



The Redstart

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J. Harold Olsen, Editor

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THE 1940-41 ADDITIONS TO THE BIRD NOTES
OF PLEASANTS COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
by
Charles Conrad

This is the third, in a series of papers, prepared on the bird notes of Pleasants County, West Virginia. The two other papers, the first written by Mr. Tom E. Shields in THE REDSTART of January, 1939, (Vol. VI, No. 4 p.p. 23-29), and the second by Mr. Harold Bergner (Vol. VI, No. 9 p.p. 57-59) covered all the bird records as recorded by the members of the Brooks Bird Club from May 25, 1935 to May 21, 1939.

This article is a report of additional records made during the annual field trips on May 26, 1940 and May 18, 1941 which was sponsored by the Bird Club.

The territory as described by Mr. Shields has an elevation ranging from 602 feet to 1,225 feet. There are many hills which rise sharply from the Ohio River or creek beds. Hickory, elm and maple trees grow abundantly in the woods, where greenbrier and blackberry are to be found in plenty. Pleasants County is presumed to be in the upper Austral Life Zone although several records have been made listing forms of the Transition and Canadian. Ornithologically speaking very little work has been done or published about the bird life in the county, except that done by the Brooks Bird Club Members.

Referring to Mr. Shields' article, we find a total of 74 species of birds recorded for the county with breeding records established for 27 species. On the 1939 trip, reported by Mr. Bergner, a total of 73 species were recorded, which include 14 additions to the 1938 list of birds and four new breeding records with evidences of four additional species that probably nest in the county.

On Sunday, May 26, 1940, fourteen members of the Brooks Bird Club spent about ten hours working the same sections of Pleasants County as previously stated. The weather in the morning was ideal being bright, clear and warm. A short time past noon a thunder storm passed over, after which bird activity was renewed. The largest single day list of birds to date was compiled, reaching a total of 79, which included eight new species bringing the total species observed to 96 for the County. The "new" additions made include: Turkey Vulture, Kingfisher, Black-billed Cuckoo, Blue Jay, Purple Martin, Mockingbird, Parula Warbler and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

A total of twelve nests were found, which definitely established two more breeding records:

1. Chipping Sparrow. Spizella passerina. A nest of this species was found by Charles Conrad in a bush about five feet above ground. The nest contained five young. Young of this same species was observed in 1938.
2. Ovenbird. Seiurus aurocapillus. This year a badly battered nest located on the ground was found along with one egg, apparently "picked" from the nest. The egg was identified after careful checking as that of the Ovenbird. In 1939, Mr. James Handlan observed the adult birds carrying food.

The other nests found during the field trip were as follows: Wood Thrush, Least Flycatcher, English Sparrow, Phoebe, House Wren, Catbird, Downy, Red-eyed Vireo, Song Sparrow and Towhee.

Again this year on May 18, twelve members of the Bird Club journeyed to Pleasants County and worked in the field from 7:00 A.M. until 3:30 P.M. The weather again proved favorable for both the birds and the observers. By the time we were ready to return we had recorded 72 species and found ten nests. For our days effort we were only able to add two "new" birds, the Canada Warbler and Rock Dove to the County List. However, we did much better with the nests for a total of four breeding records were definitely established as follows:

1. Ruffed Grouse. Bonasa umbellus. A hen grouse with six young was observed by Russell West.
2. Crow. Corvus brachyrhynchos. A nest of this species with young was found in an elm tree about thirty-five feet above the ground by Charles Conrad.
3. Chickadee. Penthestes Sp. A young Chickadee not long out of the nest was observed by Mr. Tom Shields in 1935. This year a nest of this species was found in an old fence post along side the main road. The nest contained four young and was found by Mary Kay and Chuck Conrad. The species is presumably P. carolinensis.
4. Robin. Turdus migratorius. Young were observed in 1938. A nest containing four young was found in an apple tree by Mary Kay and Chuck Conrad.

