

THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

Published by
THE TENNESSEE
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY



H.P. James
35

June
1945

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Wild-Turkey. Male and Female.
Meleagris Gallopavo.

THE MIGRANT

Published by the Tennessee Ornithological Society, to Record and Encourage the Study of
Birds in Tennessee. Issued in March, June, September and December

VOL. XVI

JUNE, 1945

NO. 2

THE WILD TURKEY

Taken from THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY BY WILSON AND BONAPARTE

(EDITOR'S NOTE:—One of Tennessee's most splendid birds is the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*), now quite rare except in very thinly inhabited parts of the State. So rare in fact has it now become that it would be impossible to currently gather enough observations to write its life history from them. For such a history, we must go back to early times, when turkeys were abundantly distributed thruout the land and when ornithologists like Wilson, Audubon and Bonaparte were present and eager spectators at Nature's vast and unspoiled stage, in search of ornithological knowledge. At the time of Alexander Wilson's death in 1813, the "father of American ornithology" had completed the eighth and part of the final volume of his great work, but he had postponed his history of the Wild Turkey because he had felt that as yet, he was not ready to do justice to it. His work was taken up and continued by Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte and he, with the aid of other competent observers, produced in 1825, the turkey chapter which appeared in later editions of "The American Ornithology". Among the assisting observers was John J. Audubon, who for seventeen years had been studying birds in Kentucky and in Louisiana. It is highly probable that the greater portion of the excerpts which follow were those contributed by Audubon from the vast fund of his own experiences in the above mentioned states as well as in Tennessee and in Mississippi. Since few of our readers have access to "The American Ornithology", the Editor takes the liberty to reproduce here that portion of the turkey chapter which pertains to the habits of these unique birds. The style of writing is quaint, being typified by the flourish and detail which characterized the literature of that day.)

"We have neglected no means of obtaining information from various parts of the Union, relative to this interesting bird; and having been assisted by the zeal and politeness of several individuals, who, in different degrees, have contributed to our stock of knowledge on this subject, we return them our best thanks. We have particular satisfaction in acknowledging the kindness of Mr. John J. Audubon, from whom we have received a copious narrative, containing a considerable portion of the valuable notes collected by him, on this bird, during twenty years that he has been engaged in studying Ornithology, in the only book free from error and contradiction, the great book of nature. His observations, principally made in Kentucky and Louisiana, proved the more interesting, as we had received no information from those states: we have, in consequence, been enabled to enrich the present article with several

Our frontispiece is a reproduction of the engraving by Lawson of a pair of Wild Turkeys and is taken from the American Ornithology.

new details of the manner and habits of the Wild Turkey.

The Wild Turkeys do not confine themselves to any particular food; they eat maize, all sorts of berries, fruits, grasses, beetles; and even tadpoles, young frogs, and lizards, are occasionally found in their crops; but where the pecan nut is plenty, they prefer that fruit to any other nourishment: their more general predilection is, however, for the acorn, on which they rapidly fatten. When an unusually profuse crop of acorns is produced in a particular section of country, great numbers of Turkeys are enticed from their ordinary haunts in the surrounding districts. About the beginning of October, while the mast still remains on the trees, they assemble in flocks, and direct their course to the rich bottom lands. At this season, they are observed, in great numbers, on the Ohio and Mississippi. The time of this irruption is known to the Indians by the name of the *Turkey month*.

The males, usually termed *gobblers*, associate in parties numbering from ten to a hundred, and seek their food apart from the females; whilst the latter either move about singly with their young, then nearly two-thirds grown, or, in company with other females and their families, form troops, sometimes consisting of seventy or eighty individuals, all of whom are intent on avoiding the old males, who, whenever opportunity offers, attack and destroy the young, by repeated blows on the skull. All parties, however, travel in the same direction, and on foot, unless they are compelled to seek their individual safety by flying from the hunter's dog, or their march is impeded by a large river. When about to cross a river, they select the highest eminences, that their flight may be the more certain; and here they sometimes remain for a day or more, as if for the purpose of consultation, or to be duly prepared for so hazardous a voyage. During this time the males *gobble* obstreperously, and strut with extraordinary importance, as if they would animate their companions, and inspire them with the utmost degree of hardihood: the females and young also assume much of the pompous air of the males, the former spreading their tails, and moving silently around. At length the assembled multitude mount to the tops of the highest trees, whence, at a signal note from a leader, the whole together wing their way towards the opposite shore. All the old and fat ones cross without difficulty, even when the river exceeds a mile in width; but the young, meagre, and weak, frequently fall short of the desired landing, and are forced to swim for their lives: this they do dexterously enough, spreading their tails for a support, closing their wings to the body, stretching the neck forwards, and striking out quickly and forcibly with their legs. If, in thus endeavoring to regain the land, they approach an elevated or inaccessible bank, their exertions are remitted, they resign themselves to the stream, for a short time, in order to gain strength, and then, with one violent effort, escape from the water. But in this attempt all are not successful; some of the weaker, as they cannot rise sufficiently high in air to clear the bank, fall again and again into the water, and thus miserably perish. Immediately after these birds have succeeded in crossing a river, they for some time ramble about without any apparent unanimity of purpose, and a great many are destroyed by the hunters, although they are then least valuable.

When the Turkeys have arrived in their land of abundance, they disperse in small flocks, composed of individuals of all sexes and ages intermingled, who

devour all the mast as they advance; this occurs about the middle of November. It has been observed, that, after these long journeys, the Turkeys become so familiar as to venture on the plantations, and even approach so near the farm-houses as to enter the stables and corn-cribs, in search of food: in this way they pass the autumn, and part of the winter. During this season great numbers are killed by the inhabitants, who preserve them in a frozen state, in order to transport them to a distant market.

Early in March they begin to pair; and, for a short time previous, the females separate from, and shun their mates, though the latter pertinaciously follow them, uttering their gobbling note. The sexes roost apart, but at no great distance, so that when the female utters a call, every male within hearing responds, rolling note after note, in the most rapid succession; not as when spreading the tail and strutting near the near, but in a voice resembling that of the Tame Turkey, when he hears any unusual or frequently repeated noise. Where the Turkeys are numerous, the woods from one end to the other, sometimes for hundreds of miles, resound with this remarkable voice of their wooing, uttered responsively from their roosting places. This is continued for about an hour; and, on the rising of the sun, they silently descend from their perches, and the males begin to strut, for the purpose of winning the admiration of their mates.

If the call be given from the ground, the males in the vicinity fly towards the individual, and, whether they perceive her or not, erect and spread their tails, throw the head backwards, distend the comb and wattles, strut pompously, and rustle their wings and body feathers, at the same moment ejecting a puff of air from the lungs. Whilst thus occupied, they occasionally halt to look out for the female, and then resume their strutting and puffing with as much rapidity as the nature of their gait will admit. During this ceremonious approach the males often encounter each other, and desperate battles ensue, when the conflict is only terminated by the flight or death of the vanquished.

