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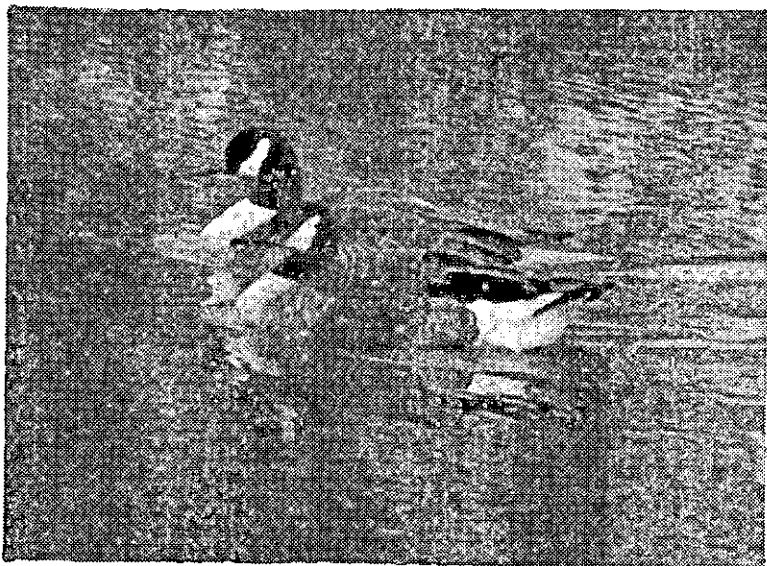
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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER



CANADA GEESE

Recovering on a Farm Pond at Henderson

Vol. 29 No. 2

May, 1953

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1923 by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS, VOL. 29, NO. 2, MAY

A Study of Nesting Birds at Sleepy Hollow, Ky. Anne L. Stamm, Walter Shackleton, and Mabel Slack.....	21
An Albinistic Cardinal, Gordon Wilson.....	28
An Albino Blue Jay, J. C. Keeley.....	28
Cardinal Banding, Brasher Bacon.....	29
News and Views.....	29
K. O. S. Spring Meeting.....	29
COVER, Canada Geese.	

A STUDY OF NESTING BIRDS AT SLEEPY HOLLOW, KY.

BY

ANNE L. STAMM, WALTER SHACKLETON, and MABEL SLACK

This paper represents a study of the breeding birds at Sleepy Hollow made April 12 through June 7, 1952, with emphasis on the number of breeding species, approximate nesting dates, and nesting habits.

Sleepy Hollow is located on the old Brownsboro Road, sixteen miles northeast of Louisville, Kentucky, in Oldham County. This somewhat rugged tract of 176 acres, which includes a seventeen-acre lake, formed by the damming of the South Fork of Harrods Creek is a real estate development section. However, there are only nineteen cottage-type dwellings, of which nine are inhabited the year round, the others occupied only during the summer months. There has been very little clearing of land around the cottages; and shrubs, vines and tall trees surround them. Thus, the development of the area has had little effect on habitat.

Only a portion of this tract was censused in order to cover it thoroughly. The area studied comprises 38 acres and consists of steep, densely wooded hillsides terminating at the lake, which borders the censused area for three quarters of a mile on the north. The South Fork of Harrods Creek borders the study area on the eastern side. This territory is divided by a private road which runs from the entrance in the valley to a point halfway up the hillside at the spring house, where it turns east and continues on that level for the entire length of the property. This road after it makes the turn is at an elevation of about 600 feet above sea level and is about halfway between the lake and the top of the hill. All dwellings are immediately adjacent to the private road. Intensive work was done in the area, which is within the southern bank of the lake and the creek to a point about 100 feet above the road and paralleling it. The area was carefully checked from time to time for nests during the entire eight-weeks period.

