

THE
WILSON BULLETIN

No. 44.

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF
ORNITHOLOGY

VOL. X.

SEPTEMBER, 1903.

No. 3

BIRDS OBSERVED ON MT. MANSFIELD AND THE
WEST END OF STOWE VALLEY AT THE
BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN, IN
THE SUMMER OF 1902.

BY MRS. ELIZABETH B. DAVENPORT.

In the October Auk, 1902, appeared Mr. Arthur H. Howell's "Preliminary List of Summer Birds of Mt. Mansfield," the first published article treating exclusively of the birds of that region. Incidentally Mr. Howell summarizes previously published Avi-faunal lists to date, also some of the literature upon the Flora of the region.

His story covered June 14-24, 1900, June 23 to July 2, 1902, and he found some interesting differences in bird distribution in these two years, his records differing also from those of Mr. Bradford Torrey made in 1885. The face of this territory is undergoing changes wrought by the lumbering interests, which are likely to increase in the near future, and it seems desirable that careful study be given the region, and note made of the bird life.

Mr. Howell offers his "List" chiefly as "a contribution to our knowledge of the breeding range of Canadian Species," and finds its "faunal relationships almost pure Canadian," "even the few Alleghanian species found in the valley being extremely rare."

The bulk of the mountain lies nearly north and south, sweeping up grandly from the valley on the western side, its base both here and on the east defining far-reaching curves, whose steep sides are covered with forests on their lower slopes, and whose broken rugged cliffs lift themselves by sharp ascents to the great crest of the mountain.

Approaching from the Stowe side the ascent from the valley begins at the foot of a spur thrown out toward the east, the carriage road winding along its sides, and crossing to the main ridge as the summit is neared. Here for the first time the whole sweep of the mountain-top breaks on the view, the fleeting outline crowned by the majesty of the Chin. A mile and a half of wind-swept summit stretches away to the north, sometimes only a narrowing mass of weather-worn rock, sometimes widening out, and making boggy hollows which shelter a few stunted trees, or again giant masses of broken, splintered rock thrown together in great confusion, and giving but perilous foothold as one nears the great valley and gorges where snowy clouds often drift or linger, and out of which other mountain summits rise like somber islands, or maybe glow with splendid color reflected from a gorgeous sky at sunset.

Below the forest proper the spur widens out into a plateau, and at its base unite the two streams which drain the mountain sides, the North Branch coming down through Smuggler's Notch, having its birth in the pure spring which bursts from the heart of Sterling Mountain, cold, swift and forceful, a brook from the hour its waters first meet the light of day.

The forest is mainly red spruce (*Picea rubra*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), yellow birch (*Betula lutea*), beech (*Fagus americana*), and sugar maple (*Acer barbatum*).

Where the virgin forest has been removed the undergrowth is very dense.

My stay was from June 6 to July 31, with the exception of a few days early in July (2-5), when I joined the B. H. B. Club at the midsummer meeting.

June 13-29, July 20-31 was spent at the summit.

June 6-13, July 5-20 I was stationed at Mr. Harlow's, and observations made on North Branch, South Branch and slopes of the mountain to the limit of timber.

The mile and a half of road from the foot of the plateau to Bingham's Falls at the entrance of the Notch, proved rich in species. For most of the way the road runs well above the wild, rocky bed of the swift-flowing brook, presenting along its borders the variety of scant open woodland, heavy forest, areas of recent growth, and areas of mountain-side where lumbermen have left trunks and tree-tops. Over the shorn forest, vines and bushes are rapidly growing, offering shelter and food to birds of the open woodland border.

Birds characteristic of both Alleghenian and Canadian fauna seemed to intermingle here. Scarlet Tanagers and Wood Pewees were in close touch with Olive-backed Thrushes and White-throated Sparrows, and the Winter Wren slipped mouse-like among the prostrate trees.

Some puzzling questions of distribution were presented. Below the Notch, Olive-backed Thrushes were confined to this Branch, as were White-throats and Juncos. while they were never found on the South Branch, just across the narrow plateau.

The Wilson and Hermit Thrushes were distributed on the South Branch only, and though the Hermits were in the forest at the base of the mountain and well up along the Notch road, they were always in the woods at the left of the road, the Mansfield side.

These and some other questions relative to distribution are reserved for further study before discussion.

The only birds listed not found along these Branches, the plateau or mountain to 3,000 feet altitude, are Bicknell Thrush and Black-poll Warbler, these two birds being confined exclusive to the mountain summit.

1. *Actitis macularia*. Spotted Sandpiper.—June 9. Through the season, North Branch and down the valley.

