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# Kentucky Warbler

*"To sift the  
sparkling from the  
dull, and the true*



*from the false, is  
the aim of  
every Ornithologist."*

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## A LIST OF THE BREEDING BIRDS OF MERCER COUNTY, KENTUCKY

By C. A. Van Arsdall, Johns Hopkins Medical School

The observations on which the present list is based cover the area of Mercer County, Kentucky, which lies on the southwest border of the inner Bluegrass Region. It is divided by the three rivers running northward through it into three areas which differ considerably in their topography: 1) *The eastern half* of the county is level or slightly rolling bluegrass farmland which is highly cultivated. It is underlaid by massive limestone which resists gulying, and, consequently, erosion has not occurred to any marked degree. This area of the county is mainly covered by cultivated tobacco, corn, hay, and grain land, except where the land is not arable, near the Kentucky River cliffs and gorges of the streams entering it. Stands of oaks and other mature trees are found, but thickets and fence rows are largely cleared except where locally unfit for cultivation near streams. The bird life found here is composed mainly of the more familiar farm and dooryard species—Meadowlarks, Sparrow Hawks, Dickcissels, Shrikes, Doves, Crows, Grasshopper and Chipping Sparrows, Bluebirds, Mockingbirds, Robins, Redwings, Orioles, Catbirds, and Red-eyed Vireos. 2) *The Western two-fifths* of the county is a part of the narrow band of hill land that divides the Inner and Outer Bluegrass Regions. This is underlaid by calcareous shale and thin limestone which weathers easily, and this region of the county is marked by a dendritic pattern of narrow, sharp-topped ridges and V-shaped valleys. The land is cultivated where level enough, and the remainder is left to pasture or woodlands. The wooded sections of this portion of the county are therefore more extensive than in

the eastern part and are for the most part in low growths of cedar, locust, sassafras, walnut, hackberry, hickory, and ash. The region provides more cover for birds, the fence-rows and hillsides being left often to scrubby growth of blackberry and coral berry. Bob-whites, Gnatcatchers, Towhees, Goldfinches, Kentucky Warblers, and others find the territory more to their liking and are found there along with the species already mentioned. 3) *A narrow strip of land, locally called White-oak land*, extends through the central part, just west of Salt River. This is intermediate in character between the two previously described areas and is roughly rolling.

The eastern boundary of the county is formed by Kentucky River, Dix River (its tributary), and Herrington Lake. Passing northward through the center of the county is Salt River, and near the western border, Chaplin River.

Nearly 85% of the county has been cultivated at one time or another, and there are no large tracts of virgin timber, although there is an area northwest of Dugansville between Brush and Loglick Creeks which is said to be virgin grassland covered with broom sedge. Probably the areas least changed from their original character are those of the Kentucky and Dix River cliffs and the narrow gorges of the few short tributaries of these—such as Cedar Run, which traverse rather precipitous courses from the tablelands to the rivers 250 to 400 feet below. The gorges of these rivers and streams are grown up with maple, walnut, ash, oak, hackberry, redbud, tulip tree, and beech and contain an undergrowth of grasses, ferns, trillium, anemone, fire-pink, shooting-star, and other wild flowers. In these locations the Wood Thrush, Louisiana Water-thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Summer Tanager, Kentucky Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher are found, along with such animals as raccoon, opossum, squirrel, and copperheads. Larger woodlands are found where local inlets and their continuations extend back into the farm land, rendering such land of little use for farming. Here the White-eyed Vireo, Gnatcatcher, Chat, Kentucky Warbler, Goldfinch, and Towhee are common. Fluctuations in water level of Herrington Lake are great because of its hydro-electric use, and the banks are rocky. Hence there is no borderline fringe of growth along the water's edge, except for a few sycamores and willows along the high water mark, and resident aquatic birds are few: Kingfishers, Green Herons, and a few Spotted Sandpipers.

The bottom land along Kentucky River is fertile, and the river is bordered by sycamores and willows. Here the Yellow and Prothonotary Warblers, Rough-winged Swallows, Kingfishers, Green Herons, and Song Sparrows are found.

Salt River runs through a broad valley with gentle slopes which are cultivated to both banks. Sycamores, maples, elms, and oaks border it, and the bird life is that of the open country around it.

Chaplin River, in the western hilly part of the county, is surrounded by smooth-topped hills which rise about 150 feet above it. There are more woodlands and cover here than in the eastern parts of the county as previously mentioned, and the variety of birds found is, therefore, greater.

The original forest in Mercer County was an open-type oak-hickory one, typical of the deciduous forest biome, and consisting of oaks, wild cherry, hackberry, ash, beech, walnut, sycamore, sugar maple, cottonwood, tulip tree, cedar, locust, and willow, with the oaks predominating, and with an undergrowth of redbud, black haw, blackberry, and trumpet vine. Broomsedge and cane occupied the spaces where the forest stand was thin or open. The present tree growth is largely second growth which has come up on cut-over land or abandoned fields. The county lies within the eastern humid portion of the Upper Austral Zone of Merriam (Carolinian) and shows the bird life characteristic of that region, although the numbers and variety are rather poor in comparison with those areas in which cultivation is less intensive.

The present list is based on personal observations recorded in my notebook over a period of nine years, from 1939 to 1948. The observations cover primarily the land in and around Harrodsburg, which lies in the south-central part of the area; the cliffs, gorges, and open land immediately surrounding Herrington Lake, Dix River, and Kentucky River; and the hilly land in the southern and western parts of the county.

The list makes no pretense of covering completely the breeding species of the area, and certainly other species nesting in the county will be found. Some which may be added are the Horned Lark, Whip-poor-will, Barred and Barn Owls, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos, Blue-winged, Pine, Sycamore, and Hooded Warblers, Redstart, Ovenbird, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, and the

Scarlet Tanager. I have recorded most of these, but only in migrations or in winter.

Notes are included concerning nests, habitats, and other data. Several references to records from adjoining counties have been included.

