



The Redstart

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J. Harold Olsen, Editor

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THE 1940 CHRISTMAS CENSUS
of the
BROOKS BIRD CLUB
Russell West

Twelve observers, working in three groups, conducted the ninth annual Christmas Bird Census for the Brooks Bird Club, in cooperation with the Bird-Lore magazine. From the standpoint of numbers of species listed, this 1940 census was not very encouraging, but this lack of a variety of species told just as important a story as an abundance of species might have indicated.

The area covered was the same as used during the past few years: Oglebay Park and the surrounding country in Ohio County and northern Marshall County, West Virginia. There were surprises in both territories. In Oglebay Park, the small number of species and individuals found under what seemed ideal winter conditions was most astonishing. If it had not been for the pleasure of being out-of-doors in the fine, cool weather, those who covered the park would have considered the day about wasted. Fourteen species, totaling 145 individuals, were counted by two groups of observers who covered all of the 750 acres in the park. This small count cannot compare with the counts made in other years.

Outside the park, the number of individuals found was below normal but the species count was excellent for the type of country covered. The discussions which always follow a field trip, failed to disclose any reason for the few birds found. The species of hawks which have appeared from time to time on the Christmas Census list were absent this year. Formerly were included such species as the Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Marsh Hawk, and Sparrow Hawk. On the other hand, the appearance of nearly all of the woodpeckers which might be expected in an area of this type was a pleasant find.

The lack of any record of Ring-necked Pheasant was both expected and disappointing. When these birds were first placed in Oglebay Park, considerable effort was made to accommodate them to their environment. As a result, they increased in numbers and spread over the northern panhandle of the state.

During the past few years, they have not received the attention previously given them, and whether due to that factor, or to others, their numbers have decreased.

The experiment has not been without value; the deductions might be that these exotic birds must be cared for to such an extent that their value as game birds in this immediate area is dependent upon the Conservation Commission's willingness to make large investments toward that objective.

The listing of Ruffed Grouse, Killdeer, and Pileated Woodpeckers are obviously due to the extension of territorial boundaries for the census. Areas where these birds were known to live were visited. The same reason may be reversed to explain the absence of the Horned Lark. In the writer's opinion, there is only one spot in the part of the Ohio Valley where the census was taken where these birds are usually to be found, and no group visited that place.

Two sparrows, new to the Christmas Census list for the panhandle, are included this year. Both the White-throated and the Fox Sparrow might be expected in this area during the wintertime, but oddly enough have been sparingly distributed on our winter bird lists. Both are known here during migrations, but neither have been known to stay for more than a short period of time.

The following report (a copy of which was forwarded to the Bird-Lore magazine) includes the data necessary for a census report:

Wheeling, W. Va. (Ohio, and Marshall Counties; elm and beech-maple woodlands with some open pasture land); Dec. 22; 9:00 a. m. to 4:30 p. m.; Clear, windy, temperature stationary at 36 degrees F.; twelve observers working in three groups; total hours afield, 19 (15 afoot, 4 by car).

Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 3; Killdeer, 2; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Flicker, 1; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 6; Downy Woodpecker, 51; Blue Jay, 1; Crow, 342; Chickadee (sp.), 109; Tufted Titmouse, 80; White-breasted Nuthatch, 15; Brown Creeper, 5; Carolina Wren, 10; Bluebird, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 8; Starling, 18; English Sparrow, 94; Cardinal, 51; Towhee, 22; Junco, 50; Tree Sparrow, 130; Song Sparrow, 20; White-throated Sparrow, 10; Fox Sparrow, 2. Total species, 28; total individuals, 1032. Walter Ammon, John Handlan, Ralph Bischof, Dorothy Neuhard, George Breiding, Donald Keyser, Robert Hallett, Harold Bergner, Dorothy Conrad, Charles Conrad, Mabel Hopwood, Russell West. (The Brooks Bird Club.)

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

CHICKADEES

Possibly some readers of past issues of THE REDSTART have noticed in some of the bird lists such as the Christmas Bird Census, an entry "Chickadee" and have wondered what kind of bird students we were to include such an indefinite name. Is it a Carolina Chickadee or a Black-capped Chickadee? Our question is the same, but to date, we have been unable to determine any definite method that can be used for field identification of these species.

Size? Yes, the writer understands there is a difference in the size of the two species but, he does not believe that it is possible to distinguish a mean variation in the field, of a quarter of an inch; especially when there are no other

birds around with which the individual can be compared. With such a small difference in size, it would almost be necessary to measure the birds to determine the species by this character alone.

