



# The Redstart

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## STATUS OF HOUSE WRENS AND SONG SPARROWS OF THE EASTERN PANHANDLE OF WEST VIRGINIA

by

Karl Haller

Since the publication of the "Preliminary List of the Birds of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia," by Lloyd Poland (REDSTART, 5:64-75, 1938) I have received some of my specimens from the United States National Museum in Washington, D. C., where I had sent them for identification. I have the following notes to add concerning the distribution of two forms in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.

House Wren. Troglodytes aedon. From the specimens identified by Dr. H. C. Oberholzer of the Biological Survey, there are two subspecies occurring in the Eastern Panhandle. T. a. baldwini, the Ohio House Wren, is the breeding bird for the Eastern Panhandle, as well as the entire State with the exception of the extreme eastern part of Jefferson County. Breeding specimens of this form have been taken at Leetown, Jefferson County, on July 15, 1937. Early fall specimens were taken on August 29, 1936, at the same locality. The specimens taken at Leetown are intermediate, but closer to typical T. a. baldwini than they are to T. a. aedon, the Eastern House Wren. Breeding specimens taken farther West in the Eastern Panhandle as well as those from the remainder of the state are more typically T. a. baldwini.

T. a. aedon occurs in the extreme eastern portion of Jefferson County at Charlestown, as shown by the specimen in the United States

National Museum, taken July 30, 1898, and listed by Poland. The only specimen of T.a. aedon which I have is a migrant, taken at Leetown, August, 29, 1936. Apparently the area around and to the east of Leetown is the area in which the "break" occurs between the two sub-species in West Virginia.

Song Sparrow. Melospiza melodia. The range of the Song Sparrow in the Eastern Panhandle, appears to be very similar to that of the House Wren so far as racial distribution is concerned. Specimens have been identified by Dr. Alexander Wetmore, of the United States National Museum. The Mississippi Song Sparrow, M. m. euphonia, breeds in the Eastern Panhandle as far east as the area around Leetown. Breeding specimens, somewhat intermediate, but closer to M.m. euphonia, have been taken at Leetown, July 15, 1937, and early fall specimens were taken at Leetown, August 29, 1936. Breeding specimens taken farther west in the Eastern Panhandle are more nearly like typical M. m. euphonia. I do not have a specimen of the Eastern Song Sparrow, M.m. melodia from the Eastern Panhandle, but Poland cites three specimens in his list, in the collections of the National Museum, taken at Halltown and Charlestown, Jefferson County, August 1, 1898, and July 30, 1898, respectively. Here, too, as in the case of the House Wren the "break" between the two sub-species seems to be in the area between Leetown and Charlestown.

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THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY MEETING  
OF THE WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

by  
Maurice Brooks

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Anniversaries, whether of people or things, serve as useful landmarks, and often call forth the special efforts of those who observe them. Certainly there can be little doubt that the Fiftieth Anniversary convention of the Wilson Ornithological Club, held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, on November 25-26, 1938, was a notable event in the history of that organization. The setting of the meeting, its attendance, the program presented, and the spirit which seemed to activate members and visitors, all were impressive, at least to this writer.

Taking front rank among the impressions carried away from the convention is the vitality of the organization. Here were gathered together young men and women, or older men and women, who add experience to youthful enthusiasm, from all parts of the United States and Canada. Many of the persons present are pioneers who have extended the boundaries of ornithological exploration and research. Some have added skills in the graphic arts to their natural abilities as field students and observers. A catalogue of the papers presented

and a list of the persons present, did space allow their inclusion here, would show the many fields of zoological activity which are being enriched by the work of the ornithologists.

More and more, investigators in our field are turning their attention to life history or physiological studies of single bird species. Such an emphasis is almost inevitable when it is considered that active officers and members of the Wilson Club include Mrs. Nice, famous for her Song Sparrow studies; Pettingill, who has monographed the American Woodcock; Kendeigh, whose work on the physiology of the House Wren is notable; Hicks, whose Starling investigations have attracted attention in this country and in Europe; Hamm, whose Ovenbird paper constitutes the best study of an American warbler; and others whose work, published or in preparation, will point the way for students of the future. Many of the papers read at the Ann Arbor meeting made definite contributions to our knowledge of life histories.

The anniversary, proper, was fittingly observed by papers which presented the early history of the club, and the state of the organization as it now appears. Dr. R. M. Strong, of Chicago, one of the two living founders of the club, told of its struggles and vicissitudes during the natal and juvenile periods. Dr. Lynds Jones, of Oberlin, Ohio, the other living founder, was, unfortunately, kept from the Ann Arbor meeting by an automobile wreck. An analysis of, and synthesis from, the questionnaire recently distributed to Wilson Club members was presented by Dr. Olin Sewell Pettingill, Jr., the club's secretary.

