

NOTES ON A FEW OF THE RARER BIRDS OF SAUK
AND DANE COUNTIES, WISCONSIN.

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PART of the following notes were made during a four years' residence at Prairie du Sac, from 1906 to 1910, but principally from April 9 to June 12, 1911, while collecting material for nesting groups of birds for the Milwaukee Public Museum, and also from May 25 to July 4, 1913, while engaged on similar work for the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of the Field Museum, Chicago.

The region under consideration includes the Township of Sumpster, Honey Creek, and Prairie du Sac, in Sauk County, and that part of the Township at Mazomanie, Dane County, that borders on the Wisconsin River. Particular attention was paid to the Baraboo Bluffs, a very rough, and in most places heavily wooded, range of hills of great interest to the Geologist and bird lover. As this region is in most sections rather difficult to transverse even on foot, owing to the lavish hand with which Nature has scattered quartzite boulders of all sizes and shapes over the landscape, it still retains much of its natural wildness and beauty, and is the home of numerous species of birds and mammals not found in the surrounding country. Virginia Deer are at the present time very numerous, and hawks and owls, Ruffed Grouse, and many species of warblers make this region their summer home. Brook trout are also found in Otter Creek, which finds its source in the numerous springs. Considerable time was also spent in the bottom lands of the Wisconsin River in the few remaining patches of heavy timber. Since these notes were made, the character of the river has been greatly changed for a considerable distance above Prairie du Sac by the great power dam, recently erected at that town, and the newly formed Lake Wisconsin ought to prove a great attraction for numerous species of water birds.

1. **Colymbus nigricollis californicus.** AMERICAN EARED GREBE.—Five of these Grebe were killed out of a flock of six, on the Wisconsin River, a few miles north of Prairie du Sac, April 30, 1909, by a hunter who gave

them to Mr. E. D. Ochsner, taxidermist of Prairie du Sac. Three of these were mounted, and are in his collection. The other two, both males in full plumage, he very kindly gave to me, and they are mounted, and in my possession. Kumlein and Hollister (*Birds of Wisconsin*, 1903, p. 6) give three records for this species for Wisconsin.

2. **Coturnicops noveboracensis.** YELLOW RAIL.— One specimen, a female, was caught in Sumpter, Sauk County, April 23, 1908. The bird was observed in a plowed field, and after a lively chase, was captured by Mr. A. O. Wagner and the writer, and is mounted in my collection. Another, a male in beautiful plumage, was collected across the river in Columbia County, May 1, 1911.

3. **Astur atricapillus atricapillus.** AMERICAN GOSHAWK.— Large numbers of this species appeared in Sauk County early in the winter of 1907-08. I took four specimens in a single trap on the following dates: one female, Dec. 6, one female Dec. 13, one male Jan. 9, and one male Feb. 20. These, with at least a dozen other specimens handled in the flesh, were all in the adult plumage. A number were also observed in the woods during the winter, and from the numerous remains of their feasts on Grouse and Quail, the game must have suffered greatly during their stay. Have one record also for 1906, an adult female, taken Nov. 10. One specimen was also seen June 3, 1911. The identification of this specimen was positive, as it flew across in front of me, giving a good view of the breast.

4. **Accipiter cooperi.** COOPER'S HAWK.— As this hawk is generally considered as a summer resident only, the following record may be of interest. An adult male in full plumage taken Feb. 5, 1907, in Sumpter, Sauk County.

5. **Buteo lineatus lineatus.** RED-SHOULDERED HAWK.— While this species is far from common, a few pairs breed in the heavy timber along the Wisconsin River, and Honey Creek in Sauk County. A nest, four young in the downy stage, and one addled egg taken May 18, 1911; an adult male and female and three partly feathered young taken June 15, 1913.