(Here follows in some detail a description of the completion of the courtship procedure which ends in their becoming mated for the season.)

One or more females, thus associated, follow their favorite, and roost in his immediate neighborhood, if not on the same tree, until they begin to lay, when they change their mode of life, in order to save their eggs, which the male uniformly breaks if in his power, that the female may not be withdrawn from the gratification of his desires. At this time the females shun the males during the greater part of the day: the latter become clumsy and careless, meet each other peacefully, and so entirely cease to gobble, that the hens are obliged to court their advances, calling loudly and almost continually for them. The female may then be observed caressing the male, and imitating his peculiar gestures, in order to excite his amorousness.

The cocks, even when on the roost, sometimes strut and gobble, but more generally merely elevate the tail, and utter the *puff*, on which the tail and other feathers suddenly subside. On light or moon-shining nights, near the termination of the breeding season, they repeat this action, at intervals of a few minutes, for several hours together, without rising from their perches.

The sexes then separate; the males, being much emaciated, cease entirely to gobble, retire and conceal themselves by prostrate trees, in secluded parts of

the forest, or in the almost impenetrable privacy of a cane-brake. Rather than leave their hiding places, they suffer themselves to be approached within a short distance, when they seek safety in their speed of foot: at this season, however, they are of no value to the hunter, being meagre and covered with ticks. By thus retiring, using very little exercise, and feeding on peculiar grasses, they recover their flesh and strength, and when this object is attained, again congregate and recommence their rambles."

(It might have been added that this period of retirement is brought about by the necessity of moulting the flight feathers; during the course of the moult, these heavy short-winged birds would be unable to rise in flight and thus seek safety in the tree-tops.—ED.)

"About the middle of April, when the weather is dry, the female selects a proper place in which to deposit her eggs, secured from the encroachment of water, and, as far as possible, concealed from the watchful eye of the Crow: this crafty bird espies the hen going to her nest, and having discovered the precious deposit, waits for the absence of the parent, and removes every one of the eggs from the spot, that he may devour them at leisure. The nest is placed on the ground, either on a dry ridge, in the fallen top of a dead leafy tree, under a thicket of sumach or briars, or by the side of a log; it is of a very simple structure, being composed of a few dried leaves. In this receptacle the eggs are deposited, sometimes to the number of twenty, but more usually from nine to fifteen; they are whitish, spotted with reddish-brown, like those of the domestic bird. Their manner of building, number of eggs, period of incubation, &c., appear to correspond throughout the Union, as I have received exactly similar accounts from the northern limits of the Turkey range, to the most southern regions of Florida, Louisiana, and the western wilds of Missouri.

The female always approaches her nest with great caution, varying her course so as rarely to reach it twice by the same route; and, on leaving her charge, she is very careful to cover the whole with dry leaves, with which she conceals it so artfully, as to make it extremely difficult, even for one who has watched her movements, to indicate the exact spot: hence few nests are found, and these are generally discovered by fortuitously starting the female from them, or by the appearance of broken shells, scattered around by some cunning Lynx, Fox, or Crow. When laying or sitting, the Turkey hen is not readily driven from her post by the approach of apparent danger; but if an enemy appears, she crouches as low as possible, and suffers it to pass. A circumstance related by Mr. Audubon, will show how much intelligence they display on such occasions: having discovered a sitting hen, he remarked that, by assuming a careless air, whistling, or talking to himself, he was permitted to pass within five or six feet of her; but, if he advanced cautiously, she would not suffer him to come within twenty paces, but ran off twenty or thirty yards with her tail expanded, when, assuming a stately gait, she paused on every step, occasionally uttering a chuck. They seldom abandon their nests on account of being discovered by man, but should a snake or any other animal suck one of the eggs, the parent leaves them altogether. If the eggs be removed, she again seeks the male and recommences laying, though otherwise she lays but one nest of eggs during the season. Several Turkey hens sometimes associate, perhaps for mutual safety, deposit their eggs in the same

nest, and rear their broods together. Mr. Audubon once found three females sitting on forty-two eggs. In such cases, the nest is constantly guarded by one of the parties, so that no Crow, Raven, nor even Polecat, dares approach it.

The mother will not forsake her eggs, when near hatching, while life remains; she will suffer an enclosure to be made around and imprison her, rather than abandon her charge. Mr. Audubon witnessed the hatching of a brood, while thus endeavoring to secure the young and mother. "I have lain flat," says he, "within a very few feet, and seen her gently rise from the eggs, look anxiously towards them, chuck with a sound peculiar to the mother on such an occasion, remove carefully each half empty shell, and with her bill caress and dry the younglings, that already stand tottering and attempting to force their way out of the nest."

When the process of incubation is ended, and the mother is about to retire from the nest with her young brood, she shakes herself violently, picks and adjusts the feathers about the belly, and assumes a different aspect; her eyes are alternately inclined obliquely upwards and sideways; she stretches forth her neck, in every direction, to discover birds of prey or other enemies; her wings are partially spread, and she softly clucks to keep her tender offspring close to her side. They proceed slowly, and, as the hatching generally occurs in the afternoon, they sometimes return to pass the first night in the nest. While very young, the mother leads them to elevated dry places, as if aware that humidity, during the first few days of their life, would be very dangerous to them, they having then no other protection than a delicate, soft, hairy down. In very rainy seasons Wild Turkeys are scarce, because, when completely wetted, the young rarely survive.

At the expiration of about two weeks, the young leave the ground on which they had previously reposed at night under the female, and follow her to some low, large branch of a tree, where they nestle under the broadly curved wings of their vigilant and fostering parent. The time then approaches in which they seek the open ground or prairie land during the day, in search of strawberries, and subsequently of dewberries, blackberries, and grasshoppers, thus securing a plentiful food, and enjoying the influence of the genial sun. They frequently dust themselves in shallow cavities of the soil or on ant-hills, in order to clean off the loose skin of their growing feathers, and rid themselves of ticks and other vermin.

The young Turkeys now grow rapidly, and in the month of August, when several broods flock together, and are led by their mothers to the forest, they are stout and quite able to secure themselves from the unexpected attacks of Wolves, Foxes, Lynxes, and even Cougars, by rising quickly from the ground, aided by their strong legs, and reaching with ease the upper limbs of the tallest tree. Amongst the numerous enemies of the Wild Turkey, the most dreaded are the large diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey, and the Lynx (*Felis rufa*), who sucks their eggs, and is extremely expert at seizing both parent and young: he follows them for some distance, in order to ascertain their course, and then, making a rapid circular movement, places himself in ambush before them, and waits until, by a single bound, he can fasten on his victim.

