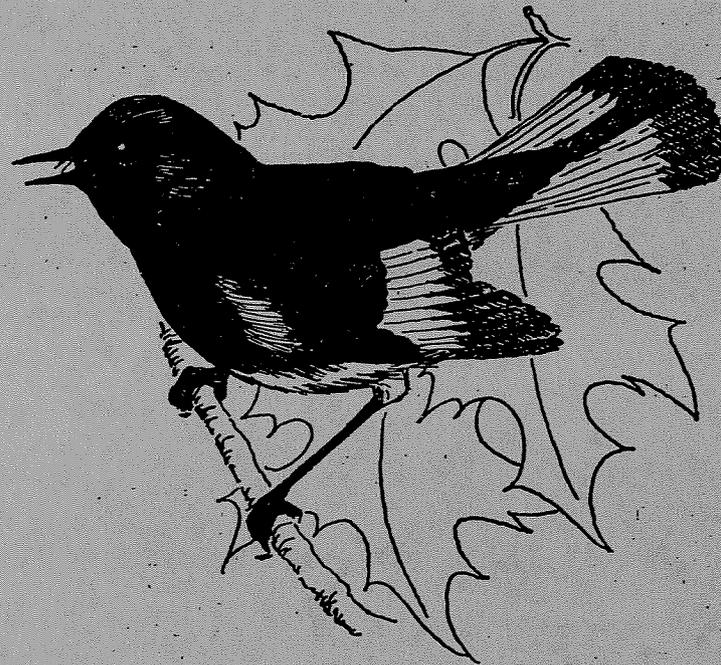


The REDSTART

VOLUME 41 - NUMBER 3

JULY, 1974



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VOLUME 41—NUMBER 3

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McClintic Sortie—1971

George Koch

The "Sortie" concept grew with the realization that we were not taking advantage of some of our best birding time. The last week of May and the first week of June are "prime time" for population studies. As we continue through June the young birds leave the nest and the song declines, both of which reduce the ease and accuracy of the studies. Previous to the "prime time" late migrants and unsettled breeders may add (to quote Dr. Burt) "contaminating influences" to the studies.

In spite of the discouragingly low attendance at the 4th Sortie (Beech Fork—1969) we were forced to continue. The 1970 Foray (Nicholas Co.) was late and we brought trailers to the Foray site the week before Foray. Eight members worked four study plots. This Sortie was more of a Pre-foray and the results were included in the Foray report. Some members had already made studies over Memorial Day weekend.

The Pre-foray was so successful that we decided to try again in 1971. We chose to return to McClintic Wildlife Station because the barn is an excellent headquarters and we needed a forest study plot to complete the work we had done in 1967 (Redstart, 38, pp. 90-99, April 1971).

We planned a four day stay from Friday, May 28 to Monday, May 31, 1971. Five persons arrived Thursday evening and the next morning we started two previously laid out study plots. One in the woodlands along the north boundary, the one that we needed, and a rerun of the Abandoned Bottomland. With a maximum of 10 "overnighters" we were able to complete the two study plots, make a 50 station Breeding Bird Survey, and band three mornings, but were unable to rerun the Cattail Marsh plot. Available time for nesting and general observation was limited and the high incidence of ticks discouraged afternoon and evening walks other than along roads or well cleared paths. No new plant lists were made. Only 14 nesting cards were turned in.

Our 1971 bird list totals 109 species. We worked extensively in the north boundary forest and along Old Town creek west of the mature forest. We added a number of new warblers to the list but were unable to find many of the unusual species of 1967. We did find a Chipping Sparrow (but not on the area proper). Perhaps the most unusual observation was in not finding a Belted Kingfisher.

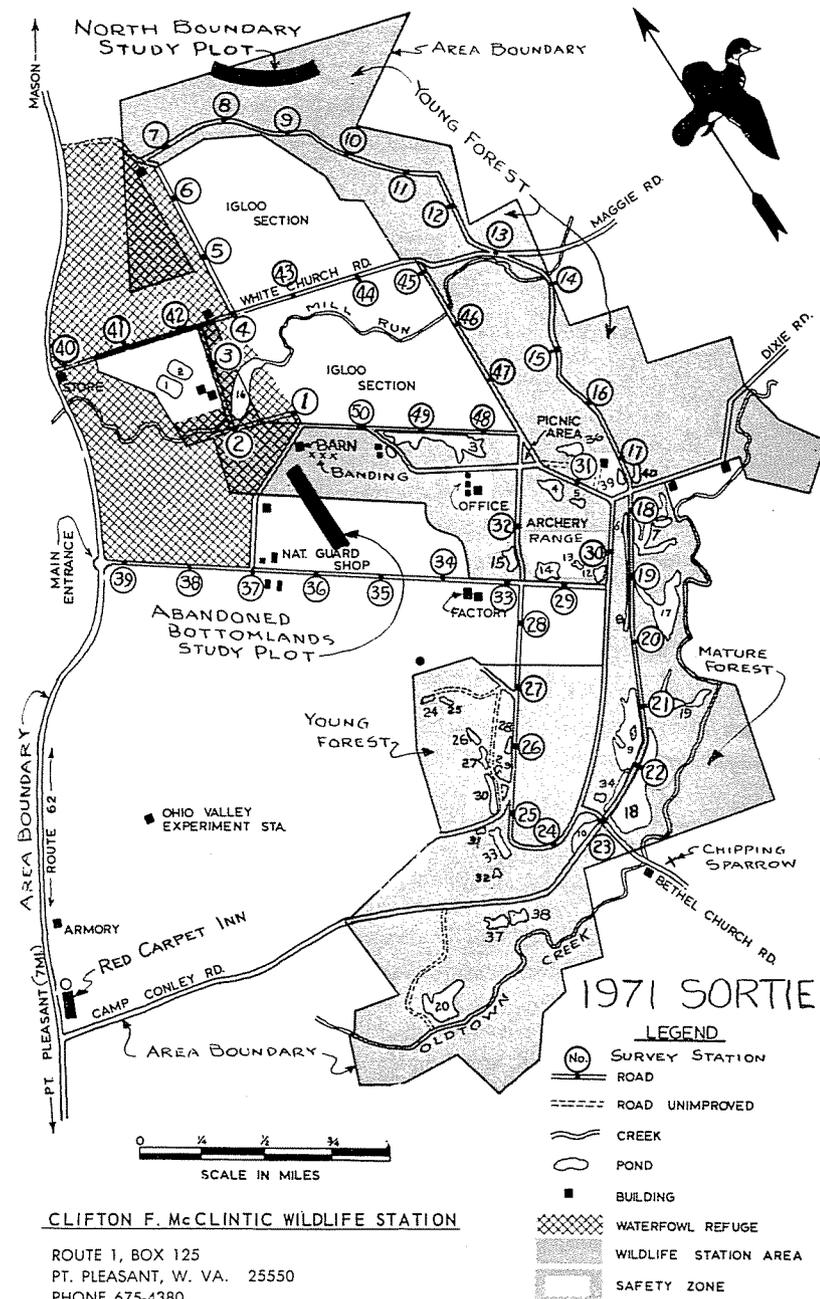
No physical change in the area except four years growth of vegetation. A program of controlled burning has been started that eventually will open up most of the thicker brushy tangles but has not yet made much progress.