2. *Bonasa umbellus*. (*togata*?) Ruffed Grouse. Mr. Howell refers all the Grouse found in this region to the Canadian form. I could not determine this definitely. Heard frequently drumming about the base of the mountain. Met with young all through the season from June 13 to July 17, on the lower slopes of the mountain to the Half-way House.

3. *Accipiter velox*. Sharp-shinned Hawk.—Summit, June 15, occasionally till late in July.

4. *Accipiter atricapillus*. Goshawk.—All through the season.

about the cliffs rising from the Notch. Young well grown, second week in July. Mr. William Brewster thinks these must have been Duck Hawks. (Tails were long.)

5. *Coccyzus americana*. Yellow-billed Cuckoo.—Occasionally about approaches to the Notch road.

6. *Ceryle alcyon*. Kingfisher.—Frequently met along the Branch brooks.

7. *Dryobates villosus*. Hairy Woodpecker.—Well up the mountain road on the underhill side. Not numerous.

8. *Dryobates pubescens medianus*. Downy Woodpecker.—Frequent on mountain slopes and lower valleys.*

9. *Sphyrapicus varius*. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.—Up the mountain road as far as the spring. In the maple woods at the base.

10. *Colaptes auratus luteus*. Northern Flicker.—Common about slopes and in the valleys. About the farm above Mr. Harlow's.

11. *Chætura pelagica*. Chimney Swift.—Common in the valley. Often seen flying over the Summit.

12. *Trochilus colubris*. Ruby-throated Hummingbird.—Frequent about base of mountain.

13. *Tyrannus tyrannus*. Kingbird.—Occasional in valley to base of mountain.

14. *Myiarchus crinitus*. Crested Flycatcher.—Common about Mr. Harlow's, especially at lower end of North Branch. Could be also seen at the mountain foot proper.

15. *Sayornis phœbe*. Phœbe.—About all farm buildings. Nesting at Mr. Harlow's.

16. *Contopus virens*. Wood Pewee.—Rare. Heard first at Mr. Harlow's; June 8, on the North Branch; July 17, at Half-way House; June 19, on Underhill trail.

17. *Empidonax flaviventris*. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.—Two pairs located near the summit in swampy woods, June 17. Under observation at intervals till July 28. Also on Underhill trail, June 19.

18. *Empidonax traillii alnorum*. Alder Flycatcher.—Occasionally noted all the way to mountain's foot along the small brooks flowing through the bushy pastures.

19. *Empidonax minimus*. Least Flycatcher.—Common in the valley. Well up the mountain side on the Underhill trail, June 19.

20. *Otocoris alpestris praticola*. Prairie Horned Lark.—Mrs. Herbert E. Straw first reported these birds in the Stowe valley in 1898. Mr. Howell found them at the same point and reported some twenty-five or more in 1901. In 1902 these birds were observed about the same fields and hill, and on June 30 several were seen and heard

*A woodpecker not surely identified but resembling the Arctic forms in general appearance, working between two tree trunks, and seen in profile only outlined against sky. Notes unfamiliar. At Bingham's Falls, and once at base of mountain.

on the sloping meadows toward Morristown, some three miles from the point to which they seemed to have been previously confined.

21. *Cyanocitta cristata*. Blue Jay.—Not common. Heard usually in the valley. Sometimes well up the mountain road. Heard calls from summit July 28.

22. *Corvus americanus*. American Crow.—Common at base of mountain. Saw Swallows (Barn and Eave) chasing crows over the meadow, June 9. Crow flying low, carrying some object in bill which it finally let fall.

23. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*. Bobolink.—Distributed through all the meadows to mountain foot. Singing as late as July 8. About the orchards July 29.

24. *Agelaius phoeniceus*. Red-winged Blackbird.—A few seen in meadow below the Forks.

25. *Icterus galbula*. Baltimore Oriole.—Four pairs located between base of plateau and Stowe village, July 13. Old birds appeared with young in the orchard about Mr. Howell's, but none were nesting above the junction of the Branches below the house.

26. *Carpodacus purpureus*. Purple Finch.—Numerous about the foot of mountain and also at Mr. Howell's. In full song all the season. Feeding on dandelion seeds, June 17.

27. *Loxia curvirostra minor*. American Crossbill.—About the plateau all through the two months. In flocks and pairs. Often feeding on the ground, holding the head sidewise to pick up grass seed. Frequently eating seed of dandelion, holding seed with plume projecting from side of bill till detached, then plume dropped. June 16, well toward top of mountain. Occasionally flying about the base in June.

