

THE MOURNING WARBLER (*OPORORNIS PHILADELPHIA*) NESTING IN WISCONSIN.

BY OWEN J. GROMME.

*Plate V.*

Authors seem to disagree upon the breeding status of the Mourning Warbler in Wisconsin.

In 'The Birds of Wisconsin' by Kumlien and Hollister (1903) page 118, they give the opinion that the species never breeds in Wisconsin and that any published record of a Wisconsin breeding must surely refer to *O. agilis*.

A. W. Schorger in his 'Birds of Dane County, Wisconsin' (1931), page 32, states that the breeding bird in northern Wisconsin is *O. philadelphia* and not *O. agilis*. In a letter to me Mr. Schorger tells of observing an adult Mourning Warbler carrying food during the breeding season at Lake Owen, Wisconsin. The logical conclusion of course is that food was being carried to the young.

In view of the foregoing, the details of the finding of a nest of the Mourning Warbler near Germantown, Wisconsin, on June 19, 1932, will be of interest. A party of us were walking through a heavily wooded lowland, which bordered an expanse of marsh. Large basswoods, maples and elms almost completely shaded the tangled growth beneath and in the more open places were large patches of nettle and jewel-weed which grew knee high. While "wading" through the jewel-weed, the writer was brought to a sudden halt by Mrs. Gromme. She saw tiny eggs rolling or "spraying" ahead of my feet as I unconsciously kicked a small nest from its slender attachment. We could identify neither the eggs nor the nest as the parent bird was nowhere in evidence. We did the next best thing and, after replacing the five eggs, we set the nest upright and concealed it as best we could. Within five minutes a female Mourning Warbler had returned and settled to her incubating.

Originally the nest had been built on a slight hummock, which elevated its base about three inches from ground level. It was placed among the upright stalks of living jewel-weed, the leaves of which almost completely concealed it from view from above. The

dead stalks of jewel-weed and layers of elm leaves were used in its general construction. It was deeply and perfectly cupped and lined with fine grasses and a few horse hairs. For so small a bird the nest appeared bulky.

Realizing the possibility of further studies and photography, we did not further disturb the bird and left the locality. On June 20 the nest was again visited. We almost touched the bird before she slipped off "mouse-like" and quietly watched us from her hidden position on the ground only a foot away. We took one of her eggs for a museum record and, relying upon her tameness, decided to try for some pictures without a blind. When we pushed aside the intervening foliage and thus exposed the nest to open view, she became very nervous and repeatedly fluttered to the overhead twigs and back to the ground and nervously emitted a single-syllabled "tsip." Her call soon attracted the male bird, which joined her in her demonstration of anxiety and uttered a similar call. Neither bird came to the nest until foliage was replaced and camera removed. On June 22 two of the young hatched and on the 23rd the other two emerged. When we arrived to build a photographic blind the female was not on the nest. We hammered and pounded on the framework only three feet away and sometime during the half hour interval the female bird quietly slipped on in spite of the noise we made. On the 24th I spent two hours in the blind and after parting the foliage at the nest, made both movies and still pictures of the brooding bird. During that interval the male came close only once and from the nest his mate answered his "tsip." During our work with this pair neither parent bird uttered any other call of which we are aware.

In order to admit photographic light it was necessary to remove several overhead branches. It is possible that the heat caused by the newly admitted sunlight on the nest area affected the young, for on the next afternoon we found the female bird brooding her youngsters which had been dead for only a short time. We collected the female, nest and young, but neither on that day nor the next did we get a glimpse of the male.

As far as I am aware, this is the first occasion of the finding of the nest of this species in Wisconsin.

*Milwaukee Public Museum,  
Milwaukee, Wis.*



*Photo by O. J. Gromme.*

FEMALE MOURNING WARBLER ON NEST.