



The Redstart

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A. B. BROOKS - IN APPRECIATION
by
I. B. Boggs

A. B. Brooks, in whose honor the Brooks Bird Club was named, died at his home at Buckhannon on May 15, 1944. The Brooks Bird Club, its members and its friends, join the family in a sense of irreparable loss. This is a tribute to his memory.

Almost a quarter of a century has passed since first I met A. B. Brooks, "A.B." to his friends. Then he was telling a group of people about the natural wealth, the scenic beauty and the joy of living among the West Virginia hills. To this day I remember how his mountains, his forests, his wild flowers, his birds, took on an unusual significance. True they were the ones on which so often I had looked and to which I had listened. But, as pictured by him, they rose to loftier heights, were filled with finer treasures, glowed with richer colors, sang with sweeter voices, and teemed with greater usefulness to mankind than did mine.

Down the pathway of time since that day came A.B., the same active and ardent apostle of the world about him and us. Occasionally I went back to hear him at some meeting or along the nature trail just as a thirsty child returns time and again to drink from a refreshing fountain. Always I came away with a feeling of enthusiasm, filled with a desire to dig deeper into the mysteries of the hills and to somehow help others to appreciate the joys they held for me.

How fortunate was I, along with thousands of others, to be within the magic sphere where A.B. carried on. He was ever the teacher, the interpreter, the sharer of beauty and culture and life. Whether with a group of grade-school children, hard-working farm people, business men or top-ranking scientists, he had the knack of meeting them on a level of their own understanding. Therein lay one of the most powerful factors which to him brought a happy and successful career.

It would be difficult to name another man whose influence has been as far-reaching in the field of West Virginia conservation and nature appreciation as has that of A. B. Brooks. Nothing seemed to escape his alert mind. The birds, the animals, the forests, the soil and water, the people - all were a part of the pattern which he hoped could be woven into the heritage of future generations.

In A.B.'s work at Oglebay Park perhaps may be found the outstanding example of his planning, his philosophy and his love for people. There during a decade and a half he formulated and established a nature conservation and appreciation program that is unique.

One had but to follow the system of park trails which served thousands of people in the Tri-State area; or to visit the arboretum and nature museum; or go to some of the numerous meetings held throughout that region; or to attend the Annual Nature School, to appreciate the scope of the program which this great naturalist's mind generated.

Although the Oglebay Park program was set up to serve a limited area, its influence spread not only throughout West Virginia, but into border and other nearby states. Space forbids greater detail of this project or mention of many other avenues of service which A.B. used in his relationships with his fellow man.

The splendid life-services of A. B. Brooks, a Christian, scholarly gentleman, whose teaching and writing influenced the actions and interests of thousands, came to an end during the month of May. He was buried on the nineteenth at Buckhannon, only a few miles from his boyhood home at French Creek. His going is not a signal to stop the progressive program on which he worked for more than a half century. What he so nobly set in motion must go on and on. To those who caught his spirit and to the organizations which were set up to promote the program in which he believed, now falls the task of carrying on—and forward. To that end let every reader of THE REDSTART dedicate himself anew. May you and I not fail in our responsibilities.

—I. B. Boggs
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia

WARBLER WAVES

Many of the bird students living east of the Rocky Mountains find their most exciting days afield in the sport of bird study when the "warbler waves" come in the springtime. A "warbler wave" may be defined as the appearance of warblers in numbers during migration at a given place where, on the previous day, there had been only a few or none at all.

In certain parts of the West, of which southern California is one, there are no marked waves of warblers as the passage northward of the migrating birds is gradual. Some species merely ascend the mountains to higher altitudes where they nest. This observation was brought to the writer's attention by Don Eckelberry, a former resident of Ohio, who spent some time in California.

We are fortunate, then, in living where we can observe the annual migration of the wood warblers, especially as there are so many kinds of them to be seen in our territory.

