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The Kentucky Warbler

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Brown Thrasher on a flowering teasel from a painting by Ray Harm

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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

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NEWS AND VIEWS

K.O.S. STAFF ARTIST

The cover picture of the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) is from a painting by Ray Harm of Berea, Kentucky. Mr. Harm, a native of West Virginia, was reared near Elkins in the mountain country and has moved to Kentucky within the past year. He is now a naturalist with the Kentucky State Parks, and his background includes training show

(Continued on page 36)

SONG AND MIMICRY IN THE BROWN THRASHER

JAMES W. HANCOCK

The Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), being a common dooryard bird, is a very convenient species to study and on which to accumulate data on bird song.

In early spring, and frequently in late spring and early summer, it mounts to the top of a tall tree or other conspicuous perch and sings incessantly. These periods of song may give the impression that this species, considered in total volume, is a top songster, yet this song is interrupted during certain phases of the breeding cycle and the thrasher, with the notable exception of the Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*), has one of the shortest seasons of song of our common dooryard birds. The oriole has been discussed in a previous article (Hancock, 1962.)

Actually, this article is not a specialized study, but perhaps my notes and records on the Brown Thrasher, over a long period, may still have a cumulative value and are here given, along with references to the work of other students. My records cover, though more or less intermittently, a period of around thirty years, or 1933-1963, all made within Hopkins County.

The thrasher is a brilliant performer, singing, when at his best, with fervor and abandon. At times the male appears to sing tirelessly, and the song is as much a part of early spring as the swelling of the buds, the chilly March winds and the opening of the first crocus blossoms.

This species does not have the lofty flight song of the Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) or even the fluttering ecstasy song of the Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*). Actually, it does not have what may be termed a true flight song, but it does sing occasionally in flight. My notes record song in flight on these dates: March 26, 1961; April 10, 1952; May 17, 20, 1934; June 10, 1946; June 15, 1934; and I suspect there may have been some unrecorded observations. Note that these records were in spring and early summer and none after the termination of the regular song season in July. Sometimes the performer will sing in flight, perch and continue the song without interruption. It is usually a rather casual performance, perhaps not essential in itself to the normal pattern of the breeding cycle.

Erwin (1935), however, writes that a male "sang very softly when the female was nearby, but when she flew away he also [as did another] began to sing much louder, as if to call her back, and at one time followed her a short distance, singing on the wing."

My records on the spring song, on individuals thought to be summer residents, cover twenty years, these being taken during these particular years: 1933-'37, 1945-'50, 1952-'55, 1957-'58, 1960-'61, 1963. Usually the species is in song on arrival, but not in every instance. In 1933 the bird was here on March 15 but the song was first heard on the 16th; in 1950 it was present by March 2 but no song was heard until the 15th. Undoubtedly, on a songster that arrives so early in the season, cold winds and low temperatures, or balmy spells on the other hand, must determine the amount of singing.

During this period the thrasher appeared as early as March 2, 1950, and as late as March 22, 1947, while an average date is March 10. The song was heard as early as March 4, 1955, and began as late as March 28, 1960, with an average being March 12.

The species has been found wintering frequently in recent years in Western Kentucky and I have three late February records of song, not included in the above summary, that appear to be by wintering individuals and must have been the very first song of the season. These are: Feb. 27, 1951 (also heard on the 28th); Feb. 21, 1959; Feb. 22, 1962. The full song was heard on the 1951 and 1959 records; the bird in 1962 sang distinctly but gave a rather uninspired performance and was not heard further until March 7. The singer in 1959 was also heard on Feb. 23, 25, 26.

The species is at its height of song here in April, May and June. Frequency of song is particularly noticeable in April, while, in number of singing individuals, it is sometimes lessened in May and June, since the bird, as a rule, does little singing after incubation has begun.

My data on the cessation of song are not so extensive as that of Saunders, although I have noted that some individuals sing well beyond the others. I have fifteen years of records on the last dates of cessation, these being for the years 1934-'36, 1946, 1950-'52, 1954, 1956-'61, 1963. The earliest date for this period is July 2, 1952 and the latest is July 28, 1958, and July 28, 1960. (Incidentally, most thrashers had ceased to sing by July 14 in 1960, while in 1958 the song was heard frequently up until the 28th). The average date of cessation during this total period is July 14.

