



The Redstart

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Maurice G. Brooks, Editor

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SOME BIRDS OF WATOGA STATE PARK

by

I. B. Boggs

Watoga is West Virginia's largest state park. Its 10,052 acres are sprawled across the mountains of Pocahontas County. It is fifteen miles from Marlinton and eight miles southwest of Huntersville. Its western border is along the Greenbrier River.

For the most part, Watoga is a forested area. Both hardwood and softwood forests prevail, with the former predominant. Some of its wooded areas are open forests. Some are densely tangled masses of rhododendron and mountain laurel. Some parts of the park are readily accessible while others are remote and are rarely traveled by man.

Numerous roads, bridle paths, and hikers' trails lead to interesting and scenic spots within the park. The trails divert one into the wilder sections where outdoor interests are greater, both in plant and animal life.

The mountains - rising up to a height of 3,200 feet - the deep hollows, the tangled thickets, the river border, the lake and other features of the park are conducive to bird, animal, and plant life of wide variation.

One could well spend months or years in Watoga studying its animals, its plants, its birds. So the writer feels that with but a week to his credit, his knowledge of any of these forms of life is quite limited. However, one does make many observations during a limited time.

It was the first week in June, 1945, when I, along with a half dozen others, settled down in Cabin No. 20 for a few days of relaxation. The weatherman frowned upon our adventures, sent cloudy days, rain, cool nights, and one killing frost. But despite the general inclemency of the weather, there were periods that were good for hiking or driving out to different sections of the park. Thus considerable time was spent outdoors.

Most members of the group were interested in birds. So, we paid particular attention to them about the cabin and on the trails. Playfully a goal of 100 different species was set up for our week. This was to include all birds observed--those within the park and those seen in our travels en route to fishing streams or elsewhere. The goal was exceeded by eight.

Comments here are confined to birds observed within the park limits.

The most common song heard day by day was that of the chestnut-sided warbler--the "Beecher Bird," as he was commonly called. Wherever we went, there was the song of this cheerful little fellow. Everyone liked him. He was adopted as a favorite park bird. And one pair seemed to adopt us, at least they built their nest not ten feet from our cabin door.

A close second in numbers and in song was the black and white warbler. While his wiry song is not musical, to me at least, his presence is always enjoyed.

A third very common warbler, especially along Island Lick Run below the Administration Building, was the oven-bird. There these birds were as numerous as were the chestnut-sided warbler--at least their singing indicated that to us.

During the entire week in Watoga Park not a single Kentucky warbler was seen or heard.

Perhaps the weather was a silencer for some species of birds, for only once did we hear the call of an owl (barred), and once the song of a whip-poor-will. Crows and hawks and vultures were few in numbers. No water or shore birds were seen around the lake near our cabin. They were rare along the Greenbrier River, also, during our visits there.

Following is a complete list of the birds observed during our stay in the park:

Eastern green heron (one along the Greenbrier); turkey vulture, sharp-shinned hawk, broad-winged hawk, sparrow hawk, ruffed grouse (one drumming), spotted sandpiper (Greenbrier River), mourning dove, barred owl, whip-poor-will, chimney swift (Greenbrier River), kingfisher (Greenbrier River), flicker, pileated woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, crested flycatcher, phoebe, acadian flycatcher, wood pewee, blue jay, crow, chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, house wren, Carolina wren, catbird, brown thrasher, robin, wood thrush, veery (one), blue-gray gnatcatcher, yellow-throated vireo, red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, black and white warbler, parula warbler, yellow warbler, magnolia warbler (three near cabin), black-throated blue warbler, black-throated green warbler, golden-winged warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, oven-bird, Louisiana water-thrush, Maryland yellow-throat, yellow-breasted chat, hooded warbler, redstart, red-wing (Greenbrier River), cowbird, scarlet tanager, cardinal, indigo bunting, goldfinch, towhee, chipping sparrow, field sparrow, song sparrow.