The list follows the order and nomenclature of the A. O. U. Checklist (as in Peterson's 1947 *Guide*), and the sub-species are those recorded by Wetmore in his *Notes on the Birds of Kentucky* (1940).

The terms for indicating comparative numbers are those used in Wilson's *Composite List of the Breeding Birds of Kentucky, 1942*: abundant, common, fairly common, uncommon, and rare. Almost all of the species listed have been confirmed by a second observer, many by Harvey Lovell, who spent a few days with me exploring the county in June, 1948.

Eastern Green Heron. *Butorides virescens virescens*. Common summer resident on almost every pond and creek and on the shores of Herrington Lake.

Eastern Turkey Vulture. *Cathartes aura septentrionalis*. Common permanent resident throughout the county, but especially near Herrington Lake and Kentucky River, where it may be seen sunning on dead trees on the cliffs.

Black Vulture. *Coragyps atratus*. Fairly common permanent resident, mainly in the same areas as the Turkey Vulture.

Sharp-shinned Hawk. *Accipiter striatus velox*. Rare permanent resident.

Cooper's Hawk. *Accipiter cooperii*. Rare permanent resident. One specimen found dead contained in its stomach the intact foot of a good-sized bird and numerous other bone fragments.

Eastern Sparrow Hawk. *Falco sparverius sparverius*. Common permanent resident, especially in the open level areas of farmland containing high oaks, dead trees, or telephone poles. The stomach of a specimen found dead in September contained the chitinous remains of grasshoppers.

Bob-white. *Colinus virginianus*. Fairly common permanent resident. These are being introduced in considerable numbers each year, so that the population is probably a mixture of the eastern (*C. v. virginianus*) and Texas (*C. v. texanus*) forms. I found a nest which contained a dozen eggs in Wildwood on Herrington Lake in June, 1939. It was located on the ground, domed over with grass, in a cedar thicket.

Killdeer. *Charadrius vociferus vociferus*. Common permanent resident near ponds and upland fields of short grass.

Spotted Sandpiper. *Actitis macularia*. Uncommon summer resident. Three were seen June 5, 1948, along Herrington Lake near Dix Dam.

Rock Dove or Pigeon. *Columba livia*. Common permanent resident.

Eastern Mourning Dove. *Zenaidura macroura carolinensis*. Permanent resident, common to abundant in summer, but much less common in winter. Nesting activity extends from April 6 to Septem-

ber 9. On the latter date two fledgelings were seen leaving a nest. Stomachs of birds during the hunting season contain mainly foxtail seed, hemp seed when available, and rarely kernels of corn. (See Van Arsdall, 1947).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo. *Coccyzus americanus americanus*. Common summer resident.

Southern Screech Owl. *Otus asio asio*. Common permanent resident throughout the county, but especially in the more wooded areas.

Eastern Nighthawk. *Chordeiles minor minor*. Common summer resident.

Chimney Swift. *Chaetura pelagica*. Common summer resident. A nest with two eggs was observed in a chimney, with two nestlings hatched June 18, 1941.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird. *Archilochus colubris*. Fairly common summer resident, well distributed throughout the county.

Eastern Belted Kingfisher. *Megaceryle alcyon alcyon*. Fairly common permanent resident, oftener seen in summer than in winter, along the rivers and Herrington Lake.

Northern Flicker. *Colaptes auratus luteus*. Abundant permanent resident, less frequently seen in winter.

Western Red-bellied Woodpecker. *Centurus carolinus zebra*. Fairly common permanent resident, regularly seen in Harrodsburg in the tall trees of the old Graham Springs property, and rather commonly elsewhere in the county.

Red-headed Woodpecker. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus*. Still a fairly common summer resident. Occupies holes in dead trees and telephone poles, mainly in open country near roads.

Eastern Hairy Woodpecker. *Dendrocopos villosus villosus*. Fairly common permanent resident, seen mainly along Herrington Lake and Kentucky River.

Northern Downy Woodpecker. *Dendrocopos pubescens medianus*. Common permanent resident throughout the county.

Eastern Kingbird. *Tyrannus tyrannus*. Fairly common summer resident, mainly along roadsides in open country throughout the county.

Northern Crested Flycatcher. *Myiarchus crinitus boreus*. Common summer resident in woods throughout the county. It built a nest in the hollow of a maple tree on March 10, 1941.

Eastern Phoebe, *Sayornis phoebe*. Fairly common summer resident.

Acadian Flycatcher. *Empidonax virescens*. Uncommon to fairly common summer resident. It occurs mainly near Kentucky River and Dix River and along Cedar Run, in secluded areas where deciduous trees overhang the water.

Eastern Wood Pewee. *Contopus virens*. Common summer resident.

Rough-winged Swallow. *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis serripennis*. Fairly common summer resident on Herrington Lake and Kentucky River.

Barn Swallow. *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*. Fairly common summer resident. Builds its mud nests in groups in barns.

Purple Martin. *Progne subis subis*. Fairly common summer resident. Has been observed nesting only in boxes erected for that purpose.

Northern Blue Jay. *Cyanocitta cristata bromia*. Common permanent resident.

Eastern Crow. *Corvus brachyrhynchos brachyrhynchos*. Abundant permanent resident. A nest made of cedar bark, tobacco canvas, twigs, and sticks and containing three eggs was found on April 12, 1942, about 18 feet above the ground in a cedar tree. A considerable number nest along Cedar Run.

Northern Carolina Chickadee. *Parus carolinensis extimus*. Abundant permanent resident, observed in more secluded woods in summer but at feeding stations in Harrodsburg in winter. A nest was found in a hollow in a fence post near a garden in Harrodsburg in June, 1946. Four young were hatched.

Tufted Titmouse. *Parus bicolor*. Abundant permanent resident. A nest was discovered May 10, 1942, in a hole in an apple tree with five young nearby.