At Cape May, New Jersey, Stone (1937) finds: "They stop singing, I think, sooner than any of our native birds and my latest dates are June 22, 1924; July 2, 1921; July 4, 1928." At Allegany State Park, New York, Saunders (1938), in four years of study, finds the earliest date of cessation to be July 6, 1921, the latest July 16, 1931, and July 8 an average. At Fairfield County, Connecticut (1948a) he cites a much more detailed set of data. Briefly, the last individual song was heard on July 16, 1941, while a general cessation average was noted by June 30; the earliest record was on June 17, 1945.

Cessation of song in the thrasher, as well as in many other songsters, appears to be partially governed by whether the summer is cooler and wetter than average. In 1952 this area had an extremely hot, dry summer, and, as mentioned, no song was heard after July 2; in 1958 July was an extremely wet month, too wet to cultivate a late garden I had planted, and the species sang until late July.

However, to my knowledge, cessation has not been exhaustively studied, and there may be other factors that have a bearing on this early and late termination of the regular song season.

In August, September, and October I have recorded some 22 instances of song. According to Dwight (1900), the "adult winter plumage is acquired by a complete post-nuptial moult in July and August." It would appear, then, that the species may sometimes sing during the moult, and, doubtless, on occasion after the moult has been completed.

Frequently the bird sings from a low perch at this season, oftentimes back among the branches of a tree in a manner more suggestive of the Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), usually only a "whisper song," sometimes with the bill closed and the song audible only at close range. However, on other occasions, I have seen the singer mount to the top of a tree, such as a sassafras, elm, or a tall oak, and sing. Even then the notes may sound broken or lacking in volume. Sometimes a singer sends out a few notes loud and distinct, then it seems to lose inspiration and sits silent or leaves its perch. Performances of this type were observed at my home on August 16 and September 7, 1948, presumably by the same individual. Never have I seen a prolonged, full-throated performance from a high perch by this species in late summer and autumn, after the termination of the regular song season.

An interesting performance was noted at Spring Lake, near Madisonville, on October 16, 1947. This bird sang about 8-10 feet above the ground in trees near the lake. The notes were hardly so loud as in spring but were surprisingly distinct. It sang about five minutes, ceased when I approached, then began again in lower tones. It sang while back among the branches of the trees.

My records on renewal include eight in August, twelve in September and only two in October. Of these, eight were performed from a high perch.

Saunders (1948b) writes: "I have heard this bird singing in the fall just once, September 13, 1944," while Bicknell (1884) records a fall song on September 8, 1881.

On April 3, 1934, I heard a low song as I approached a thrasher nest in a brush pile. The bird apparently sang either while standing over or sitting on the nest. On April 15, 1960, I saw a nest being built in a young elm across the road from my home. As I watched, the bird at the nest sang in pleasant low phrases, sometimes increasing these slightly in volume.

John Burroughs (Saunders, 1929) stated that the Brown Thrasher never sings near the nest, and Wright (1936) writes: "Under no circumstances does he sing when near his nest." Saunders disagrees, however, and later states (1951): "As soon as the nest is established, the bird ceases singing, but it begins again when the nesting is over. This has led to the statement that the bird does not sing near its nest, but it is my experience that if one notes the place where a bird sings daily in April and a week or two later the song has ceased, he may, by careful search, find a nest very near the spot where the singing took place."

In addition to the whisper songs already mentioned, I have two winter records of this type, these being on February 5, 1941, and December 31, 1958. Both these birds were watched at close range as they sang with the bill closed. (Some late February records have already been discussed, but were not whisper songs.)

Laskey (1935) discusses a song of this nature in early spring at Nashville as follows: ". . . Also in March, but about the middle of the month, a Brown Thrasher that had arrived two days previously, was heard at noon-day, softly singing as if communing with himself. It was not until a week later that the usual springtime song of this species was recorded that year in the garden."

In my opinion, the Brown Thrasher, in the wild, is capable of mimicry, but his talents are well below those of the Mockingbird, Catbird, or even the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). The songs or calls recognized are often fragmentary and are sometimes difficult to judge. My notes include records on imitations, however, of the Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*), Yellowthroat, Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Carolina Chickadee (*Parus carolinensis*), Wood Pewee (*Contopus virens*), and Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*).

