

A Collecting Trip to Southeastern Colorado

BY EDWARD R. WARREN

IN April and May of last year, 1905, the writer made a collecting trip to the southeast part of Colorado. With the exception of a few days' stay at Lamar the entire period was spent in Baca County, which is the extreme southeastern county of the State. I arrived at Lamar at midnight of April 4, and remained there until the morning of the 10th, when I took the stage for Springfield, the county-seat of Baca County, fifty miles away, reaching there late that afternoon, and securing quarters at the hotel kept by Mrs A. C. Bruner, who was kind enough to put up with a collector and his traps.

Leaving there on the 26th, I drove east almost to the Kansas line, where I stopped at the ranch of Mr. J. M. Johnston, at which Monon Postoffice is located. Mr. Johnston and his family took me in, a perfect stranger, unintroduced, gave me the best they had, in fact treated me *white*, and I shall always remember my stay there with pleasure. I stopped there until May 9th, when I returned to Springfield and remained until the 17th. I then went nearly thirty miles in a northwesterly direction, and located at the ranch of Mr. E. J. Gaume, in the northwest corner of the county, where I remained until the 26th, being also hospitably treated there. Then I again returned to Springfield, and left for home on June 2, but doing my last field work May 31.

The country about Lamar is a prairie country, but not as level as in Baca County. The Arkansas River flows by the north side of the town, and its bottom is well wooded with cottonwood trees with some underbrush. The land along the river is largely taken up and cultivated. To the south the ground gradually rises until it culminates in a nearly level mesa or prairie. A ditch winds around on this rising ground and below it the land is cultivated, above not. In places the soil is very sandy.

The road between Lamar and Springfield is over a monotonous, nearly level prairie. Two streams with a little water are crossed, Clay Creek and Two Butte Creek; also Bear Creek about two miles north of Springfield, but this has only a little water here and there in holes.

Baca County is a typical prairie country, very flat and level, tiresomely so to one accustomed to the mountains. No trees except along what few water courses there are, and not always along them. These trees are mostly broad-leaved cottonwoods, with a few willow, wild plum and cherry trees. Bear Creek north of Springfield has quite a good many trees along its banks, and it is a good collecting ground.

Mr. Johnston's ranch is also on Bear Creek, but with comparatively few trees about, tho a short distance east, at about the state line, there is quite a little grove of small cottonwoods which I found full of birds. And an afternoon spent on Buffalo Creek three miles north showed many birds among the trees there. In fact wherever one could find trees along these creeks he would find birds. Bear Creek, instead of emptying into some larger stream, has an easterly course in Kansas for a little distance then disappears in the ground. Locally they say it "empties into Kansas."

The country around Gaume's ranch is quite different as it is on the edge of what is known as "The Cedars," which name covers the extreme western part of Baca County, and the eastern portions of Las Animas and Bent Counties. It is a

mesa country covered with a cedar growth, and much broken by shallow canyons cut through the sandstone country rock.

The following list is much shorter than it might have been if I had devoted myself exclusively to birds, but I was collecting mammals also, and at every station my first efforts were to secure what mammals I could, then look after the birds. It will be noticed that I record but few water birds, tho ducks are reported as being common on the creeks a little earlier in the season. But few species of hawks were seen, the lack of timber no doubt keeping many species away. Several species of birds were also seen but not positively identified as no specimens were secured, and the field identification was not satisfactory.

A number of specimens were sent to the Biological Survey for identification, and were examined and labelled by Mr. Ridgway; I wish to express my thanks for this kindness.

1. *Querquedula discors*. Blue-winged Teal. Two were seen May 6 on Buffalo Creek, north of Monon, at such short range as to admit of no doubt of the species.

2. *Spatula clypeata*. Shoveller. Seen in water holes on the prairie between Springfield and Monon, and also in Bear Creek at Monon.

3. *Ardea candidissima*. Snowy Heron. Two birds were described to me as having been seen on the prairie near Springfield which I have no doubt were of this species.

4. *Fulica americana*. Coot; Mud-hen. Seen in a water hole on the prairie between Springfield and Monon, in company with shovellers.

5. *Tringa minutilla*. Least Sandpiper. Four seen May 2 on Bear Creek at Monon, and two secured.

6. *Actitis macularia*. Spotted Sandpiper. First seen on Bear Creek, near Springfield, May 13, when two were seen; noted occasionally after that.