Second growth trees and undisturbed undergrowth make up the cover on the hillsides. Among the more common deciduous trees of general distribution are several species of oak, white and black walnut, scalybark and pignut hickory. Other trees characteristic of the wooded slopes are beech, maple, tulip poplar, wild cherry, ash, elm, buckeye, honey and black locust. Considerable hop hornbeam, box elder, willow, and blue beech form a fringe at the edge of the lake. A few stately sycamores are in the valley and on the hillside west of the creek. The undergrowth consists

of spicebush, black raspberry, the usual saplings, together with much poison ivy, wild grape vines, Virginia creeper, and honeysuckle. In spring the ground is carpeted with wild flowers such as squirrel corn, Dutchman's breeches, trillium, trout lily, rue, and false anemone, blood root, toothwort, hepatica, wild ginger, shooting star, and fire pink. In the moist shaded nooks, violets, jack-in-the-pulpit, and celandine poppies grow in profusion. Here and there are many outcroppings of limestone ledges, thickly covered with moss, walking ferns, and mitrewort.

Observations were made on April 12, 20; May 1, 3, 10, 13, 16, 17, 24, 28; June 1, 7. Most trips were between the hours of 6:30 A. M. and noon. (Walter Shackleton resides in the area and contributed records from additional observations). Weather during this period was exceptionally good, although on some days showers prevented censusing the entire area. Nesting, however, did not seem delayed because of weather conditions. As far as possible, breeding data were based on actual nests found. A map of the area was made, and nests were charted on it.

Many summer residents did not nest immediately upon arrival, and in many cases nest building did not begin until two or three weeks later. Perhaps the early arrivals moved on farther north and the later birds remained to nest. An interesting example was the arrival of the Acadian Flycatchers on May 1, yet this species as a group was not active at nesting duties until May 24; however, one nest was found on May 17. The Indigo Bunting made its appearance on May 3, and nesting was not observed until May 17. A number of Wood Thrushes were singing on April 20, yet most nests were not under construction until the first week in May, and the peak egg-laying period was May 10-13. The majority of the Wood Thrush nests were found in maple saplings and spicebush along the edge of the road. Evidently this species needs only a limited territory, since the nests were close together.

Much evidence of parasitism by the Cowbird was observed, and of the nests recorded the Wood Thrush, Cardinal, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher suffered most in the order named. Also parasitized was one nest of the Kentucky Warbler. Some depredation by snakes was also observed. There was some predation on adult birds, although its extent is not known.

One hundred and thirteen active nests of twenty-four species were found in the area (4 nests found on the opposite edge of the lake are included because the birds were seen feeding in the censused area). Some nests were found

before egg-laying started, some contained eggs, others young, and in a few young had fledged. The highest density of nesting occurred between May 24 and 28. This is based on actual nests which were in the process of being built, or which contained eggs or young. It is interesting to note that during this period inter-specific strife was very low. Even where Red-eyed Vireos, Acadian Flycatchers, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nested in close proximity, there was little evidence of territorial defense.

Based on the number of nests only, the following species are arranged in the order of decreasing abundance: Wood Thrush, 23; Cardinal, 16; Acadian Flycatcher, 16; Red-eyed Vireo, 13; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 11; Prothonotary Warbler, 6; Phoebe, 4; Catbird, 3; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 2; Carolina Chickadee, 2; Carolina Wren, 2; Cerulean Warbler, 2; Summer Tanager, 2; Green Heron, 1; Wood Duck, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 1; Crested Flycatcher, 1; Wood Pewee, 1; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Yellow-throated Vireo, 1; Kentucky Warbler, 1; Indigo Bunting, 1; Song Sparrow, 1.

A few remarks regarding the arrangement of the breeding list and the comments which follow each species will be necessary to a clear understanding of the whole. Species for which we found actual nests are listed without asterisks. A single asterisk occurs twelve times and refers to singing males or species found repeatedly in the area but for which we found no nests. A double asterisk marks five species where evidence of breeding is based on nocturnal calls alone. A triple asterisk precedes the names of four birds, indicating nesting based on parent birds carrying nesting material, carrying food to young, or the young seen out of the nest.

LIST OF THE BREEDING BIRDS

GREEN HERON, *Butorides virescens*. Recorded on each visit. One nest found on May 28 on edge of area. Another pair observed on May 24 carrying nesting material to east woods.