House Wren. *Troglodytes aedon* subsp. Rare summer resident. A nest was built in a martin box in Harrodsburg during the third week of June, 1947, but no young were seen to hatch or to be in the vicinity thereafter. A second nest was built in the same spot in early June, 1948. These are the only summer records I have for Mercer County.

Northern Carolina Wren. *Thryothorus ludovicianus ludovicianus*. Abundant permanent resident. A nest in an old Robin's nest under the eaves of a garage was found in May, 1941.

Bewick's Wren. *Thryomanes bewickii*. Common permanent resident throughout the county. A nest was observed in a gourd April 26 to May 4, 1941, and produced four young birds. Other nests have been found under the eaves of a garage.

Eastern Mockingbird. *Mimus polyglottos polyglottos*. Common to abundant permanent resident. A great many of these birds are seen along roadsides in open country near low bushes. Along with the Indigo Bunting, the Mockingbird is one of the commonest roadside birds. One was heard which mocked perfectly, and in succession, the Killdeer, Nighthawk, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, and Redwing.

Catbird. *Dumetella carolinensis*. Abundant summer resident, especially in bushy areas near homes.

Eastern Brown Thrasher. *Toxostoma rufum rufum*. Abundant summer resident, especially in bushy but fairly open areas.

Robin. *Turdus migratorius* subsp. Permanent resident, abundant in summer and remaining in small numbers during some winters, especially in protected areas. Nest-building has been observed as early as April 6, and a broken egg was found April 9, 1942. My earliest hatching date is that of a nest on the ledge of a porch window with three young hatching May 1, 1943.

Wood Thrush. *Hylocichla mustelina*. Fairly common summer resident. Breeding occurs mainly along the Kentucky River with occasional nestings around Harrodsburg.

Eastern Bluebird. *Sialia sialis sialis*. Permanent resident, common in summer. Occurs most frequently in open country. A family of two adults and four juvenal birds was recorded on June 5, 1948.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. *Poliophtila caerulea caerulea*. Fairly common summer resident, breeding mainly near the Kentucky River

and Herrington Lake. A nest observed in winter in western Mercer County was saddled on a limb of a small elm and was covered with lichens.

**Cedar Waxwing.** *Bombycilla cedrorum*. Permanent resident, fairly common in fall, winter, and spring, rare in summer, erratic at any time of year. Several summer records for Mercer County, June 17, 1947, and June 5 and 20, 1948, when pairs were seen at Wildwood on Herrington Lake. A nest in a small elm near Kentucky River was observed being constructed from July 20 to 26, 1947, in adjoining Woodford County (Van Arsdall, 1948).

**Migrant Loggerhead Shrike.** *Lanius ludovicianus migrans*. Fairly common resident. A nest was found in a thorn tree within eight feet of the Burgin-Herrington Lake Road on April 11 and 13, 1943. A family of four was seen June 25 and 26, 1941, about three miles from the preceding, and a number of grasshoppers were found impaled on barbed wire close by.

**Starling.** *Sturnus vulgaris*. Abundant permanent resident, beginning to nest as early as March 28 in hollow trees or poles in sites such as those chosen by the Red-headed Woodpecker. Bands into huge flocks in winter. One such flock observed in January, 1942, in western Mercer County, blackened the sky as it rose from the ground, and the sound of the wings was like a gale.

**Northern White-eyed Vireo.** *Vireo griseus novaboracensis*. Fairly common summer resident. Observed near Kentucky River and Herrington Lake during summer, mainly in fairly dense but rather sunny thickets of redbud, locust, cedar, and sassafras. I observed nesting activity of two pairs in adjoining Woodford County during the fourth week of July, 1947.

**Red-eyed Vireo.** *Vireo olivaceus*. Common summer resident in mature deciduous trees on fairly open land.

**Black and white Warbler.** *Mniotilta varia*. One summer record at Wildwood on Herrington Lake on June 17, 1947.

**Prothonotary Warbler.** *Protonotaria citrea*. Probably a rare summer resident. One male was heard singing from a perch on a well-shaded snag at the mouth of Cedar Run on Kentucky River on June 6, 1948, and seen and heard again June 24, 1948, at the same spot.

**Worm-eating Warbler.** *Helmitheros vermivorus*. Probably a rare summer resident. One individual seen June 5, 1948, along Cedar Run, at the bottom of the gorge, with Harvey Lovell.

**Eastern Yellow Warbler.** *Dendroica petechia aestiva*. Fairly common summer resident. Found especially in willows and other low growth over water.

**Northern Prairie Warbler.** *Dendroica discolor discolor*. Probably a rare summer resident. A single individual was seen and heard June 6, 1948, on a hillside in Wildwood on Herrington Lake. The area was burned over ten years ago. The bird was singing for some time from a low sassafras shrub.

**Louisiana Water-thrush.** *Seiurus motacilla*. Uncommon summer resident. All records are for Herrington Lake, Kentucky River, and Cedar Run. An adult was seen feeding a young bird at the mouth of Cedar Run on Kentucky River, June 5, 1948.

**Kentucky Warbler.** *Oporornis formosus*. Fairly common summer resident. Seen and heard in wooded areas throughout the county, especially on Kentucky River, Herrington Lake, and in the woods of



the western part of the county. An adult and a young bird were seen together June 26, 1946, near the lake.

Northern Yellow-throat. *Geothlypis trichas brachidactyla*. Common summer resident. Observed mainly in bushy, tangled areas in fairly open land.

Yellow-breasted Chat. *Icteria virens virens*. Common summer resident. Heard frequently singing on moonlight nights. It chooses thorny growths of low bushes and trees, and old clearings, and is quite common through the area.

English Sparrow. *Passer domesticus*. Abundant permanent resident. Over fifty eggs were laid apparently by three females in one spring, when nests and eggs were regularly removed in an attempt to get rid of them.

Eastern Meadowlark. *Sturnella magna magna*. Abundant permanent resident in open farm country. Less frequent in winter than summer.

Eastern Redwing. *Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus*. Common summer resident. Colonies are seen frequently in clover and hayfields away from water in locations where Dickcissels are also found.