7. *Symphemia semipalmata inornata*. Western Willet. One taken April 28 at Monon; another seen at same place May 2.

8. *Numenius longirostris*. Long-billed Curlew. Seen occasionally on the prairies when away from ranches. Is a summer resident, and I suppose breeds.

9. *Oxyechus vociferus*. Killdeer. Common everywhere. At Monon I saw a young one not long hatched, on April 30.

10. *Podasocys montanus*. Mountain Plover. Rather common summer resident; said to gather in very large flocks in the fall.

11. *Colinus virginianus*. Bob white. The only place where I saw any was about six miles south of Monon, where on the afternoon of May 1 I saw seven, three couples and one odd bird. They were hanging out along a locust wind-break in a very sandy place beside the road. While I have assigned them to the above species none were collected, and they may possibly have been *texanus*, the Texas bob-white. I heard of no others in the county.

12. *Callipepla squamata*. Scaled Partridge. This species was seen at Lamar, where it was said to be common, at Springfield where only a few were seen, at Monon where it was common, and also at Gaume's ranch. It is said to be common in the cedars. At Monon they have made their appearance within the last fourteen years, as both Mr. Johnston and his son Arthur assured me there were none before that time. They are gradually working their way into Kansas.

Mr. W. M. Stewart told me he had lived at Springfield seventeen years, and that the birds were not there when he first came, but he could not remember just when they made their first appearance. Apparently these birds have been gradually working eastward from the cedars where they have always been resident.

Professor Cooke, in his Second Appendix to the "Birds of Colorado," speaks of what he calls "a queer state of affairs" regarding the occurrence of this species in this State, and notes that at first it was supposed to be very rare, and then it was found to be common in the cedars, and at the time of the publication of this appendix the birds had found their way to the Arkansas River at Rocky Ford. My observations show that they are common in the cedars and that they are still working east.

13. *Tympanuchus* Sp. Prairie Hen. I was told there were but few prairie hens in Baca County. One was killed near Springfield early in 1905, and Mr. Arthur Johnston told me he had seen one near the ranch at Monon. These birds may have been either *americanus* or *pallidicinctus*, or even not prairie hens at all, but sharp-tailed grouse, but I am inclined to believe they were some species of prairie hen.

14. *Meleagris* Sp. Wild Turkey. I made many enquiries about turkeys while in Baca County, and was told there were a few in the rough country to the southwest, which would be in the southern part of Las Animas County. Of course nothing could be ascertained as to the species or subspecies.

15. *Zenaidura macroura*. Mourning Dove. Common. First seen April 17. Found a nest with two young near Springfield, May 30. The birds were found everywhere, out on the prairie as well as along the streams among the trees.

16. *Cathartes aura*. Turkey Vulture. One was seen April 10, between Lamar and Springfield. They were common in the cedars and about Gaume's ranch.

17. *Circus hudsonius*. Marsh Hawk. The most common, in fact, the only common hawk. Seen frequently on the plains about prairie dog towns. I caught one in a dogtown, in a "Climax" rat trap baited with meat.

18. *Accipiter velox*. Sharp-shinned Hawk. Two taken, both on Bear Creek, near Springfield. One taken May 11 had a freshly killed lark bunting in its talons which it dropped when shot at. It was so loth to leave its pray that a second shot was easily secured, also the bird. Its stomach seemed absolutely empty, which might account for its anxiety.

19. *Falco sparverius*. Sparrow Hawk. Seen at Lamar, Springfield and Monon. Have no note of its being seen later than May 3.

20. *Asio wilsonianus*. American Long-eared Owl. One was taken April 11 in the cottonwoods along Bear Creek, north of Springfield; the only one seen. Enquiries were made about screech owls, but I could not find a person who had ever seen one.

21. *Bubo virginianus pallescens*. Western Horned Owl. I think it is rather common. One was seen at Buffalo Creek north of Monon, and I thought I saw one among the trees on Bear Creek, near Springfield. At Gaume's ranch a pair had a nest in a hole or small cave in the sandstone bluffs back of the corrals; the bluffs in fact formed the back wall of the corrals. From below, the old one and sometimes two young could be seen at the mouth of the hole. May 24, while on the hill above and back of the nest I found a young owl dead. Its body was still covered with down and the quills were about half grown out. There was nothing to indicate the cause of death. After that I was unable to see any of the birds about the nest.

