

NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOME WISCONSIN BIRDS. I.

BY A. W. SCHORGER.

A FEW years ago while studying the information available on life zones, the writer formed the conviction that certain species of birds, considered rare in Wisconsin, should occur as summer residents in the southwestern portion of the state. It has recently been possible to obtain substantiating data whereby several species, particularly the Kentucky Warbler, Bell's Vireo and Tufted Titmouse, are placed in the definite position of summer residents. The impossibility of giving life zones precise boundaries is realized; however, on the basis of avifauna,¹ the Carolinian or Pseudo-Carolinian area of the Upper Austral zone, as given by Merriam,² should be extended to include the lower Wisconsin valley as far north as Columbia County. Within this portion of the valley are to be found breeding such typical species as the Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Kentucky Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, and Louisiana Water-Thrush.

Each of the several brief field trips in the southwest was of the nature of a reconnaissance, special search being made for Vireos and Warblers. Only a few places could be explored with any degree of thoroughness, so that many territorial gaps exist. These notes are in no sense an attempt to define breeding areas as the data at hand are too few for this purpose.

Bartramia longicauda. UPLAND PLOVER.—A regular summer resident in small numbers, in Iowa County, near Dodgeville, and in Green County, in the open, rolling country between Monticello and Monroe. My records for Dane County are scanty: two birds, April 26, 1925, near Lake Waubesa; and four, June 14, 1924, near Verona, where they are locally reputed to be of regular occurrence.

Empidonax virescens. ACADIAN FLYCATCHER.—The first state record for this species was obtained by H. L. Stoddard,³ who found it

¹ My friend, James G. Sanders, collected in the Mazomanie region, several species of leaf hoppers, not previously known to occur north of Tennessee. (Ann. Entomological Society of Am., 10 (1917)79).

² Bulletin No. 10, U. S. Biological Survey (1898).

³ Auk, 34 (1917) 66.

nesting in the Baraboo Bluffs, Sauk Co., in 1913. He also found it in a tamarack swamp in Waukesha Co., in 1921.¹

I found it in only one locality at Potosi, Grant Co., where it was common. Near Grant River there is a heavily wooded bluff, intersected by numerous ravines in which the birds were established. On June 17, 1924, I collected one of six singing birds. Two nests containing two and three fresh eggs, respectively, were found in typical situations in the bottom of the ravines. The species was as plentiful the following year.

Previous to the trip to Potosi I had been unable to find this Flycatcher in Dane County in spite of much effort. The experience gained as to habitat led me to suppose that the hilly, northwestern portion of the county was most promising. After several fruitless trips, I finally located a pair near Cross Plains, July 5, 1924, and collected the male. The birds were found in a picturesque spot beside a cliff, at the base of which the ground was carpeted with brakes waist-high; surrounding all, was an extensive tract of heavy timber.

My opinions as to habitat were shattered by the collection of a male, in the Mazomanie bottoms, on May 31, 1925. On June 12, two males were found in a similar situation at Mill Bluff in Sauk County.

The essential requirement of the Acadian Flycatcher appears to be a large tract of undisturbed timber. The typical habitat is a deep, well wooded ravine having a rocky stream bed, which is usually dry. It may also be looked for in the heavy timber of the river bottoms and in tamarack swamps in the southern portion of the state. The majority of apparently suitable localities are uninhabited. Though sight records are of little value, this species has so typical a note that it is not easily overlooked.

Cathartes aura septentrionalis. TURKEY VULTURE.—My sole state record is a bird seen at Potosi, June 8, 1925.

Spyrapicus varius varius. YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.—An uncommon summer resident in the southern portion of the state. One was found on a river birch in the bottom lands at Potosi, June 16, 1924.

Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola. NORTHERN PILEATED WOODPECKER.—This is still a common species along the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, and in the virgin hardwood forests of the northern portion of the state. I found it: at Herbst, Bayfield County, November 11–13, 1913; along the Potato River, Iron County, November 12, 1915; along the Wolf River, Langlade County, October 3, 1925; and near Boulder Junction, Vilas County, October 4–5, 1925.

On June 9, 1925, at Potosi, I was attracted by the cries of young to a nest, fifteen feet from the ground, in a basswood stub. Both parents were present, but after much protesting soon left the vicinity. The young appeared to be fully feathered and ready to leave the nest. One young occupied so large a portion of the entrance that there was only room for the head of another. A short distance away stood a tall, live basswood

¹Wilson Bulletin 34 (1922) 76.

having three nesting holes about five feet apart. Several other nesting holes were observed in living trees, all of which were basswood. Excavating in this soft wood is easy for so powerful a hewer.