Orchard Oriole. *Icterus spurius*. Common summer resident. Several old nests have been found at Herrington Lake.

Baltimore Oriole. *Icterus galbula*. Uncommon summer resident. I observed a pair late in June, 1948, on a number of occasions along a fencerow grown up with locusts. Others have been noted in Woodford County.

Bronzed Grackle. *Quiscalus versicolor*. Abundant summer resident. They built a nest in a flowering crabapple which was kept under observation from May 23 to June 3, 1942. Several young were hatched.

Eastern Cowbird. *Molothrus ater ater*. Fairly common summer resident in open country.

Summer Tanager. *Piranga rubra rubra*. Fairly common summer resident. One nest was observed from June 14 to 18, 1941. A single nestling hatched June 18. The nest was made of fine grasses, was rather flat and shallow, and was placed in a slippery elm about twelve feet from the ground. The Summer Tanager frequents open deciduous woodlands.

Eastern Cardinal. *Richmondia cardinalis cardinalis*. Abundant permanent resident. It prefers bushy and scrubby areas.

Indigo Bunting. *Passerina cyanea*. Common summer resident. It is one of the commonest roadside birds where the fencerows are not cleared entirely.

Dickcissel. *Spiza americana*. Fairly common summer resident. Occupies fields of hay crops, sweet clover, wild lettuce, white blossom, timothy, etc.

Eastern Goldfinch. *Spinus tristis tristis*. Fairly common permanent resident, especially in areas where farmland is growing up in pioneer vegetation.

Red-eyed Towhee. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus erythrophthalmus*. Common permanent resident, less frequently found in winter.

Eastern Grasshopper Sparrow. *Ammodramus savannarum pratensis*. Fairly common summer resident. Inhabits open fields of grass and stubble.

Eastern Vesper Sparrow. *Pooecetes gramineus gramineus*. A rare summer resident. I have several records in June for the western portion of Mercer County in an open pasture with short-cropped grass and stony out-croppings.

Eastern Lark Sparrow. *Chondestes grammacus grammacus*. Probably a rare summer resident. A single bird was seen by Lovell and me in the western part of the county in a hilly pasture covered with stones and a few low trees, June 6, 1948. I also have a mid-June, 1947, record made in Jessamine County just across the Kentucky River from Mercer.

Bachman's Pine-woods Sparrow. *Aimophila aestivalis bachmanii*. Probably a rare summer resident. Lovell and I saw one singing its beautiful song on June 6, 1948, on a steep hillside just over the Mercer line in Washington County. It was there when I again visited the spot on June 9.

Eastern Chipping Sparrow. *Spizella passerina passerina*. Common summer resident. One nest with a female incubating was watched from June 14 to 18, 1941. Several other nests have been found. It prefers roadsides and open country with scrubby fence-rows.

Eastern Field Sparrow. *Spizella pusilla pusilla*. Common permanent resident, less frequently seen in winter. It prefers rough pasture land beginning to grow up with cedars and low shrubs.

Mississippi Song Sparrow. *Melospiza melodia euphonia*. Common permanent resident, seen in about equal numbers in summer and winter, especially near water in low bushes.

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## A SUCCESSFUL BREEDING RECORD OF THE CEDAR WAXWING AT CYNTHIANA

By Bird W. Mayer, Cynthiana

On June 12, 1948, I drove to the home of Mrs. Robert Reed in response to a telephone message about a strange-looking nest she had discovered in a tree in her yard two days before. At first she thought some one had put an old mop in her tree, but on closer investigation she realized it was a bird's nest. She climbed up to look inside and found it contained three bluish eggs with dark markings (June 10). She also noticed two "little brown birds with crests" around the nest.

Mrs. Reed pointed out the nest to me upon my arrival, and sitting on it was her little brown bird, a Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). While we watched, it flew to a nearby tree, where it was joined by its mate. The two sat close together looking down at us, and then one of the birds flew back to incubate and was still there when I left some time later. When examined later, the nest contained 5 eggs. The fourth must have been laid on the eleventh and the fifth on the twelfth, the day of my first visit.

The nest was made of the coarse, white thread of an old mop, interwoven with small twigs. It was placed on the horizontal limb of a pin oak about 8 feet from the ground. The tree was in the front yard  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the house and 15 feet from the street, where automobiles were passing.

The next time I saw the nest, it had shrunk. There had been several hard showers, and the cotten mop threads had become shrunk and packed closely together by the rain. On June 26, the bird was still sitting on the nest, but on the next day, the adult birds were observed bringing in food. This would make the incubation period 14 or 15 days. The driveway into the garage was only a few feet from the limb on which the nest was placed, and Mrs. Reed observed that each time the car went in or out, the bird left the nest. This may have delayed incubation somewhat. All five eggs hatched successfully.

On the afternoon of July 9, three of the young birds were perched on the rim of the nest, as though just ready to leave, and the other two were stretching their necks up on the other side. On July 10, the nest was empty. One fledgling was discovered on the porch railing of the house next door, and the others were in some shrubbery nearby.

Some days later, when I went to get the nest, which I have sent to our curator, Burt Monroe, Mrs. Reed said that she still saw the young Waxwings around the yard. It was, therefore, a most successful nesting.

This was not destined to be the end of the episode. On August 12, Mrs. Maffett called me to say the birds had built again in a tree in her yard, which was next door to the first nest. At that time the nest was nearly completed. This nest was about 20 feet from the ground in a tulip poplar. It was quite bulky and seemed to be made chiefly of small twigs with a little string in the bottom. I assume that this nest was built by the same pair of Waxwings, as there were no others in the neighborhood.

When I visited the nest on August 17, there was no sign of the adults, but after five minutes, a Cedar Waxwing flew to it and settled down to incubate. I kept my field glass on the nest and noticed that the bird changed its position often. First its head was toward me, then it would turn around, and all I could see was the top of its tail. It continued to incubate for a long time. On September 4, I watched one of the adults carrying food to the nest. On September 11, one fledgling left the nest, and another could be seen still in the nest. While I was watching it, a bird flew into a large hemlock nearby, and I noted that it was a Cedar Waxwing in the striped juvenal plumage, evidently one of the first brood.