So in summing up the records from 1935-1941 made by members of the Brooks Bird Club, we find a total of 98 species of birds recorded for Pleasants County with breeding records established for 37 species.

Those who participated in either or both the 1940 and 1941 Club field trip included: Misses Mabel Hopwood, Carolyn and Dorothy Conrad, Dorothy Neuhard, Racheal Green and Mrs. Mary Kay Conrad; Messrs. Ted Frankenberg, Russell West, Byrne Waterman, Paul Palmer, John Worley, John Mitchel, Ray Reed, George Breiding, Don Keyser, Pete Chandler, George Arner, Harold Olsen and the writer.

--418 Warwood Avenue,
Wheeling, West Virginia

HALLER'S GONE AGAIN!

On May 25, active member, Karl "Mike" Haller left Wheeling for Pittsburgh to join W. E. Clyde Todd, Curator of Ornithology of the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pa., on an expedition to the northern part of Canada sponsored by the Museum. The object of the trip was to study Summer Bird Life of the James Bay Region.

Two letters have been received by his family since his departure giving the only information obtainable concerning the progress that they have made. The first was mailed from Moosonee, Ontario, the last settlement that they visited before continuing north. Their other stops would be made at Hudson's Bay Posts or Indian settlements. They were delayed at Moosonee for about two weeks due to bad weather (snow and rain). From this town they shipped most of their supplies north on a Trading Boat to a distant Hudson's Bay Post so their traveling would be much easier and more time could be spent in studying in the field. On traveling they encountered such high wind and rough water that they were delayed to a point where their food gave out, causing the party to travel 50 miles out of their way to get more supplies. At this supply station they met two aviators who were flying south, and who were willing to take letters to be mailed home. This second letter was postmarked Rupert's House Post, Quebec. In this letter, Mike said that he hoped to be home the latter part of August if everything goes well.

--Byrne Waterman
Woodlawn
Wheeling, West Virginia

(Ed. Note: Mr. Haller's itinerary is very indefinite. He has promised that upon his return he will give us information regarding the success of his trip and we hope to include a report in a forthcoming issue.)

FORAY REPORT

The 1941 Foray Report of the Brooks Bird Club held at Lost River State Park, Hardy County, West Virginia, June 14-21 is in the progress of being assembled and will soon be ready to edit.

Not all the reports have been turned in by the assigned leaders but those which have show that the Foray group as a whole did more and better work this year than last. New records were added to many of the different subjects of nature as reported on last year.

A limited number of these reports will be mimeographed and will be distributed with care. All members who took part in the 1941 Foray are assured a copy.

The director of this year's Foray wishes to thank all those who helped to cooperate in making the 1941 Foray the great success it was and marking up another successful event in the long list of the Brooks Bird Club activities.

--Jean Semancik, Foray Secretary
729 Main Street
Wheeling, West Virginia

FIELD NOTES

Contents of Short-eared Owl Pellets:

During the past two winters, a Short-eared Owl, Asio flammeus, has used small pine trees bordering on the Lost Nation Road Airport, near Willoughby in Lake County, Ohio, as a roosting place. Under these trees, from time to time, we have found pellets. On February 9, 1941, Don Eckelberry, Mrs. Skaggs and I picked up eleven of these pellets and later sent them to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for examination.

Mr. P. N. Moulthrop, assistant mammalogist at the museum reported that the total contents were the remains of 20 field mice (Microtus pennsylvanicus). Using that figure as a basis, we guessed the pellets averaged nearly two mice per pellet. The findings again emphasize the value of this, and other birds of prey, to agriculture and it is to be regretted that many hunters shoot these birds "on sight."

--Merit B. Skaggs
Julian Road
South Euclid, Ohio

Early Arrival of Catbird in Marshall County, W. Va.:

On Sunday, March 23, 1941, Helen Dunlap, her parents and the writer found a Catbird, Dumetella carolinensis, in the vicinity of "Jim's Run" in McMechen, West Virginia. Encil Hawkins reported later that he, too had

found that species on that same day. Earliest published record found for that area was April 10, 1935 and for other years has been either the middle or the latter part of April.