MALLARD, *Anas platyrhynchos*. Not common. Two pairs noted on May 10, and young of this species observed on later visit.

WOOD DUCK, *Aix sponsa*. Not common. Ten young on May 9.

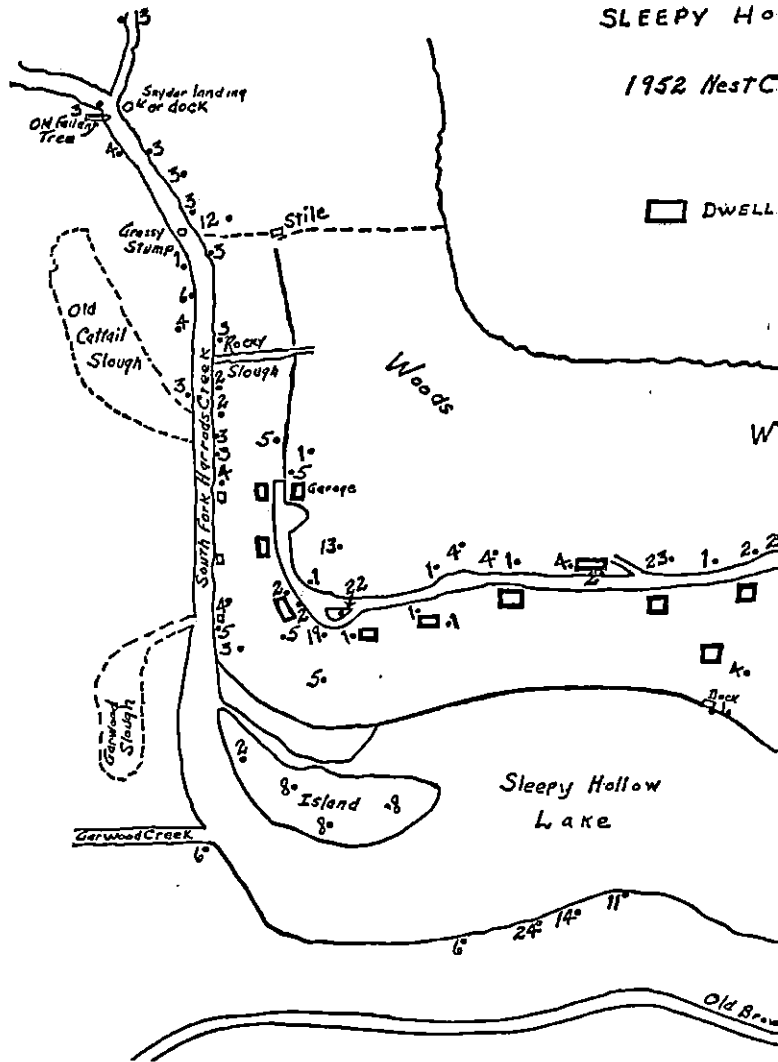
COOPER'S HAWK, *Accipiter cooperii*. Species observed by Walter Shackleton.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, *Buteo lineatus*. Species observed by Walter Shackleton.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK, *Buteo platypterus*. One was seen at tree level along the road on May 13 and one on May 24 in the same area. Observed at other times by Walter Shackleton.

MOURNING DOVE, *Zenaidura macroura*. Uncommon in area. One pair was found along the lake and another pair near the spring house where the road turns east.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, *Coccyzus americanus*. Fairly common in the valley and at the lower end of the property near the creek.