A new area map has been made to show the new study plot and the stations of the 50 station survey.

NORTH BOUNDARY RIDGE—HARDWOOD FOREST

Location: Eight miles NNE from Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in the McClintic Wildlife Station. Starts at 38° 58' 39" N, 82° 04' 08" W, Cheshire quadrangle, U.S.G.S., and extends WNW along the ridge.

Size: 15 acres (rectangular, 110 x 660 yards, measured longitudinally).



CENSUS

Species	Territorial Males	Males per 100 acres
Cerulean Warbler	6	40
Cardinal	5	33
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	27
Acadian Flycatcher	3	20
Red-eyed Vireo	3	20
Indigo Bunting	2.5	17
Kentucky Warbler	2	13
Rufous-sided Towhee	2	13
Eastern Wood Pewee	1	7
Blue Jay	1	7
Carolina Chickadee	1	7
Tufted Titmouse	1	7
Carolina Wren	1	7
Wood Thrush	1	7
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	7
Summer Tanager	1	7
Barred Owl	+	+
Pileated Woodpecker	+	+
Red-bellied Woodpecker	+	+
Hairy Woodpecker	+	+
Downy Woodpecker	+	+
Common Crow	+	+
Yellow-throated Vireo	+	+
Ovenbird	+	+
Scarlet Tanager	+	+
Brown-headed Cowbird	+	+
American Goldfinch	+	+
Total Species, 27	35.5	237

Visitors: Cedar Waxwing, Worm-eating Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler.

Remarks: Nests found: One each of Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Cardinal. The territories of the breeding birds were remarkably well established and defined on the plot. Good opposition singing, especially with the Cerulean Warblers, solved any problems that arose. All of the Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were found near the centerline and were seen or heard every trip. A juvenile Barred Owl was seen on three trips. Most of the visitors were late-migrating birds. A Black Snake was observed on the plot and Gray Squirrels and E. Cottontails were seen. The type of vegetation provides good nesting sites and cover as well as ample food. This appears to contribute to the number of species and individual birds found in this study.

Census Takers: Nevada Laitsch (compiler), Maxine Thacker, Harry Slack, Grace Grant, Andy Weaks, Maxine Kiff.

Topography: The ridge is level at an elevation of 820 to 850 feet, with a 20-30% slope on each side of the ridge.

Plant Cover: The land rises to about 200 feet above the Ohio River flood plain and is fairly typical of this part of the Ohio Valley. The partially closed canopy, made up of trees 50 to 60 feet in height and up to 14 inches DBH, includes Red Maple [*Acer rubrum*], Black Cherry [*Prunus serotina*], Red Oak [*Quercus rubra*], Black Locust [*Robinia pseudo-acacia*], Tulip-tree [*Liriodendron tulipifera*], White Ash [*Fraxinus americana*], Slippery Elm [*Ulmus rubra*], and Sassafras [*Sassafras albidum*]. The intermediate understory is composed of Redbud [*Cercis canadensis*], Pawpaw [*Asimina triloba*], Flowering Dogwood [*Cornus florida*], and Spicebush [*Lindera benzoin*]. Tree climbers are Wild Grape [*Vitis* sp.], Virginia Creeper [*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*], Poison Ivy [*Rhus radicans*], and Trumpet Vine [*Campsis radicans*]. Blackberry [*Rubus* sp.] is distributed throughout and *Rosa multiflora* and Japanese Honeysuckle [*Lonicera japonica*] are becoming well established. The ground cover includes several patches of Periwinkle [*Vinca minor*], Mayapple [*Podophyllum peltatum*] and grasses. Christmas Fern [*Polystichum acrostichoides*], New York Fern [*Dryopteris noveboracensis*], and Adders-tongue Fern [*Ophioglossum vulgatum*] were found. An old haul road, used as the centerline, passes through a grassy opening of about one half acre midway through the plot.

Edge: The forest continues on all sides.

Coverage: May 28, 29, 30, 31, 1971. Ten trips were made between daybreak and 8 a.m., two in the late morning and two in late afternoon. Total man-hours, 20.

ABANDONED BOTTOMLAND

Location: Six miles NNE of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in the McClintic Wildlife Station. Starts 150 yards SSW of the Barn and extends south from 38 55' 31" N, 82 05' 03" W, Cheshire Quadrangle, U.S.G.S.

Size: 15 acres (rectangular, 110 x 660 yards, measured longitudinally).

Topography: Level at about 610 feet above sea level.

