

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF THE FORT LEAVENWORTH RESERVATION, KANSAS

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Introduction.

While an Officer of the Medical Corps, United States Army, in charge of the surgical clinics of the Army Hospital and the Hospital of the United States Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, covering the period of the spring migration, 1919, I made a casual check list of the birds observed and miscellaneous notes pertaining thereto. Hospital duties occupied at least the forenoon and the early afternoon each day. Bird observations were limited to an hour or more from time to time after four o'clock p. m., except for a very occasional stroll of a Sunday morning by prearrangement with the Commanding Officer, and of evenings when I would steal away from the haunts of man at dusk to receive in the depths of the woods the punctual and boisterious nocturnal greetings of numerous whippoorwills and to pursue a growing interest in the night life of nature by imposing myself as a sort of "officer of the day" over the night patrols in nature's population, the while meditating on the "home sweet home" of a volunteer medical officer.

The reservation at Fort Leavenworth, including that of the United States Disciplinary Barracks, comprises a few thousand acres of uplands and river-bottoms skirting the west bank of the Missouri river, above the city of Leavenworth, Kansas. The bottoms are low lying marshy flats, heavily timbered with cottonwoods, interspersed with elms, save only a portion that has been cleared and dyked for cultivation. The uplands in places abutting the river as bluffs, are checkered with open woods, broad meadows, copsy streamlets, dry hillsides, and fallow lands, dispersed

roundabout the major feature which is a great expanse of ridges and hills well forested with oak, hickory, elm, linden, ash, cottonwood, etc., and undergrowth — black haw, wild plum, red bud, seedlings, etc. The hilltop strata of shale and limestone issue seepage which assembles down the valleys in rills that foregather the waters into streamlets coursing to the great river.

The flats along the bottom are populated sparsely as to variety of species and only fairly well as to individuals. At mid-day they appear almost deserted, except for lovers of the ground such as juncos and song sparrows. On the river itself I seldom saw bird life. The open waters of ponds and "cut-off" lakes in the Missouri river-bottoms harbor water-fowls, but there are no lakes on the reservation.

The checkered uplands are well populated, and the watered valleys among the forested hills are "birdland" for certain — a bird lover's paradise. Here he may feast. Frequent rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, harmless serpents, snails, insects and botanical curiosities especially fungi, make sauce for the feast. Thirsty mosquitoes try his appetite and classify him a full blooded devotee of Audubon or a weak sister only.

ANNOTATED LIST

The subjoined list is arranged under consecutive dates. The first observation of a species is the only entry of it. Many species not identified with certainty, if they had been set down by guess, would well-nigh double the number recorded.

MARCH 16, 1919

1. *Sturnella magna magna*—Meadowlark.

Meadowlarks are abundant and tuneful residents in the open meadows. They are all eastern meadowlarks. I have listened carefully from March to July and never once have heard a western meadowlark. Knowing that the latter species is not uncommon a few miles westward, I am struck by its absence from this vicinity.

2. *Planesticus migratorius migratorius*—Robin.

3. *Cyanocitta cristata cristata*—Blue Jay.
4. *Corvus brachyrhynchos brachyrhynchos*—Crow.
5. *Colaptes auratus luteus*—Northern Flicker.
6. *Centurus carolinus*—Red-bellied Woodpecker.
7. *Dryobates pubescens medianus*—Downy Woodpecker.
8. *Junco hyemalis hyemalis*—Slate-colored Junco.
9. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus erythrophthalmus*—Towhee.

Towhees are numerous residents and a fascinating part of the underbrush bird world, in song, in plumage and in hustling, bustling habits.

10. *Cardinalis cardinalis cardinalis*—Cardinal.

Cardinals are frequent residents and a delight to the eye and ear. I have always been impressed with the low visibility of the cardinal. It is scarcely more noticeable in the shaded woodlands than many dull-colored birds. This seems to be due to the fact that its red plumage has relatively low values. Difference in degrees of value may be quite as important as color contrast in determining visibility. The scarlet tanager shows red with high values, is more contrasty with the landscape, and more visible.

