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The Kentucky Warbler

Volume V.

Bowling Green, Ky., April, 1929

Number 2

OUR SPRING PROGRAM—Here is the program for our spring meeting:

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Friday, April 19, 2:00 P. M., Mezzanine Dining Room, Watterson Hotel

1. Bird Program by pupils of Finzer School, Louisville
2. **Camping and Hiking, or An Outdoor Philosophy**, by Edward M. Ray, Principal of Frances High School, Marion
3. **Alexander Wilson's Southern Trip in 1810**, by Gordon Wilson, Teachers College, Bowling Green
4. Bird Calls by John Hauss, duPont Manual Training High School, and Jack Miller, I. N. Bloom School, Louisville
Exhibit of Bird Houses by pupils of Parkland School
Bird Habitat Group by pupils of Finzer and John H. Heywood Schools.
Favors by pupils of Johnston School.

Our spring meetings have grown in importance. We hope that our attendance will be up to its regular high standards this spring.

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A GOOD LIST—Miss Elsie Davern, Kindergartner at Brandeis School, Louisville, sends the following list of birds observed in the yard of her home in Louisville: Red-winged Blackbird, Bronzed Grackle, Blue Jay, Cardinal, Bluebird, Mockingbird, Catbird, Baltimore Oriole, Dove, Brown Thrasher, Tufted Titmouse, Robin, Goldfinch, Bewick Wren, Indigo Bunting, Yellow Warbler, Screech Owl, Bobwhite, Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Flicker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Song Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, Carolina Chickadee, a total of 25 species. Suppose others send us lists of birds in your yards. It might stimulate a lot of interest in bird-feeding stations and other projects for protecting and encouraging birds.

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OUR MEMBERS—Professor L. Y. Lancaster of Bowling Green has been very active in the Kiwanis Club of his city. Recently he addressed the club on **Birds of Warren County**.

Miss Emilie Yunker spoke on **Birds and School Gardens** at Greenville, Kentucky, on February 22. She is in charge of the April meeting of the Bird Circle of the Louisville Outdoor Art League and will deliver a stereopticon lecture on **The Economic Value of Birds**. Jack Miller and John Hauss, two Louisville boys, will give a number of bird calls as a part of her program.

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Dr. T. Atchison Frazer addressed the Woman's Club of Princeton on March 15 on *Birds and How to Win Them*. He spoke before the Marion Woman's Club the preceding week on *Bird Enemies*. In spite of a very busy winter, Dr. Frazer reports that his bird activities have been numerous.

Our Treasurer, Mrs. McBride, was ill for some time just after Christmas but is reported as in good health now.

Wild Life in Kentucky, issued many years ago by Professor W. D. Funkhouser of the University of Kentucky and long out of print, has just been revised and reissued. It can be obtained from the Kentucky Geological Survey, Frankfort, and should be in the hands of all who are studying birds.

* * * *

Black Meadowlarks—I have had some rare opportunities to study along with my other work this winter. Just yesterday I saw two black Meadowlarks, which were as real larks as any I ever saw except in color. I spent some time in following them from place to place to be sure of their identification. They were with several other Meadowlarks that were exactly the same in size, shape, and motions. I heard them sing distinctly and give their call notes, and they refused to be separated from the perfectly normal ones. The Mockingbirds have stayed with us in numbers this winter, and some have continued to sing all winter. The Cardinals seem to be more brilliant this winter than ever before. We have had many in town all the season.

—Dr. T. Atchison Frazer, Marion, February 15, 1929.

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OUR FALL MEETING—Last fall, as we announced in our October issue, we decided to hold next fall's meeting at Elkton and then have our outing at the famous cliffs along Clifty Creek. At our spring meeting we hope to make further plans for this great occasion. A detailed account will be published later in the year. The exact date has not yet been set, but it will probably be about October 15. We are eager to reach every part of the state in these fall meetings. So far we have met in the following places: Bowling Green, Henderson, Murray, and Hodgenville. In 1930 we ought to go into eastern Kentucky.

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SOME BIRD CHANGES IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS—The Wood Duck is far below its former numbers, but the few years of protection accorded it have already shown results in my section, where Wood Ducks are seen ten times as often now as they were ten years ago. As compared with primitive conditions, all Ducks are less numerous, but it is safe to say that nearly all species are now more plentiful than they were before the Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada in 1918. This is equally true of the Canada Goose, most of the Herons, and the Woodcock.

Answers to questionnaires sent out by the United States Bureau of Biological Survey indicate that nearly all species of water and wading birds are profiting by this great international agreement. Among the birds reported as increasing are the King, the Virginia, and the Carolina Rails; the Green Heron; the Solitary, Spotted, and the Least Sandpipers; and the Pied-billed Grebe. In my own section all these are decidedly increasing, as are also the Coot and the Lesser

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Yellowlegs. Canada's protection of these birds in their breeding season is probably the greatest reason for this increase.

