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The Kentucky Warbler

Vol. XII

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Number 2

OUR SPRING MEETING

The fourteenth annual spring meeting of the Kentucky Ornithological Society was held in Louisville on April 16 and 17, 1936, in connection with the Kentucky Education Association. The sessions were held in the Red Room of the Seelbach Hotel. Two program sessions Thursday and Friday afternoons included six papers, slide talks, and movie presentations. The attendance was approximately 160 on Thursday and 100 Friday. Twenty-five members and friends attended the luncheon Friday. Brief abstracts of the papers are given below.

1. Cleveland P. Grant, Baker-Hunt Foundation, Covington, Kentucky, "Bird Life in Education."

A pictorial record of the habits and nesting activities of such unusual birds as the Upland Plover, Woodcock, Great Horned Owl, taken at close range from blinds.

2. Gordon Wilson, Teachers College, Bowling Green, "Nature: From Fear to Championship."

A presentation of stages in the development of man's attitude toward nature: the savage and his fear of natural objects; the barbarian and his disdain and cruelty; the civilized man and his love for and companionship with nature.

3. William Vogt, Editor of BIRD-LORE, "Where Can a Duck Get a Drink?"

A review of the effect of marsh drainage upon waterfowl and recommendations of procedures that would best preserve these birds from wanton destruction. Motion pictures were shown of the Todd Wild Life Sanctuary in Maine, Cobb's Island in Virginia, and the Rainey Wild Life Sanctuary on the Louisiana Gulf Coast.

4. Albert F. Gainer, Editor of THE MIGRANT, Tennessee Ornithological Society, "Nesting Habits of Some of Our Rarer Birds."

Numerous nest studies of some of our rare birds, including the Bald and Golden Eagles, Cormorants, Herons, Egrets, Bitterns, Water Turkeys, Rails, Hawks, and Falcons, splendidly illustrated with slides from photographs made by the speaker in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky.

5. Charles F. Walker, Soil Conservation Service, Zanesville, Ohio, "Wild Life Conservation in Kentucky."

An analysis of ecological conditions existing in our state today and the direct relation of such conditions to the distribution of birds. A sum-

mary of the work being done by the Soil Conservation Service in rehabilitation of land and its possible effect upon bird life in such areas. Illustrated with slides.

6. Samuel E. Perkins, III, Treasurer, Wilson Ornithological Club, Indianapolis, Indiana, "Days Afield in Posey County, Indiana."

An account of the bird life at the most southerly point in Indiana, where swampy woodlands and a lake are the summer home of Herons, Wood Ducks, and other water birds and other species which here reach their northernmost limit. Illustrated with colored lantern slides.

The field trip was taken early on the morning of April 17, north of Louisville along the Ohio River, including the marshy lands in Indian Hills. A total of forty species was recorded: Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Eastern Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, Wood Duck, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Eastern Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Eastern Mourning Dove, Northern Barred Owl, Chimney Swift, Flicker, Southern Downy Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Rough-winged Swallow, Northern Blue Jay, Eastern Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Robin, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Myrtle Warbler, Sycamore Warbler, Starling, English Sparrow, Eastern Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Cowbird, Bronzed Grackle, Eastern Cardinal, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Field Sparrow, Eastern Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Red-eyed Towhee.

Plans were made for our fall meeting in October with the Tennessee Ornithological Society at Franklin, Kentucky, with a field day in the edge of Tennessee.

Sanders, Aretas A. A GUIDE TO BIRD SONGS. D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1935. 2885 p., 7¼ x 5 in., \$2.50.

This interesting guide gives descriptions and diagrams of the songs and singing habits of the land birds of the northeastern United States. The author has devised a method of musical shorthand by which the characteristics of bird song are recorded in a manner quite different from the usual musical notation; it can be comprehended without the aid of detailed knowledge of musical symbols. The records consist of a series of diagrams which indicate plainly the time, pitch, and loudness of the song; descriptive terms written above the diagram give an idea of the quality; and the record of what the bird actually seems to say is written below to represent phonetic sounds. By this method can be recorded songs which do not conform to the standards of pitch and time used in human music. Call notes and alarm notes are included as well as melodious song.

The chapter "How to Identify Bird Songs," in which the method is explained, is followed by a "Key to Bird Songs," comparable to a key based upon physical properties. The index includes both scientific and common names. Since the book deals chiefly with songs, other material is limited to a brief description of the best known plumages and a general statement of the season, habitat, and range within the northeastern United States of each species described. Water and shore birds are not included; hawks are not considered song birds and are therefore omitted. The book includes the swallows and several sparrows and warblers, which Mathews' **Field Guide** omits. A few species such as the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and

the Summer Tanager will be notably missed by bird students in a region farther south than the range covered.

Despite the difficulty in describing bird song, the author has accomplished remarkably well the task he assumed. His study of details and variations of song, his clear interpretation and visualization will help students in the identification of more species and individuals and bring an added interest to their study.

