatingly recommends this magazine (a year's subscription costs only 50 cents) to any outdoorsman, sportsman or not.

The Redstart is published monthly by The Brooks Bird Club, at Oglebay Park, Wheeling, W.Va. and is mailed to all classes of Members free of charge. It goes to no one outside the Club's membership.

Membership in The Brooks Bird Club is divided into three classifications: (1) Honorary Members (who pay no dues): (2) Active Members (who are elected to membership and who pay dues of \$1.00 annually); and Corresponding Members (who become members upon their application and who pay dues of 50 cents annually).

Officers of The Brooks Bird Club

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