6. **Falco peregrinus anatum.** DUCK HAWK.— A nest of this hawk was located May 10, 1911, on a ledge on the face of a nearly perpendicular sandstone bluff, overlooking the Wisconsin River, on the Sauk County side. The nest was only a slightly hollowed out spot in the sand, overlaying the sandstone, and contained two eggs. Ten days later the adult female, one egg and one downy young were collected. Mr. Bert Laws, a keen observer, who lives just across the river from this bluff, and who was instrumental in the location of the nest, tells me that nearly every season, for about twenty-five years to his knowledge, a pair of these birds have nested on this, or one of the adjoining bluffs. This pair made no attempt to defend their nest, but flew about screaming. The female struck and chased away a Red-tail Hawk, whose circling brought it too close to the Duck Hawk eyrie. These Red-tails had their nest on a rock ledge of another bluff less than a

quarter of a mile down the river, the only nest of the Red-tail that I have seen in such a location. The Red-tail is a common nesting species, all through the well timbered sections of this region, while the Duck Hawk has only been recorded as breeding in Wisconsin a very few times.

7. ***Aquila chrysaetos***. GOLDEN EAGLE.—Specimens of this eagle are not infrequently taken in Sauk County during the winter. A large female in my possession was taken in Feb., 1908, another, a male, was taken Feb. 23, 1909. That this species nested in Sauk County prior to 1908, there can be no doubt. There was a deserted nest still in good state of preservation on a sheltered ledge about sixty feet above the ground, on the same bluff where the Duck Hawks were found breeding. It was littered with feathers of pigeons, ducks and other birds, and evidently the Duck Hawks found it a convenient place in which to eat their game. This nest was typical of the Golden Eagle, made principally of juniper limbs, some of which were over an inch and a half in diameter. Mr. Bert Laws, who frequently saw the birds and described them to me, informed me that the nest was used for one or two seasons prior to 1908. Before that time they had used a nest on an adjoining bluff, which was destroyed. I have seen specimens of the Golden Eagle on two occasions in the Baraboo Bluffs, in early summer.

8. ***Cryptoglaux acadica acadica***. SAW-WHET OWL.—Rather rare in Sauk County. One specimen taken March 4, and one on March 23, 1907.

9. ***Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola***. NORTHERN PILEATED WOODPECKER.—A number of these fine birds still nest in the heavy river timber along the Wisconsin River, both in Sauk and Dane counties, and will doubtless hold their own till the original stand of timber is cut away, as they are extremely wary, especially in fall and winter, and breed in the mosquito infected river bottoms where they are seldom molested. There are only a few scattered patches of suitable woodland left in this region however, and those are fast disappearing. Have never observed them or signs of their work in the Baraboo Bluffs, which are heavily wooded, and in this region at least, they are almost wholly confined to the river timber, though family parties of four or five may be observed occasionally in late summer, somewhat out of their usual range. Have only two nesting records though they have frequently been observed during the breeding season. May 31, 1911, a male and female and three young were taken from a broken-off river birch-stub. Nest about twenty-five feet from the ground in partly flooded river bottom on the Sauk County side. June 11, 1913, another pair and three nearly fledged young were taken from a similar site on the Dane County side of the river. This nest was situated about thirty feet from the ground in an old and very brittle birch, which broke off at the base as soon as I started to climb, though the tree was nearly a foot and a half in diameter. The birds undoubtedly find this "punk" wood very easily worked, as they had excavated an unusually large cavity, measuring entrance hole, three and a fourth by four and a half inches, with a total depth of twenty-three inches, and an average diameter of seven by nine

inches, narrowing somewhat nearer the bottom. As soon as the nesting stubs were jarred, the young commenced their "hissing" noise, similar to young Flickers, but a great deal louder.