--Mabel W. Hopwood
1800 Marshall Street,
Benwood, W. Va.

Sharp-shinned Hawks in Huntington, W. Va.:

Two Sharp-shinned Hawks, Accipiter velox, were observed in Ritter Park, Huntington, W. Va., the afternoon of March 12. They were in flight together, quite near the ground, when I first caught sight of them. I watched from less than 50 yards away while the two birds swooped and dived in the air, first one and then the other rising steeply to gain height for these evolutions. On several occasions I thought they surely would collide in mid-air. Finally one, noticeably the larger of the two birds, perched in a tree within 30 yards of my position (the distance was later paced by the observer) and the smaller bird continued for a minute or two to perform aerial acrobatics near the perch of the other before both flew away. I assume that the birds were female and male, and that I witnessed a courtship performance.

---John W. Handlan
510 Maxwell St.,
Charleston, W. Va.

Pine Siskins at Mt. Lookout, Nicholas Co., W. Va.:

During this winter (1940-41) there has been an invasion in this area of Pine Siskins, Spinus pinus. They are to be found in great numbers in the forests and even in the trees about the houses. I had never seen over a dozen of this species of bird before this winter. My observations covered an area of about ten square miles and it would be interesting to learn the extent of the siskin invasion.

--William C. Legg
Mt. Lookout
West Virginia

Black Vultures in Greenbrier and Monroe Counties, W. Va.:

While traveling through Greenbrier and Monroe Counties, W. Va. on Sunday April 6, 1941, Black Vultures, Coragyps atratus, were twice seen. Two were first sighted near the Greenbrier-Monroe County line in the vicinity of Organ Cave. They were in company with three Turkey Vultures, Cathartes aura. Later, while observing waterfowl on the small lake at Gap Mills, Monroe County, seven Black Vultures wheeled into view from the direction of Peters Mountain. They flew low for a few minutes, then perched on trees above the lake. There they remained for an hour or more within close and favorable observation range.

This is the third successive season that I have observed this species of vulture in each of the two counties, always during the spring or early summer months. That they may be breeding in the nearby mountains is merely a conjecture; one that needs further investigation to prove or to disprove.

-- I. B. Boggs,
Oglebay Hall,
Morgantown, W. Va.

Ed. Note - Maurice Brooks suggested to readers of THE REDSTART, in 1935, that since he had received reports from other observers in the same area that is mentioned above, that it was probably only a matter of taking time to make a thorough hunt during the breeding season to find the nest. Lawrence E. Hicks lists the bird as breeding in Ohio; Brooks listed them also in Grant and Hardy Counties, W. Va. John W. Handlan wrote of finding them in November and in July in Monroe Co and Lloyd Poland has found them in December in Jefferson County. As Boggs wrote, it is a "conjecture" but the finding of a nest seems to this editor to be very possible since the species has been found so often in the southern sections of the state. Who's in that section to do the "job"?

Greenbrier-Summers-Monroe-Raleigh County Bird Trip:

It was interesting to me to read of a trip described by I. B. Boggs in a letter received from him April 9, 1941: ". . . on a murky, cloudy day . . . I first visited the small artificial lake at White Sulphur Springs drove to Gap Mills via Union, and from there via Alderson to Hinton thought a list of 40 birds would be good but my total, much to my surprise was 51. It follows: Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Black Duck, Baldpate (numerous), Green-winged Teal (1), Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Shoveller, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Phoebe, Prairie Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, Crow, Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Bewick's Wren (3), Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, Robin, Bluebird, Starling, Louisiana Water-thrush (3), English Sparrow, Meadowlark, Red-wing, Rusty Blackbird, Bronzed Grackle (numerous), Cowbird, Cardinal, Goldfinch, Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Junco, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow and Song Sparrow."