In Ohio most of the "warbler waves" come in May, usually when the plum, pear, apple, and cherry trees are in full bloom and have thus transformed the countryside into a combined fairyland and ornithologist's paradise. To many people there is no more lovely sight than the myriads of blossoms waving against a background of blue sky and fleecy clouds. At that time of year the young leaves, fruit buds, and sprouting seeds all are a promise of the good things to come, but to the bird student they seem to shout, "Come out-of-doors; the things you seek are here--waiting for you!" Should you heed the invitation, you are quite likely to find that during the night large numbers of warblers have arrived from points farther south and are feeding or resting in the blossoming or budding trees.

With the warblers, in the trees, you may find rose-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings, scarlet tanagers, orioles, flycatchers and several of the vireos. On or near the ground the handsome white-crowned sparrows and some of the thrushes are at home, the latter acting much like their close relative, the robin. Even though many of these birds may have made long, exhausting flights, they frequently pause from their pursuit of insects to sing a song of gladness -- and this will assist the more advanced bird students in identifying them even before the bird is clearly seen through the field glasses. What bird student does not get a thrill in seeing his first Blackburnian or Cape May warbler of the new season?

One of the best "warbler waves" that the writer has ever seen was evident on the morning of May 11, 1943. That day was a fairly warm but overcast day as many "wave days" are apt to be. In a small orchard near my home I found that nearly every tree had several warblers among its branches. One small cherry tree, white with blossoms, had five Cape May warblers and a magnolia warbler in it. Realizing that it was a "wave day" I walked along the edge of a small ravine bordering the Euclid Creek Metropolitan Park so that some of the tree tops were not much above eye level and the birds could be easily observed.

Myrtle warblers were in the tree tops by the score and seemed to be passing over in flocks. A tiny male parula warbler went from a high branch to catch a small insect and then returned to the branch in true flycatcher style. There were so many warblers about that there was no need to rove about in search of birds--they came and went before my eyes. In thirty minutes I listed thirteen kinds of warblers as follows: black-and-white, Nashville, northern parula, magnolia, Cape May, black-throated blue, myrtle, black-throated green, Blackburnian, chestnut-sided, western palm, ovenbird, and redstart. On my lawn a flock of fifteen chipping sparrows seemed to be members of this migration wave even though they were a month late.

By this time it was necessary to go to work, but in the late afternoon I hurried home to spend more time along the ravine. The large flocks of myrtle warblers were gone but quite a few of the other warblers remained and I found two additional species--the northern yellow-throat and a bay-breasted warbler. Quite a day--and all this within 200 yards of home! By hunting for a longer period of time, more species of warblers have been

found in our neighborhood in one day, but for sheer numbers, the May 11 wave surpassed all previous wave days.

On May 16, 1943 a group of bird students engaged in making a "century dash" or listing at least 100 species of birds in one day, found the very satisfactory total of twenty-five species of warblers at only three spots investigated in the Pymatuning Lake area.* Strangely enough, a good variety of warblers was found in one of the roadside parks on the Ohio side of the lake. On this day there were no large flocks of any one species but it was evident that there had been a "warbler wave" possibly a day or two before.

With more than thirty species of warblers to be seen in most parts of eastern United States, is it any wonder that many of us "birders" live eleven months of the year waiting for the magic month of May, with its "warbler wave" days, to come again?

*(See Bird-Life, Vol. 39, No. 3, October, 1943, Page 169)

--M. B. Skaggs
The Kirtland Bird Club
South Euclid, Ohio

NOTES FROM NICHOLAS COUNTY

Last winter I discovered that a Wilson's Snipe was wintering on a creek on our farm. A Snipe was observed first on this small creek on November 8 but I did not discover that a bird was wintering on it until in December. After that the creek was visited practically every day and the bird was usually found there each time (both at noon and near dusk). On February 3 two snipes were flushed but that is the only time more than one flushed until in March. As many as four have flushed at times since the middle of March. Several times two flushed but a majority of the times just one flushes (even today it flushed as well as yesterday). What a pity the bird is not marked so that I could have seen if the same bird has been here all the time.

On March 17 the first Woodcock was heard and after that until April 6, they were seen and heard quite frequently. Today one was flushed, which is the first one since April 6. I might add that both snipe and woodcock have been heard at dusk giving their strange courtship performances.