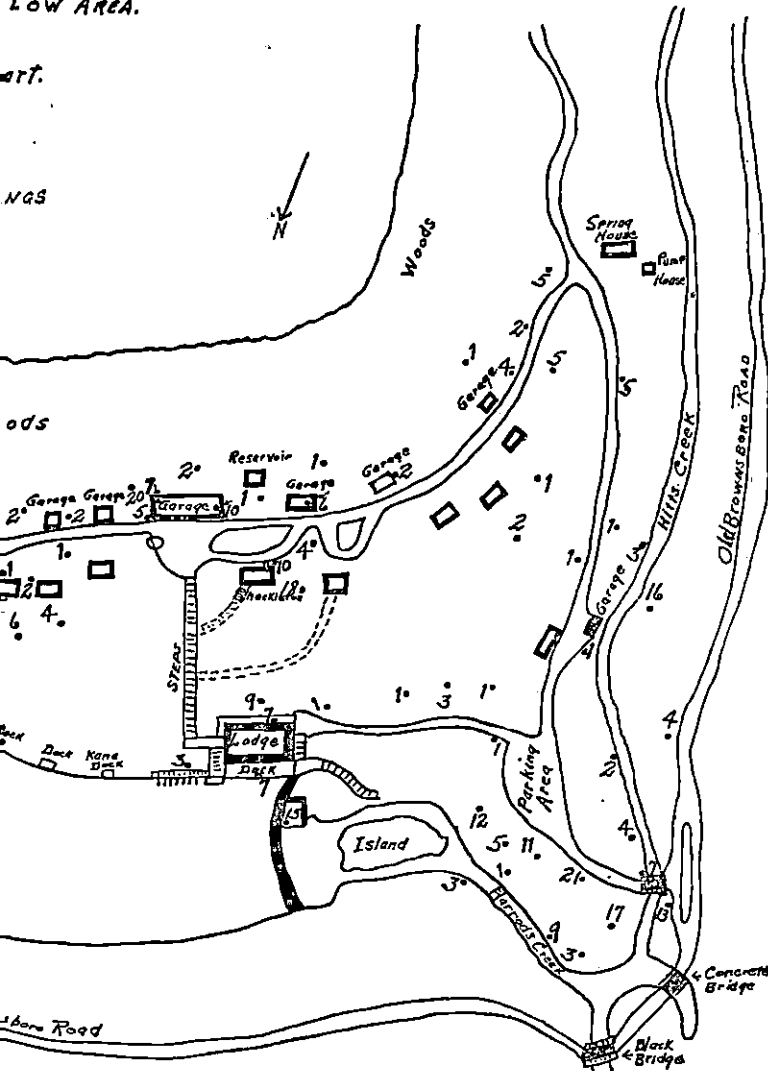
SKETCH-MAP OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

KEY FOR NEST CHART

Birds are listed with a key number referring to map; for example the key number for the Wood Thrush is 1, in which case a 1 is put on the map where nest of that species was found. Symbols are as follows:

- 1—Wood Thrush, 2—Cardinal, 3—Acadian Flycatcher, 4—Red-eyed

LOW AREA.



AREA, SHOWING LOCATION OF NESTS

Vireo, 5—Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 6—Prothonotary Warbler, 7—Phoebe, 8—Catbird, 9—Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 10—Carolina Wren, 11—Carolina Chickadee, 12—Cerulean Warbler, 13—Summer Tanager, 14—Green Heron, 15—Wood Duck, 16—Red-bellied Woodpecker, 17—Downy Woodpecker, 18—Crested Flycatcher, 19—Wood Pewee, 20—Yellow-throated Vireo, 21—White-breasted Nuthatch, 22—Kentucky Warbler, 23—Indigo Bunting, 24—Song Sparrow.

**SCREECH OWL, *Otus asio*. Heard numerous times; breeding based on calls.

**HORNED OWL, *Bubo virginianus*. Heard numerous times by Walter Shackleton.

**BARRED OWL, *Strix varia*. Noted by Walter Shackleton and others in the area.

**CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW, *Caprimulgus carolinensis*. Listed on basis of calls heard by Walter Shackleton.

**WHIP-POOR-WILL, *Caprimulgus vociferus*. Records indicate much calling especially during week of May 11. (Walter Shackleton).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, *Archilochus colubris*. Two nests found on June 1: one on a tiny branch of a beech sapling, and the other, ten feet from the ground on a limb overhanging the creek bank. Birds incubating.

*BELTED KINGFISHER, *Megaceryle alcyon*. One or two noted on most visits along creek and lake.

*YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER, *Colaptes auratus*. Not as common as Downy Woodpecker. The courtship of a pair observed on June 1.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, *Centurus carolinus*. A fair number present. One nest found on May 17, when parent birds were seen feeding young.