Color? The Black-capped supposedly has light edgings to the primary feathers. We have been fortunate in having contact with Dr. George M. Sutton, who is busily engaged in impressing upon expert ornithologists the importance of washing bird-skins and of the results that may appear when skins are carefully cleaned. We are all sure that slight differences in the shades of colors may be accounted for by other than the natural colors of the bird.

Song? Some who are acquainted with the Carolina Chickadee will say that the typical song of this species is of four notes, represented by the phrase: "Oh me, oh my." Those in the northern states usually are equally confident that the Black-capped Chickadee has a typical two-note song, pitched in a different manner from that of the Carolina and that the Black-capped says: "Oh me." In the northern panhandle of West Virginia we hear both songs throughout most of the year (the four-note being the most common). Besides, what would you name a Chickadee that sings a two-note song, then a four-note song, and then one of a series of seven or eight notes?

Dr. Sutton, realizing the situation, collected a number of birds of these species and studied the collections. The results of his observations were embodied in a report which described the "Northern Carolina Chickadee" as being almost intermediate in range, size and color between the two species. His report further stated that both species were collected in a single flock during one of his trips.

If, in the future, you again see a notation of "Chickadee" on the bird lists, don't criticize too severely, for the writer thinks, as do many others, that it is better to use that term with the unseen qualification of "We don't know what species was found, but we do know it was a Chickadee."

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

Editor's Note: The above note concerning the identification of Chickadees, is, of course, one writer's opinion. Many of the members of The Brooks Bird Club have discussed the subject from time to time, without arriving at a definite solution satisfactory to more than one or two members of the group present at the time of that particular discussion.

Some of the readers of this journal may be better prepared to discuss, and to answer this question; some may have an opinion, a comment, or observations that can be written into a brief, or detailed, if you choose, report of the field identification of the species of Chickadees represented in this and the surrounding territories.

West has asked during the discussions, that if the species are differentiated by outward appearances, why should not such differences be sufficiently noticeable to be seen by careful field observers? Or are we dealing with one species, not two?

The editor realizes that he and West are open to correction and criticism and that is what is desired. Send in the comments so that all the readers may know of them.

 EDITORIALS

Corrections:

(1) In the November issue of THE REDSTART, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Page 14, the second paragraph of the editorial headed "Bi-Illogical Poetry," should read: "Bobby Murray . . .," and not "Robert Murray" The former is Miss Gladys Murray who has attended several of the Nature Leader's Training Schools formerly operated by the West Virginia Nature Association and is well known to many of the readers of this journal. The error was the editor's. Dr. Bernal Weimer wrote, under the heading "Acknowledgements" of her work: "Last but not least, my sincere thanks is extended to Bobby Murray who has materially contributed to this volume by her clever and amusing illustrations."

(2) In the process of cutting the stencils for the issue of THE REDSTART for the month of December, 1940, Nov. VIII, No. 3, it was numbered Vol. IX by mistake.

 FIELD NOTES

Cadiz Christmas Census:

Cadiz, Ohio -- including fields and woods as far as five miles west of Cadiz, and three miles along shore of Tappan Dam of the Muskingum Conservancy District which lies about 15 miles west of Cadiz; Dec. 22; 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; sky cloudy, west wind, light to moderate; ground bare; temperature 32 degrees F. at start, 36 degrees at return; nine observers in two parties (although all were together most of the time); total hours afield 17 (15 by foot, 2 by car); total miles, 48 (8 afoot, 40 by car).

Mallard, 10; Black Duck, 32; American Golden-eye, 1; Coopers Hawk, 1; Red-tailed Hawk, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 6; Bob-white, 1; Florida Gallinule, 1; Coot, 1; Herring Gull, 1; Screech Owl, 2; Kingfisher, 1; Flicker, 4; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 9; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 10; Pileated Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 1; Crow, 5; Chickadee, 10; Tufted Titmouse, 9; White-breasted Nuthatch, 11; Carolina Wren, 2; Bluebird, 7; Starling, 29; English Sparrow, 77; Meadowlark, 4; Redwing, 1; Cardinal, 12; Goldfinch, 77; Towhee, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 20; Tree Sparrow, 127; Song Sparrow, 21; total, 36 species, 503 individuals; H. B. McConnell, John G. Worley, Robert Patterson, Milton Ronsheim, George Bier, Milton M. Ronsheim, Harold Martin, Nately Ramsay, John C. Worley.

This is the fortieth consecutive Christmas Census taken by H. B. McConnell for the Bird-Lore magazine, and the twenty-ninth consecutive census taken by McConnell and John G. Worley, together, and over the same territory near their homes in Cadiz, Ohio. H. B. McConnell was out for the first census sponsored by Bird-Lore but his list was not published at that time.