The following circumstances are related by Bartram: "Having seen a flock

of Turkeys at some distance, I approached them with great caution; when, singling out a large cock, and being just on the point of firing, I observed that several young cocks were affrighted, and in their language warned the rest to be on their guard against an enemy, who I plainly perceived was industriously making his subtle approaches towards them, behind the fallen trunk of a tree, about twenty yards from me. This cunning fellow-hunter was a large fat Wild Cat, or Lynx; he saw me, and at times seemed to watch my motions, as if determined to seize the delicious prey before me; upon which I changed my object, and levelled my piece at him. At that instant my companion, at a distance, also discharged his piece, the report of which alarmed the flock of Turkeys, and my fellow-hunter, the Cat, sprang over the log, and trotted off."

These birds are guardians of each other, and the first who sees a Hawk or Eagle gives a note of alarm, on which all within hearing lie close to the ground. As they usually roost in flocks, perched on the naked branches of trees, they are easily discovered by the large Owls, and, when attacked by these prowling birds, often escape by a somewhat remarkable manoeuvre. The Owl sails around the spot to select his prey; but, notwithstanding the almost inaudible action of his pinions, the quick ear of one of the slumberers perceives the danger, which is immediately announced to the whole party by a *chuck*; thus alarmed, they rise on their legs, and watch the motions of the Owl, who, darting like an arrow, would inevitably secure the individual at which he aimed, did not the latter suddenly drop his head, squat, and spread his tail over his back; the Owl then glances over without inflicting any injury, at the very instance that the Turkey suffers himself to fall headlong towards the earth, where he is secure from his dreaded enemy.

On hearing the slightest noise, Wild Turkeys conceal themselves in the grass, or among shrubs, and thus frequently escape the hunter, or the sharp-sighted birds of prey. The sportsman is unable to find them during the day, unless he has a dog trained for the purpose; it is necessary to shoot them at a very short distance, since, when only wounded, they quickly disappear, and, accelerating their motion by a sort of half flight, run with so much speed, that the swiftest hunter cannot overtake them. The traveller, driving rapidly down the declivity of one of the Alleghanies, may sometimes see several of them before him, that evince no urgent desire to get out of the road; but, on alighting, in hopes of shooting them, he soon finds that all pursuit is vain.

In the spring, when the males are much emaciated by their attendance on the females, it sometimes may happen that, in cleared countries, they can be overtaken by a swift cur-dog, when they will squat, and suffer themselves to be caught by the dog, or hunter who follows on horseback. But from the knowledge we have gained of this bird, we do not hesitate to affirm, that the manner of running down Turkeys, like Hares or Foxes, so much talked of, is a mere fable, as such a sport would be attended with very trifling success. A Turkey hound will sometimes lead his master several miles, before he can a second time *flush* the same individual from his concealment; and even on a fleet horse, after following one for hours, it is often found impossible to *put it up*. During a fall of melting snow, Turkeys will travel extraordinary distances, and are often pursued in vain by any description of hunters; they have then a long, straddling manner of running, very easy

to themselves, but which few animals can equal. This disposition for running, during rains, or humid weather, is common to all gallinaceous birds.

The males are frequently decoyed within gunshot, in the breeding season, by forcibly drawing the air through one of the wing bones of the Turkey, producing a sound very similar to the voice of the female: but the performer on this simple instrument must commit no error, for Turkeys are quick of hearing, and, when frequently alarmed, are wary and cunning. Some of these will answer to the call without advancing a step, and thus defeat the speculations of the hunter, who must avoid making any movement, inasmuch as a single glance of a Turkey may defeat his hopes of decoying them. By imitating the cry of the Barred Owl (*Strix nebulosa*), the hunter discovers many on their roosts, as they will reply by a gobble to every repetition of this sound, and can thus be approached with certainty, about daylight, and easily killed.

Wild Turkeys are very tenacious of their feeding grounds, as well as of the trees on which they have once roosted. Flocks have been known to resort to one spot for a succession of years, and to return after a distant emigration in search of food. Their roosting place is mostly on a point of land jutting into a river, where there are large trees. When they have collected at the signal of a repeated gobbling, they silently proceed towards their nocturnal abodes, and perch near each other: from the numbers sometimes congregated in one place, it would seem to be the common rendezvous of the whole neighborhood. But no position, however secluded or difficult of access, can secure them from the attacks of the artful and vigilant hunter, who, when they are all quietly perched for the night, takes a stand previously chosen by daylight; and, when the rising moon enables him to take sure aim, shoots them down at leisure, and, by carefully singling out those on the lower branches first, he may secure nearly the whole flock, neither the presence of the hunter, nor the report of his gun, intimidating the Turkeys, although the appearance of a single Owl would be sufficient to alarm the whole troop; the dropping of their companions from their sides excites nothing but a buzzing noise, which seems more expressive of surprise than fright. This fancied security, or heedlessness of danger, while at roost, is characteristic of all the gallinaceous birds of North America.

The more common mode of taking Turkeys is by means of *pens*, constructed with logs, covered in at top, and with a passage in the earth under one side of it, just large enough to admit an individual when stooping. The ground chosen for this purpose is generally sloping, and the passage is cut on the lower side, widening outwards. These preparations being completed, Indian corn is strewed for some distance around the pen, to entice the flock, which, picking up the grain, is gradually led towards the passage, and thence into the enclosure, where a sufficient quantity of corn is spread to occupy the leader until the greater part of the Turkeys have entered. When they raise their heads and discover that they are prisoners, all their exertions to escape are directed upwards and against the sides of the pen, not having sagacity enough to stoop sufficiently low to pass out by the way they entered; and thus they become an easy prey, not only to the experienced hunter, but even to the boys on the frontier settlements.

In proportion to the abundance or scarcity of food, and its good or bad quality, they are small or large, meagre or fat, and of an excellent or in-

different flavor: in general, however, their flesh is more delicate, more succulent, and better tasted, than that of the Tame Turkey: they are in the best order late in the autumn, or in the beginning of winter. The Indians value this food so highly, when roasted, that they call it "the white man's dish," and present it to strangers as the best they can offer.

The Indians make much use of their tails as fans; the women weave their feathers with much art, on a loose web made of the rind of the Birch tree, arranging them so as to keep the down on the inside, and exhibit the brilliant surface to the eye. A specimen of this cloth was in the Philadelphia Museum; it was found enveloping the body of an Indian female, in the great Saltpetre cave of Kentucky."

(Included in the several pages that follow are some interesting figures on Wild Turkey weights. Regarding that of the males "15 to 20 pounds may be considered a fair statement of their medium weight, but birds of 30 pounds are not very rare and I have ascertained the existence of some weighing 40. Mr. Audubon informs us, he saw one in the Louisville market that weighed 36 pounds and that the pectoral appendage (beard) of this bird measured more than a foot in length.")