A noteworthy feature of the meeting was the assembling and showing, under the direction of George Miksch Sutton, of a magnificent exhibit of the works of contemporary bird artists. The exhibit, housed in the pretentious Rackham Building, fine arts center of the University of Michigan, included 26 Buertes originals, many fine things from the brushes of Jacques, Sutton, Brooks, Peterson, Hunt and others, splendid etchings by Benson and Breckinridge, and notable examples of the work of many younger American artists. Paintings by William Montagna, of Bethany, attracted favorable mention, a study of a Junco on Barberry being especially complimented. William Lunk, of Fairmont, was represented by a water color of a Bobwhite and a pencil sketch of a Golden-winged Warbler feeding young.

The writer was impressed by recent progress in the field of bird photography, especially in the medium of the motion picture. Some of the best of this work is now approaching the Hollywood standard of technical perfection, having traveled far from the rather amateurish efforts of only a few years ago.

Economic phases of ornithological study, especially in the field of game management, are coming in for their share of consideration, and back of all the efforts of the organization is a deep devotion to the broad field of conservation. Recognizing that man's dominance in the world is a threat to many species, and that changes in our fauna are coming more and more rapidly, bird students are determined

to save what can be saved, and to preserve imperishable records of that which may eventually be lost. As Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy points out in a recent article in Science, the museum worker stands in the position of a librarian, cherishing the evidences of vanished species and preserving, for future investigators, data which, once lost, can never be replaced.

The 1939 meeting of the Wilson Club goes to Louisville, Kentucky, the first meeting of a national ornithological society in that state. The Friday and Saturday following Thanksgiving have been selected as the time of meeting, and it is to be hoped that many readers of THE REDSTART will find it possible to attend.

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NOTE: Mr. Brooks now is a graduate student at the University of Michigan and will not return to his duties with West Virginia University until the summer of 1939. -- J. W. H.

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#### TWO SALAMANDERS NEW TO SCIENCE DESCRIBED FROM WEST VIRGINIA

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After having waited since the beginning of time without having a reptile or amphibian species described from within its territory, West Virginia has blossomed out with two species of salamanders, new to science and typed from points within the state. They are Plethodon richmondi, described by M. Graham Netting and M. B. Mittleman (Annals of the Carnegie Museum XXVII, pp.287-294, 1938) and Plethodon nettingi, described by N. Bayard Green (Annals of the Carnegie Museum, XXVII, pp. 295-299, 1938).

With both of these new salamander species, the Oglebay Park Nature Leaders Training School has rather intimate connections. During the time in which he was serving as an instructor in the NTS at Oglebay Park in 1931, Mr. Netting collected the first of a series of specimens which later proved to be Richmond's Salamander. During the 1935 encampment of the NTS at White Top Mountain, Randolph County, West Virginia, Mr. Netting and Mr. Leonard "Sody" Llewelyn collected, on Barton's Knob, the first specimen of what proved to be Netting's Salamander. The fact that both Mr. Netting and Mr. Green have, on numerous occasions other than those mentioned, been associated with the Nature Training School is a matter of further interest.

Plethodon richmondi is a long and slender blackish salamander bearing a superficial resemblance to the dark-backed phase of the common Red-backed Salamander, Plethodon cinereus. It is named in honor of Mr. Neil D. Richmond, instructor in zoology at Marshall College, Huntington, W. Va. Mr. Richmond is one of the most active zoologists in the state, a tireless collector and careful field investigator. The species is known at present from a number of points in West Vir-

ginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland, most of these locations at medium to low elevations. A specimen from Huntington has been selected as the holotype of the species.

Plethodon nettingi is a slender, black salamander, the upper surface of the body bearing tiny, numerous gold flecks. Its name honors Mr. M. Graham Netting, Curator of Herpetology, of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, who has been instrumental in carrying on through recent years a very thorough study of West Virginia herpetology. A scholarly museum investigator, Mr. Netting has yet found time to do an immense amount of collecting within the state and has, by his encouragement and helpful suggestions, been responsible for leading other students and collectors into this field of investigation. He and his assistants have been most generous in giving of their time to further the program and activities of Oglebay Park.

Netting's Salamander is known at present only from Cheat Bridge and Barton's Knob. Selected as the holotype of the species is a specimen from Spruce-clad Barton's Knob, at an elevation above 4,000 feet. It resembles P. welleri, a species from North Carolina and the southern Virginia Blue Ridge.

Readers of THE REDSTART may find surprising a herpetological note in an ornithological journal, but most bird students will have interests wide enough to embrace the other vertebrate groups. In addition, the present writer takes great pleasure in thus paying a small tribute to the efforts of Mr. Netting and Mr. Green.