28. *Astragalinus tristis*. American Goldfinch.—Abundant in the valley to the forest at base of mountain.

29. *Spinus pinus*. Pine Siskin.—Frequently seen in flocks flying about the Nose.

30. *Poœcetes gramineus*. Vesper Sparrow.—Abundant in valley and upland meadows.

31. *Coturniculus sandwichensis savanna*. Savanna Sparrow.—Distributed along the plateau. A few pairs in meadows near Stowe.

32. *Zonotrichia albicollis*. White-throated Sparrow.—Along the North Branch. Not on the mountain till well toward the summit (Inn trough), then rapidly increasing in numbers. One of the most abundant birds on the mountain top where they were in full song till I came down, July 29. Not so many individuals singing in July. Sang from dawn till 10 P. M. June 23, earliest date observed feeding young on summit. Some birds showed individual phrasing of the song common to the species, which was maintained through the season.

33. *Spizella socialis*. Chipping Sparrow.—Abundant in the lower valley, but rare on the plateau.

34. *Spizella pusilla*. Field Sparrow.—This bird was searched

for diligently in the bushy pastures at the foot of the mountain. Neither heard nor seen till July 17, when a single one was found at the above place.

35. *Junco hyemalis*. Slate-colored Junco.—Ranging with the White-throats, but extending into the Notch. On the summit the White-throats were not found north of the rocky masses known as the "lips," but the Juncos were all along the ridge to the "Chin." Very familiar about the hotel, coming to the piazza for crumbs, and feeding their young all about the open space.

36. *Melospiza cinerea fasciata*. Song Sparrow.—Common on the plateau and valleys. The most abundant bird of that region.

37. *Zamelodia ludoviciana*. Rose-breasted Grosbeak.—Nesting on the plateau, along the North Branch and woods of lower mountain slopes. Heard and seen several times beyond the Half-way House, and once at the limit of the large yellow birches.

38. *Passerina cyanea*. Indigo Bunting.—Common on the plateau and Branches. Also seen at the mountain foot proper.

39. *Piranga erythromelas*. Scarlet Tanager.—At base of the mountain, the North Branch, and hill below Mr. H.'s house.

40. *Chelidon erythrogaster*. Barn Swallow.—Abundant in the valley. Nesting on the plateau, north edge of the mountain forest.

41. *Petrochelidon lunifrons*. Cliff Swallow.—Record as No. 40.

42. *Clivicola riparia*. Bank Swallow.—Common in suitable situations below the plateau.

43. *Ampelis cedrorum*. Cedar Waxwing.—First observed in valley June 9, which Mrs. Straw thought an early date. Later seen occasionally about the base of the mountain.

44. *Vireo olivaceus*. Red-eyed Vireo.—Abundant in maple woods at base of mountain. Common all about the lower slopes and valley, and heard almost to limit of timber.

45. *Vireo gilvus*. Warbling Vireo.—Rare in the lower valley and not heard at any other point.

46. *Vireo solitarius*. Solitary Vireo.—Occasionally on the lower slopes. Always in the vicinity of hemlocks.

47. *Mniotilta varia*. Black and White Warbler.—Common on the lower slopes and about the plateau.

48. *Helminthopila rubricapilla*. Nashville Warbler.—On the North Branch, at foot of plateau, in the orchard opposite Mr. Howell's. Also again near the mountain summit, where this bird was still singing July 28. Less numerous than any other warbler.

49. *Compsothlypis americana usneæ*. Northern Parula Warbler.—Not abundant on the mountain proper, but found well up among the hemlocks. More numerous along the North Branch.

50. *Dendroica æstiva*. Yellow Warbler.—None found above foot of plateau. Not abundant.

51. *Dendroica cærulescens*. Black-throated Blue Warbler.—Very common about the Falls, the North Branch and lower slopes of mountain, ranging up through the deciduous woods in the open

spaces, and edges of clearings. Feeding young at foot of mountain, June 30.

52. *Dendroica coronata*. Myrtle Warbler.—As low down the mountain as the "S" bend. Very numerous about the summit. Often singing sitting on tips of firs and spruces. They had a pretty habit of scouring along the edges of roofs of the hotel and barn, and poising on wing to pick out spiders from under the eaves, the outspread wings and hovering motion showing their rich coloring to great advantage. Still in song there July 28.

53. *Dendroica maculosa*. Magnolia Warbler.—Occasional on the North Branch, but more often found in the pastures above the South Branch, and always among the young spruces and firs. A few noticed on the mountain road.