--J. H. Olsen
Elm Grove, W. Va.

George Breiding, President - Brooks Bird Club:

Since 1932 the active membership list of the Brooks Bird Club has been kept with but occasional changes. Almost all of the charter members continued their active status and did their part in the work of the organization. There had been a few additions from time to time which kept the active list at all times around twenty-five. The figure is still about the same, but the proportion of new members is larger than ever before. There have been during the year of 1941 what is to us a tremendous migration of club members to other

parts of the country. This precludes the announcement that the most recent loss (as an active member) is that of our present president, Mr. George Breiding. On July 9, 1941, Breiding was inducted into the United States Army. After receiving his physical examinations at Huntington and his equipment at Columbus, he was assigned to duty in Colorado. We suggest that postcards or letters from friends and acquaintances would be most acceptable to him. His present address is: Private George Breiding, Hdq. and Hdq. Squadron, A. C. T. S., Lowry Field, Colorado. (The ACTS signifies "Air Corp Training School.")

--Russell West
113 Edgewood St.
Wheeling, W. Va.

BERT CROMES - A CHEF AND A FRIEND

Even before the Brooks Bird Club was formed in 1932, the people now making up the membership of that organization had the privilege of contacting a chef who was supreme in his ability to prepare meals. After the formation of the Club, this chef has presided over the tables of every affair when meals were served. Camps throughout the state of West Virginia; reunions during the fall of each year; meetings when the fellowship of a good meal would increase the pleasure of the evening; all these events were made more enjoyable through the efforts of one of the best cooks ever to preside over a stove.

It makes no difference to Chef Bert Cromes of Wheeling, W. Va. what kind of stove might be available. We have seen him cooking over an open fire; on an army range, on wood-burners, natural gas, manufactured gas stoves; oil-burners and electric ranges. And every meal he has cooked has been enjoyed by every person who had the privilege of eating it.

Bert Cromes has seen many years of active service. In June of 1941 he celebrated his seventy-third birthday. Yet daylight in camp finds him ready to begin his preparations for the first meal of the day. Generous to an unsurpassed degree, he has coffee for the early risers should they desire it. And should an individual or a group be away from camp on a distant field trip, they find a warm meal awaiting them at any time in the evening or the night.

The members and the friends of the Club are taking this opportunity of paying tribute to Chef Bert Cromes. May he be with us for many, many more years. Should Bert Cromes ever need a friend, he may be sure he has one - multiplied a hundred times - the members of The Brooks Bird Club.

--Russell West
For the Brooks Bird Club
113 Edgewood St.,
Wheeling, W. Va.

1941 REUNION

Since many of the active and corresponding members of the Brooks Bird Club have found it necessary to move to all parts of the country, we, the committee, feel that it would be of great value to all of us to announce the dates for the 1941 Nature Reunion.

This year the committee is planning a really "Bigger-Better-Reunion". It's not only to be one big day, nor two big days, but for the first time, we are planning three big days. The dates will be October 3-4-5. The places will be announced later.

There are no plans as yet for publication but the committee already is getting ready and when the proper time arrives, their plans will be announced.

This reunion is guaranteed to be the best ever and will pack the punch of the past twelve put together with just a step or two ahead of the field.

So remember the dates, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 3 - 4 - 5, 1941!!! (You'll get a postcard notice first - and then a "formal" announcement)

--Charles Conrad, Chairman
Reunion Committee
113 Edgewood St.,
Wheeling, W. Va.

THE REDSTART is published monthly by and for the members of the Brooks Bird Club. Corresponding membership may be obtained upon payment of \$1.00 which includes a twelve-month subscription to THE REDSTART. Members are invited to send in for publication, pertinent field notes. These are subject only to editing to insure the greatest possible accuracy and consistency with editorial policy. Memberships, field notes and correspondence should be addressed to the Brooks Bird Club, 113 Edgewood St., Wheeling, W.Va.