BECKHAM BIRD CLUB—The Beckham Bird Club, of Louisville, held its first meeting of its second year on January 14. Under its able president, Burt Monroe, its first year was a gratifying one. Although the actual membership is not large, the average attendance at the meeting was 25. Meetings were held every month except in August. Among the speakers who addressed the club were Colonel Lucien Beckner, James Speed, Ex-Governor J. C. W. Beckham, Miss Emilie Yunker, Dr. Harvey B. Lovell, Dr. P. A. Davies, Floyd Carpenter, and Leonard Brecher. Mr. Carpenter also gave a series of talks on bird life that will be continued. At various times members discussed their experiences in the field and reported on meetings which they had attended. An all-day field trip in May and another in October were sponsored by the club.

In May the club issued the first number of a leaflet, called tentatively **THE CARDINAL**, full of excellent notes and items about the members. The longest article is entitled "Waterfowl on the Ohio River," by Burt Monroe.

The 1936 officers are as follows: President, Floyd Carpenter; Vice-President, Mabel Slack; Secretary-Treasurer, Evelyn J. Schneider; Directors: Burt Monroe, Emilie Yunker, and Colonel Lucien Beckner.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE EUROPEAN STARLING

By W. FOSTER HAYNES

About 1890-91 the Starling, like the earlier immigrant, the English Sparrow, was introduced into this country at New York. From there it has spread westward and southward until there are thousands in the Central States.

I presume that it has gone northward as well, as my observation leads to the conclusion that it is rather a northern bird. During the last spring and summer I was in Kentucky twice, the last of April and the last of July, two to four days each time, in Daviess and Henderson counties. As always, I kept my eyes open for birds, not only on the road between Owensboro and Henderson but also in a favorable bird resort in Henderson County; and I did not see (nor have I ever found, on previous trips) a single Starling in Kentucky. Coming back northward by motor, I found they would begin to appear some fifty or more miles north of Evansville.

But that was in the summer, and in looking over the Christmas census of 1934 of the Kentucky Ornithological Society, I find that over five thousand of them were reported at Nashville, Tennessee, at that time and also quite a number in the Bowling Green, Kentucky, district. They are abundant in Chicagoland all the time, but I think much more so in the summer than in the winter. While these data are not extensive and need to be greatly supplemented, they seem to indicate that the Starling is a good

deal of a migrant with northerly tendencies. Whether they nest in Kentucky or farther south, I do not know. [Many nests have been found in Kentucky.—Ed.]

In nesting they are gregarious or perhaps, from their point of view, urban in that respect. There is a little patch of woodland in or near Harvey (a southern suburb of Chicago) where they nest regularly and numerously, while similar places quite near or at no great distance seem not to be used by them at all in that way.

They are gregarious, too, in the ordinary sense of the word. I have seen flocks here ranging from a few dozen to apparently several hundred, and the Nashville observers must have seen much greater flocks. Yet it is not at all uncommon to see a solitary bird or pair.

Starlings vary greatly in coloring in different seasons and stages of growth. When young, but fully feathered, they may be found of a uniform, light mouse color, and then of various shades between that and black. The seasons, too, have their effect, as pointed out in the common descriptions of the species.

In another paper (accepted by BIRD-LORE) I have spoken of their frequent persistence as flycatchers. But perhaps the most interesting thing about this vigorous and versatile bird I never noticed until this fall. It may be called their imitation of the Purple Martin. Long after the Martins had gone, on some of the fine afternoons and evenings of this beautiful autumn I have seen Starlings, not in flocks but as individuals, sailing and maneuvering in the air for all the world like Martins. This is not at all their common manner of flight, and generally they are not given to remaining aloft like Martins and Swifts, usually flying to go somewhere. But on the occasions mentioned (and there were a number of them) they would stay up indefinitely, sometimes quite high, circling and sailing much of the time with outspread wings, and apparently with great enjoyment. I can best describe their flight and behavior at these times by saying, as I have done, that they are very similar to those of the Martin.

The Starling is increasing rapidly and in some places has become a pest. Fortunately, it is said to be of excellent flavor for eating, and its size is such that much fewer than four-and-twenty of these blackbirds, baked in a pie, would make an ample and, I presume, a dainty dish to set before almost anybody.

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April, 1923

President.....Mr. Brasher C. Bacon, Madisonville, Ky.
 Vice-President.....Mr. Edward M. Ray, Fordsville, Ky.
 Secretary-Treasurer.....
Miss Mabel Slack, 1004 Everett Ave., Louisville, Ky.

Address correspondence about THE WARBLER to Dr. Gordon Wilson, Bowling Green, Ky. Send dues to the Secretary-Treasurer.

Dues: Sustaining (including membership in the Wilson Ornithological Club) \$2.50; Active, \$1.00; Group (of ten or more children under sixteen years of age), 25c a person.

Meets annually in Louisville during the week of the Kentucky Educational Association; in the fall at some town or park in the state.