On September 12, one nestling was still in the nest. It would sit on the edge and stretch its wings as though just ready to leave, then fall back into the nest. It continued this performance on the following day but finally left on September 14. It is interesting to note that all five birds left the first nest at about the same time, while three days elapsed between the time the two birds left the second nest. This appears to be the first record of the breeding of the Cedar Waxwing in this county and one of very few for the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky. Van Arsdall reported a nest for Woodford County in July, 1947 (*Ky. Warbler*, 24: 29-30), and Stamm discovered another nest at Maysville, July 4, 1948 (*Ky. Warbler*, 25: 16-17). The nestings at Cynthiana were so successful that it is to be hoped that they will be continued in future years and that we can add the Cedar Waxwing to our regular list of summer residents.

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### DICKCISSEL NESTS IN THE LOUISVILLE AREA

By Mabel Slack and Anne L. Stamm, Louisville

On May 22, 1948, while we were driving along a country road about ten miles east of the city limits of Louisville, we saw a female Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) sitting on a fence. We watched her for some time, and suddenly she disappeared into a clump of bushes. Assuming she had a nest nearby, we watched the place closely; and when she did not reappear, we approached it slowly, and the nest with three pale blue eggs was found after she flew away. The nest was located in an overgrown fence-row at the edge of an alfalfa field and was about six feet from the road. It was approximately nine inches from the ground, supported by three blackberry stalks and fairly well concealed with poison ivy vines.

On the morning of May 23 there were four eggs in the nest. The female was not seen, but four hours later she was flushed from the nest. The following day there were five eggs, and the female was not on the nest but was seen in the immediate vicinity. On May 25 the incubating female was flushed, but she returned to the nest promptly. There was no further opportunity to visit the nest until May 29, at which time it was found empty, with no apparent signs of vandalism.

On May 24, we noticed another female in this area and began watching her movements. She sat on the fence, looked about cautiously, and worked her way slowly along the wire; then she unexpectedly dropped down into a dense growth. This led to the discovery of an additional nest containing one egg. It was located in the same fence row only fifteen yards from the first nest and about the same height from the ground, in the same type of bush but not as well concealed. When discovered, the female, reluctant to leave, flew only a short distance to a weed stalk, where she sat to watch. The following day the nest still contained only one egg and was deserted.

While the nests were under observation, only one male was seen or heard in the nesting area. An effort was made to determine the range of the singing male. His usual perch was a telephone wire near the nests, but occasionally he was seen flying and singing at distances ranging up to five hundred feet.

Later one of the nests was brought in and examined closely. Its outside measurements were five and a quarter inches in height by four and one-half inches in diameter and, inside, a depth two inches by two and a quarter inches in diameter. It was bulky, made of weed stalks, grasses, and leaves. The exterior was ornamented with loosely-woven fruiting stalks of dried shepherd's purse, veronica, and hoary plantain. It was lined with a thick layer of fine rootlets.

Although published records indicate that the Dickcissel is a fairly common summer resident in some parts of Kentucky, we have searched the literature and believe this is the first descriptive data regarding a nest in the state.

## AN UNUSUAL BROODING RECORD

by James Covert, Route 1, Finchville

On March 14, 1948, I discovered a nest of the Red-Shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*. It was situated near water in the crotch of a white oak tree, about twenty-five feet from the ground. When I approached, the female flushed, showing the narrow white tail bands characteristic of the species.

The nest proved to contain four eggs, warm from incubation. I thought I had found a good opportunity to obtain pictures of hawk nestlings; so I planned to return. A week later I again visited the nest, to find conditions unchanged, except for a small sprig of cedar placed on one side of the nest lining.

For eight weeks the female hawk flushed each time I came near. She was still trying to hatch those infertile eggs. A. C. Bent gives 28 days as the average incubation for this species, yet here was a female brooding for twice that time.

Finally, on May 16 I found the nest empty. Some predator or the hawk herself had destroyed the eggs.



NEST OF RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

Photo by H. B. Lovell

## FIELD NOTES

### A NOVEMBER TRIP TO KENTUCKY WOODLANDS

Kentucky Woodlands Wildlife Refuge is certainly the outstanding region in Kentucky for making observations on natural history. The over 60,000 acres afford a wide variety of habitats, each bountifully supplied with birds, mammals, and other wild life.

On November 12, Grace Wyatt and I took an all-day field trip to the area and made several interesting observations. The most spectacular feature of the trip was the abundant water fowl which were wintering on the four large artificial lakes. On Empire Lake we found chiefly Mallards and Black Ducks; on Esselton Lake there were also Canada, Blue, and Snow Geese. It was estimated by Talbott Clarke, Refuge Manager, and Grover Elgan, biologist, that 2,000 geese had been on the lakes during this season. However, at this time only 4 Blue, 2 Snow, and 200 Canada Geese remained.

From here we went to Honker Lake, where Mallards were most abundant. The more remote and large Hematite Lake had also a flock of Pied-billed Grebes, 4 Hooded Mergansers, and a few Coots. The ducks return to Esselton Lake late in the evening, and it is a magnificent sight to see them flying in formations of 5 to 30 birds.

Our most prized observation was the discovery of 4 Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) near Hematite Lake. There were one adult and three immatures. The great size and showy white head and tail of the adult made identification immediate. All four birds rose from the trees across the lake, flew high, and began to circle. The adult and one immature flew together with wings outspread, circling round and round, falling downward until they were low over the water.

We also saw four English Fallow deer close to Honker Lake. A buck, doe, and two fawns were grazing in an alfalfa field near the roadside and made no move to run when we stopped the car to watch them. Later in the afternoon deep in the woods, we saw two Virginia White-tails. Mr. Clarke said there was a direct conflict between the two species of deer, and that they would not remain in the same area at the same time.