ADDITIONAL WATER BIRDS AT NICHOLAS COUNTY FARM PONDS

In The Redstart for July, 1945, the writer presented a list of water birds that he had recorded at recently built farm ponds at Mt. Lookout. Since that report the following additional records have been made:

Pied-billed Grebe, Podilymbus p. podiceps. On Sept. 3 one was on the farm pond of Morris McClung. On Sept. 21, one was recorded on the recently constructed Legg pond.

Great Blue Heron, Ardea h. Herodias. July 13 Verl McClung first reported this bird to me. It was often reported by pond owners and others for a week. It was a very unwelcome guest at the stocked ponds.

Common Mallard, Anas p. platyrhynchos. Nov. 11 there was a very wild male mallard on our pond. I followed it to Morris McClung's pond and from there it apparently left the country.

Hooded Merganser, Lophodytes cucullatus. This duck, a female, was with the above mallard. It later flew to W. E. Legg's pond where a baptising was soon to be in progress. The duck remained at the far end of the pond from the crowd, dived and swam throughout the ceremony, to the amusement of several of the congregation. The strange feature to me is that it remained closer to a crowd than it permitted me, alone, to get while on our pond.

Only two members of the Scolopacidae were recorded on the farm ponds during the autumn and fall. The Eastern solitary sandpiper, Tringa s. solitaria, was recorded from Sept. 2 to Oct. 2.

The greater yellow-legs, Totanus Melanoleucus, was recorded frequently from Sept. 21 to Nov. 22. In every instance only a lone individual was recorded.

None of the other birds that were recorded during the spring and included in my previous list were recorded this fall except the two last ones in this list and three blue-winged teal on Sept. 9.

W. C. Legg
Mt. Lookout, W. Va.

WILD GEESE

When geese fly over Mt. Lookout, which is seldom, we have news and I usually hear about the event. Sometimes I see them. If I don't, I feel sadly disappointed that I happened to be at the wrong place when they flew over. On Feb. 28, 25 low-flying birds passed over this community and several people have asked me on this 1st day of March, "Did you see the wild geese yesterday?" I hadn't seen them for I was beside roaring Meadow River at 2 p.m. checking in phoebes, fox sparrows and wood frogs. They tell me that they were large geese and that the leader was honking very loudly. Some friends are particular about that "honking" anymore, for once they came to me with a wild goose tale and in my notes I had reported "about 20 silent, long-necked mergansers," for I had seen them, too, and Peterson was on my side.

W. C. Legg
Mt. Lookout, W. Va.

BIRD NOTES

Since returning from the service in late January I had been "itching" to get out and do some birding. However, due to sickness in the family and several other things

it was not until February 22, that I managed to get in my first real hike. In company with George Breiding, we worked the Big Wheeling Creek area in the vicinity of Cedar Rocks Golf Course and the Langmeyer Farm. Altogether we were in the field about six hours.

Although we listed 17 species, which is a fair total for this time of the year, we both noted the scarcity of bird life. The day was a bit over-cast but quite calm and the temperature about 35 degrees. We did on two occasions observe flocks of approximately 40 and 60 individuals, mostly chickadees, house sparrows, juncos, song sparrows and titmice. Our best recordings for the day were the red-bellied woodpecker and the fox sparrow, both species being very uncommon.

On February 20, at my home in Warwood, for the second time in three years I recorded a myrtle warbler during the winter months. In going to the mail box I noticed this bird flying low and keeping beneath a long hedge-row of junipers. Upon investigation the bird was flushed and a clear view was obtained of the myrtle. In 1943 as I returned home from the Christmas census I picked up an injured myrtle warbler in our yard. The bird lived for several days, apparently dying from internal injuries. Although this species is quite common in the spring, there are few winter records for the county.

Charles Conrad
Wheeling, W. Va.

SCHEDULE

A schedule of events for the Brooks Bird Club has been arranged by the executive committee and presented to the group by chairman, Clyde Upton. The dates cover a six months' period beginning with April and continuing through September.