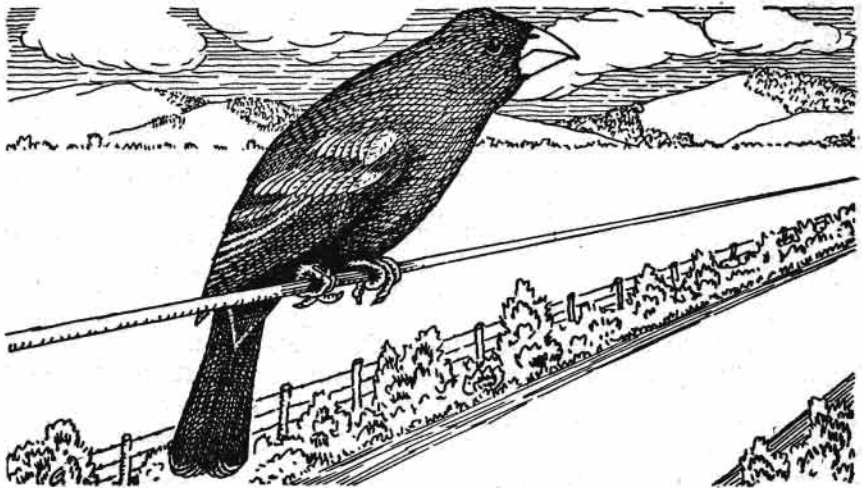
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE BLUE GROSBEEK

By BENJ. R. WARRINER

In former years I have come across the Blue Grosbeak only on two occasions. Two males were seen in a heavily wooded bottom, near Corinth April 18, 1937. Again, a few days later I found some three or four in a thicket of tall willows about a mile up-creek in the same woods. Identification of the first two was positive; but about the others I have been a little doubtful, as the birds flew away after I had only a glimpse of them. Since that time I have been looking for the Blue Grosbeak in the bottoms where trees are abundant; but now I have concluded that terrain of that kind is not as good as open meadows and low-lying fields where there is a plentiful growth of tall reeds and grasses, interspersed with last year's dead corn stalks and cotton stalks. On April 22, 1944, in late afternoon, I had parked my car on the side of the road that crosses Cane Creek, four miles west of town. A variety of birds were near, and my particular attention was centered on the Dickcissels that were scattered up and down the meadow that bordered the creek. On a telephone wire there was perched a plain, blackish looking bird that might have been a Cowbird, or other member of the blackbird tribe. It flew down into the tall reeds that bordered the road; I flushed it and as it flew away I discovered a tinge of dark blue in its coloration. Again it lit on the wire, where it remained for minutes and where I gave it a good going over with my glasses. It was slender, rather than heavy and blunt like other Grosbeaks; it had a small but distinct top-knot; the wings were heavily marked with dull brown and the bill was thick and heavy like that of a Cardinal. I knew I had a strange bird, but could not quite catalog it. Again it flew into the grass,

close by the road. I flushed it and then saw at close-hand the blue and other marks so distinctly I knew my find was a Blue Grosbeak. Across the road it went and lit atop a dead corn stalk, where I left it. The female flushed almost at my feet from the roadside. The very next afternoon, in Clear Creek bottom at a spot almost identical with the one above described, I found another male. It too was perched on a dead corn stalk, in low land.

Several times during May 1945, I again found male Blue Grosbeaks in the Cane Creek bottom, near their last year's location. This bottom is a half mile wide and consists of open cultivated land having fairly rich soil. Wires run alongside the road which is built upon an embankment about four feet above the surrounding fields. A rank growth of coarse grasses and weeds border the road. The Grosbeaks were found feeding most of the time in a field of oats and wheat, the grain being still in a green state. Their favorite



perching place was on the phone wires but on one occasion, May 27, one sang from a cottonwood tree near the road. I made repeated efforts to find nests but without success and only one female was seen during these visits.

On June 10, in McNairy County, Tennessee, seven miles north of Corinth and in the Muddy Creek bottom, several males were found perched on the wires alongside Highway No. 45. Conditions here were exactly as they were at Cane Creek, except that the valley of Muddy is laid out on a much larger scale, there being extensive fields of rich cultivated land on either side of the road. Alongside the highway, for a distance of a mile, a strip forty or fifty feet wide is grown up in coarse grasses and weeds, among which willow bushes grew plentifully and a few cottonwood are also scattered along. The road is built on an embankment about five feet high.

Here, on June 11, I found a female Blue Grosbeak building a nest in a shrubby willow, about forty feet away from the road and three feet above the ground. The site offered ample cover for a nest. The male remained perched on a wire nearby and did not appear to be helping at all with the nest. On my next visit, June 17, three pale blue eggs were found to have been laid.

On the 19th, there were four. On June 25, the female was found incubating on the nest and I figured the eggs should hatch about July 1. My visit of July 2, found the nest to contain four very small young. Both parent birds perched on the wire very near by and before I left the spot the mother bird returned to the nest. As well as I can estimate the time, twenty days elapsed from the day the nest was started until the eggs had hatched. Approximately eight days after hatching, the young left the nest but remained about for a few days longer. During my visits to this place, I saw some four or five males along the road; good evidence that there were as many other nests.

The nest was roughly built of small strips of bark fiber, torn (I saw the female tugging at it) from a dead tree limb that lay on the ground nearby, straw, and small bits of trash which included a strip of white paper an inch wide. The interior of the nest was quite cozy, smooth and deep. It was built in a crotch of the willow and well concealed. I understand that this is the first breeding record for Tennessee.

The female Blue Grosbeak is distinctly a sparrow-like bird but on close examination is found to have the grosbeak characteristics. I noticed a faint though positive blue marking on the wing (middle covert) and the tail is dusky blue. The male can always be positively identified by the distinct reddish-brown marks on the shoulders and middle wing coverts. Otherwise it is very similar to the Indigo Bunting but is considerably larger. The song is also somewhat similar to that of the Indigo but a little louder and might otherwise be described as a blend of the Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting.

I found a male this past June on a phone wire at Pickwick Dam, Tenn., in a big stretch of open level country. At another place, a mile toward Corinth from the nest described, still another male has been seen several times. At the point where I found the nest, at certain times the traffic is very heavy and there is considerable noise but the birds pay no attention to it. All along this area, Dickcissels are plentiful and were doubtless nesting there. My suggestion to those who would like to find the Blue Grosbeak in Southwest Tennessee and in Mississippi, would be to look in the cultivated bottomlands, open country, containing areas with heavy cover of coarse grass and weeds with bushes interspersed and where there are phone wires on which to perch.

CORINTH, MISSISSIPPI. June, 1945.



