

despite the work already done, still holds more than its share of biological loose threads.

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EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—

I was glad to see in last October's 'Auk' a note by J. Charles Tracy on the extension of the breeding range of the Wood Thrush. This interesting ornithological event has not received the attention it deserves, but it is only fair to the field workers to point out that it has not been entirely overlooked, and also that it began much earlier than Mr. Tracy supposes. Without attempting an exhaustive review of the literature I may call attention to Glover M. Allen's 'List of the Birds of New Hampshire' (Proc. Manchester Inst. of Arts and Sciences, iv, 1902, Manchester, N. H., 1903), where records of ten individuals occurring in the White Mountains are given, dating from 1894 on—records which could now be added to very extensively. For Vermont, I myself recorded in 'The Auk' (1908, p. 63) the finding of four or five singing at Willoughby Lake in 1896 and of nine at West Bridgewater at elevations ranging from 1100 to 2000 or 2500 feet in 1907, and there cited Howell's record for Mt. Mansfield in 1899 and Torrey's for the Canadian side of Lake Memphremagog in or before 1885. I could cite more recent records for both New Hampshire and Vermont, but my purpose is only to call attention to these earlier ones.

I cannot be so sure as Mr. Tracy seems to be that the northern-nesting Wood Thrushes tend to seek higher altitudes than those that breed farther south. At any rate my singing birds of 1896 at Willoughby Lake were all near the head of the lake and hence at an altitude of only about 1200 feet, or as low as they could get and nest in the neighborhood at all. Dr. Walter Faxon had found a single singing Wood Thrush there in 1885 and again in 1889, but I did not learn this till after my visit and I was as much surprised to find the species there as was Mr. Tracy on his later visit. In an article that appeared in the *St. Johnsbury (Vt.) Caledonian*, September 11, 1896, I mentioned Faxon's experience and added as a possible explanation of the increase in numbers: "The fact that four or five, probably representing so many pairs, were heard this year is perhaps due to the scarcity of Hermit Thrushes, which were seriously decimated in the South in the winter of 1895, and which have not yet recovered their normal abundance. Dr. Faxon and Mr. Ralph Hoffmann found last year (1895) that the Wood Thrushes were taking the places left vacant by Hermits on the side of Mt. Greylock in Massachusetts and far above their usual limit of altitude. Mr. William Brewster also writes me that he found a Wood Thrush at Lake Umbagog this spring for the first time, and he thinks these birds are extending their range northward." Lake Umbagog, by the way, lies northeast of the White Mountains, partly in Maine and partly in New Hampshire, and at an elevation of about 1600 feet. This remained Brewster's only record for the species at Lake Umbagog in an experience beginning in 1871 and ending in June, 1909. (See his 'Birds of the Lake Umbagog Region of Maine,' *Bulletin Mus. Comp. Zoöl.*, vol. 66, part 3, 1937.)

There is no doubt that the Wood Thrushes do ascend the mountainsides farther than might be expected, but in northern New England they are by no means con-

fined to such altitudes, as is shown by my experience at Willoughby Lake. Thus, although I was surprised to hear one singing at 3900 feet on Mt. Mansfield in Company with Bicknell's Thrushes (1926), I was only gratified to hear one at 1200 feet at South Tamworth, N. H., from the same piazza where I heard Hermits, Olive-backs, and Veeries. The 'apparent desire to remain aloof from the civilization' that struck Mr. Tracy as unusual in his Willoughby Lake birds would not so impress a New-Englander, since the Wood Thrush is not the dooryard bird even in southern New England that it is farther south. Though the woods in my neighborhood abound in Wood Thrushes in season, I have only once had a pair nest near my house. That was in the summer of 1939, and the experience has not been repeated though the conditions remain the same and this year a male sang there for eight days before giving it up.

In considering this matter of the altitudinal range of this species it should be remembered that the Wood Thrush is only irregularly and locally distributed in northern New England and that the general altitude of the terrain is fairly high, much of it over 1000 feet even in the valleys, so that to spread into the region at all the bird must be not averse to fairly high altitudes; but that does not prove that it actually prefers them to the lower elevations. I cannot help wondering, too, whether the Wood Thrush avoids the higher altitudes in the Southern States as much as Mr. Tracy indicates. I cannot speak from personal experience on that point, but I note in Wetmore's 'Observations on the Birds of West Virginia' (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 84, No. 3021, 1937) a record of one taken at 3300 feet at Cranberry Glades, June 12, 1936, and in the same author's 'Notes on the Birds of Tennessee' (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 86, No. 3050, 1939), records of specimens taken at 5100 and 2700 feet in the Great Smoky Mountains; the one obtained at 5100 feet was a juvenile only recently from the nest. May it not be that the choice of a nesting place is a matter of local conditions rather than of altitude? The Wood Thrush is undoubtedly a bird of deciduous growth, as Mr. Tracy says, not of coniferous forest, and it prefers saplings in which to nest.

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