The various writers disagree on whether the thrasher is capable of mimicry. Dawson (1903) writes: "Now and then he lapses into mimicry but for the most part his notes are his own—piquant, incisive, peremptory, stirring." Nehrling (Barrows, 1912) thinks "It consists entirely of original notes, those of other birds never entering into the composition." Saunders (1951) says it "Sometimes imitates other species, but less frequently than the Catbird or the Mockingbird. Six species is the largest number I have known an individual to imitate."

The experiences of Beals (1942) with this species, in regard to mimicry, are of particular interest. Working on the theory that members of the thrasher family should have the ability to mimic human conversation, she tried her luck on a pet thrasher with amazing results. She writes: "His vocabulary soon consisted of ninety individual words and an extensive repertory of phrases or sentences"; in addition, "He imitated the songs of the Redwing, Baltimore Oriole, Northern Yellowthroat and many others, and pronounced such names as Chewink, Bob-white, Phoebe, Killdeer, Whip-poor-will and Pewee. He loved the word 'busy' and repeated it many times during the day, with inflection and interrogation 'Busy, busy, busy?'" Thus it appears that the imitative ability of some individual thrashers may be far beyond that which we have ascribed to them.

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* * *

TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER, 1963

JOSEPH CROFT

Traill's Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) were again present at Louisville during the summer of 1963, although apparently in numbers slightly smaller than those of 1962 (see *Ky. Warbler*, 38:59-61, 1962). Observations indicated seven pairs in Jefferson County, plus two others on the Indiana bank of the Ohio River. Of three nests examined in Jefferson County, only one held eggs or young. The season's most noteworthy observation, however, was the discovery of a used nest in Nelson County, extending the definitely established breeding range some 35 miles southward into central Kentucky.

Three pairs were found in the Caperton's Swamp area, compared to last year's four. Two pairs, first noted in early June by Haven Wiley, were present in the marshy area along the Louisville Country Club Road;

a third pair nested behind Fairview Beach, a quarter of a mile to the east. The following nests were found:

Nest 1. Found June 22, at edge of pond behind Fairview Beach, 6 feet up in ash sapling, with three warm eggs; our earliest date for eggs. July 7, two young, apparently only a day old. July 15, two young. July 20, nest empty; no fledglings found in vicinity, but adult bird calling very excitedly.

Nest 2. Found July 7, in Country Club Road area, 5½ feet up in maple; empty. July 15, empty. July 20, found destroyed, with only a few wisps of the nest material still in place.

Nest 3. Found July 15, in Country Club Road area, 3½ feet up in maple; very precariously supported; empty. July 20, found lying on ground.

On June 29 in the willow thickets on the Falls of the Ohio I found three widely separated birds, plus a fourth that was probably the mate of one of these. This is a probable decrease of one pair from last year's four. No nests were found at the Falls this year. The latest record of the season was made here on September 7, when William Rowe and I heard one calling. Two other birds, about a mile apart, were found in June on the Indiana side of the River.

The species was also found in one new Jefferson County area this summer; on July 28 I found an adult calling in poplar saplings along the border of a large cattail pond, near Manslick Road and the Watterson Expressway.

No attempt was made to locate the flycatchers this year in Bullitt County, where last year two singing males were found (**Ky. Warbler**, 38:61, 1962). I did, however, make brief checks of a few possible spots in Meade and Nelson Counties. These checks produced no results until late August, when a used nest was located in Nelson County; this may be listed as:

Nest 4. Found August 25, in a small marsh at Johnson's Lake, western Nelson County; 7 feet up in willow. Judging by its relatively good condition, this nest was obviously built this year. The elevation here is 430 feet, lowest in the county. This location is about 35 miles south of previously located nests, all in northern Jefferson County, and 20 miles south of last year's Bullitt County birds.

It should be pointed out that the records listed here, and in my two previous notes on this species, must surely represent only a fraction of the birds actually present; even in Jefferson County there are many likely areas which have not yet been searched for these inconspicuous little flycatchers. In view of the recent expansion of the species' range in the eastern United States, it would be surprising if Traill's Flycatchers are not now established as rare but fairly regular breeding birds over a large part of Kentucky. For example, while there seems to be only a single record of the species in the Kentucky mountains (Herndon, **Ky. Warbler**, 34:57-58, 1958), in late June 1962 Charles O. Handley, Jr., on a brief visit to extreme southwestern Virginia, found this bird singing near Ewing (**Raven**, 33, no. 4:4, 1962); this is about three miles from Kentucky.