OBSERVATIONS ON THE BIRDS OF WAKE ISLAND

BY CHARLES VAUGHN

(FOREWORD.—Far out in the wide Pacific Ocean, 1000 miles west of Midway (westernmost of the Hawaiian Isles) and 1550 miles east of Guam, lies Wake, one of the most isolated islands on the globe. Relatively, it is but a mere speck on the greatest of oceans, a low flat reef of coral sand of only about one square mile in area. It has been described as "a spot teeming with birds, Polynesian rats and fiddler crabs", the land dwelling forms competing and fighting for the scant food to be had on its nearly barren surface. Unfit

for settlement, it had gone on almost unnoticed until the advent of trans-pacific air transport, when it immediately became of great importance as a much needed way-station and under United States ownership, improvements were installed here for that purpose. Charles Vaughn, son of Dr. H. S. Vaughn and who grew up with the Nashville 'bird group', penned the following notes after a short stay on Wake during the first week of April, 1938. For some years thereafter, Mr. Vaughn flew transport planes up the Yangtze River and up and down the China coast. During the current war, he is flying the trans-Atlantic plane route of the Pan-American Airways, carrying troops and supplies to the A.E.F.

During January 1942, Wake Island, stoutly defended by American Marines, succumbed to mass attack by the Japanese navy and has since been continuously occupied by them. During the elapsed three and a half years, the little island has been blanketed by bombs dropped from carrier planes on many occasions and this must have been greatly destructive to the birdlife. If, in addition, as is probable, the Japanese have followed their past iniquitous record as predators upon Pacific wildlife, Mr. Vaughn's observations may well become a first and final chronicle, for the interesting birdlife of Wake may have become completely extirpated as a result of the Japanese occupancy. His notes follow.—EDITOR)

Wake Island, April 7, 1938.—This remote bit of land offers a splendid opportunity for a detailed study of a limited number of seabirds, as well as a few land species, with regard to their habits of breeding, feeding, social characteristics, migration, manner of flight and other things that go to make up their life histories. Unfortunately for my own interest in them, my stay here was only for a few days and I was further handicapped by being a land-lubber and therefore not well acquainted with sea birds.

Of the species that I could positively identify, there were the Man-o'-war or Frigate Birds, Boobies ('Gannets'), Sooty Terns ('Wide-awakes'), Laysan Albatross ('Goonies'), Tropic Birds ('Bosunbirds'), the Wake Island Flightless Rail and what appeared to be Common and Least Terns. Others of which I was uncertain were two or three kinds of Terns, a 'Stormy' Petrel, a wader that resembled a Phalarope, a Plover that might be peculiar to this island and a blackish bird that at a distance looked like a crow but probably was not.*

Of all these, the Flightless Rail was to me the most interesting. They are similar in size and appearance to the Sora Rail of the United States but because they are nonmigratory—there being no convenient 'stepping stones' southward—they have lost the power of flight and their wings have evolved into stubby appendages quite useless for this purpose. They travel around with, and even eat from the same dish with, the small vegetation-eating rats that infest the island. Long unacquainted with human beings and therefore unafraid, they have become quite friendly with our men during the three years the Pacific Airways have occupied the island. They stand by dozens on the steps of the hotel kitchen door, peering thru the screen at the staff and going crazy with delight when one of the Chinamore kitchen-boys (natives of Guam) comes out with scraps for them. They walk over his shoes and jump high in the air, just like young chickens at feeding time. During the heat of the day, they get under the hotel or go down into the rat burrows to keep

cool; at night, they go foraging abroad with the rats. They do not like to be handled however and when the men chase them, they stretch their useless stubby wings to balance themselves and run with the speed of a Bob-white. They nest on bare sand at the base of the scrubby beech magnolias, laying a clutch of four or five eggs, judging by the number of young in the nest.

According to the best information obtainable from residents, there is a continuous breeding season on the island, some species or other nesting during each month of the year. My informants were also of the opinion that only the Albatross and perhaps some of the Terns were away for part of the year and that the other species were permanent residents. The 'Bosunbird' takes its name from the way it nonchalantly perches on the prow of a boat with the authoritative air of a boatswain. They were breeding in abundance at the time and deposited but one egg, it being pale blue marked with brown-mottled wash. Some of the little Terns were nesting and I came across a Booby's nest with young.

Socially, the various species seem to get along together very well, several different kinds nesting in the same colonies within a few feet of one another. The Man-o'-war Bird is the bully of the community, often robbing other birds of their catch and is always shunned by other species. It is obvious to even the casual observer that the birds have little or no knowledge of man. They will alight a few feet away from an observer and watch him interestedly, making no move to fly when he steps toward them, or, they will sit on the sides of a rowboat while you fish and fight together over a small fish that may be thrown to them, or, steal from the bait can while you are looking the other way. With so many birds about and so many that were new to me, the whole scene was confusing and I regretted that I had to move on before I could learn more of their habits.

*(NOTE.—Comparable to the birds of Wake Island, is a list from Laysan. No ornithologist of whom we have found record has visited Wake except Dr. Alexander Wetmore who did so a good many years ago but who has not published his observations. Laysan Island, near the west end of the Hawaiian group and 1400 miles east of Wake, is a protected bird reservation and its seabirds in most respects are similar. Its birdlife has been well studied and most prominent of the score or more there, are the Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, Sooty Tern, Gray-backed Tern, Noddy Tern, Hawaiian Tern, White Tern, Bonin Island Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Red-tailed Tropic Bird, Blue-faced Booby, Red-footed Booby, Man-o'-war Bird and Bristle-thighed Curlew. There is also a species of the little Flightless Rail.

American ornithologists visited Laysan in 1902 and in 1903 and published accounts of the huge bird colonies. Japanese plume hunters learned of this, raided the islands and are estimated to have killed in the neighborhood of a million birds. Only the timely arrival of a United States revenue cutter prevented their complete extermination. This issue of THE MIGRANT will go to several of our members now in the armed services in the Orient and we hereby commission them to report further upon Wake if they should have the opportunity.—ED.)

THE ROUND TABLE

BICKNELL'S THRUSH ADDED TO TENNESSEE LIST: On the morning of May 5, 1945, while making the circuit of Bluebird nest boxes, I picked up a dead Thrush of the Gray-cheeked species on the roadside at the extreme east edge of Percy Warner Park, Nashville. The bird had apparently collided with a passing automobile but was in perfect condition. As Gray-cheeked Thrushes are migratory in Tennessee, are never common, are difficult to identify in the field, and sub-species are indistinguishable in the field, I presented the bird to A. F. Ganiem to be made into a study skin. The wing measurement of 93.2 mm. (female) proved it to be a Bicknell's Thrush (*Hylocichla minima bicknelli* Ridgway), the smaller form of the Gray-cheeked. This identification is chiefly based on the statement of Alexander Wetmore in *Notes on the Birds of North Carolina* (1941, Proceedings of the U. S. Nat. Museum, 90:512), where, under the heading of Bicknell's Thrush, he states: "A male was collected near Southport [N. C.] May 12. In this specimen the wing measures 95.1 mm., so that it is clearly representative of the smaller form." In his *Notes on the Birds of Kentucky* (1940, Proc. U. S. Nat. Museum, 88:552), Wetmore gives four wing measurements for the larger form, *Hylocichla minima minima*, the Gray-cheeked Thrush, as 98.5, 99.8, 102.5, and 102.9 mm.