Plant Cover: In an area graded in 1942 for a munitions plant since abandoned the predominate plants are still Blackberry [*Rubus* sp.] and Poison Ivy [*Rhus radicans*]. Tent caterpillars were again abundant in the Black Cherry [*Prunus serotina*] saplings. For complete Topography and Plant Cover see Redstart, vol 38, pp. 94.

Edge: Continuous habitat on all sides.

Coverage: May 28-31, 1971. Twelve trips between daylight and 8:30 a.m. and one trip in the evening. Total party-hours, 11.

Visitors: Green Heron, Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Barn Swallow, Common Crow, Eastern, Bluebird, Orchard Oriole, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

Remarks: No reason was apparent to justify the increase in population from 1967 to 1971. Additional studies will be required to determine the norm. Goldfinches were abundant but the Cowbird was the most abundant species. Ticks were also very abundant and discouraged nest hunting so, although we suspect that many nests were parasitized we were unable to prove it.

Census Takers: Kenneth Anderson, Andy Weaks, Harry Slack, Roy Slack, Maxine Kiff, and George Koch (compiler).

Species	CENSUS		
	Territorial Males		Males per 100 acres
	1971	1967	1971
Yellow-breasted Chat	9	53	60
Yellowthroat	7	13	47
Field Sparrow	6	27	40
Rufous-sided Towhee	5	47	33
Catbird	4	17	27
Yellow Warbler	4	+	27
Song Sparrow	4	33	27
Prairie Warbler	3	13	20
Traill's Flycatcher	2	0	13
Carolina Chickadee	2	0	13
Brown Thrasher	2	3	13
Red-winged Blackbird	2	+	13
Cardinal	2	0	13
Indigo Bunting	2	+	13
Carolina Wren	1.5	+	10
White-eyed Vireo	1.5	+	10
House Wren	1	7	7
Wood Thrush	1	0	7
Eastern Phoebe	0.5	3	3
Blue Jay	0.5	0	3
Red-shouldered Hawk	+	0	+
Bobwhite	+	vis.	+
American Woodcock	+	7	+
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	+	+	+
Black-billed Cuckoo	+	7	+
Blue-winged Warbler	+	7	+
Brown-headed Cowbird	+	+	+
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	0	3	0
Total Species 1971, 27	61	254	407
1967, 21			

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

Saturday morning, May 29, 1971, Connie Katholi, with Laura Koch and Grace Grant as scorekeeper, navigator, and gate openers, made a survey run tailored to fit our limited area. The usual 50 stations but only about a quarter of a mile apart were used for a total of 12¼ miles. Between stations 39 and 40 they traveled just less than a mile along W. Va. Route No. 62 but made no stops. Starting at 5:35 a.m. they stopped for three minutes at each station and tallied all birds seen or heard at each stop. Even though stations 7 through 24 were behind locked gates they finished at 10:15 a.m. which was much earlier than at Beech Fork in 1969. This was because there was about twelve miles less travel, they were familiar with the area, the roads were good, and the route started and ended near camp.

The results are tabulated below. The total for each species gives the apparent abundance of the bird. The "Stops per Species" shows the distribution of that species. 63 species were found.

Species	Stops per Species		Stops per Total Species	
	Total	Species	Total	Species
Pied-Billed Grebe	1	1	16	14
Green Heron	5	2	9	7
Canada Goose	25	4	8	5
Mallard	6	1	7	4
Blue-winged Teal	2	1	8	7
Wood Duck	27	2	5	4
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	1	76	8
Bobwhite	13	13	9	6
American Coot	1	1	10	7
Spotted Sandpiper	1	1	2	2
Solitary Sandpiper	1	1	2	2
Rock Dove	2	2	15	12
Mourning Dove	23	18	1	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	1	4	4
Black-billed Cuckoo	4	4	5	4
Chimney Swift	6	3	35	26
Yellow-shafted Flicker	7	6	47	30
Pileated Woodpecker	2	1	8	2
Eastern Kingbird	3	3	3	2
Eastern Phoebe	2	2	88	16
Acadian Flycatcher	3	3	4	2
Traill's Flycatcher	3	3	2	2
Eastern Wood Pewee	2	2	43	17
Tree Swallow	4	2	17	9
Barn Swallow	2	2	1	1
Purple Martin	6	1	52	37
Blue Jay	3	3	42	33
Common Crow	58	26	6	5
Carolina Chickadee	3	2	22	18
Tufted Titmouse	13	8	43	20
House Wren	2	2	32	25
Carolina Wren	2	2		

BANDING AT THE 1971 SORTIE

Maxine Kiff and Jerie Stewart assisted by Janice Musser set up the mist nets and banded during the mornings of May 28, 29, and 30, 1971. They banded 57 birds and netted two additional ones that had previously been banded at the station. Both birds, a Catbird and a Yellow-breasted Chat, had been banded by Jerie Stewart on May 9, 1970.

The birds banded this year were; Black-billed Cuckoo, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 1; Traill's Flycatcher, 4; Least Flycatcher, 1; Catbird, 6; Brown Thrasher, 1; Robin, 1; Wood Thrush, 1; Swainson's Thrush, 1; Eastern Bluebird, 2; Cedar Waxwing, 1; White-eyed Vireo, 3; Blue-winged Warbler, 1; Orange-crowned Warbler, 1; Yellow Warbler, 1; Connecticut Warbler, 1; Yellowthroat, 1; Yellow-breasted Chat, 5; Wilson's Warbler, 2; Brown-headed Cowbird, 3; Cardinal, 7; Indigo Bunting, 4; Rufous-sided Towhee, 2; Field Sparrow, 4; and Song Sparrow, 2.

BREEDING RECORDS

Both the Canada Geese and Wood Ducks had successful breeding seasons. The few records we found are listed as species, description, and initials of the recorder.