I have also seen more Solitary Sandpipers than usual. Last Sunday two were on "Snipe Creek" along with a Least Sandpiper. This was my first Least. Why I call it a Least is that it was very small (sparrow-size) and was brown. Its size and color was contrasted to the Solitaries. When the birds flushed the Least executed all movements that the larger birds made as well as giving its low different calls when the Solitary gave its "Peet weet weet." On April 16 on this creek I found a Lesser Yellow-legs. It remained on the creek, where it was eating caddis fly larvae, the 16th and 17th, so I had many chances to observe it. The bird was a little larger than the Solitary

Sandpipers, did not have the black median line in the middle of the tail nor was the tail barred. The white extended more on the rump. The bird often when flushed and while flying uttered a loud "cu cu" or, a few times, just "cu". It also definitely had yellow legs.

On April 2 I was on Gauley River and really found the ducks moving through but I only succeeded in positively identifying two -- a pair of male Baldpates (I learned that ducks of this species "whistle" on that date for the first time!), a male and female Bufflehead. Also with the Baldpates were about a dozen Scaups but I could not tell which they were. It rained and snowed that day and I should have arrived home a miserable specimen of Homo sapiens, but instead I was very happy. Several other ducks were seen but, due to various reasons, they could not be identified.

On April 30, I found Swainson's Warbler quite common along Malinda, a branch of Malinda which I haven't explored for several years, and along Franzy Creek. This is my earliest date so far.

Several American Bitterns were recorded this spring, the first on March 26.

—W. C. Legg
Mt. Lookout, W. Va.

AN EARLY CAPE MAY WARBLER

This is the story of a little warbler who got all mixed up and came north two months before he was supposed to come. He first appeared on our feeding tray, March 6, 1944, a little fellow with bright yellow breast heavily striped with black, a white splotch, instead of bars, on his wings, and a yellow rump patch; his tail was banded with black (or very dark green) and white. If there had been a chestnut cheek patch (and there was not a sign of one) we would have known he was a Cape May Warbler; or if his yellow neck marking had not gone almost completely around his neck we would have identified the Magnolia. We finally decided, however, that he was a Magnolia, who had gone in for a modernistic neckline.

He ate continuously - wild bird seed and peanut butter, and seemed to enjoy coming with the Myrtle Warbler who was changing plumage and looked, for all the world, as though a vacuum sweeper had just gone over him the wrong way.

None of our friends had a warbler like this one and all the authorities said that neither the Magnolia nor the Cape May should be back before May 10th.

Tuesday, the 4th of April, was a very cold day - with snow storms one minute and sunshine the next - imagine my surprise when I looked out of the window and saw my little Warbler sporting a brand new Cape-May-chestnut-cheek-patch, just in time for Easter Week!

Whether it was an immature bird who suddenly acquired his first grown-up clothes, or whether he was just changing to spring plumage like the Myrtle

Warbler, we don't know, because he left on the eleventh of April and that is the last we've seen of him.

One of our books says: "This bird is considered, by most migrant watchers, as a special prize". So, we are very much puffed up about it.

—Mary H. Resener
1241 Eighth Street
Huntington 1, W. Va.

THE EASTERN ROBIN NESTING ON A WINDOW LEDGE

In the spring of 1942 a pair of eastern robins (Turdus migratorius migratorius L.) nested on a second-story window ledge of the Science Library in McGilvrey Hall at Kent State University. Nest building began on either May 4 or 5. The first egg was observed at 8 A.M. on May 8. The second egg was observed at 2 P.M. the same day. Three days later the third and fourth eggs were first seen at 11 A.M. Three of the eggs hatched on May 22, and the fourth egg hatched a day later. The female spent much time away from the nest, leaving the eggs exposed for long periods. All of the observed feeding of the young was done by the female. The male came to the ledge occasionally, but without food. All of the birds left the nest on June 4.

—Ralph W. Dexter,
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

THE REDSTART is published monthly by and for the members of the Brooks Bird Club. A corresponding membership may be obtained upon payment of one dollar and fifty cents which includes a twelve-month subscription to THE REDSTART. All members are permitted to contribute field notes for publication.
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