***H A I R Y WOODPECKER, *Dendrocopos villosus*. Uncommon. Adult birds were seen carrying food to young.

DOWNY WOODPECKER, *Dendrocopos pubescens*. Fairly common. More numerous in the valley and on eastern edge of property. One nest found in cavity of elm tree about thirty feet from the ground on June 1. This nest was at the left of the entrance. Young out of the nest were also observed on the hillside above the boat club.

CRESTED FLYCATCHER, *Myiarchus crinitus*. Fairly common. Confined chiefly to the eastern area near creek. Pair occupied nest box in Shackleton's yard.

PHOEBE, *Sayornis phoebe*. Moderately common in half of the area. Four nests located, the earliest one on April 12.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax virescens*. A b u n d a n t summer resident. Sixteen nests located. Most nests were loosely constructed and in blue beech and box elder trees overhanging the creek and varied in height from three to twenty feet above the ground or water.

WOOD PEWEE, *Contopus virens*. Not as common as one would expect in such a wooded area. One lichen-encrusted nest was fifty feet high on outer limb of a large beech tree. The birds brought minute materials to add to the nest on June 1, although from all outward appearances it seemed finished.

*BLUE JAY, *Cyanocitta cristata*. Permanent resident, yet not common. Found more frequently at upper end of area in more open territory.

*AMERICAN CROW, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*. Permanent resident, and a number were seen in the area quite frequently.

CAROLINA CHICKADEE, *Parus carolinensis*. Fairly common, yet only two nests were found. One nest of interest was built in a three-inch iron post supporting a pot hanger which hung over a picnic grill. When it was found on May 16, the nest contained one young and three eggs.

***TUFTED TITMOUSE, *Parus bicolor*. Rather common in certain sections. A pair observed carrying nesting material on April 20.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, *Sitta carolinensis*. Uncommon permanent resident. Usually found at Shackleton's, and a pair nested in a cavity of a sycamore tree in the picnic area.

CAROLINA WREN, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*. Most birds were observed near the dwellings. One nest was completely built on March 30 and was placed on a shelf above the door on Shackleton's porch. Another nest was found in the garage and built in a coffee can.

CATBIRD, *Dumetella carolinensis*. Uncommon. Species found only along creek edge and in the more open area. Three nests located on the island. Our earliest record is a nest with two eggs on May 10.

WOOD THRUSH, *Hylocichla mustelina*. Abundant summer resident. Twenty-three nests located. Most nests were in shrubs or saplings along the road edges.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, *Polioptila caerulea*. Common summer resident. Eleven nests located. First nesting activity was noted on April 20.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, *Vireo flavifrons*. Uncommon. Only one nest found and one other male heard singing, indicating an additional nest.

RED-EYED VIREO, *Vireo olivaceus*. Common summer resident, especially in wooded area. Thirteen nests found. First nesting activity noted on May 16.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, *Prothonotaria citrea*. Fairly common summer resident along the creek bank. Six nests were found, most of them in cavities of dead trees, but one of interest was in a mason jar which was on a shelf in Shackleton's garage. Our earliest record is a nest under construction on May 3 and containing three eggs on May 10.

CERULEAN WARBLER, *Dendroica cerulea*. Moderately common in some of the area. Two nests located high in walnut trees. The first nest was found May 17.

*YELLOW-THROATED (SYCAMORE) WARBLER, *Dendroica dominica*. Earliest arrival of the summer residents. A few heard throughout the entire study. Found primarily in the valley and at the eastern end of the creek where it forks.

***LOUISIANA WATER THRUSH, *Seiurus motacilla*. Fairly common along the valley, sloughs and creek bed. One observed carrying food on June 1.

KENTUCKY WARBLER, *Oporornis formosus*. Summer resident of the moist woodlands. Singing males indicate six pair in the area. One nest found on May 13 was built on a platform of maple leaves and at the base of a sapling.

*YELLOW-THROAT, *Geothlypis trichas*. Uncommon. A few observed on island and likely nested there, as they were heard on most trips. On numerous occasions the birds gave alarm notes as we searched the vegetation on the island.