11. *Sayornis phæbe*—Phæbe.
12. *Penthestes atricapillus atricapillus*—Chickadee.
Abundant resident.
13. *Bæolophus bicolor*—Tufted Titmouse.
Abundant resident, musical and delightful to observe.
14. *Spizella monticola monticola*—Tree Sparrow.
15. *Lanius ludovicianus migrans*—Migrant Shrike.
16. *Sialia sialis sialis*—Bluebird.
17. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*—Red-headed Woodpecker.
18. *Dryobates villosus villosus*—Hairy Woodpecker.

MARCH 19, 1919

19. *Colinus virginianus virginianus*—Bob-white.
Occasional resident.
20. *Sitta canadensis*—Red-breasted Nuthatch.
Observed three or four times.
21. *Colaptes cafer collaris*—Red-shafted Flicker.
Observed in migration during a period of a week or two.

MARCH 20, 1919

22. *Euphagus carolinus*—Rusty Blackbird.
23. *Passerella iliaca iliaca*—Fox Sparrow.
Observed in migration during a period of two or three weeks.
24. *Accipiter cooperi*—Cooper's Hawk.

MARCH 22, 1919

25. *Melospiza melodia melodia*—Song Sparrow.

Abundant and entertaining.

26. *Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*—Bronzed Grackle.
27. *Dafila acuta*—Pintail Duck.
28. *Branta canadensis canadensis*—Canada Goose.
Observed once flying. About one hundred in the flock.

• APRIL 8, 1919 •

29. *Hylocichla guttata pallasi*—Hermit Thrush.
Frequently observed in migration during a period of about two weeks. Now the blue and yellow violets and the dutchman's breeches are coming into flower. The flower buds of the mandrakes are swelling fast.
30. *Regulus calendula calendula*—Ruby-crowned Kinglet.
31. *Loxia curvirostra minor*—American Crossbill.

APRIL 10, 1919

32. *Polioptila caerulea caerulea*—Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.
33. *Mniotilta varia*—Black and White Warbler.

APRIL 11, 1919

34. *Troglodytes aëdon parkmani*—Western House Wren.
35. *Sitta carolinensis carolinensis*—White-breasted Nuthatch.
36. *Bubo virginianus virginianus*—Great Horned Owl.
Owls of various kinds are common residents. Observation, however, is difficult.
37. *Cathartes aura septentrionalis*—Turkey Vulture.
Turkey vultures are frequent residents. As many as eight are seen in the air at once.
38. *Astragalinus tristis tristis*—Goldfinch.

APRIL 12, 1919

39. *Molothrus ater ater*—Cowbird.
40. *Agelaius phœniceus phœnicus*—Red-winged Blackbird.
41. *Toxostoma rufum*—Brown Thrasher.
42. *Zonotrichia querula*—Harris' Sparrow.
Abundant during migration.
43. *Lanivireo solitarius solitarius*—Blue-headed Vireo.
44. *Spizella pallida*—Clay-colored Sparrow.
45. *Melospiza lincolni lincolni*—Lincoln's Sparrow.

APRIL 16, 1919

46. *Chen caerulescens*—Blue Goose.
One flock of about sixty is seen flying high.
47. *Helodromas solitarius solitarius*—Solitary Sandpiper.
A solitary sandpiper is flushed from a nest in the edge of a

steep bank, four feet above a streamlet, in a forested valley. Four eggs in the nest, showing light brownish spots, are evidently not the eggs of this bird, and the presence of the sandpiper there remains a puzzle.

48. *Dendroica coronata*—Myrtle Warbler.

49. *Piranga erythromelas*—Scarlet Tanager.

Frequent residents, and beautifully conspicuous.

50. *Progne subis subis*—Purple Martin.

Numerous over the building of the military prison. Their sociable life of domestic activity and their freedom contrast sharply with the human prison-life within.

APRIL 17, 1919

51. *Buteo borealis borealis*—Red-tailed Hawk.

A pair of red-tailed hawks are found nesting. The nest is about thirty feet from the ground in the top of a tree almost limbless and somewhat apart in an unfrequented section of the forested area.

APRIL 18, 1919

52. *Accipiter velox*—Sharp-shinned Hawk.