Green Heron, nest, 8 ft. up, GK; Canada Goose, several broods, All; Mallard, 6 young on pond 9, RS & HS; Wood Duck, several broods, All; Killdeer, 4 young, RS & HS; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, nest, 12 ft. up, NL; Eastern Kingbird, nest 3 ft. above water, pond 18, All; Acadian Flycatcher, adult on nest, NL; Eastern Bluebird, in box at barn, All; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 2 nests, with eggs & feeding young, AW-KA; Kentucky Warbler, on nest, NL; Red-winged Blackbird, 2 nests, on nest & 2 young, RS-HS; Baltimore Oriole, Nest 55 ft. up, RS & HS; Cardinal, nest with 4 eggs, 3 ft. up, NL.

1971 BIRD LIST

We will note only the changes from the 1967 list as they are few. The abundant species are still abundant and the rare species are still rare or missing. Both Crows and Grackles have increased and are now abundant. The Red-eyed Vireo is now quite common. All additions to the list can be considered rare.

Water birds—delete the Black-crowned Night Heron, Am. Wigeon, and Lesser Scaup. Add the Black Duck.

Hawks—delete the Marsh Hawk and add an Osprey.

Add the Ruffed Grouse.

Shore birds—delete the Com. Gallinule. Add the Virginia Rail and Solitary Sandpiper.

Delete the Belted Kingfisher and the Olive-sided Flycatcher.

Warblers—Add the Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Orange-crowned, Yellow-throated, and Canada Warblers.

Delete the Grasshopper Sparrow and the White-crowned Sparrow. Add the Chipping Sparrow.

104 species in 1967, plus 14, less 9, equals 109 species in 1971.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Participants in the Sortie were Nevada and John Laitsch, (whose names were inadvertently omitted from the 1967 list), Harry and Roy Slack, Janice Musser, Maxine Kiff, Jerie Stewart, Dave Leatherman, John Smith, Grace Grant, Maxine Thacker, Jo and Ray Ashworth, Andy Weaks, Kenneth Anderson, Connie Katholi, and Laura and George Koch. — 370 Central Ave., South Charleston, W. Va.



Field Sparrow Egg in Towhee Nest

Jo and Ray Ashworth

It was the twenty-ninth of May at McClintic Wildlife Station, that we observed a most unusual happening in the avian world.

A field sparrow with a nice fat caterpillar in her mouth, perched on a nearby sapling. As she flew into tangled undergrowth the voices of young could be heard. When she flew out to get more tidbits, we approached with the hopes of getting a good picture for our collection.

A towhee scrambled out of the grasses near our feet. There in a clump of tall grass was a beautiful hair-lined grassy nest with two white eggs, speckled and blotched with red brown. Also in the nest was one smaller pale greenish egg, splotted with brown. The picture we took of the nest was good.

About five feet away in the scrubby undergrowth, the field sparrow's grassy hair-lined nest was located. Pushing away the tall grass, we observed two fledgings with pink gapes trimmed with yellow and one unhatched pale greenish egg splotted with brown.

After taking pictures and replacing the tall grasses, we came to the conclusion that the field sparrow, in her haste, was confused by the proximity of the nests, and laid an egg in the towhee's nest.

The towhee is sometimes victimized with great success by the cowbird. Maybe by a field sparrow, too? — 322 Parkview Dr., St. Albans, W. Va.

Editorial

The Brooks Bird Club and Conservation

Brooks Bird Club members are, obviously, very sophisticated. For example, the April issue of *The Redstart* was printed on recycle paper. Even though this paper was obviously off-white and of different quality from the usual paper used, your editor has had but one comment about the paper. One conclusion is that our readers, having been exposed to such paper elsewhere, were not surprised to notice it in their periodical. Recycle paper is no cheaper than our usual grade. While the amount of paper used and thus the number of trees conserved is small, I thought it would be of some value to show the Club's dedication to conservation by this token action. Your comments are solicited.

While on the subject of conservation I would like also to comment on another aspect — that of plant conservation. Some of our members collect entire plants for replanting in their own yards. Many of these efforts are successful while others fail due to the varied exacting soil requirements for such wild plants. While it could be rationalized that the taking of one or several plants from an area where there are many of that species will not affect the species' survival it is yet another matter where only one or a few specimens of a rare plant is concerned.

Is the practice of conservation not better served to leave the rare specimen where found so that others may also have the opportunity to discover and observe it too. Also, it might have better chance for surviving and increasing in its naturally selected habitat.

The only valid reason for moving such a plant seems to be where its destruction was imminent for some reason. In such case it could be argued that the plant should then be placed in an arboretum or other similarly protected public area where interested people could enjoy seeing it.

Perhaps our members who have not embraced it could adopt the "take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints" philosophy expressed many times with reference to our great outdoors. — George Hurley

Book Review

The View from Hawk Mountain

by Michael Harwood

Charles Scribners, 1973 — pp. 184 — \$6.95

To a birder the title brings instant empathy, and the book is a promise fulfilled, — a veritable magic carpet transporting the reader to the mountains where the hawks are flying. House-bound hours spent with this very readable book are almost equivalent to going physically to the rocky ledges, — whether on days of autumn blue-and-gold or ones of misty, lowering clouds. It is a book for both the lover of hawks and the lover of the out-of-doors.

Mr. Harwood retells the story of Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, — its topography and geology, the early history of the infamous fall hawk shoots, the first fragile beginnings of the sanctuary including the story of Maurice Broun, the first curator, and of the many others who were responsible for its success. He describes the mechanics of the migratory flights, the weather patterns, and the numbers of passing birds with comparisons over the years. Included also are the tiny warblers, the thrushes and the finches observed from the look-outs, and some of the more unusual or unexpected migrants over the mountains, — the loons, geese, swans, and shorebirds recorded with the hawks along this route. He narrates anecdotes also of the many residents of the mountain both bird and animal.

Interwoven throughout are character or personality sketches of each species of raptor from the tiny kestrel to the mighty eagle which is seen flying the Kittatiny ridges. These "vignettes" are exceptionally fascinating, — in my opinion the freshest and most interesting portions of the book. Taken from the "literature," they include excerpts from the diaries and writings of such early naturalists as Audubon, Wilson, Edwin Forbush, William Brewster, and Arthur C. Bent. These are inserted between narrative accounts of a number of days spent by the author atop the observations points with the varied incidents of excitements and disappointments experienced on these occasions.