Among the Gray-cheeked Thrushes trapped at my home banding station, I have measured 12 since 1939. Of these, one banded in 1940 is referable to the Bicknell's Thrush on the basis of its small size, the wing having measured 91 mm.

The Warner Park specimen, when compared with skins of the Gray-cheeked in the collection of Mr. Ganiem, showed a difference in size that is very apparent. Further, the Bicknell's specimen is more brownish above and more buffy below, thus conforming to the description given by Forbush in his "Birds of Massachusetts". My banded individual of Sept. 15, 1940, constitutes the first record of Bicknell's Thrush for Tennessee, now substantiated by the specimen of May 5, 1945.—AMELIA R. LASKEY, Nashville, Tenn.

ALDER FLYCATCHER AT MEMPHIS: On August 27, 1944, in company with Robert Tucker, the writer collected the first specimen of this flycatcher (*Empidonax trailli trailli*) that has been recorded in Tennessee and thus ended a search of many years. The bird was on the shore of Mud Lake, 14 miles southwest of Memphis, and was feeding along the margin of the woods which fringe it. It was an immature female in excellent plumage and the back bore the characteristic brownish shade. It was feeding by alighting on fallen tree branches and small sprouts, a foot or so above the ground and flying thence to the wet earth below, to pick up insects. The bird was quite nervous at all times and flew back into the underbrush on numerous occasions when approached to within 60-75 feet. Perhaps 8 or 10 small flycatchers in all were seen, several of which were feeding in this manner and there may have been others of this species. They were all quite elusive but we secured two others and these proved to be the Least and the Yellow-bellied Flycatchers. Dr. Alex Wetmore has kindly examined the specimen first mentioned above and verified its identity.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville.

BLUE GROSBEAK SEEN AT NASHVILLE: Although not abundant in any part of its summer range (Louisiana to Southern Illinois), nest records for the Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) have been published for the states surrounding Tennessee. Yet, curiously, this species has been recorded for our state only once. Franklin McCamey and George Foster saw a female in the Memphis area on August 5, 1935 (MIGRANT, 1935, 6:53).^{*} My observation of one just west of Nashville, on May 19, 1945, is worthy of record. About 9 A. M., driving slowly along Highway 100, on the west boundary of Percy Warner Park, accompanied by Warren Bosman, a high school senior making his initial trip with me to the park, my ear caught a charming but unfamiliar song. It came from a bird perching on a wire some 60 feet away, above a weedy railroad embankment beside a drainage gully. Stopping by the roadside, we had the pleasure of listening and observing as long as we desired, checking with 8x binoculars to compare point by point with plate and description in Peterson's Bird Guide. The singer was a beautiful adult male Blue Grosbeak, whose plumage, in the sunlight, appeared richly blue except for the conspicuous reddish-brown wing bars. He sang at length from the wire, then flew down into tall weeds, hopping to the tops of stalks where he remained in full view as we reluctantly drove on. Except for his larger size and wing bars, he resembled an Indigo Bunting, but his song was distinctly different. The song is aptly described by Peterson as "rising and falling" and by Baerg in *Birds of Arkansas*. He says: "As a singer, the Blue Grosbeak rates high. Its song has been likened to that of the Purple Finch. It resembles somewhat that of the Indigo Bunting but is less shrill, and of better quality. The voice is soft and rich in overtones."—AMELIA R. LASKEY, Nashville, Tenn.

^{*}(NOTE:—There is an earlier unpublished record of one observed four miles southwest of Memphis. This is contained in a letter of Ben B. Coffey of that city, who wrote me on May 28, 1929, that he had observed one on May 11 of that year. Elsewhere in this issue, Benj. R. Warriner records them in McNairy County, southwest Tennessee.—Ed.)

COMPETITION FOR TERRITORY: During last spring two pairs of Kestrels* (*Falco sparverius*) nested within 100 yards of each other, in front of and behind my home in the suburbs. One raised four young, but the other, contesting occupancy with a Fox Squirrel, lost their first set of eggs, and although seen sitting on a second set, apparently this also was unsuccessful. Territory disputes were conspicuous, once the two males tangling high in the air and falling almost to the ground before separating. Flickers, they themselves entangled in an ever recurrent triangle, were continuously beset upon by one of the Kestrels whenever the woodpecker alighted near the Kestrel's nest. A "shrug" of the Flickers shoulders was usually enough to shake off the diminutive falcon, and the Flickers paid no other attention to them. However, once a Kestrel got a better hold and started to ride the Flicker down, and the latter's distressed yelp brought instant vocal help and protest from all nearby nesting birds.—WALTER R. SPOFFORD, Nashville, Tenn.

^{*}NOTE: Dr. Spofford uses the name Kestrel for what our bird books designate as the Sparrow Hawk, his reason being that the latter name was first applied and rightly belongs to the European form of our Sharp-shinned Hawk.—EDITOR.

SWIFTS TAKE REFUGE FROM RAIN: Spring flocks of Chimney Swifts are always of interest in this area and the behavior of a flock on May 11, 1945, was particularly so. My sister, Mrs. A. F. Yancey, who has observed these birds many times with me, reported the following:—"About 7:45 A. M. a flock of approximately 1,000 Swifts were circling the chimney at Idlewild Presbyterian Church. Earlier in the morning the weather had been clear, but suddenly a cloud which darkened the skies came on and it looked as if a torrential rain were imminent. The Swifts thereupon began pouring down the chimney and by 8:10 A. M., all the birds had gone within. There was no opportunity to observe what followed later on."—MRS. BEN B. COFFEY, 672 N. Belvedere, Memphis, Tenn.

SPRING ROOSTING OF SWIFTS: The roosting of Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) in large numbers in chimneys is a regular occurrence throught the State in autumn but the birds are much less in evidence on their return in Spring. Since neither Dr. Henry Meyer nor the writer have observed such large flocks at Knoxville before at that season, the following notes may be of interest.

Returning transients were first reported on April 1 and continued to be seen in normal numbers until on April 26, on which date a large flock was reported to me as having gone to roost in the 40 foot chimney at the Court House. The report having been received on Friday, the 27th, we arranged to personally observe the flock that evening. We arrived at 7:10 p. m. and estimated a thousand or more birds circling about the general area. Gradually they began to form a more compact flock, circling over the chimney, then drifting off as tho to seek a better roost elsewhere. Shortly, they would begin to move back into view and there would be another concentration over the area centering about the chimney. This performance was repeated several times within ten minutes and since it was then sufficiently dark for the birds to begin entering the chimney, the writer made a hasty visit to two other nearby chimneys that had been used the past October. The time was 7:25 and the number of birds were increasing rapidly. From high in the sky they began to swoop down and with binoculars, it was readily ascertained that there was a definite movement toward the chimney used the night before. We rushed back and arrived in time to see the first diving passes at the chimney. The lower part of the mass would go into a tight clockwise movement, hesitate, scatter and regroup; this time circling perhaps in the opposite direction. Finally one bird entered and the rush was on. The first lull in the surge came in a few minutes and our estimate was that 2000 birds had entered and that quite a number were still high in the air. The light was fading rapidly now and the funnelling began again with more intensity than before. The last of the main flock was in by 7:41 and the few stragglers still outside could be seen with difficulty. Forty or fifty of these entered singly or in groups of four to six. We estimated the entire flock at approximately 3400 birds. Our past estimates of fall flocks, checked later by trapping, have not been greatly in error.