Among the migratory land birds that are increasing in Kentucky are the Mockingbird, the Robin, the Bluebird, the Chimney Swift, and the Nighthawk. I attribute the increase of such birds as the Mockingbird, the Robin, and the Bluebird to a growing appreciation for the color and songs of birds. Hundreds of people in Kentucky are trying to attract birds to their farms or homes and are providing some protection and nesting sites, as well as food. The Chimney Swift and the Nighthawk illustrate what nature can do to adapt herself to changing conditions. The Swift, formerly nesting in hollow trees, has taken such a great fancy to chimneys that I have never heard of a nest elsewhere. This adaptation has not only saved the species but is causing it to increase noticeably. Annually more and more Swifts come through our town in the migratory seasons. The Nighthawk seems to thrive on the insects that are so numerous over cities and has often been known in recent years to nest on flat-roofed buildings right in the heart of the largest cities. Unlike its cousins the Whippoorwill and the Chuck-will's-widow, it seems perfectly able to do without the lonesome woods and unfrequented fields.

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THE MIRACLE OF CONTINUITY—The miracle of continuity is one of the most appealing things in nature. "Like produces like" eternally, with variations so small that it is not often any one man in his lifetime can see where things are tending. This slowness of change is responsible for much of the reaction against science, which can see across the centuries or the aeons as most knowledge sees only the present. Slowly in my own life I have seen the Wood Thrush in western Kentucky come near the houses of men, ceasing to be the wild bird of the woods that Wilson and Audubon found it. Why has it changed its ways of living? Has a more healthy sentiment in favor of bird life been responsible? Or is it due to a change in its method of feeding? May we not guess that it may ultimately change its song as it gradually gives up its wilderness? Who knows what birds may be residents ten generations hence, birds which now leave when winter approaches or which may be residents in other parts of the world? Brown Thrashers have been kept in the far northern parts of the United States by supplying them with their proper food. Some species of birds have profited by man's invasion of their territories, namely the Woodpeckers, the Chimney Swift, and the Nighthawk. It is not beyond reason to believe that with proper protection there may easily come a time when birds may regain their former numbers, especially those birds which are distinctly beneficial or those which formerly found the struggle against their natural enemies too hard until man came to help. As firmly fixed as things seem, the imperceptible changes are forever creating a new world. What it shall be, "it hath not yet appeared," but the naturalist is enough of a poet to dream of a new world quite as different from this as St. John imagined the Holy City to be.

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MIGRATION—With the return of spring and its hordes of migrants, the bird lover returns to his "long, long thoughts" about this annual mystery. After all the known facts are assembled, this annual coming and going remains a wonder. If there is any one time

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when the bird lover becomes more acutely akin to the things of the wild, it is on some cloudy night in the migratory season, when the air is full of the cries of birds on their way, led by some instinct which we may have lost. These inarticulate cries overhead become calls to a wandering life, to a quest of hidden mysteries. The spirit of adventure is never lost to the ornithologist: every season brings its thrill. After a stormy night in April one wakes to see birds that may never have been recorded in his neighborhood. A particularly murky night may drive the migrants so near the earth that high buildings and telephone wires may take their toll. Thus I found my first Carolina Rail, or Sora, for the overhanging clouds were so heavy that it flew into a telephone wire. One year—to be exact, April 27, 1917—a companion and I had the unusual privilege of finding the very ridge which hordes of Warblers were using for their highway as they fed northward after a stormy night. Several times I have mentioned the number of species and individuals I saw then, only to be regarded as a nature-fakir, even by would-be ornithologists. We might haunt the same ridge for a lifetime without repeating that success. Seven years intervened between my first and my second records of the Sora. Probably thousands have passed over my territory of observation in that time and even hundreds stopped at night to feed around the very ponds I may have visited at sunset. This knowledge of unexpected happenings has often made me turn suddenly and glance in some direction just in time to catch a bird, new or old to me, in some unknown pose or to hear its songs from a new angle. Wisely or unwisely, I have humored this impulse, even though I have not always been rewarded by making some remarkable discovery by following it. Do you wonder that ornithologists can hardly sleep at night when the hosts of migrants are returning? Some wonder of a lifetime may go by while we take our beauty sleep in the early morning.

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April, 1923

President -----Professor Gordon Wilson, Bowling Green

Vice-President -----Miss Emilie Yunker, Louisville

Secretary-Treasurer --Mrs. Charles McBride, 1106 S. Fourth St.,

Louisville

Meets annually in the spring at Louisville, during the week of The Kentucky Educational Association; in the fall at some Kentucky college.

Dues for K. O. S. membership: local or state members, 50c annually; affiliate, \$2.00.

Address Warbler correspondence to the President.