22. *Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa*. Burrowing Owl. Seen about prairie dog towns at Lamar, and at every place in Baca County which I visited.

23. *Geococcyx californianus*. Roadrunner. Only seen at Gaume's ranch, but reported to me as found all over the county, but not common. Almost always spoken of as "chapparral."

24. *Dryobates scalaris bairdi*. Texas Woodpecker. Took one, a male, and saw three others April 17, in trees along Bear Creek, near Springfield. On May 12 took a female in same locality. I think it likely it may be a regular summer resident.

25. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. Red-headed Woodpecker. The only ones seen were two males, on May 16, near Springfield, along Bear Creek, but it seemed to be well known, and is no doubt a regular summer resident.

26. *Colaptes cafer collaris*. Red-shafted Flicker. Seen at Lamar and at Springfield. One taken at Lamar is somewhat of an intermediate, or "hybrid."

27. *Phalacroptilus nuttalli*. Poor-will. Seen at Springfield May 16, also at Gaume's ranch. They may have been *nitidus*, but as I did not get a specimen have placed them as above. Summer resident.

28. *Chordeiles virginianus henryi*. Western Nighthawk. First seen at Gaume's May 21; frequently seen after that and also at Springfield May 29. Summer resident.

29. *Tyrannus tyrannus*. Kingbird. First seen near Monon May 3; two or three seen there all told and as many about Springfield a little later. A summer resident, but apparently not at all common.

30. *Tyrannus verticalis*. Arkansas Kingbird. First positively identified at Monon May 3, though I am quite sure I saw one April 30. There were many on the 3rd. At Springfield, on the 11th, I found many in the trees along Bear Creek, noisy and restless. On the 29th saw one on a nest there. They were also seen at Gaume's ranch. I frequently saw them on the prairie, a mile or more from trees.

31. *Myiarchus cinerascens*. Ash-throated Flycatcher. A single bird seen and taken at Gaume's ranch, May 25. This is possibly the most eastern record.

32. *Sayornis saya*. Say Phoebe. Seen everywhere I went. A common summer resident. A nest with two eggs seen at Monon about May 1st. On May 28 found a nest built in a niche in the wall of a well, about six feet below the curb, and containing six eggs.

33. *Contopus virens* ? Wood Pewee. A specimen taken near Springfield is thus labelled by Mr. Ridgway. It was taken May 12. It differs considerably from the specimens of *C. richardsoni* taken at the same place a little later, but seemingly not enough to positively place it with *virens*. If it were *virens*, it would apparently be the first record for Colorado.

34. *Contopus richardsoni*. Western Wood Pewee. Taken on Bear Creek, near Springfield, May 30.

35. *Empidonax minimus*. Least Flycatcher. A single specimen taken near Springfield May 13.

36. *Empidonax trailli*. Traill Flycatcher. Two females taken on Bear Creek, near Springfield, May 29; they showed no indications of having begun to breed.

37. *Otocoris alpestris leucolæma*. Desert Horned Lark. Not seen close to Lamar, but common several miles south along the stage road, and common everywhere on the prairies in Baca County. Called "pansy birds" there, from a fancied resemblance of the throat and head markings to a pansy flower. About Springfield they seemed to be mating the middle of April. May 17 I saw near Springfield a young bird just out of the nest, and later in the day thought I saw a family. On May 28 I found a nest with three eggs near Springfield. June 2 there were a good many young, just able to fly, along the road between Springfield and Lamar.

38. *Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus*. Pinyon Jay. They seemed to be common in the cedars at the extreme western edge of Baca County. Curiously enough, the people did not have any name for them, tho knowing them well, simply calling them "the big blue birds."

39. *Molothrus ater*. Cowbird. Seen at Monon, Springfield and Gaume's ranch. Fairly common.

40. *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. Yellow-headed Blackbird. A few seen at Springfield, and in the eastern part of the county, at and near Monon. It seems rather strange they should be there; for I saw no places anywhere that seemed to me suitable breeding places for them.

41. *Agelaius phœniceus*. Red winged Blackbird. Only seen at Lamar. Common there along the large ditches.

42. *Sturnella magna neglecta*. Western Meadowlark. A common bird everywhere, a summer resident of course, and very likely some spend the winter.