The chimney was not under observation on the 28th but Swifts were seen emerging the following morning. There was a precipitation over Knoxville the night of the 28th and on the 29th and the birds did not come to the

chimney the evening of the 29th with the exception of about 60 individuals. None were to be found in the area the evenings of May 1 and 2. Two showery days followed and on the evening of May 5, a small flock of 35 to 50 were in the area of Henley and West Hill, three blocks from the Court House. This small flock remained to date (June 10), varying from 15 to 75. The large flock apparently moved northward on or about April 29.—WM. M. WALKER, Knoxville, Tenn.

SPRING MIGRATION OF THE RED-HEADED WOODPECKER: In most, if not all, species the number of individuals does not remain the same for a very long period of time. One of the contributions of field study is that it aids in determining the relative abundance of a species from year to year. At times the Red-headed Woodpecker, (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) has been found to be present in considerable numbers in East-Tennessee. In "A distributional list of the birds of Tennessee", Ganier ('33) lists this form as a fairly common summer resident, a rare winter resident, and a common transient.

During the past two years (1943-44) the Red-Headed Woodpeckers have been missed (by this observer) or were absent from many areas in and near Knoxville where they had previously been observed regularly. Because others, including Mr. William Walker, one of our most reliable observers, have voiced a similar opinion, the following notes concerning observations of this species during the spring of 1945 may be of interest.

Although this Woodpecker occasionally winters in this area, I do not have a record of its occurrence here in the 1943-44 or the 1944-45 winter. On April 29, 1945 it was recorded at the Island Home Sanctuary. Since that date it has been recorded in most of the areas we regularly found it prior to 1943. On June 1, I observed one less than two blocks from "downtown" Knoxville. On May 12, fifteen were observed at the University of Tennessee Farm. On May 14, six were noticed in a small area on the University Campus. On May 19, nine were again recorded at the University Farm. Mrs. Meyer's diary records the Red-head in our yard on May 19, 23, and 29. The fact that on May 12, six of the birds were in one tree while three others were on a telephone pole close by may be considered as evidence that this was a migrating group. Further, the fact that several students who were enrolled in my Ornithology class, reported seeing Red-heads on the campus frequently between May 12 and 19 may be considered as supporting evidence of a migration wave of these Woodpeckers between these dates.—HENRY MEYER, Department of Zoology and Entomology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS INCREASING: Without being able to suggest a reason for their scarcity, it is a fact that over a period of several years, here in this section of the country, Red-headed Woodpeckers were decidedly conspicuous for their absence. Beginning around the year 1930 and continuing for a decade, these birds were rarely seen. Then, some four or five years ago, they began to increase in numbers. Today they would not be counted as plentiful, yet there are enough of them here to rate them as 'fairly common'. The Red-head is a very jaunty, noisy and beautiful bird and its return after having dwindled in numbers adds a bit of interest to our local bird life.—BENJ. R. WARRINER, Corinth, Miss.

THRASHER SINGS WITH HIS BEAK FULL: Watching a Brown Thrasher moving about in a brush pile, I noticed that he had a piece of bread about as big as the end of my thumb, held in his beak. But it seemed that song was coming from the same brush pile. By carefully focussing eight-power glasses it was easy to see the Thrasher's throat moving as well as to perceive that he was singing with his "mouth" full of bread. The song was quite soft and low. This caused me to wonder if other birds sing while holding food in their beaks. Only a day later, I was watching a Red-eyed Vireo and I saw quite clearly that he would sieze a leaf worm and would warble with it in his beak before he ate it.

A Brown Thrasher furnished us another observation of interest, as follows. We had purchased a live chicken and it was lying out in the yard with its feet tied together. I noticed that its presence seemed to disturb the birds. A Thrasher especially, was hopping about in a nearby tree and fussing although I could not be sure it was the chicken that was disturbing him. But when I wrung the chicken's neck and let the body drop on the grass, the Thrasher circled immediately and dived for it. When the chicken was temporarily still, he would perch upon a nearby log, with his wings partly raised, vehemently fussing, and when the fowl again began to thrash around, he was immediately upon it. This kept up until the chicken was quite dead and the bird did not leave, or abandon his belligerent attitude, until I had carried the fowl into the house.—ROBERT M. HAWKINS, Nashville, Tenn.

FURTHER NOTES ON MEMPHIS NESTING CENSUS: Since the nesting census of the Memphis chapter had been made at Forest Hill Cemetary in June 1943 and 1944 (THE MIGRANT, 1944, p.56 and 1943, p.53), Dr. C. L. Moore, Mary Mason, Lawrence Kent, Alice Smith and the writer, visited this place on June 24, 1945, to again list the birds and their nests. Practically the same species were observed with but small variation in numbers. The only new species added were Cooper's Hawk, one pair with a nest containing three young; Red-shouldered Hawk, one pair and Hairy Woodpecker, four pair. Two pairs of Catbirds and a pair of Tufted Titmice were listed in 1943 but none of either in 1944 or 1945. The Parula Warbler, listed on both previous counts, was not found this year. Bewick's Wrens (three) were noted in 1944 only.—MRS. BEN B. COFFEY, JR., 672 No. Belvedere, Memphis, Tenn.

WHITE PELICANS AND CLIFF SWALLOWS ON TENN. RIVER: During the course of a boat trip down the Tennessee river, from Chattanooga to Paducah, Ky., I made the following notes.

Four White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) were observed on June 7, on the Pickwick pool, a few miles upstream from Pickwick dam. Their identity was made certain by their large size, white plumage and black wing-tips. Their occurrence this far east is unusual.

Since Swallow Bluff, 37 miles downstream from Pickwick, has been submerged by waters of the Kentucky dam pool, the large colony of Cliff Swallows which nested there formerly (see MIGRANT, 1941, p.21) have had to move elsewhere. On this trip, I found them nesting 25 miles further downstream on the face of Marvin's Bluff which lies on the east bank of the river in Perry County. This location is about 4 miles below Double Island and 2 miles below White Oak Creek. Another colony was found to be nesting at

the newly finished Kentucky dam near Paducah. They were building under one of the overhanging concrete walkways at the upstream entrance to the lock, as they do at Dover, Tenn.

Herring Gulls I usually find by hundreds along the river, especially at Pickwick and at Wilson dam locks, where they perch on the handrails in great numbers. On the June trip above mentioned, I saw practically none at all, they having departed for their northerly breeding grounds.—S. A. WEAKLEY, U. S. Engr's Office, Nashville, Tenn.