-- John G. Worley
Baker Building
Cadiz, Ohio

Morgantown Christmas Census:

On December 24, 1940, William A. Lunk and the writer took a Christmas Census of birds in the vicinity of Morgantown, and Lake Lynn. The day was clear, temperature 25 degrees F. at 7:00 a.m. rising to approximately 55 degrees by mid-afternoon and sinking to 35 degrees at 5:00 p.m. Although the total number of species recorded is the largest listed in the three consecutive years 1938-39-40, the individuals for many species listed were scarce. Black Ducks were most numerous, while for ten species but a single individual was recorded. The entire list follows:

Common Loon, 3; Horned Grebe, 2; Mallard, 2; Black Duck, 230; Ring-necked Duck, 1; Hooded Merganser, 1; Cooper's (?) Hawk, 1; Red-shouldered (?) Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 2; Mourning Dove, 16; Flicker, 1; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Blue Jay, 1; Crow, 10; Chickadee, 17; Tufted Titmouse, 18; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Carolina Wren, 2; Mockingbird, 1; Catbird, 1; Bluebird, 1; Starling, 5; English Sparrow, 34; Cardinal, 28; Purple Finch, 5; Goldfinch, 4; Slate-colored Junco, 32; Tree Sparrow, 26; Song Sparrow, 8. Total species, 32; total of individuals, 466.

--- I. B. Boggs,
West Virginia University
Extension Service,
Morgantown, W. Va.

Whistling Swan at Cadiz, Ohio:

An immature Whistling Swan, Cygnus columbianus, spent the two weeks preceding December 3, 1940 in and around Chautauqua Lake, just at the western outskirts of Cadiz, Ohio (Harrison County). The lake, a body of water comprising about twenty acres, was frozen over for almost its entire surface during most of this period of time, but the swan kept two small areas open by swimming about. While thus immured in the open water areas it could be approached as near as six feet and showed little fear at any time, even though apparently not injured.

At times it was observed walking over the ice from one pool to another. Feeding was accomplished by inserting its long neck under the water into the mud near the shore and at these times a low guttural note was occasionally uttered by the bird. When continued cold caused the entire surface to be frozen over, the swan was seen to rise in flight and did not return.

This young bird presented a slightly soiled appearance of head and neck, as distinguished from the whiter ones of an adult; showed also, the salmon colored bill, outline in black, rather than the solid yellow bill of an adult. So far as the writer has been able to determine, this is the first authentic record of finding this species of bird in that vicinity.

---John G. Worley,
Baker Building,
Cadiz, Ohio

ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNAL REVIEWS

Condor, The, XLII, 6, Nov.-Dec., 1940:

David Lack, writing from England, contributes to this issue what he terms a summarizing of existing knowledge on "Pair Formation." The author begins his paper with the statement: "There is probably more ignorance concerning pair formation than there is of any other aspect of bird behavior." His technical paper of some score of pages, together with bibliography, etc., might be read with interest and profit by any one interested in birds as creatures to be studied, rather than as something to be identified, only.

The remainder of the issue is devoted to birds of the far west and southwest, Frank Graham Watson's paper, "Noted on the Behavior of the White-tailed Kite" being of especial general interest. (Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, Calif.)

Field Ornithology, 2, 7, July, 1940:

Arthur L. Berry, of Los Angeles, tells of his first sight of a California Condor in his brief sketch on "another vanishing American." Among field notes in this issue, one by Don Eckleberry, art editor of this journal, comments on the success of attracting the Pileated Woodpecker by imitations of the notes of the Screech Owl. Richard Klein and Ralph O'Reilly tell of a "hybrid duck" which they observed at Hartstown Swamp, Penn., in June. They believe the bird to have been a "cross" between the Redhead and Ring-necked ducks and ask that anyone having knowledge of hybridizing between species of the genus Nyroca correspond with them through Field Ornithology.

W. C. Legg, publisher of the paper, discusses Screech Owls invading poultry pens in Nicholas County during the hard winter of 1939-40.

Field Ornithology, 2, 8-9, Aug.-Sept., 1940:

William Cummings, of St. Paul, Minn., tells "How I Keep a Journal" in one article of this issue. Personally, we prefer the "roll call" system suggested by Dr. Chapman in his indispensable "Handbook." Ralph O'Reilly, jr., tells of finding Evening Grosbeaks in Lake County, Ohio, March 14, 1940.

W. C. Legg, of Mount Lookout, W. Va., records an afternoon of observation of Upland Plover near his home. At least 20 birds were seen. THE REDSTART editorial committee will be pleased to note a paragraph of reference to their publication in this issue of Field Ornithology. (Mount Lookout, W. Va.)