APRIL 22, 1919

53. *Zenaidura macroura carolinensis*—Mourning Dove.

54. *Chaetura pelagica*—Chimney Swift.

55. *Zamelodia ludovicigna*—Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

MAY 4, 1919

56. *Zonotrichia albicollis*—White-throated Sparrow.

57. *Setophaga ruticilla*—Redstart.

Frequent resident.

58. *Hirundo erythrogastra*—Barn Swallow.

MAY 6, 1919

59. *Piranga rubra rubra*—Summer Tanager.

Not uncommon. Summer resident.

60. *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*—Black-billed Cuckoo.

One or two observed.

61. *Antrostomus vociferus vociferus*—Whippoorwill.

MAY 19, 1919

62. *Icteria virens virens*—Yellow-breasted Chat.

Several resident pairs of these avian comedians observed in the forested area.

63. *Passerina cyanea*—Indigo Bunting.

Common resident in full song.

64. *Hyalocichla aliciae aliciae*—Grey-cheeked Thrush.
 65. *Myiarchus crinitus*—Crested Flycatcher.

MAY 22, 1919

66. *Hyalocichla ustulata swainsoni*—Olive-backed Thrush.
 67. *Wilsonia canadensis*—Canada Warbler.
 One specimen observed well at close range and in good light.

MAY 26, 1919

68. *Butorides virescens virescens*—Green Heron.
 69. *Coccyzus americanus americanus*—Yellow-billed Cuckoo.
 70. *Thryothorus ludovicianus ludovicianus*—Carolina Wren.
 71. *Oporornis formosus*—Kentucky Warbler.
 Common resident.
 72. *Dendroica chrysoparia*—Golden-checked Warbler.
 One resident pair observed closely from time to time.

JUNE 1, 1919

73. *Tyrannus tyrannus*—Kingbird.
 74. *Empidonax minimus*—Least Flycatcher.
 75. *Chondestes grammacus grammacus*—Lark Sparrow.

JUNE 4, 1919

76. *Piranga ludoviciana*—Louisiana Tanager.
 One summer-resident pair observed at close range and in good light off and on many times in a hillside woods.
 77. *Vermivora pinus*—Blue-winged Warbler.
 78. *Spizella pusilla pusilla*—Field Sparrow.
 Numerous resident locally, in high, dry pastures.

JUNE 7, 1919

79. *Helmitheros vermivorus*—Worm-eating Warbler.
 Now on this hot, sultry afternoon, when bird life is silent and in seclusion, a change of fortune befalls an otherwise unprofitable journey. While I am negotiating the brush-wood of a steep hillside, I discover an unusual little bird—rather, it discovers me. It flies about from twig to twig, now far, now near, nervously, and calling with a commonplace "chip." I stand fast for at least fifteen minutes noting its unfamiliar markings and making a sketch. At times it alights four or five feet from me an instant, then away again, always calling. Close scrutiny for a nest is profitless. Its approaches are to my right. As I am about to advance, glancing downward, a little buffy, fuzzy object on a stem not six inches from my right hand is caught in the margin of vision. It suggests the appearance of a fluffy pussy willow-bud or a little discolored silk

of milkweed. Looking straight at it, there it is,—the tender, motionless baby-bird. I quickly leave the mother to her babe alone. I have seen the worm-eating warbler, and found her a summer resident of this locality.

80. *Spizella passerina passerina*—Chipping Sparrow.

81. *Spiza americana*—Dickcissel.

82. *Ceryle alcyon*—Belted Kingfisher.

COMPARATIVE STUDY

Comparison of my notes with the check lists and notes on the birds of Kansas cited in the List of References, discloses a few items of interest.

1. Birds listed as migrants in eastern Kansas.
 - (a) Northern Flicker.
 - (b) Red-breasted Nuthatch.
 - (c) Hermit Thrush.
 - (d) Blue Goose.
 - (e) Black-billed Cuckoo.
 - (f) Canada Warbler.
 - (g) Worm-eating Warbler.
2. New records.
 - (a) Louisiana Tanager. One summer-resident pair.
 - (b) Golden-cheeked Warbler. One summer-resident pair.
 - (c) Worm-eating Warbler as a summer-resident.

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