COWBIRD, *Molothrus ater*. Common in area. Three eggs of this species were found in one Cardinal nest and four eggs in that of the Kentucky Warbler, others too numerous to mention.

SUMMER TANAGER, *Piranga rubra*. Two nests located and singing males indicate six or seven pairs. There was considerable distance between singing males. Birds were incubating when nests were found on May 28 and June 1.

CARDINAL, *Richmondia cardinalis*. Common permanent resident. Sixteen nests found. Nests varied in location from those in shrubs, the elbow of a drain pipe below eaves, to one placed on a plank which was in a garage, eight or ten feet from the floor. Our earliest nesting record is a nest with three eggs on April 20.

INDIGO BUNTING, *Passerina cyanea*. Not common. Found in the more open spaces. On May 17 a pair found building a nest in a wild hydrangea about four feet from the ground and near the road; later the nest was abandoned. Another pair was seen gathering nesting material on the hillside near the Boat Club.

***EASTERN TOWHEE**, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*. Uncommon. Found only two pairs.

SONG SPARROW, *Melospiza melodia*. Not common. Found only along island and slightly to the east of the island. One nest located on May 28 at edge of area and evidence of another nest when adult bird was seen (on edge of island) carrying food.

Visitors to the area included the Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Chimney Swift, Rough-winged Swallow, Orchard Oriole, Bronzed Grackle, and Goldfinch. The Warbling Vireo and Baltimore Oriole were noted on one day only. Transients were most conspicuous on May 17. A Blue-headed Vireo, which was found on numerous occasions to the left of the parking area, is worthy of mentioning because it was observed as late as June 1. A Nashville Warbler was also noted on that date.

We are indebted to Floyd Carpenter for assistance in determining the acreage covered.

Acknowledgment for helpful assistance in nest searching and examination is made to Mrs. Walter Shackleton, Mrs. Milton Glock, Thos. C. Fuller, and Frederick W. Stamm. Acknowledgment is made to Mrs. William B. Tabler for assistance on May 1 and May 13, to Harvey B. Lovell and Mrs. F. P. Shannon on April 12. Other Beckham Bird Club members who participated in the two field trips scheduled in connection with this project were: Mrs. Yancey Altsheier, Helen Browning, Floyd Carpenter, William F. Fleisher, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hansen, Sabra Hansen, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Krull, Mr. and Mrs. Walton Jackson, Charles Mitchell, Louis Pieper, Marie Pieper, Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Shannon, and Audrey Wright.

FIELD NOTES

AN ALBINISTIC CARDINAL

On December 6, 1952, I flushed, among many other Cardinals, an albinistic one on the farm of Miss Florence Schneider, on Drake's Creek four miles east of Bowling Green. It was entirely white except for a pink wash on its outer breast, at the tips of the primaries, and the tip of the tail. In every way it seemed perfectly normal, so far as agility and call notes were concerned. On our Christmas Bird Count, December 22, Dr. J. R. Whitmer and I saw this bird again. Though I returned several times, I was not able to find it again.—GORDON WILSON, Bowling Green.

* * * * *

AN ALBINO BLUE JAY

On the Owensboro-Yelvington Road, eight miles east of Owensboro, two miles west of Carpenter Lake, on the farm of William Nantz I found an albino Blue Jay. There was no suggestion of any color except for its feet and bill. I studied it with field glasses at 50 feet for 10 minutes. The bird has been seen by a dozen or more people in the neighborhood.—J. C. KEEBLEY, Owensboro.

CARDINAL BANDING

I have just compiled my records of Cardinal banding for 1952. During 1952 and through February 10, 1953, I banded 95 new birds. On February 5, 9, and 10, I banded 44 birds. In 1951 I banded 104 new birds. The total number of Cardinals banded to date has been 563, of which 36 were nestlings. Of the 527 the sex of which was determined, 264 were males and 263 were females, which indicates that one sex is as easy to trap as the other, assuming the sex ratio to be 1 to 1.