In the final chapters Harwood traces again the search for the answer to the problems besetting the peregrine falcon, the osprey and the Bald eagle, recounting the investigations into DDT and related chemicals with the findings and apparent conclusions to date. He discusses the latest developments at the Sanctuary, the additional look-outs constructed to provide space for the ever-increasing crowds who visit the mountain, the new nature trails and the taped programs available to the many groups of school children.

Michael Harwood is an ardent birder and hawkwatcher who has been intimately associated with Hawk Mountain for many years; he is as in love with it as many of us are with Bear Rocks and the other hawk ridges of West Virginia. He has spent many hours assisting with the counting of the flights and with various other chores at the sanctuary. He is the writer of numerous articles on nature and environmental matters for *The New York Times Magazine* and *The Potomac Magazine*; he is the author of several books. A great deal of research as well as observation in the field went into this current one; it is a scholarly effort. The long bibliography attests to this as well as the list of acknowledgements which reads like a "who's who" of the top birders and naturalists today. Particularly of interest to BBCers—perhaps already known to many—is the part which George M. Sutton played in bringing to a focus the early awareness of the need for action against the gunners of the hawks on the Pennsylvania ridges.

It is as well a spontaneous outpouring of Mr. Harwood's own love of nature. He is capable of vividly descriptive nature writing. The reader hears the buzzing of insects around the sun-warmed rocks, notes the passage of the travelling Monarch butterflies, and revels in the scarlet of mountain ash accenting the already brilliant autumn foliage. He conveys so well the anticipation of the watcher, revealing how similar, indeed, are the various hawk stations for providing thrills and excitement

along with the enjoyment of the outdoor scene, and the hope which "springs eternal" in the spectators' hearts. Above all he recreates the awe experienced when watching the great birds of Hawk Mountain — birds which are in his words, "the very essence of wilderness." He expresses the feeling which these passing birds give to him, "that he is somehow at the very heart of Migration", — a feeling not so easily obtained from the small night migrants which materialize only with the dawn, although they may often be heard passing during the hours of darkness. The text is illustrated with very nice pen-and-ink drawings of the various hawks by Fred Wetzell, who is an associate curator at the sanctuary.

After finishing **The View From Hawk Mountain**, it occurred to me to reread **Hawks Aloft**, written by Maurice Broun in 1947, roughly 15 years after the founding of the sanctuary, — over 25 years ago now! Still in print it is as fresh and exciting as when it was first published; it covers much of the same material of the present volume. In this respect Mr. Harwood's book is essentially "Hawk Mountain revisited" and brought up-to-date. But there is a new audience now, a generation possible even more nature and conservation conscious than the older one, and to them I recommend that they read both books, the old one and the new. They will then be "partakers of the view", indeed, as Michael Harwood invited them to be in his dedication. — Constance Katholi

A Leucistic *Plethodon cinereus* from West Virginia

Hensley (1959) does not list albino salamanders of the genus *Plethodon* for West Virginia.

A leucistic *Plethodon cinereus* was collected at the West Virginia University Biological Station, Terra Alta, West Virginia on 16 May 1972. This specimen was collected in an area where *P. cinereus* is common. The following description is based on this specimen: a mature male with a total length of 66mm, a snout-vent length of 35mm, and a costal groove count of 19 (Highton, 1957). The eyes are normal in color. Dissection showed that pigmentation is lacking internally. Externally, the only coloration consists of minute pigment traces found along the sides. The dorsal band, characteristic of the red-backed phase, and the venter are nearly devoid of these pigment traces and therefore lighter in color.

This specimen is presently in the private collection of the author. — Thomas K. Pauley, Department of Biology, Salem College, Salem, West Virginia 26426

A Behavior Note on Incubation Duty Exchange in Killdeer

Mark Gatewood

The killdeer has evolved many behavioral adaptations which enable it to successfully exploit an open-nesting situation. The most commonly observed and reported of these adaptations is the injury-feigning distraction display used to lure a potential predator from the nest area. I find no record, however, of the manner in which the nesting killdeer pair, which shares incubation duties, effects the actual exchange of places on the nest.

During the spring of 1973, I observed a nesting pair of killdeer near Marietta, Ohio. The nest was located in a sparsely weedy strip between a gravel parking lot on the north and a large plowed corn field on the south. The corn field was used as a feeding and resting area by the off-duty bird.

I watched the birds almost daily from 14 April, when the nest was discovered, until 6 May, when it was terminated. I spent a total of about eight hours at the nest, with the longest single observation period being three hours. During this time, I saw six exchanges of incubation duty between the parent birds. The way in which the exchanges were made fell into a general pattern. Though no two exchanges were identical, a typical one would proceed as follows; the replacement bird, flying in from the corn field to the south, gave a single call note on the wing (in one case this call was given upon alighting). The bird would alight at a distance of eight to ten feet from the nest and wait for the sitting bird to leave the nest. In three cases, the replacement landed behind the sitting bird.

The sitting bird usually perked up on hearing the replacement's call note. It would then rise and run discretely from the nest for a distance of six to ten feet. In all exchanges but one, the sitting bird ran directly away from the replacement. In one instance, it ran towards the replacement and, as the birds passed one another, each gave a low, fluttering trill, as of recognition.

Once at a safe distance from the nest, the relieved bird gave a single loud note and took wing. Only then did the replacement approach the nest and sit.

The adaptive significance of this behavior is obvious. All flight is begun or ended at a distance from the nest and distracting calls are used to further direct attention away from the nest area. Approach and abandonment of the nest are effected on the ground, with the bird running in a crouched, rodent-like posture. It is all part of a behavioral ploy adopted, perhaps, in order to escape competition with those species of birds requiring concealed nesting sites.