43. *Icterus bullocki*. Bullock Oriole. First seen at Monon May 3, a single male bird. At Springfield they were common, May 11, in the trees along Bear Creek. Many old nests were seen in these trees earlier, before the leaves came out. One or two seen near Gaume's ranch.

44. *Euphagus cyanocephalus*. Brewer Blackbird. A few seen in the eastern part of the county.

45. *Quiscalus quiscula æneus*. Bronzed Grackle. One taken on Bear Creek near Springfield. Was told the birds do not breed there.

46. *Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*. House Finch. Seen only at Gaume's, where I saw a few males, four together one day. The females were presumably incubating or taking care of young.

47. *Passer domesticus*. English Sparrow. Much to my surprise I found this bird all over Baca County. There were a good many in Springfield, and every ranch I visited had several pairs living there.

48. *Rhynchophanes mccowni*. McCown Longspur. Common on the plains about Springfield when I first arrived, and last seen April 26.

49. *Poœcetes gramineus confinis*. Western Vesper Sparrow. First seen near Springfield April 17, and from that time on was quite common there, and also at Monon. Seemed to prefer the neighborhood of Bear Creek at both places. Last seen near Gaume's, May 18.

50. *Chondestes grammacus strigatus*. Western Lark Sparrow. First seen April 26 near Monon. Common from that time on, and seen everywhere I went. At Gaume's they were the most common bird. One seen there May 24, carrying nest material. Near Springfield, May 27, I found a nest with a single egg. The next morning another had been added. The nest was on the ground beside a tuft of grass.

51. *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambeli*. Intermediate Sparrow. First seen near Springfield April 27. They did not seem at all common until May 3rd, at Monon, when they were comparatively abundant. The last one was seen near Springfield May 15. At both places they frequented the trees and bushes near Bear Creek.

52. *Spizella socialis arizonæ*. Western Chipping Sparrow. Did not seem to be very common, though seen everywhere I went. First seen April 27 at Monon. Summer resident.

53. *Spizella pallida*. Clay-colored Sparrow. Quite common, more so than the preceding. First seen May 4 at Monon. They seemed to frequent the edge of the prairie near Bear Creek.

54. *Spizella breweri*. Brewer Sparrow. Seen at Monon and at Springfield. First seen April 29. Much less common than either of the preceding.

55. *Junco hyemalis*. Slate-colored Junco. Only seen at Lamar, April 6; one taken and another seen.

56. *Amphispiza bilineata deserticola*. Desert Sparrow. Seen only at Gaume's ranch, May 18 to 25. Three taken and others seen. Undoubtedly breeding.

57. *Peucaea cassini*. Cassin Sparrow. A specimen of this species, the first to be recorded for Colorado, was taken May 27, near Springfield. The bird was on a wire fence near Cat Creek, south of the town. Its breast was quite bare of feathers, so that it may have been incubating.

58. *Melospiza cinerea* subsp.? Song Sparrow. Seen only at Lamar, April 5; as no specimens were taken it is impossible to say to what subspecies they belonged.

59. *Pipilo maculatus arcticus*. Arctic Towhee. A female, taken at Monon May 3, is thus identified by Mr. Ridgway.

60. *Pipilo maculatus megalonyx*. Spurred Towhee. A male taken at Monon April 28 is thus identified by Mr. Ridgway. Though towhees were not uncommon at that time, these two specimens were unfortunately the only ones collected.

61. *Oreospiza chlorura*. Green-tailed Towhee. First seen at Monon May 3, when there were many in the cottonwoods along Bear Creek. It was seen once at Springfield, May 11.

62. *Calamospiza melanocorys*. Lark Bunting. A very common summer resident on the prairies. First made its appearance at Monon April 30, the first birds being males. The first females were seen May 5. They began their courtship and love songs the middle of May, and from then on it was a common sight to see the males up in the air singing. The song then seemed sweeter to me than when given from a perch. On June 2 they still seemed to be mating and I saw two males pursuing one female. Locally called "buffalo birds" and sometimes "bobolinks."

63. *Progne subis*. Purple Martin. Mr. Arthur Johnston told me that two or three years ago a pair came about their place at Monon but did not stay.

64. *Petrochelidon lunifrons*. Cliff Swallow. Seen at every place I went to. At Monon there were several colonies of old nests in the bluffs along Bear Creek. The birds were about these but had not yet begun to build new nests.