-- Maurice Brooks  
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#### AN ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE 1939 NATURE TRAINING SCHOOL AT OGLEBAY PARK

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Members of the Brooks Bird Club are herewith advised in advance of certain plans and innovations in connection with the 12th annual session of the Oglebay Park Nature Leaders Training School. A descriptive folder concerning the School and its forthcoming activities is now ready for the printer and important changes in the regular "setup" are here reviewed in advance, for the benefit of members of this organization.

The school again will be held at Oglebay Park and at Terra Alta, West Virginia. The session will begin at the Park on June 12, 1939, and continue in session there for two weeks. For the ensuing two weeks, the school will hold forth at property leased by it at Lake Terra Alta, probable future permanent camp site of the school.

At Oglebay Park the school will occupy as living quarters six of the new log-style cabins in the Park. Each cabin holds from four to seven or more campers, provides built-in bunks, an open fireplace, showers, etc. In addition, the School has rented Woodland Cottage, which is to be fitted, in part, as kitchen and dining hall where the school's own chef will preside and meals will be served camp-style from provisions purchased through the school's own purchasing agent as is done in the mountain camps. Overflow students will be housed in remaining space in Woodland Cottage which, normally, houses some 36 campers.

The log cabins already rented for the occupancy of the school are located in the immediate vicinity of Woodland Cottage and thus will give the school a compact, dwelling and service unit without the annoyance of trespass by other groups which may be using camp facilities at the Park at the same time as the Nature Training School.

At Terra Alta the school again will operate a tent-camp, using its own equipment, in a 16-acre area now leased for five years with option to purchase the location. The area under option to the Nature Association, which sponsors the school, includes the large open field adjacent to the woodland in which the successive camps at Terra Alta have been held, and in this field, and near the woodlands, it is purposed to erect the men's camp and women's camp for the 1939 field base.

So far as the physical comfort and well-being of the students and staff are concerned, the 12th session of the school bids fair to be the best of the long series. Definite changes in the plan for instruction, not now completed, are to the effect that at least three full-time instructors will be present for the four weeks of the school and that their work will be supplemented by shorter periods during which additional teachers will be available.

For those not especially familiar with the Nature Leaders Training School it seems well to note that the school is open to men and women of 17 years or older. A few younger students regularly are accepted upon especial recommendation as to their physical and mental ability to keep pace with adult associates. NO college credits are awarded for work done in this school. Attendance at classes is not compulsory. The few and simple rules and regulations which govern students are for their own safety and convenience. Students are permitted, and encouraged, to carry on studies of their own selection, including private field investigations, etc. The school, both at Oglebay Park and at Terra Alta literally affords excellent, inexpensive living accommodations and access to highly desirable territory for biological field investigations.

Descriptive folders will be mailed free to anyone who addresses the Director, Nature Training School, Oglebay Park, Wheeling, West Virginia.

-- J. W. Handlan  
Wheeling, W. Va.

## EDITORIAL NOTES

Publication of Field Notes. - In this, and the two preceding issues of THE REDSTART, virtually no field notes have appeared. Their absence from the issues indicated is in no way indicative of any lack of importance. Many notes of much merit now await publication and, if they have not appeared, the physical limitations of this journal, and NOT any adverse judgment of the material submitted has brought about their failure to appear "in print."

Please continue to send field notes to The Editor. A fine nucleus of notes for future issues has been assembled, thanks to the interest of members of The Brooks Bird Club. This journal can use, also, longer articles, of which far too few are submitted.

The Nature Training School. - The Editor sincerely hopes that many readers of THE REDSTART, not now familiar with the Nature Training School at Oglebay Park, will take advantage of this school during its 1939 (twelfth annual) session. We believe that the School offers more for one's money than any similar organization; that it is more practical and more "useable" than any school of its kind with which we have had contact; and that the person who attends has more sheer fun, not to mention a liberal outdoors education, than he would have in any other organization approaching the NTS in general character. To paraphrase a commercial "tag-line," it is suggested that anyone interested "ask the man who's been there," and get his version of the general character and value of the school. And, by the way, the school is NOT operated to make money! It's a service to nature-minded people, rather than an effort to collect!

Pymatuning Expedition Opens Spring Field Trips. - Spring field trips of the Brooks Bird Club will begin the week-end of April 1-2, when the Club and its friends will conduct their annual pilgrimage to Pymatuning Lake, Pennsylvania. Those interested in attending the week-end activities at Pymatuning are urged to communicate, at once, with Charles Conrad, 423 Warwood Avenue, Wheeling. The club cannot, of course, arrange transportation, but will be glad to make arrangements for meals and lodging for the week-end. Unless other last-minute arrangements for field trips out-of-town are arranged, the club again will conduct its April-May field trips at Oglebay Park, beginning at 5 A. M. and dedicated primarily to the instruction of beginners in bird study. There is no charge for attendance at these informal excursions.