The local field trips planned for each Sunday during the migration season will be followed by out-door breakfasts prepared by the club for participants present. Century Day will be held on May 12, at which time the group's aim will be to record one hundred different species of birds. It requires a full day of field work, covering various habitats and territories, but it has been accomplished.

More intensive field study will be stressed this year with the resuming of out-of-town trips, which were always so much a part of the activities in years past. It will be interesting to note any changes that may have occurred since our last visit to such places as Pymatuning Lake, Linesville, Pa.; Tappen Dam, Cadiz, Ohio; and Pleasants County, West Virginia.

The Club's annual foray will be held during the month of June, the time and place to be announced at a later date. This month marks the beginning of a series of three out-door monthly meetings around a camp-fire. The customary meeting place for the monthly business sessions is the club room at 707 Warwood Avenue, the last Friday of each month, unless announced otherwise. However, during the summer months the out-door meetings are much preferred.

Aside from all the dates scheduled, the group gathers every Tuesday evening at the club room to complete all business transactions and necessary work on hand. A cordial invitation is extended to any member or friend to join the Brooks Bird Club on any of these occasions. The club room door is open at 8:00 p.m. and we are always happy to greet new friends.

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| April | 6-7 | Field Trip | Pymatuning Lake, Pa. |
| | 14 | Migration walk | Big Wheeling Creek |
| | 21 | Easter Party | Club room |
| | 26 | Monthly meeting | Club room |
| | 28 | Migration walk | Oglebay Park |
| May | 5 | Migration walk | Oglebay Park |
| | 12 | Century Day | Ohio County |
| | 19 | Field trip | Pleasants County, W. Va. |
| | 26 | Migration walk | Oglebay Park |
| | 30 | Walk and picnic | Oglebay Park |
| | 31 | Monthly meeting | Club room |
| June | 2 | Field trip | Tomlinson Run State Park |
| | 8-15 | Annual Foray | Watoga State Park |
| | 18 | Post foray round-up | Club room |
| | 28 | Monthly meeting | Vanscoy Residence |
| July | 4 | All day outing | Oglebay Park |
| | 14 | Field trip | East Liverpool, Ohio |
| | 26 | Monthly meeting | Oglebay Park |
| Aug. | 11 | All day outing | Oglebay Park |
| | 23 | Monthly meeting | Conrad Residence |
| Sept. | 1-2 | Field trip | To be announced |
| | 27 | Annual meeting | Club room |

Carolyn Conrad
Wheeling, W. Va.

OWLS IN AND NEAR CHARLESTON, W. Va.

Members of the Charleston chapter, Brooks Bird Club, have had opportunity during February and March, 1946, to observe a barred owl and at least one great-horned owl (by its voice) under "city" circumstances quite at variance with the conditions under which these larger owls ordinarily are reported.

Dr. and Mrs. Robert Ketchum, whose home at South Ruffner is within the Charleston city limits, watched a barred owl, Strix varia, which appeared fascinated by the beam of an automobile spotlight. On three occasions during late February and early March Mr. and Mrs. John Handlan reported hearing from their bedroom windows the booming of a great-horned owl, Bubo virginianus. Their home is in Kanawha City, within the Charleston municipal limits and the voice of the bird (or birds) appeared to come from a hillside just beyond the city line and some quarter-mile from their apartment.

John W. Handlan
409 41st St. S.E.
Charleston, W. Va.

- ANNOUNCEMENT -

The 1946 Oglebay Nature Training Camp will take place at Lake Terra Alta, Terra Alta, W. Va., from June 23 to July 6. The first week will be devoted to nature study in the vicinity of the camp while the second week will include many one-day field trips. Of special interest will be Reunion Day, July 4, when all old time campers are invited to be on hand. For additional information, please write for the folder, Nature Education Department, Oglebay Institute, Wheeling, W. Va.

Hughes Barnes
Camp Director

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.

The Brooks Bird Club, 707 Warwood Ave., Wheeling, W. Va.