There may also be subtle significance to the direction from which the replacement approaches the nest with relation to the orientation of the sitting bird. The replacement could be landing deliberately on the sitting bird's blind side. This would give the sitting bird the advantage of being able to abandon the nest over territory which it has already been scrutinizing for possible danger, with the added security of knowing that the territory to the rear is being covered by the replacement.

Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio



FIELD NOTES

Mrs. Nevada Laitsch, Editor
MC 21, East Liverpool, Ohio

FIELD NOTES WINTER SEASON

December 1, 1973 through February 28, 1974

For the second straight year our region experienced a very mild winter. There were some very warm days in January and excessive rainfall in both January and February. There were no heavy storms or greatly prolonged cold spells during the period and snowfall was well below normal.

Birdlife did not differ greatly from last winter. There was no invasion of northern species. Most reporters listed a fair number of wintering species but the consensus was that birding was dull both in the field and at the feeders.

Loons, grebes and herons—**Common Loons** appeared to be scarce. The only report came from the eastern panhandle of West Virginia where they were seen on the Shenandoah River during most of the winter (CM). There were more than usual reports of **Horned Grebes**. 25 were seen on the Kanawha River on Dec. 9 (NG), four were listed on the Pipestem State Park area (parts of Monroe, Summers and Mercer Counties, W. Va.) Christmas Count (OJ) and were found at Lake White, Pike County, O. Jan. 6 (MT). **Pied-billed Grebes** were considered common in the eastern panhandle of W. Va. but few were reported elsewhere. **Great Blue Herons** were reported by most contributors and listed on all the Christmas Counts that reached the editor. Two of this species wintered on the Tygart River between Beverly and Elkins, W. Va. (EO&EH).

Waterfowl—Unusual was the report of wintering **Whistling Swans** in Randolph County, W. Va. Two adults and four juveniles were seen there throughout the winter (EO&EH). A flock of five was noted near Portsmouth, O. on Jan. 26 and the flock built up to 20 by mid February (MT). A flock of some 50 **Canada Geese** was observed in flight over Portsmouth, O. Jan. 1. Smith counted 125 at McClinton Wildlife Station, Mason County, W. Va. Jan. 26 and Bell saw 26 on a pond near Carmicheals, Pa. on the same date. Five **Snow Geese** were seen at Seneca Lake, O. Jan. 24 (ES), and two were seen near Hinton, W. Va. Jan. 16 (JLS) and one at Marmet, W. Va. on Feb. 21 (NG). **Mallard Ducks** were considered plentiful on the rivers in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia during the winter. A few **Black Ducks**, **Common Goldeneyes**, **Buffleheads** and **Mergansers** were also there during the early winter. All of these species were seen on the Greenbrier River near Hinton with **Common Goldeneye** being the most plentiful (JLS). A flock of 12 **Wigeons** was

seen near Lewisburg, W. Va. Dec. 12 (COH). One of this species was seen at Seneca Lake, O. Feb. 17 (ES) and one in Coonskin Park, Charleston, W. Va. Feb. 18 (NG). A most unusual report was that of a male **Harlequin Duck** seen near Hinton, W. Va. on Jan. 22, Feb. 7 and 15 (JLS). The reporter's accompanying notes on description and comparison to **Common Goldeneyes** nearby left little doubt as to proper identification. Four **Oldsquaws** (one male and three females) were seen at Lewisburg, W. Va. Dec. 16 (COH).

Vultures and hawks—**Turkey Vultures** continue to be scarce in the eastern panhandle of W. Va. A **Black Vulture** was seen there occasionally (CM). 47 **Turkey Vultures** and 38 **Black Vultures** were listed on the Lewisburg, W. Va. area Christmas Count. Few records of accipiters were submitted which indicates that accipiter populations continue to be low in our region. There were many reports of **Red-tailed Hawks**. 18 were found on the Clarksville, Pa. area Christmas Count which Bell comments "the most ever". **Am. Kestrels** appeared to be more common than usual. Several reporters mentioned increases in their areas. The only record of **Marsh Hawk** was the one that wintered in the Richland area near Lewisburg (COH).

Gallinaceous and shorebirds—**Turkeys** were in good supply in the mountain areas of the eastern panhandle of W. Va. Miller had reports of flocks of 6 to 10 birds during February. Eleven **Turkeys** were included in the Pipestem area Christmas Count. A few **Killdeer** wintered at East Liverpool, O. and Charleston, W. Va. Flocks numbering up to 30 were seen in the Scioto River bottoms near Portsmouth, O. Feb. 2 (MT). Both **Killdeer** and **Common Snipe** were plentiful in the eastern panhandle of W. Va. A dozen **Common Snipe** were seen on the Clarksville, Pa. Christmas Count but that is only half as many as last year (RKB).

Gulls, doves, owls and kingfishers—Both **Herring** and **Ring-billed Gulls** were seen occasionally on the Ohio, Kanawha, Shenandoah and Potomac rivers during the period. A flock of 50 **Ring-billed** and four **Bonaparte's Gulls** were seen near Lewisburg, W. Va. Dec. 16 (COH). A flock of **Ring-billed Gulls** numbering at least 100 was seen at Kyger Creek, Galia County, O. Jan. 26 (JLS). **Mourning Doves** were reported in very good sized flocks in several areas indicating further increases in dove populations. The only report of **Barn Owl** came from Lewisburg where one was seen Dec. 19. Mr. Handley comments that five **Great Horned Owls** on the Lewisburg area Christmas Count was unusual. Bell reports an increase of this species in the Clarksville, Pa. area where six were recorded on the Christmas Count and they could be heard calling regularly. As to be expected during such a mild winter, several reports of wintering **Belted Kingfishers** were received.

Woodpeckers—Most resident woodpeckers appear to be doing quite well. There were no records of wintering **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and wintering **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** appeared on the low side.

