

## SOME REMARKS ON THE "BIRDS OF CHESTER CO., PA."

BY FRANK L. BURNS, *Berwyn, Pa.*

During the latter part of 1889,\* the *Ornithologist and Oologist* published what appeared at first to be a reliable and admirably annotated list of the "Birds of Chester County, Pennsylvania." This, the fifth and last list devoted exclusively to the County, was subsequently found to contain so many remarkable statements, particularly regarding the breeding of species long known to nest only in the far north or at a much higher altitude than our county anywhere affords, that it was cast aside as utterly untrustworthy. The author, Mr. Cyrus B. Ressel, quoted Mr. William D. Doan, of Coatesville, as his authority for so many statements, that I was constrained to write to that gentleman, in order to separate some of the wheat from the chaff, if possible. As Mr. Doan has long since retired from the Ornithological field for the scarcely less interesting study of Entomology, I take it upon myself to publish the following notes and corrections, taken from his letters almost verbatim, trusting that they may not be without some value. In justice to Mr. Doan I will say that he had not seen the *O. & O.* list until I drew his attention to it.

"HORNED GREBE, *Colymbus auritus*.—One specimen secured on the Brandywine creek south of Mortonville.

"BLUE-WINGED TEAL, *Anas discors*.—I shot two or three specimens on the same creek in the fall. (I secured several during the first week in September, about the heads of Gunpowder and Bush rivers, Maryland.)

"WHISTLING SWAN, *Olor columbianus*.—I remember taking one out of five, the last week in March, 1885, along the meadows south of Chadd's Ford, during a severe rain storm which lasted for several days. These birds often ascend tributaries to quite a distance. My brother has mounted specimens, shot during spring-time, north of Columbia, Lancaster county, on the Susquehanna; and I have also shot them as far inland as Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, on the Potomac.

"YELLOW-LEGS, *Totanus flavipes*.—I secured one along the Brandywine creek, south of Downingtown. I believe it was in the spring of 1887, but I am not sure as to the year.

"PASSENGER PIGEON, *Ectopistes migratorius*.—I had secured half-a-

\*July, August and September. See Vol. xiv. pp. 158 and 175 for criticisms.—{Ed.

dozen specimens of this species in Chester and Lancaster counties previous to 1882, but have not seen any since that time.

"OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, *Contopus borealis*.—In looking over my Entomological notes I find in reference to this species: Sept. 30, '87, secured two males near Coatesville along the Brandywine road, feeding upon Red Ants, *Formica sanguinea*. Upon examination of the stomachs, I found them to contain besides the Red Ants: Black Crickets, *Acheta nigra*; Mosquitoes, *Culex pipiens* and two House Flies, *Musca domestica*.

"YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax flaviventris*.—I remember collecting this bird upon one occasion during the breeding season, and have no doubt that it would be more frequently met with but for its resemblance to *C. virens* at a distance.

"AMERICAN CROSSBILL, *Loxia curvirostra minor*.—Several secured during the great blizzard of March, 1888. Dr. A. K. Fisher took them during this storm, as far south as Washington, D. C.

"WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL, *L. leucoptera*.—One taken during the same storm.

"BOHEMIAN WAXWING, *Ampelis garrulus*.—I shot two specimens during the same blizzard. Climatic conditions have so much to do with bird life that in order to be posted upon each species, one must have the necessary field experience. If we fail to look for northern species during the cold and stormy days we will never secure them.

"PARULA WARBLER, *Compsothlypis americana*.—In 1883 I found this bird breeding along the Octoraro creek which borders the county. Turning to such high authority as Mr. H. Nehrling and Prof. Ridgway, we find them saying: 'From Maine and Canada to Texas it seems to make itself at home where ever it can find a nesting place;' and further 'It ranges from the Atlantic to the Plains, north to Canada. In Connecticut, Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan New Jersey and most of the states bordering on the Atlantic it seems to be common.'

"CAPE MAY WARBLER, *Dendroica tigrina*.—Mr. Wood, of Philadelphia, took this species near Coatesville. This specimen is now owned by Mr. Thomas Windle, of the firm of Windle and Doan, Coatesville.

"BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER, *D. blackburnie*.—I have met with this species in the county as a transient visitant only, but met with a single pair in Lancaster county, north of Columbia, along the Susquehanna, late in June, paired and the male in full song.