Corvus corax principalis. NORTHERN RAVEN.—A pair was seen and heard along the Potato River in Iron County, November 12, 1915.

Vireo griseus griseus. WHITE-EYED VIREO.—This is the rarest of the Vireos. The only record in recent years is the one taken at Madison by the writer on October 10, 1923.¹ I have searched in vain for this species in the southwestern portion of the state, but it will doubtless be found to be a regular summer resident in certain localities.

Vireo belli belli. BELL'S VIREO.—The first state record is represented by a male taken by the writer at Madison, July 3, 1914. The statement in the published note,² to the effect that the bird was probably not breeding was due to an unfortunate misunderstanding. The testes were greatly swollen. On June 9, 1922, Mr. Warner Taylor³ found a pair nesting in the same locality and took the male.

I was unable to find it at Potosi in 1924, though confident that it should be resident. On June 9, 1925, I heard one singing in a clearing and collected it. The following day I worked the region a few miles south of Boscobel. Here, after collecting another male, I found Bell's Vireo to be common. Nearly all of the numerous patches of hazel contained from one to two pairs. This is an excellent example of localization, but it is somewhat surprising that the species should have been overlooked so long. To find this Vireo, it is necessary to rely almost entirely on the feeble but very characteristic song. The breeding range as given in the Check-List may be extended to include the southwestern portion of the state, bounded on the north by Madison and the Wisconsin river valley.

Protonotaria citrea. PROTHONOTARY WARBLER.—This is an abundant summer resident along the Mississippi river and in the Wisconsin valley at least as far north as Okee, Columbia County. Deposition of eggs begins the last week in May, and young able to fly have been noted by June 28.

Vermivora pinus. BLUE-WINGED WARBLER.—This species is a locally common summer resident in the southwestern portion of the state, though formerly considered rare by various observers. My only record for the immediate vicinity of Madison is May 18, 1924. The bird flew after being shot, and fell in brush where it could not be found. At New Glarus, Green County, on June 14, 1924, I collected one of three singing birds. It has been found in two localities at Potosi, at Spring Green in Sauk County, and at Mazomanie in Dane County, where it occurs in numbers. It may be expected to occur in western Wisconsin as far north as Buffalo County, since it breeds in southeastern Minnesota.

¹ Auk, 41 (1924) 347.

² N. DeWitt Betts, Auk, 31 (1914) 542.

³ Auk, 39 (1922) 575.

In the Wisconsin river bottoms it is found where there are open stands of trees and bushes, and a luxuriant growth of grass.

Vermivora chrysoptera. GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER.—This species is less common as a summer resident in southern Wisconsin than *V. pinus*. It breeds in small numbers at Mazomanie, and in two localities near Cross Plains, Dane County. I have also found it in June in the southern end of Richland County, near Muscoda.

The nest in the accompanying photograph contained one egg when found on June 13, 1925. During my stay in the vicinity, the female inspected the nest about every five minutes. The male always accompanied her to the nest but passed on when she stopped. My next visit was on June 19 when there were four eggs.

The cone-shaped nest, placed at the base of a bush on the side of a ravine, had the following dimensions: outside, 3.25 x 4.00 x 3.25 inches high; inside 1.75 x 2.25 x 1.60 inches deep. The exterior consisted of a thin layer of leaves of the white oak, the walls of long thin strips from the exterior of the stems of various annuals, and the lining of stiff, brown, bast fibers that were not identified.

Dendroica cerulea. CERULEAN WARBLER.—This species was considered rare by Kumlien and Hollister. Stoddard found it common in the Baraboo Bluffs in 1913. It is an abundant summer resident at Potosi and common in suitable localities throughout the southwestern portion of the state. I have found it in numbers at New Glarus, Cross Plains, Mazomanie, Mill Bluff, Spring Green, and Boscobel.

The Cerulean Warbler is found mainly in moist rich woodlands containing tall, dense timber, in both the uplands and river bottoms. I, however, collected a male at Potosi, June 17, 1924, in a thin stand of oaks about 30 feet high, on the top of a rocky bluff. The birds are not often found below the level of the tree tops.