Larks and corvids—25 **Horned Larks** were included on the Pipestem area Christmas Count and a flock was seen at the Mercer County Airport Dec. 31 (JLS). A flock of about 25 was seen near Lewisburg on Jan. 15 (COH). Most reporters considered the numbers of wintering Blue Jays to be about normal. Two **Common Ravens** were sighted over the Bluestone gorge at Pipestem State Park on Jan. 27 (JLS). Large flocks of **Common Crows** remained in the region all winter.

Chickadees through wrens—Several reporters commented that although a few **Black-capped Chickadees** were in the region, numbers were far below those of a few years back. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were scarce. **Brown Creeper** numbers appeared normal. Ten Winter Wrens were listed on the Pipestem area Christmas Count. A few were found throughout the period near East Liverpool, O. Gluck reports that he heard only one during the period in the Charleston, W. Va. area. The abundance of **Carolina Wrens** drew comment from most every reporter. More than one person commented they seem to be everywhere!"

Mimics and thrushes—**Mockingbirds** wintered in the southern part of the region in unusually good numbers. One was seen daily at East Liverpool, O. which is a bit out of range. Several **Brown Thrashers** wintered in the Charleston area (NG). Although great numbers of wintering **Robins** were in the Charleston area there were no reports from other areas. A fair number of **E. Bluebirds** wintered at Lewisburg, W. Va. (COH) and scattered reports came from other locations. Their numbers were way down at Charleston where the number on the Christmas Count was the lowest in eleven years.

Kinglets, waxwings and warblers—**Golden-crowned Kinglets** were not uncommon during the winter—they appeared to be well distributed over the region. **Cedar Waxwings** were rare. The only reports came from Steubenville, O. and East Liverpool, O. where a few were seen in January but soon disappeared (CSB&NL). Warblers were practically non-existent during the winter season. A few **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen in the eastern panhandle of W. Va. and a **Pine Warbler** came to a feeder at Shanghai in that area throughout the winter (CM). A **Palm Warbler** was seen at Bell's home near Clarksville, Pa. from Dec. 17 to Dec. 22 then disappeared.

House Sparrow—An interesting account of **House Sparrows** came from Charleston, W. Va. where a steady decline of this species has been taking place during the past six to eight years. There was only 56 included on the Charleston Christmas Count this year compared to 450 in 1964 (NG). Ralph Bell has noted a decline of **House Sparrows** in the Clarksville, Pa. area also.

Blackbirds—46 **E. Meadowlarks** were tallied for the Lewisburg area Christmas Count. Nine were seen by the Pipestem area counters. Small numbers were seen in Columbiana County, O. in February (NL). Five **Rusty Blackbirds** were located in the Pipestem area for the Christmas Count (OJ). A few **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Com. Grackles** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** appeared as occasional visitors at feeders in the region during the winter but no large wintering flocks were reported.

Grosbeaks through sparrows—A population explosion of **Cardinals** was indicated by the many reports of greatly increased numbers of **Cardinals** all over the region. A **Dickcissel** appeared at a feeder near Sistersville, W. Va. in February and remained for several days (GM). **Evening Grosbeaks** were not very numerous. Small flocks appeared now and then in various places in the region but numbers failed to build up. Few **Purple Finches** were reported. A **House Finch** was seen several times in December at a feeder in Buckhannon, W. Va. (MTh.) **Pine Siskins** were scarce at feeders. **Am. Goldfinches** showed a population decline compared to past few years. The only report of **Red Crossbills** came from St. Albans, W. Va. where the

Ashworths saw them on several occasions when they fed on scrub pine cones (R&JA). Reporters in the southern part of the region considered the number of wintering **Rufous-sided Towhees** to be about normal. **Dark-eyed Juncos** were wintering in good numbers in most areas. An exception was Charleston, where the wintering population continues to be low (NG). **Tree Sparrows** were rare. Some reporters were unable to find them while most others reported only one or two birds. A **Chipping Sparrow** was seen regularly at Greensburg, Pa. during January and February (VO). The wintering population of **Field Sparrows** was down in the Charleston area and the flock that normally winters at East Liverpool, O. could not be found. Good numbers of **White-crowned Sparrows** wintered in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia and at Lewisburg. More than usual were seen at Buckhannon (MTh.). **White-throated Sparrows** were included in most all accounts but they were not considered nearly as common as they were last year. **Song Sparrows** appeared about normal.

Contributors—Ray and Jo Ashworth, **R&JA**; Clinton S. Banks, **CSB**; Ralph K. Bell, **RKB**; Norris Gluck, **NG**; Charles O. Handley, Sr., **COH**; Eugene Hutton, **EH**; Oliver Johnson, **OJ**; Clark Miller, **CM**; Gladys Murrey, **GM**; Ephe Olliver, **EO**; Virginia Olsen, **VO**; J. Lawrence Smith, **JLS**; Eleanor Soja, **ES**; Maxine Thacker, **MTh**; Marie Trowbridge, **MT**.—Mrs. Nevada Laitsch, MC 21, East Liverpool, Ohio 43920.

An Unusual Date for a Sandhill Crane in West Virginia

A Sandhill Crane [*Grus canadensis*] was sighted on 9 February 1972, two (2) miles west of Milton (Cabell County), West Virginia. The crane was in a swamp beside West Virginia Interstate 64, approximately 200 yards west of Mud River.

While the occurrence of the Sandhill Crane is rare in West Virginia, a few sightings have been reported. The most recent sighting was by Ann Shreve (1969, "Field Notes," Redstart 36:77).

The date of the Cabell County sighting is significant because it is unusually early. This crane is presumably one of the population that nests in Michigan and winters in Florida. Williams and Phillips (1972, "North Florida Sandhill Crane Population," The Auk, 89:541-548) reported that spring migrations begin in Florida in late February. Their studies also showed that the earliest arrival in Michigan was 3 March. These data show the crane in Cabell County to be three to four weeks ahead of the earliest recorded migrant. — Thomas K. Pauley Department of Biology, Salem College, Salem, West Virginia.