My most interesting record has been that of an adult female, first banded on September 5, 1943, which returned on January 18, 1946, November 15, 1949, and twice on May 5, 1951. The later date is nearly 8 years after she was first banded. If she was a second-year bird when banded, as seems likely from her mature plumage, she was really about 9 years old when last taken.

A summary of my returns since May 11, 1937, is as follows (The age is that of the bird assuming it was about 1 year old when banded): 1-year-old, 23; 2-year-old, 8; 3-year-old, 10; 4-year-old, 9; 5-year-old, 6; 9-year-old, 1.—BRASHER BACON, Spring Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, Madisonville.

NEWS AND VIEWS

One of our recent K. O. S. members, Barbara Jo Parkinson, is a Junior at Mt. Carmel High School in Illinois. She is building a fine life list and, after adding the American Golden-eye and Canvasback on the Wabash River recently, now has 218 species. While at the Girl Scout Camp at McCormick's Creek State Park in Indiana last summer, she tells about adding another species. The park naturalist had directed her to a large sycamore tree in an overgrown meadow, where she might find a Prairie Warbler, a new species for which she had been looking.

"About an hour and a half later," she writes, "I had become a little dubious about adding that new species. I could not see anywhere the small yellow and olive warbler with the black streaks for which I had been searching. Only Yellow-breasted Chats and Eastern Bluebirds were singing. I realized that it was time to be getting back to camp, but I had to take one more quick look. It must have been pure luck, because there in a lower branch of the sycamore perched a warbler new to me, but clearly the Prairie Warbler. He sang, preened his feathers, and put on quite a show. As you must have guessed, I hastened back to camp with a feeling of achievement."

* * * * *

K. O. S. SPRING MEETING

The thirtieth annual spring meeting was held on Friday, April 17, in the Mirror Room of the Kentucky Hotel. About 200 members and guests enjoyed the program.

LUNCHEON. Thirty-two members attended. Mrs. Francis P. Shannon was chairman of the arrangements. Place cards had a colorful hand-made iris standing on them.

VIEWPOINTS IN ORNITHOLOGY by Professor A. S. Bradshaw of Transylvania College completed the noon program. He discussed these under three headings: the ridiculous, the sentimental, and the realistic. Will Cuppy was used to illustrate the first. Those of you who are familiar with his description of an ornithological field trip

know how funny he can be.' A series of nature poems illustrated the second point. For the realistic, Mr. Bradshaw quoted from Aldo Leopold, whose writings combine accuracy with a charming style.

AFTERNOON SESSION. A DEMONSTRATION LESSON by Grade 6 of Cochran School, Miss Mary McAlister, teacher. Twenty-four pupils carried on a class lesson in bird study. An interesting feature was a series of bird games which were played in groups of 3 or 4, each group playing a different game. Although the pupils had assignments, the program was unrehearsed. They knew an amazing amount of bird lore, and the program was most successful in showing teachers how to conduct such a class.

EXHIBIT OF BIRD PAINTINGS. Calvin Burris, a junior at Valley High School, exhibited three paintings done in oils of a Cardinal, a Brown Thrasher, and a Flicker. The birds are very lifelike, with attractive backgrounds.

Howard Rollin, the bird artist from Colorado, who has sent us several fine water colors, had these exhibited. These have been described in the *Kentucky Warbler* previously. They have been framed and are available for loan to K. O. S. members.

AMERICAN BIRD ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS, by Professor Howard Michaux of Purdue University, was the main event of the afternoon program. He showed colored slides of paintings of leading bird artists past and present. He was particularly enthusiastic about the work of Louis Agassiz Fuertes, who was the first of the great modern artist-ornithologists.

FIELD TRIP, SATURDAY MORNING. In spite of the cold rain, 5 cars showed up at 7:30 A. M. At Indian Hills Swamp two American Bitterns were feeding.



NEST OF KENTUCKY WARBLER

With 1 Cowbird egg. Previously it contained 2 Warbler eggs and 2 Cowbird eggs, and outside the nest 2 additional Cowbird eggs on the ground with holes pecked in them.

Photo by Anne Stamm, see page 27.