Seiurus motacilla. LOUISIANA WATER-THRUSH.—This is a fairly common summer resident along the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers. At Potosi, June 9, 1925, I found a pair in a ravine where a spring trickled over a rocky ledge to form a miniature fall. One of the birds, a female, was collected. The largest ova were 2 mm. in diameter. One of two singing males was collected at Mazomanie, May 31, 1925. I have also found it in June at Spring Green and Mill Bluff. In the bottom-lands of the Wisconsin it is found near the small ponds and sloughs in the deep woods.

Oporornis formosus. KENTUCKY WARBLER.—It is a pleasure to state that this supposedly rare Warbler is not uncommon as a summer resident, and to record the discovery of the first nests. Kumlien and Hollister mention seven specimens and state—"We appear to be a little too far north for this exquisite species." The only other printed record refers to a pair taken in Dane County by Stoddard, June 13, 1913. Had I so desired, I could have taken a dozen specimens in a morning.

I began my exploration of the Potosi region early on the morning of

June 16, 1924. While walking along the side of a wooded ravine I was stopped by a song that I did not recognize. A moment later a Redstart came dashing past pursued by a bird that alighted on a sapling a few feet from me; the pursuer was a fine Kentucky Warbler. Before I could unlimber my gun, the bird disappeared in a thicket and could not be seen. Greatly disappointed, I resolved to continue the search after breakfast. While returning to the hotel by an old road, a female suddenly flushed near my feet. The bird and her nest, containing 4 eggs of the owner and 2 of the Cowbird, were collected. The nest was well concealed by sprouts growing from an oak stump. It was a bulky affair of leaves and lined with dark rootlets and horse hair. The dimensions were: outside, 5.0 x 6.0 x 2.75 inches high; inside, 2.0 x 2.5 x 2.25 inches deep.

On June 18, I nearly stepped on another nest containing a fine set of 5 eggs. In marked contrast with the former, this nest, situated at the bottom of a ravine, was plainly visible from all directions. The only protection was a seedling maple bearing a few leaves. Both birds sat very closely and left the nest with hysterical cries.

At Potosi, the Kentucky Warbler was found in two regions, about three miles apart, where there were richly wooded ravines. During the visit of 1925, I was impressed by finding pairs within a short distance of the places occupied the previous season. Judging from areas in which it is known to be a summer resident, this species shows a decided preference for thickets of prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*).

On May 31, 1925, I observed three singing males in the woods in the Mazomanie bottoms. Mr. Warner Taylor took a female here a week previously. It seems to be the same locality in which Stoddard collected his pair.

Anderson¹ states that the Kentucky Warbler reaches "about its northern limit in Jackson and Blackhawk Counties"; this would be about latitude 42° 30', or the southern boundary line of Wisconsin. Its occurrence at Mazomanie extends the northern range to at least 43° 15'. This species has not been taken in Minnesota,² but it will probably be found to be a summer resident at some distance north of the mouth of the Wisconsin river.

Wilsonia canadensis. CANADA WARBLER.—At Potosi June 9, 1925, I found a bird singing in a habitat such as it chooses for breeding in northern Wisconsin. The bird had that "fixed" air indicating nesting.

Parus bicolor. TUFTED TITMOUSE.—At the time of the publication of Kumlien and Hollister's work, but one specimen had been obtained in the state. Within recent years, this species has been irregularly common in winter and early spring, though no breeding records are extant.

I found a single bird in the valley of Grant river at Potosi, June 17, 1924. None were observed the following year. I had expected to find

¹ 'The Birds of Iowa,' Proc. Davenport Acad. of Sciences, 11 (1907) 359.

² Roberts, "A Review of the Ornithology of Minnesota" (1919).

the species fairly common. On June 11, 1925, I found a pair in the river bottoms at Spring Green. The birds disappeared after being watched for some time. Returning an hour later I found one in the same spot, but could obtain no satisfactory evidence of breeding. The following day I heard one calling in the woods at Mill Bluff. On June 28, Mr. Warner Taylor and I went into the bottoms at Mazomanie. While walking towards the river we heard a Tufted Titmouse. Investigation disclosed a family consisting of two old and five young birds. I took one of the latter, a female, which is now in my collection. This is the first breeding record for the state.

While there is little doubt that this species has extended its range northward within recent years, it has probably been a regular summer resident in small numbers, but has been overlooked.

Mimus polyglottos polyglottos. MOCKINGBIRD.—A single bird was seen near Devil's Lake, July 26, 1916. Unfortunately, I had no means for collecting it.

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