65. *Hirundo erythrogaster*. Barn Swallow. Seen May 26 at several places along the road between Gaume's ranch and Springfield, hawking for insects in company with cliff swallows. Also seen at Springfield a few days later.

66. *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*. White-rumped Shrike. Seen at Lamar, Springfield and Monon. A common summer resident. A number of persons with whom I talked considered it a very useful bird as it catches many grasshoppers. Perhaps this is noticed more in this species than in others from its habit of decorating the barbed wire fences with its prey.

67. *Vireo gilvus swainsoni*. Western Warbling Vireo. One taken May 3 at Monon, and another at Springfield, May 30, both in the trees along Bear Creek. These were the only vireos of any species seen.

68. *Helminthophila virginiae*. Virginia Warbler. A single specimen, a male, taken May 3 at Monon, which extends its known range very much to the east.

69. *Helminthophila celata*. Orange-crowned Warbler. A female taken on Bear Creek, near Springfield, May 15.

70. *Dendroica aestiva morcomi*. Yellow Warbler. Seen everywhere I went, in suitable localities; most common along Bear Creek, near Springfield, among the

cottonwoods and bushes. First seen at Monon, May 6. A summer resident. All my specimens are thus labelled by Mr. Ridgway.

71. *Dendroica auduboni*. Audubon Warbler. First seen at Monon May 2. They were common there and at Springfield in the trees along Bear Creek. None seen after May 15. A migrant only.

72. *Dendroica maculosa*. Magnolia Warbler. One taken on Bear Creek, near Springfield, May 12. According to Cooke's List of Colorado Birds, this should be the fourth record for the State.

73. *Geothlypis tolmiei*. Tolmie Warbler. Seen only near Springfield, as usual, among the trees along Bear Creek. First seen May 11, several seen the next few days. The last one seen was a male of preceding year, in immature plumage, taken May 30. A migrant only.

74. *Wilsonia pusilla*. Wilson Warbler. First taken May 3 at Monon. At Springfield they were quite common among the trees and bushes along Bear Creek, May 11 to 16, though they seemed rather scarce at the latter date. Migrant.

75. *Setophaga ruticilla*. American Redstart. A last year's male taken May 30, near Springfield.

76. *Oroscoptes montanus*. Sage Thrasher. A single specimen taken on Bear Creek, near Springfield, April 21, and I thought I saw another the same day.

77. *Mimus polyglottos*. Mockingbird. Seen at every place I visited. First seen at Monon May 3. A common bird, and after its arrival its song was continually heard.

78. *Galeoscoptes carolinensis*. Catbird. First seen at Springfield May 12, on Bear Creek, and on the 16th there were many there. Also seen at Gaume's May 22. Did not see any about Springfield the last days of May.

79. *Salpinctes obsoletus*. Rock Wren. This was seen at Springfield, Monon and Gaume's ranch. It was about Springfield when I arrived April 10. It seemed a common bird around the sandstone ledges and bluffs. Summer resident.

80. *Troglodytes aedon aztecus*. Western House Wren. Seen only at Springfield among the trees and bushes along Bear Creek. Summer resident.

81. *Myadestes townsendi*. Townsend Solitaire. Seen in April among the trees and bushes on Bear Creek. There seemed to be several there, and they were seen at various times from the 12th to the 21st. Probably a winter resident.

82. *Hylocichla ustulata swainsoni*. Olive-backed Thrush. First seen May 16, among the trees on Bear Creek, near Springfield. There were many that morning, though not seen before then. Three were taken, all males. May 29 to 31 there were still many there, but six out of seven shot were females.

83. *Hylocichla guttata*. Alaska Hermit Thrush. First seen May 1 at Monon, when one was shot in a tree beside Bear Creek. May 11, at Springfield, they seemed common among the trees along Bear Creek. Disappeared a day or two after.

84. *Merula migratoria propinqua*. Western Robin. Seen at Lamar, Springfield, and Monon. Last seen at Springfield May 11. I was told they did not breed there. I certainly did not see any after the above date, nor can I recall seeing any old nests in the trees on Bear Creek, and there was good opportunity for observation in April, before the leaves came out. But Mr. Johnston told me a pair built among the fruit trees near the house a year ago.

Colorado Springs, Colo.