Other interesting birds observed during the trip include the following: Great Blue Heron, Mourning Dove, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Purple Finch, Swamp Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow.

—KATHLEEN KEY, 1618 West Main St., Murray.

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### NOTES ON THE CRESTED FLYCATCHER AND WHIP-POOR-WILL

For six years a pair of Crested Flycatchers have built their nests in an old mail box which is fastened to a tree in our yard at Kirk. In 1947 one of the Crested Flycatchers tried to bring in such a large snake skin that its mate had to help carry it. This year (1948) the box has not been used. It would seem probable that at least one of the birds had lived the full six years that the box was in use and that the desertion of the nest site was due to its death.

Soon after dark on the night of September 12, 1946, we heard a Whip-poor-will singing. It called three times, was silent awhile, then

called several times again. This is the latest I have ever heard this bird in the fall.

—ELIZABETH SHEERAN, Kirk, Breckinridge County.

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#### FIELD DAYS AT WOODBURN LAKES

On March 12-13, 1949, eleven people visited the wet-weather lakes that I have studied so long. Both days were uncomfortably cold, with an inch of snow falling the first night. The lakes are the largest they have been since 1937 and now cover 400 acres and 275 acres, respectively. The Chaney Lake has attracted the more waterfowl this season. The fact that the woods are in the midst of the water and not merely at the edge, as usual, may have contributed to this, as the birds, when frightened, can take refuge within the woods. As the winter was wetter than usual, the lakes were already in evidence at the time of my Christmas Bird Count; so that there have been a few waterfowl to be seen at all times. The real season began in late January, when 500 or more ducks appeared. On our two field days in March we walked entirely around the Chaney Lake and along the side of the McElroy Lake nearest the barn and house. Of the 63 species of birds recorded on the two days 20 were water species, chiefly ducks and geese. All told, there were some 2000-2500 waterfowl on the two lakes. The most memorable sight was over a hundred Canada Geese circling leisurely over the pond, giving their distinctive calls.

On March 12 the party discovered the nest of a Mourning Dove with two eggs near the Chaney Lake, certainly an early date considering the cold weather during the first two weeks of March.

The following people attended the field meet: Dr. Russell Starr, Glasgow; Mr. A. F. Ganiier, Nashville, Tennessee; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey B. Lovell, Bob Steilberg, Don Summerfield, Anna Sohns, Mrs. Irma W. Bartman, Hazel Kinslow, and Edith Pearson, Louisville; and Gordon Wilson.

—GORDON WILSON, Bowling Green.

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#### MINK VERSUS KINGFISHERS

While leading a group of Boy Scouts along Harrods Creek in Oldham County, I met a trapper. He told us how he placed his traps in places where mink tracks indicated that the animals were using the spot as a runway. He showed us how common mink tracks were all along the edge of the stream, and then explained that the scarcity of Kingfishers was due to the abundance of mink, since the mink destroy the eggs or young of the Kingfishers. Kingfishers used to be common along that and similar creeks a few years ago, said the trapper, but lately because there is so little trapping, the mink, now over-abundant, had nearly wiped out the birds.

—HARVEY B. LOVELL, Louisville.

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#### HORNED LARK BREEDING IN WARREN COUNTY

On July 16, 1948, I located another Horned Lark's nest on the Clarence Neighbors Farm, near Dr. L. Y. Lancaster's cabins. On this same farm Dr. Lancaster found a nest in 1947, the farm manager one in 1946. The pasture near the stock barn has Horned Larks in it at all seasons of the year. On the date I found the nest there were eight birds to be seen in this field.

—GORDON WILSON, Bowling Green.



## THE WINTER SEASON IN KENTUCKY

The weather was unusually warm in Kentucky in January and February, and spring wild flowers began to bud and even to bloom in February (4 weeks early). However, the first three weeks of March were cold, snowy, with below-freezing weather, which froze the ground. In general big water did not freeze at all during the winter, and this caused ducks, geese, and other water fowl to winter in larger numbers than usual. Between the bridges just above the great hydroelectric dam at Louisville hundreds of ducks winter (one to two thousand at times), where they receive 24-hour protection from the Coast Guard station. Old Squaw were present nearly all winter. At Bowling Green the overflowed corn fields were unusually large early in January and continue to be so (Gordon Wilson). By Jan. 23 there were 500 ducks present, which gradually increased to one or two thousand. The Shoveller appeared Feb. 12, the Coot and Holboell's Grebe on Feb. 23. Red-heads were more common than usual, the maximum number being 10. As many as 500 each of the following were at Bowling Green Lakes: Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, and Baldpate. On March 13, it was estimated that 1000 Ring neck ducks were on the overflowed corn fields.

At Kentucky Woodlands Wild Life Refuge (between Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers) there was a great wintering of both ducks and geese due to both the mild winter and to careful management. Canada Geese wintered there for first time in large numbers (about 1,500, according to Clarke). A few Snow and Blue Geese also wintered there for the first time. By removing fence rows, a great open area has been created around two of the ponds. Ducks, too, have been very numerous. As high as 3200 Mallards and 1100 Blacks were counted on the same day. Ducks wintered in only fair numbers on the 17 lakes near Madisonville (Hancock), but Horned Grebes were more numerous than usual in the fall, Nov. 9-14.

**SMALL BIRDS.** Several observers report that small birds were less common than usual this winter. From Madisonville (Hopkins Co.) Hancock writes that Myrtle Warblers, Winter Wrens, Purple Finches, and Shrikes were scarce this winter. From Bowling Green, Wilson writes that in general the migratory winter birds were below usual numbers, especially Hermit Thrush, Myrtle Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Carolina Wrens, which became scarce during the cold winter of 1947-48, have not returned to their usual numbers. At Louisville the Cedar Waxwing, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, and Golden-crowned Kinglet were scarce this winter.

**EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS.** The season has been spotty. Woodcock arrived in Louisville on Feb. 14 and began calling. The Phoebe was rather late in Louisville, Mar. 5; Bowling Green, Feb. 20. Blackbirds were slow in arriving in any numbers. At Madisonville Red-wing and Grackle returned on Feb. 14, but at Bowling Green, Cowbird and Red-wing were not seen until Mar. 12. They were also late coming to Louisville area, although one flock of Redwings was reported on Feb. 13 (Summerfield). At Kentucky Woodlands Refuge Lovell and Covert recorded the Hooded, Blue-winged, Prothonotary, Cerulean Warblers, Ovenbird, Yellow-throat, Warbling, White-eyed, Red-eyed, and Yellow-throated Vireo on April 12, and Prairie Warbler April 13, all rather early dates.

**UNUSUAL BIRDS.** No very unusual records have come to my attention. Bald Eagles were quite common at Kentucky Lake (Tennessee River), a dozen or more being counted (DeLime). A

large flock of 150 Pipits were seen at Louisville on March 20 by Don Summerfield. A flock of 42 Golden Plover were seen at Henderson by Lovell and Covert on April 10. Only one had molted sufficiently to show the black belly. There were several Rough-legged Hawk records during the winter. Miss Fowler reported a flock of more than 50 Vesper Sparrows from Berea. (Compiled from notes received from Wilson, DeLime, Hancock, Fowler, Summerfield, Shackleton, Monroe, Jr., Brecher, Covert, and others).

—HARVEY LOVELL, Louisville.

### A CROW ATTACKS A FLICKER

A Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, was observed to attack an adult Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*, on April 22 in Cherokee Park, Louisville. The attack resulted in the death of the Flicker.

The Flicker's distressed calls first drew my attention to the fighting pair on the ground. Then the Flicker flew from the ground, and the Crow pursued her. A second Crow, which had been perched about three feet above them, followed slowly behind for a short distance. During a short chase of about 200 feet, the first Crow pecked several times at the Flicker, and then both crashed into a hillside. The Flicker again gave a series of calls and then was silent.

When I arrived at that place a few minutes later, the Crow flushed, and the Flicker was found across a ravine about 10 feet from where she had crashed. The Flicker was apparently stunned, for she was on her back and made no attempt to fly. Her visible injuries were only two small spots on the crown where the feathers had been pulled out, and, on the right side of the head, the feathers were gone and the skin bleeding from below the eye to the nostril. The Flicker was given a cold drink of water and was watched for 25 minutes. During this time she made no attempt to fly, although she seemed perfectly well. Thinking she would recover shortly, I left her by the spring, since there was no sign of the Crow.

On returning to this place an hour later (4:40 P. M.), a Crow was again flushed from the body of the Flicker. The Flicker was now dead and stripped of feathers on the ventral side, and one side of her head. The tail feathers and most of the wing feathers were also gone. The thoracic cavity was ripped open and approximately one-third of its contents gone.

All of the feathers were concentrated in an area about 3 feet in diameter, although about 6 feet from the place where the Flicker was left. The Flicker was an adult female. There were no conspicuous ova.

—ROBERTA BURCKHARDT, 638 E. Ormsby, Louisville

### YELLOW-THROATED VIREO NESTING IN LOUISVILLE

On June 22, 1947, while strolling through Cherokee Park in Louisville to investigate a Bluebird's nest, I noticed a young bird perched on a small shrub growing at the base of a large maple tree. The bird was immediately visible because of the intense sunlight illuminating the yellowish throat and breast. As I watched from a distance, a parent bird brought food which the young accepted readily. It was not until I approached the young that both parent birds appeared and were much distressed at my intrusion. The young, evidently just out of the nest, remained on the shrub. At such close range all three could be readily identified as Yellow-throated Vireos (*Vireo flavifrons*).

The nest was found directly above where the young bird perched. It was high in the maple tree, approximately forty feet above the ground, well concealed in the thick foliage and midway between the center of the tree and the tip of the branches. Its location was unlike that of the nest of a Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) which I had found the previous year in Seneca Park near the pond. The latter was approximately thirty feet high in an elm tree but close to the outer end of a branch and easily visible.

This discovery of the young and nest of the Yellow-throated Vireo was interesting since in *Breeding Birds of Kentucky*—a Composite list (Ky. Warbler, 18, 1942) no information is given regarding the breeding status for the Louisville area.

—ANNE L. STAMM, 2118 Lakeside Drive, Louisville.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

BENT, A. C. 1948. *Life Histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and their Allies*. Smithsonian Inst. Washington, D. C. 475 pages, 90 plates. \$1.75. This is the 16th volume of this very thorough and valuable series of life histories. As usual, very few data from Kentucky are included. This is due to the failure of Kentuckians to send their unpublished notes and reprints to Mr. Bent. In contrast there are numerous references to Tennessee birds. Among the few Kentucky records mentioned are one on the Short-billed Marsh Wren on p. 274, "It has been found breeding at Barboursville, Ky. . . ." There is also an interesting description of a Brown Thrasher's nest (p. 356) which was collected in Pulaski County. This nest had 6 eggs believed to have been laid by 2 females, as 2 of the eggs were differently marked and 3 birds demonstrated their concern when the nest was collected. However, the very complete life histories of many local birds are indispensable reading for every Kentucky bird student. They point out gaps in our knowledge as well as furnish a standard for comparison with our own observations. This work should be purchased early, as the price will probably increase to \$5.00 in second-hand book lists as soon as the Smithsonian supply is exhausted.

MUSEUM AT MADISONVILLE. The Editor and James Covert visited Brasher C. Bacon at his new museum at Spring Lake on April 12. The museum is an attractive cement block, fireproof building located in view of the lake. Show cases have been installed for displaying the mounted birds, nests, and eggs. Additional sets are kept in the dark in a cabinet. One part of the collection consists of the eggs of distant species which Mr. Bacon has obtained through exchange with other collectors. To Kentuckians his sets of such rare local birds as the Bachman's Sparrow are of special interest. Most of his Kentucky sets include the nest, too. Mr. Bacon has reopened his banding station at Spring Lake and is currently operating about 50 cells around the museum. His traps, all homemade, are treadle traps of his own design.