54. *Dendroica pensylvanica*. Chestnut-sided Warbler.—Common along the North Branch and shrubby clearings of the mountain toward the base. First found feeding young, July 8. The sexes have different alarm notes. Verified for first time this year.

55. *Dendroica striata*. Black-poll Warbler.—Abundant among all the stunted spruces and firs from altitude of 3,000 feet to region about the summit. Never heard them much north of the hotel. The rhythmic beat of their notes never musical, but the impression of ebb and flow most agreeable. Feeding young, July 26.

56. *Dendroica blackburniæ*. Blackburnian Warbler.—Ranging with the hemlocks, but singing and feeding largely in the deciduous trees—a habit I have noticed about Brattleboro. Common along North Branch.

57. *Dendroica virens*. Black-throated Green Warbler.—Common along the North Branch. Well up the mountain. Found always among the hemlocks.

58. *Seiurus aurocapillus*. Oven-bird.—Abundant along North Branch and mountain road wherever open deciduous woods abound. Flight song June 11, then nightly till early in July. Feeding young July 11 (mountain road). July 6, male about Mr. Howell's orchard.

59. *Geothlypis philadelphia*. Mourning Warbler.—Heard but a few times at the foot of the mountain in the thickets and edge of woodland. Mr. Howell reports them in the Notch.

60. *Geothlypis trichas brachidactyla*. Northern Yellow-throat.—Abundant about streams at foot of plateau and North Branch.

61. *Sylvania canadensis*. Canadian Warbler.—Nesting along North Branch. Common where timber had been cut and bushes had grown up among the abundant tree-tops.

62. *Setophaga ruticilla*. Redstart.—In the second growth timber on Notch road almost to Bingham Falls. Also along the South Branch and road from valley to Mr. Harlow's. Not abundant. Young out of nest July 29.

63. *Galeoscoptes carolinensis*. Catbird.—Common in the valley. Observed almost to edge of mountain forest along the bushy streams in the pasture.

644. *Olbiorchilus hyemalis*. Winter Wren.—Of this bird Mr. H. reports: "Mr. Lorry writes me that he noted them several times during his visit in '85 on the upper part of the mountain. I was disappointed not to find them, but I am certain they were not there in '99-00, for although the bird might be overlooked the song is not likely to escape notice." This is a most interesting report, for 1902 found a different record, so that I give a full account of the distribution as I found it. At Bingham Falls and further down the North Branch. Once both seen and heard at the junction of the Branches (July 20 for latter record); also in the Notch. Again about half-way up the mountain road. Four pairs about the summit. Heard on the underhill slopes and once at the Chin on the Notch slopes. As Mr. H. says, it would not be likely that this bird could be overlooked if present. From June 13 to 18 song heard about the Summit House from faintest dawn till after 9 P. M., and singing daily till July 28, but song not continuous after about June 20. I could never decide if the song sounded the more beautiful in the deep forest among the mossy tree-trunks about whose prostrate forms spinulose ferns clustered, and where water filtered and dripped and lay in tiny pools, or where the rich silvery notes greeted one in the closing hours of the day as the glowing tints of sunset faded from the sky and mountain tops, and purpling shadows folded in the magnificent rocky ramparts of the ridge.

65. *Sitta carolinensis*. White-breasted Nuthatch.—Not common, but well up the mountain ranging with the Chickadee.

66. *Sitta canadensis*. Red-breasted Nuthatch.—June 12 in maple wood at base of mountain, and twice on South Branch. Was surprised not to find this bird more generally distributed, and think an earlier exploration in the Notch would have changed my record.

67. *Parus atricapillus*. Chickadee.—Feeding young at base of mountain June 8. Well distributed on North Branch and hillside below the plateau. On mountain road among the hemlocks. Not abundant.

68. *Regulus satrapa*. Golden-crowned Kinglet.—But once, at foot of mountain.

Hyllocichla mustelina. Wood Thrush.—Mr. H.'s record for this Thrush is, "I think there were two pairs nesting there in 1899," and "heard the song and alarm note several times in the damp maple woods at base." In 1900 could find no trace of them, nor have they been observed by Mrs. Stowe in the Stowe Valley, so they are probably irregular in their occurrence there. Early one morning I thought I identified the song in the direction of the maple woods, of which Mr. H. writes, but the distance was too great to hear a whole phrase. This was the only occasion when any note was heard which could be related to this species, though I searched and listened diligently.