"PINE WARBLER, *D. vigorsii*.—I have met with it on two occasions, once in the spruces south of Coatesville, and the second time in what is

known as Roney's Pines, south of Steelesville, along the Octoraro creek. They have been taken upon several occasions at the last named place by the late Joseph Krider, of Philadelphia. It breeds in all our Atlantic states, at least as far south as South Carolina. It is a summer resident in eastern West Virginia and as far north as Manitoba. Nehrling says, 'It seems to be especially abundant in the pine barrens of the South Atlantic and Middle States.' This species frequents the pines and spruces throughout its range and must be looked for in such places.

"PRAIRIE WARBLER, *D. discolor*.—I found it breeding in the county, south of Medina, along the Brandywine, but once. I have frequently met with it during my several years' collecting, in the rocky localities along the Brandywine and Octoraro creeks. It can be found throughout the summer along the Susquehanna river as far north as Peach Bottom and it may be further north of that point, as it has been found in Southern Wisconsin, Michigan and New England. It is one of the smallest and most active of the *Dendroica* group.

"WATER THRUSH, *Seiurus noveboracensis*.—Met with in this section only as a transient visitant.

"LOUISIANA WATER THRUSH, *S. motacilla*.—I secured nest and eggs south of Atglen, along the Octoraro in the summer of 1883. I saw the birds building their nest and secured both male and female after the eggs were laid. They are very shy, often nesting where it is hard to get to them for mud or water. I regard the finding of the Worm-eating Warbler easy in comparison.

"HOODED WARBLER, *Sylvania mitrata*.—If my memory serves me right, my friend, the late Joseph Krider, collected specimens south of Steelesville, along the Octoraro, and wrote me in regard to the find shortly afterward. I have shot it in Mayland close to the Pennsylvania line.

"I have never met with the American Egret, *Ardea egretta* and Florida Gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*, in the county, but I shot one of each in the adjoining county of Lancaster, near Peach Bottom.

"I have met with the American Bittern, *B. lentiginosus*; Red-shouldered Hawk, *B. lineatus*; Least Flycatcher, *E. minimus*; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, *H. ludoviciana*, and Wilson's Thrush, *T. fuscescens*, only as migrants.

"I have not observed the Fish Crow, *C. ossifragus*, in the county, and to the best of my knowledge I have not seen the Golden Eagle, *A. chrysaetos*; American Hawk Owl, *S. ulula caparoch*, or Red-shafted Flicker, *C. cafer*, in this state."

We must regard the capture of one or two belated individuals of the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in Chester and Blackburnian Warbler in Lancaster counties, in the breeding season, as purely accidental and of no value in determining their breeding range.

A few species, undoubtedly migrants, given by Mr. Ressel as summer residents (to which exceptions were made), subsequently have been found nesting in the county; while others were undoubtedly the result of careless "identification" or misinformation.

It is to be hoped that, ere long, a competent person of large field experience in local ornithology will give us a list revised and corrected to date.

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### GENERAL NOTES.

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YOUNG OF THE KILLDEER, *Ægialitis vocifera*.—May 15, 1896. While out walking early this morning I had the pleasure of seeing, for the first time in my life, some nestling Killdeers. Seeing a pair of old birds near the corner of the pasture which I was crossing, I stepped over that way and at once felt sure there were eggs or young, as the old birds at once set up a fearful and pitiful crying, "*Kill-dee-Kill-dee*," and would flutter and crawl along in front of me after the "time honored custom" of ground nesting birds. I soon found the young, three in number, little downy bits about as large as ones thumb, but able to walk quite well. On picking one up (much to the discomfiture of Mrs. *Ægialitis*) he "*peeped, peeped*," much like a young chicken, for a few minutes and then nestled down in my hand, perfectly contented. When resting on the ground the head and bill are laid perfectly flat, with the body, upon the ground. When I left the spot, one of the parents followed me, circling and calling, to the outskirts of town, nearly a half mile, probably thinking that I still held one of his offspring in captivity.

N. HOLLISTER, *Delavan, Wis.*

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN NOTES.—DICKCISSEL, *Spiza americana*.—A pair of Dickcissels, the first seen in several years, summered near Delavan last year; the male could be seen on any day during the latter half of May and all through June, sitting upon a fence post by the road-side, evidently not far from the nest.

BALD EAGLE, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*.—More common this fall than for several years—several fine adults seen and also several immatures—