10. **Melanerpes carolinus.** RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.— This handsome species is a fairly common resident in certain favorable localities, in the heavy bottom land timber along the Wisconsin River, and Honey Creek, in the same locality frequented by the Pileated Woodpeckers. Quite often observed in the village of Prairie du Sac, during the winter. A male and female and three partly feathered young were collected on the Dane County side of the river June 1, 1911. This nest was in a small and very hard dead limb of an elm tree, over a slough. The entrance hole was on the under side of the limb which extended from the tree at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

11. **Empidonax virescens.** ACADIAN FLYCATCHER.— This species was found breeding in considerable numbers along small water courses in the Baraboo Bluffs in June and July, 1913. A series of nine adults and a number of nests collected. Was much pleased to find this bird breeding in this region as Kumlein and Hollister (Birds of Wisconsin Hypothetical List, 1903, p. 129) say of this species, "We have never taken this species in Wisconsin, and all the observers with whom we have had correspondence, have also failed to find it. Hoy and some later writers include it in their lists, but evidently, without positive proof. The fact that Hoy appears to have been somewhat mixed on his flycatchers, as indeed many at that time were, and that all recent collections fail to produce a specimen, although furnishing both varieties of *traillii*, whereas Hoy included but one, of course, leads us to believe that a mistake has occurred, and so we await future developments."

12. **Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina.** EVENING GROSBEAK.— Have observed this species only during the winter of 1909, when they were quite common in the months of February and March, when a number of specimens were collected. The birds were observed to spend a great deal of time feeding on the winged seeds of the box-elder.

13. **Carpodacus purpureus purpureus.** PURPLE FINCH.— Seen occasionally in spring and fall, but appears to be rather rare. One adult male collected from a flock of five or six that were feeding on Juniper berries, February 23, 1909.

14. **Bombycilla garrulus.** BOHEMIAN WAXWING.— This species visited Sauk County in large numbers in the winter of 1908-09. One flock estimated two hundred, seen March 1, and a number of specimens in high plumage were secured.

15. **Protonotaria citrea.** PROTHONOTARY WARBLER. In the partly flooded river timber, on both the Sauk and Dane County sides of the Wisconsin River, this beautiful warbler breeds rather numerously in certain restricted areas. In two days, June 9 and 11, 1913, five nests were located containing eggs or newly hatched young; four of these nests being located in dead river birch stubs over water, and the fifth in a dead maple stump near a slough.

16. **Vermivora pinus.** BLUE-WINGED WARBLER.— This rare Wisconsin warbler probably breeds in the Baraboo Bluffs and possibly also in the river bottoms, in suitable localities; at least the following records would seem to indicate that such is the case, though no nests were located. A pair collected June 22, 1913, and a female in the same locality June 24, and one male each, June 9 and 11, in the Dane County river bottoms. ¶

17. **Vermivora chrysoptera.** GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER.— Two broods of young of this species, just able to fly, were observed in the Baraboo Bluffs, July 1, 1913. Have also the following records of specimens collected in Sauk County: adult male, June 12, adult female June 22, and a pair, July 1, 1913.

18. **Dendroica cerulea.** CERULEAN WARBLER.— Near the source of Otter Creek in the Baraboo Bluffs, there are large tracts of tall timber, principally of hard maple, basswood and oak, growing on the level, and rather swampy ground, between the hills. In this region, the Cerulean Warbler is a common summer resident, and undoubtedly breeds, though I did not succeed in locating any nests. A number of specimens were collected, (May 30 to July 3, 1913) nearly all of which were the easily located males, only one female being secured.

19. **Dendroica fusca.** BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.— As a migrant, this species is fairly common at times in the Baraboo Bluffs, but I have only two summer records. One adult male being secured June 27, and another July 1, 1913.

20. **Oporornis formosa.** KENTUCKY WARBLER.— Two specimens of this rare species (for Wisconsin) were seen June 9, 1913, and one adult male was collected. As the actions of the birds strongly indicated that there was a nest in the vicinity, a very careful search was made, but without result. Kumlein and Hollister (*Birds of Wisconsin*, 1903, p. 117) give seven records of this species, six of which were for Lake Koshkonong, in spring.

21. **Icteria virens virens.** YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.— Have only one record for this species, an adult male, collected in Dane County, June 13, 1913. A few were also heard.