69. *Hyllocichla fuscescens*. Wilson Thrush.—Only on the South Branch and in growth of young maples approaching base of mount-

ain. Rather common. Young hatched June 11. A bird and nest of unusual interest found June 8. Nest in group of six young maple trees growing closely together. Broken sticks had lodged in the group, and large beech leaves made the foundation of the nest at about 18 inches from the ground. *The nest was of moss, thick walled, deeply cupped, well sunken in the bed of leaves. Lined with fine grass and fibers. I did not handle the eggs, but they looked like typical Wilson eggs. The bird was not typical Wilson. No warm tints anywhere. Back, wings, tail and rump just the color of the young maple bark. Throat matched the blanched beech leaves over which it was lifted. Breast creamy; also sides. Streaked on sides and on breast, streaks running to the bill, but leaving throat entirely clear. Throat, eye ring and lores white, with the lores strongly marked. Calls and alarm notes those of the Wilson, and neither song nor notes of any other Thrush heard in vicinity. Studied the bird at range of six feet, for three hours at a time, for three days. Four young safely hatched June 10.

70. *Hylocichla aliciae bicknellii*. Bicknell Thrush.—Abundant on the whole mountain crest wherever the swampy ground supported a growth of dwarfed spruce or fir. Found as low on the mountain road as the turn which first brings the hotel in sight. In full song when I first reached the summit, June 13, singing from earliest dawn till 10 P. M., both about the house and on the under-hill side of the ridge. After June 20 song diminished, but often heard as late as July 29. Young well grown July 22. Their thrush habit of singing in the tops of dead trees or on projecting dead branches gave one much opportunity to see them. Were shy of near approach till young were hatched, then came about house and barn from out their cover, feeding freely on the ground and in the barn-yard. Occasionally while incubating would be seen running a little ahead of us on the bald rocky ridges toward the Chin, feeding at the edges of the bogs, and slipping into the dense growth if too nearly approached. The birds showed variation in both color and size, but the spotting in perfect harmony with olive of the back. The calls and alarm notes resemble the other thrush notes, but are easily separable, the "when" being thinner than that of the Wilson. The "cluck" was a common note; also the notes resembling the Nighthawk, a call which is like no other Thrush unless it should be the Alice, with which I am not familiar. Mr. Howell gives the song "weé â weé â wee chi chi wee, whistled through closed teeth." I heard it mostly given weé â weé â we we, then the chi chi, the last thin and high, but with the vibrant quality of the Wilson without change of pitch, closing with wea wea. On these last two unaccented notes only an interlude between repetitions of the vibrant

*One of the *Polytrichiums*. Plants laid close together, as they grow, the root ends beautifully curved at the bottom and the capsules crowded together at the rim and overlapped by the blanched leaves of the beech.

notes. We sought diligently and perseveringly for the nest, but without success. The cover was so dense, the stiff, low-growing boughs so interlaced, that it was impossible to penetrate many feet from the road. We searched every available group, sometimes climbing over the tops of low-growing trees when no opening could be made. On June 22 the men were cutting trees to mend the road, and when they had penetrated a close growth, a pair of birds circled about them, showing great distress. Examination revealed a crushed nest and eggs in the felled tree. The season was not favorable for nest-hunting, almost every day in June being in whole or part rainy, and with high winds often making it impossible to keep one's footing in the open on the summit. We are trusting more favorable conditions and results another year.

71. *Hylocichla swainsonii*. Olive-backed Thrush.—Abundant on the North Branch and lower slopes, extending well up to the limits of timber, but decreasing then in numbers. One was located at point where the hotel is first sighted, the highest range found. This bird often sang within hearing of the house. Were found well up the mountain sides, both in Smuggles and Underhill Notches. Well-grown young, July 19, in both above-named places. It was impossible not to contrast the song of Bicknell and Olive-back, as both were heard together. The latter suggested the rich odor of the fragrant firs and the former their spiring tops. Found the Olive-backed more shy than Bicknell.

72. *Hylocichla guttata pallasii*. Hermit Thrush.—Well distributed along the road to the Notch proper, but only to left of this road. Also on the South Branch, but not common. Seemed to be confined to the woods south-east of the mountain base, through which flowed the South Branch. Mr. Lorrey says, "Singing freely about the summit in July." On July 23 I was on the ridge near the cavern when a Hermit broke into song just below me on the slope toward the Underhill, singing continuously for almost ten minutes, then again at short intervals. At no other time was this bird heard anywhere above the base, and had probably pushed up the sharp slope temporarily.

73. *Merula migratoria*. Robin.—Abundant at the mountain base. A pair located on the summit seemed much more shy than those commonly nesting about our houses.

74. *Sialia sialis*. Bluebird.—Several nesting about Mr. H.'s and to the base of mountain. Numbers came about the orchard, their soft notes and calls heard when the song season proper had passed.