Natural History, XLVII, 1, Jan., 1941:

D. R. Barton's "Birdman of the Sea" is a biographical sketch of Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy. Dr. Murphy is curator of oceanic birds for the American Museum of Natural History and his magnificent monograph "Oceanic Birds of South America," won for him the Brewster Medal in the recent year of its issue. His museum career has been replete with the excitement of travel in far places - a real life example of the thing of which most young aspirants to scientific exploration dream when they apply for jobs with "an expedition."

The cover design is a splendid reproduction of a Kodachrome photo by Henry B. Kane, with a Barred Owl as a subject.

Prothonotary, The, 6, 12, Dec., 1940:

It is of interest to note that the Buffalo Ornithological Society is considering inclusion in its organization a special membership classification - that of Fellow. For election to Fellowship it is proposed that members who meet one or more of the following requirements may be elected by a committee, to be appointed, and which would pass upon potential fellowship candidates:

Active membership (Associate membership? Ed.) in the A. O. U.; president of the Buffalo Ornithological Society; editorship of the Prothonotary; teaching an adult museum course; publication of a check-list of this or of another territory; substantial work on bird banding, preferably publication of a paper; publication of a paper; publication of articles in a paper; other meritorious project work. (B. O. S., Buffalo, N. Y.)

Wilson Bulletin, The, 52,4, Dec., 1940:

No West Virginia bird student interested in the warblers should omit reading Maurice Brooks' "The Breeding Warblers of the Central Allegheny Mountain Region." In a paper of considerable length the author discusses the status of summer residents of the area which includes West Virginia, including species for which nesting records have not actually been established. The paper apparently had been prepared before additional information on certain species was available to the author and other observers in the summer of 1940 and we may look for additions to the present record. For example, data secured in mid-June, 1940, by the Brooks Bird Club Foray into Hardy County provide some rather wide variations in nesting dates in comparison to those cited by Maurice Brooks.

Honorary members of the Brooks Bird Club, of whom Maurice Brooks is one, were fully represented in this issue of the Bulletin, for Dr. George M. Sutton is co-author with Thos. D. Burleigh of a contribution on Mexican birds. This paper is the lead feature and is illustrated by a color plate from one of Sutton's paintings of an Emerald Toucanet.

Dr. J. J. Murray records finding and collecting a Red Phalarope at Lexington, Virginia, September 30, 1940. Other water birds of interest are recorded in the same field notes. (Wilson Ornithological Club, Ann Arbor, Michigan.)

CHANGES IN BIRD LIFE AT PYMATUNING: A REVIEW

"Changes in Bird Life at Pymatuning Lake, Pennsylvania," is the title of a contribution to the Annals of the Carnegie Museum which is certain to be regarded with interest by many members of The Brooks Bird Club. Its author is Ruth Trimble, now Mrs. James C. Chapin, a long-time member and friend of The Brooks Club. Furthermore, her paper concerns an area of especial interest to the Club and annually a setting for field trips of the organization.

Mrs. Chapin briefly relates a history of the developments which transformed a great "bog type" area into a lake of considerable extent. She discusses intensive investigations in the area by Dr. George M. Sutton and bases her paper, for purposes of accurate comparison, upon his report of his findings as of 1928.

It was to have been expected, of course, that waterfowl would increase their appearances in the area with the impounding of feeder streams to form a large lake. But results appear to have exceeded any normal expectations, particularly in the imposing list of species which have become established as breeding species.

Within six years, 21 additional species of migrant waterfowl and shore birds have been recorded at Pymatuning. Such species as the Little Blue Heron, Whistling Swan, Duck Hawk and Black-bellied Plover, formerly considered stragglers there, have become regular migrants. Unusual visitors which have "fortuitously appeared" in recent years include the Great White Heron, American Brant, Western Willet, Wilson Phalarope and Red Phalarope.

Species such as the Great Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and Blue-winged Teal, for which Dr. Sutton established no actual nesting records, now are described as occurring abundantly as summer residents with many nests examined by the investigators. Dr. Sutton recorded a single nesting of the Black Tern in 1910 whereas a colony of about 100 has been established at the lake since 1934 and the Common Tern apparently is nesting there, also.

Recently added nesting species include the Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Shoveller, Redhead, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks. Breeding records for several of these species at Pymatuning established new eastern extensions of their known ranges.

A table compares the 1928 status of some 80 species of interest with results ascertained by the more recent investigations covered by the report. An annotated list of the species compared and literary sources examined concludes the paper.

A map of the area under discussion and three plates showing six splendid photographs made by R. L. Fricke, of the Carnegie Museum, illustrate the paper.

-- John W. Handlan
91 Lynwood Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia

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 Street, Wheeling, W. Va.