JUNIOR ACADEMY OF SCIENCE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION. This was held at Atherton High School, Louisville, on April 1 and 2, 1949, with the DuPont Science Club of Manual and the Bunsen Club of Atherton as hosts. The convention started Friday afternoon with scientific moving pictures. In the evening Harvey Lovell gave an illustrated talk on Kentucky birds. Following this

Dr. S. T. Fife of the Engineering School of the University gave an explanation of television which was illustrated by an actual program broadcast by the local station.

On Saturday morning the main part of the program was given by the students themselves. The discussion topic was the same for all clubs, "The Significance of the Name of My Club." Top ratings went to Sabra Hansen of Atherton and Ruann Bee of Model High School, Richmond, in class A. Mary F. Adair, Cane Run, received the top award in class B.

There were many fine exhibits of the work of the clubs. Among the class A schools, Model High School, Richmond received the superior award for its exhibit of white rats being subjected to nutrition experiments. Morehead schools received an excellent rating for their solar system. Other schools which were rated as good were Harrodsburg, Anchorage, and Maysville.

In the class B group, Cane Run received a superior rating for its exhibit of a very large terrarium containing wild plants and animals; Valley High School was awarded an excellent rating for its nature Christmas tree and its exhibit of the plant phyla. Other schools whose exhibits were rated as good were, Paint Lick, Bardstown, Kingston, and La Grange.

The Bunsen Club of Atherton won the K. O. S. prize for the best bird census, and Valley High School received honorable mention. Dorothy Waller of Morehead won the bird study award. For the best articles in the *Junior Science Bulletin*, class A, Dalene Pferrer, Bunsen Club, and Douglas John, Anchorage shared the prize; class B award went to Bobby Ann Parish, Kingston. The A. M. Peter Award was won by Cane Run, "An Experiment with Sound," and Donald Maddox, Richmond, "the Photo-electric Cell." Billy Moody, Shelbyville, and Bobby Caisus, Cane Run, were each awarded a year's honorary membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Saturday afternoon tours were conducted to the University of Louisville, the Nature Museum at the Library, the Louisville Mushroom Farm, the Courier-Journal Building, and a field trip through Cave Hill Cemetery.

—HARRIET CLARK, Meadowlark Road, Louisville.

**ERRATUM.** On page 50 (Vol. 24, 1948) in Robert Mengel's article the date upon which Blincoe captures a Goshawk should read Dec. 1, 1917, instead of Dec. 1, 1918.

**A NEW EXCHANGE.** The *Raven*, published by the Virginia Society of Ornithology and edited by J. J. Murray (mimeographed), has been added to our exchange list. The first two copies received contain some very interesting articles.

#### SPRING MEETING OF THE K. O. S.

On April 21, 1949, the Kentucky Ornithological Society held its annual Spring Meeting during K. E. A. At the luncheon in the Rainbow Room of the Henry Clay Hotel, 35 members and guests were present. Mrs. Mary Lou Frei, the president, presided. A vote of thanks was given to the members who helped make the meeting a success: Mrs. F. P. Shannon, luncheon chairman; Mrs. Arthur Konz and Mrs. Paul Hansen, floral decorations; Henrietta Link, for the attractive programs, and Audrey Wright, program chairman.

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## THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

A quarterly journal devoted to the study of Kentucky Birds.

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Secretary-Treasurer: Mrs. S. Charles Thacher, 2918 Brownsboro Road, Louisville.

Editor, Harvey B. Lovell, 3011 Meade Ave., Louisville 13.

Notify the secretary promptly of a change of address.

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At 2 o'clock, Mrs. Frei called a short business meeting. The invitation of the Indiana Audubon Society to hold a joint meeting in the fall at Henderson and Evansville was accepted. An Audubon Society has recently been formed at Henderson.

It was moved and passed that the word "group" be stricken from the student membership clause. It should now read: The annual dues for student membership shall be \$1.00.

As Gordon Wilson was unable to be present, Harvey Lovell gave the address of welcome. He displayed a bound volume containing the last 4 years of the Kentucky Warbler, complete with title page and index, and urged members to send him their file for binding. The cost is \$2.00 per set.

Miss Jo Ann Shipley, president of the Valley High School Science Club, traced the history of the Junior Academy of Science from its organization in 1932 until the present time. It became affiliated with the Kentucky Ornithological Society at the fall meeting at Berea in 1942.

Mr. Harold Alexander, Federal Co-ordinator for the Pittman-Robertson Act, for the Kentucky Division of Fish and Game, gave an interesting discussion on the upland game birds of Kentucky. Our state's share of this fund, which is derived from an excise tax on guns and ammunition, has increased from around \$20,000 to over \$100,000 in the last three years. This money must be used for research or restoring game and habitats. Work is being done on Bob-white, Ruffed Grouse, and Wild Turkey as well as on mammals and fish. Robert Pierce is carrying out a research project on the survival of pen-reared Bob-white, and Frederick Hardy is studying the habits of the Ruffed Grouse in eastern Kentucky. Mr. Alexander ended his program with a kodachrome moving picture, "The Realm of the Wild."

Miss Audrey Wright had on display a fine exhibit of low-cost and free materials available for teaching wildlife and conservation. A group of bird pictures was passed out by some of her pupils to all those present.

Friday morning, April 22, at 6 A. M., Floyd Carpenter led a field trip through Cherokee Park. Another group went to Indian Hills Swamp and the Ohio River. Among the birds recorded were: American Coot, 9; American Golden-eye, 1 female; American Merganser, 2 females; Lesser Scaup, 9; Blue-winged Teal, 10; Lesser Yellow-legs, 8; House Wren, 1; Yellow Warbler, 2; Prothonotary Warbler, 2.

—ANNIE M. THACHER, SECRETARY, 2918 Brownsboro Road  
Louisville.