ELIZABETHTON SPRING FIELD DAY: The Elizabethton Chapter of the T. O. S. held its second annual spring field day on May 6, 1945. The temperature ranged from 50 to 65 degrees F. and we were favored with fair weather. The territory covered was in the vicinity of Elizabethton and nearby Johnson City. The last mentioned area was covered by Messrs B. P. Tyler and R. B. Lyle. The remaining group consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Finucane, Mr. W. F. Pearson and Miss Gillespie from Kingsport, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Behrend, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. and Sylvia Browning, Dr. and Mrs. Hugo Doob, Jr., Mrs. Hugh Taylor, and Dr. and Mrs. Lee R. Herndon, of Elizabethton. After spending the day in the field, the group assembled for a buffet supper at the Herndon home at 7:00 P. M. and compiled the day's list. On completion, this was found to comprise 109 species. Fourteen of these were observed only by the Johnson City representatives and these are designated below by an asterisk. The list follows:

Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Mallard Duck*, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture*, Cooper's Hawk, Osprey, Sparrow Hawk, Bob-white, Sora Rail, Wilson's Snipe*, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs*, Lesser Yellowlegs*, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo*, Whip-poor-will, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker*, Downy Woodpecker, Kingbird, Crested Flycatcher*, Phoebe, Acadian Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Wood Pewee, Prairie Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch*, House Wren, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood Thrush, Veery*, Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Migrant Shrike, Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, warblers as follows: Black-and-white, Worm-eating, Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Myrtle, Cerulean, Chestnut-sided, Palm, Kentucky, Hooded and Canada, Ovenbird, Northern Water-thrush, Louisiana Water-thrush, Maryland Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Redstart, English Sparrow, Bob-o-link*, Meadowlark, Redwing Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Grackle, Cowbird, Scarlet Tanager*, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Goldfinch, Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow*, Slate-colored Junco, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow*, and Song Sparrow.—LEE R. HERNDON, 1533 Burgie St., Elizabethton, Tenn.

NOTES, HERE AND THERE

A communication came to the Editor recently from Peru, enclosing a band believed by the sender to have been taken from a Chimney Swift there. The circumstances related regarding its taking did not fit in with the habits of Swifts so we refrained from using it in our last issue until the history of the band could be checked. The bird turned out to be a Bank Swallow. We will work up the little story for our next issue.

A Children's Museum has been launched at Nashville and upon the recent successful completion of a financial campaign for its support, its future has become assured. Messrs Vernon Sharp and H. S. Vaughn, two active T.O.S. members, are President and Director respectively. Mrs. Winston Brockner has been engaged as Educational Director. In a future issue, we hope to describe the project in greater detail.

Capt. Ben B. Coffey is at present in India, being in the Air Service and directly connected with the work of maintaining our air bases in that region. He reports that he is getting acquainted with many new oriental birds and we hope to present a communication from him in a future issue.

W. M. Walker, for some years an active observer at Knoxville, has removed to Nashville where he is again connected with the State Highway Department.

From our new and active Elizabethton chapter, we have received an attractive program of walks and talks, scheduled for the entire year.

We are fortunate in this issue in being able to record two new birds for the Tennessee list and the first State nesting record for a third.

In October of this year, the T.O.S. will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. Three of the original founders are still living.

We regret having to reduce the weight of paper on which THE MIGRANT is printed. Due to war restrictions, we are using 45 instead of 60 pound stock. In further compliance, we have reduced the number of our pages.

The cost of the illustrations in this issue was donated by members. That of the Blue Grosbeak by Mr. Warriner; the frontispiece by the Editor.

T. O. S. OFFICERS FOR 1945.—At the annual meeting of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, held at Nashville on May 6, 1945, the following officers were elected to serve for the year beginning July 1, 1945:

President, Dr. Walter R. Spofford, Vanderbilt Medical School, Nashville.

Vice-pres., West Tenn., Mrs. Ben B. Coffey, 672 N. Belvedere, Memphis 7.

Vice-pres., East Tenn., Mr. W. F. Pearson, Homestead Hotel, Kingsport.

Vice-pres., Middle Tenn., Prof. Robert M. Hawkins, S. Bellevue Dr., Nashville 5.

Editor-Curator, Mr. Albert F. Ganier, 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville 5.

Treasurer, Mr. Alfred Clebsch, 838 Gracey Avenue, Clarksville.

Secretary, Mr. Luther F. Keeton, 75 North Cleveland St., Memphis 4.

The officers were elected at the conclusion of an all day field trip to Craggie Hope on the Turnbull River, 25 miles west of Nashville.

THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF TENNESSEE BIRDS
PUBLISHED BY THE TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Free to members. To subscribers, \$1 per year; single copies 30c.

Alfred Clebsch, Treasurer, 838 Gracey Avenue, Clarksville, Tenn.

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Luther F. Keeton, Secretary, 75 N. Cleveland St., Memphis 4, Tenn.

All items for publication should be sent to

Albert F. Ganier, Editor, 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville 5, Tenn.

The Tennessee Ornithological Society was founded, October 1915.

Publication of THE MIGRANT was begun, March 1930.

*The simple truth about birds is interesting enough;
it is not necessary to go beyond it.*

THE DUAL USE OF ENGLISH AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES

The frequent insertion of scientific names, following the vernacular or English names, of birds referred to in this journal may be puzzling to some of our readers. Admittedly, we are inconsistent in not either omitting the former entirely or using both in each case. It would perhaps be proper to omit the scientific names entirely and cover this policy by a blanket statement to the effect that all English names used were those adopted by the current standard Checklist of the American Ornithologist's Union and further stating that therein could be found the corresponding scientific name. As a matter of fact, this statement *does* cover our present policy where scientific names are not given. There are some ornithologists however, particularly those of the 'old school', who will not accept or refer to published information about birds unless the author has emphasized his care in identification by repeating the English name in its scientific equivalent. The leading ornithological journals have therefore followed the practice of giving both names in general articles, special short articles and elsewhere where the inclusion would not be burdensome or wasteful of space. THE MIGRANT has followed this custom and will continue it. We will do so particularly in such articles and notes as future research workers may wish to quote as source information. Other notes, particularly those that mention our common birds in a casual way such as field day or census lists, will not be burdened with the scientific synonym. There is no hard and fast rule and we will not carry consistency to the point of being boresome. Furthermore, in using scientific names of birds represented in the State by two or more subspecies, we will usually use the binomial unless the specimen has been collected and properly identified, thereby properly establishing the correct trinomial designation. The vernacular or English names have suffered but few changes during the past fifty years and have therefore proved far more stable than the scientific names. Under the rules by which scientific names are applied and revised, there is no hope for stability in future. For these and other good reasons, it is our feeling that future editions of the A. O. U. Checklist should change the English names only when there is a very good reason for doing so.—ALBERT F. GANIER.

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