The Gathering Cage



Constance Katholi, Editor
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Hartland Farm, Lewisburg, W. Va.

I resumed banding at my Lewisburg Station in October 1973. A total of 79 White-crowned sparrows was banded. Of this number 13 were adults. There were also 4 returns of birds banded during the winter of 1968-1969. Adults represented slightly better than 22.6% of those banded. Of particular interest among these were the 5 birds of the Gambel's variety. This bird has no black line in front of the eye, and in several specimens this characteristic varied considerably in prominence, indicating a possible crossing of the Eastern White-crowned with the more northern or western Gambel's form. Possibly these birds had originated in Alaska or the Mackenzie region where the nesting ranges of the two varieties of the White-crowned sparrow overlap. More banding is needed to prove this theory. Another interesting point in this connection is that the Gambel's form of the White-crowned sparrow is the last to leave here in the spring, apparently awaiting the arrival of spring in the far North. — Charley Handley

Hudson, Me.

This spring we had a rather large finch movement through our area during the months of March, April and May. On March 17, I caught and banded my first Common Redpoll;—by April 17, I had handled 226 of these interesting visitors from the far north. Along with the Redpolls were fair numbers of Pine Siskins. Some days I just could not empty the traps fast enough. Several times as I was removing birds from the traps both Siskins and Redpolls would land around me and begin feeding. On two occasions I was able to place my hand over a feeding bird and put it in the gathering cage with the others.

Though there never was a real large congregation of Evening Grosbeaks at my trapping area at any one time, I was able to band over 200 individuals of this species.

Purple Finches started entering my traps the last week of March, and a foreign banded ASY male was taken on March 29. The real bonus though, came on May 13. I happened to look out at the trapping area and saw a strange brownish bird in the apple tree above one of my potter traps. Since I was not able to identify it, I went to get my binocular for a closer look; but, when I got back it was already in the trap. Upon close examination, it turned out to be an almost albino Purple Finch. It was a

light tanish with some white feathers on its back. There was a very faint eyeline, but no streaking on the breast. — John Morgan

Columbus, Ohio

Last round I mentioned the magnetic tape from the Wildlife Service giving us all the recovery data for banded Red-wings since 1954. Now we have similar tapes for Cowbirds, Grackles and Starlings. The computer has done its part and I now have a stack of big printed sheets a foot thick. Computers have not heard about the paper shortage and are pretty wasteful.

The first thing I tackled was the Starling data. Some time ago we found that Starlings banded hereabouts were recovered mostly to the Northeast and Southwest rather than going Northward or Southward as they were supposed to do. This has been attributed to a genetic tendency which evolved in our Starlings' European ancestors because of geographical barriers and which persists here because there is nothing to select against it.

The question arises as to whether this tendency holds merely for Starlings in central Ohio. The question can now be answered with a resounding "no". With 40 banding stations "from the redwood forests to the New York island" and with some 9000 recoveries. *Sturnus vulgaris* relies on the same old genes and goes Northeast and Southwest. More detail will appear eventually in **Bird Banding**.

This being my first experience with a computer I thought I could relax. Hardly! The tapes gave, among other things, the latitude and longitude of the banding station and of the point of recovery. You get the difference in latitudes and convert it to miles and likewise for the longitude. Then the square root of the sum of the squares of those two figures gives the distance the bird traveled. Now in a dozen cases the recovery data were incomplete but the WLS included those cases and put 000 for the location of the recovery. When the computer, following instructions, got the difference between the latitude and longitude of the banding station and zero, they got a real big number. So some of the banded birds were recovered in the middle of the ocean. Fortunately we caught the mistake and threw out those cases. The computer could have done it if we had known in advance. Never a dull moment! — Harold E. Burt

Clarksville, Pa.

We have new bird neighbors in our back yard this year: Sparrow Hawks. It will be interesting to see how they and our other yard nesters get along. These include the Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, E. Kingbird, Barn Swallow, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Grackle, Cardinal, Chipping and Song sparrows. A predator (?) has already taken 4 young Kingbirds out of the nest, but my guess is that it was a crow since this species is often seen in the yard. On May 4, 1974 I put up the new box for the Sparrow Hawks on a pole formerly supporting a Purple Martin house. We knew our Sparrow Hawks were looking for a place to nest as their earlier attempt in the old box on the hill had been a failure earlier this year, and they were giving their mating calls as they checked other possible nesting sites

around the farm. There have been continuing failures in the old box-on-the-hill a half a mile from the house since 1970. The reasons for this have varied from raccoons to possible after-effects of pesticide and herbicide spraying on their wintering grounds.

The day after the new box was put up the local starlings had a great time checking it over as a possible nesting site for themselves. But on the morning of the next day I could not see any starlings near the box, and the reason was soon evident. If any starlings made an attempt to alight on the pole or box, one of the Sparrows Hawks immediately gave chase. Now weeks later the starlings are still avoiding that box. Sparrows show a very strong attachment for the same nesting site, and this box will be much easier for me to check. I hope to obtain better records in the future. —Ralph Bell

The following table is recorded data pertaining to the old box beginning in 1957.

Year	No. Eggs	Date	No. Hatched	No. Banded	Date
1957			5	5	June 16
1958			4	4	June 14
1959			5	5	June 4
1960			5	5	June 10
1961			4	4	June 20
1962			5	5	June 13
1963			5	5	June 5
1964			4	4	June 9
1965			4	4	June 4
1966			4	4	June 5
1967	5	April 23	3	3	June 2
1968				3	June 4
1969				4	June 1
1970			1 deformed	died later	June 10
1971	5	May 9	Box empty		May 31
	4	July 9	2nd Attempt	2	Aug. 8
1972	5	April 19	Box empty	May 19, Raccoon ate banded Mother	
1973	5	May 2		2	June 18
1974	4	April 6	1 egg cracked	Box empty	May 1
1974 New box	1	May 9			
	5	May 17	3 (1 quite small)	(2 eggs not fertile)	

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