SHORT-BILLED MARSH WRENS IN MEADE COUNTY

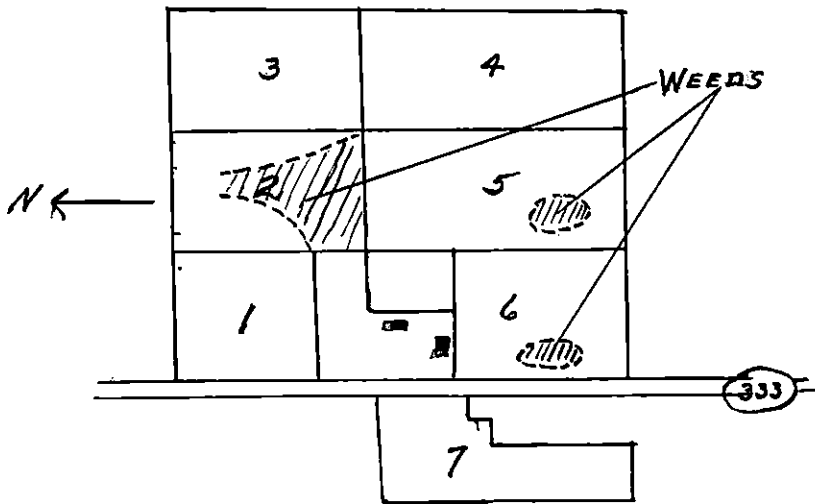
WILLIAM ROWE

On July 4, 1963, Joe Croft and I were searching a large unmown orchard grass field on state route 333 just south of Maples Corner in southern Meade County. After dragging a rope through most of the field we heard a song that Croft identified as a Short-billed Marsh Wren's (*Cistothorus platensis*). We soon found the singer; it and another wren were not shy and offered good looks. While leaving the field we saw a third. On subsequent trips alone and with others (July 5, 9, 11, 15, 21, 28; August 12, 23; September 3) I found more wrens in this field and several more fields containing wrens.

These fields were contiguous, except for Field 7 directly across the road from the others, and their total area was around (probably more than) 200 acres. Fields 1 and 4 were largely of thick orchard grass. Field 2 contained an area of mixed orchard (primarily) and Johnson grass, another area of tall, dense green weeds, and a long, narrow strip of Johnson grass. Field 3 was of shorter, less dense orchard grass, except for a few spots of thick growth, and was very weedy. Fields 5 and 6 were of thick orchard grass, and each had a large, roughly circular patch of waist-high weeds like those of Field 2; the ridge along the rear of Field 6 contained much sweet clover of the previous year (dry, brittle stalks). I never walked through the whole of Field 7, but the eastern third of it consisted of mixed orchard and Johnson grass.

ROUGH SKETCH OF MARSH WREN FIELDS

(Not a Map)



Other birds inhabiting these fields were the Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*); the Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) in the dense weeds; the Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), the most abundant

bird; the Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), usually where the grass was shorter and sparser; and Henslow's Sparrow (*Passer-herbulus henslowii*), in both weed patches and thick grass.

On the afternoon of July 21 Haven Wiley counted 12 singing Short-bills in Field 6, an adjacent section of Field 5, and the small field behind the owner's house. I censused the rest of the fields on the evening of July 28 and found Field 5 and part of Field 6 mown. My total for Fields 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 was 11 singing wrens, which were pretty evenly distributed. Field 1 had one wren and the others two or three apiece. The combined total of the two counts was 23. A third of these (8) were counted in Field 6, although several other fields presented equally good habitat. It may be that fewer birds sang than were present in the other fields on July 28, but even so I think Field 6 actually did have a higher population. Puzzling, too, is an apparent increase in wrens in Field 7. On July 28 I heard only two singing wrens there. Between then and August 12, when I returned, most of the other fields across the road were mown. On the 12th I heard 8 wrens singing in Field 7. Either the first count was far too low, or some dispossessed wrens from other fields took up residence in 7, or new, nonbreeding wrens moved in temporarily.

The wrens seemed to show no preference between ridges and hollows as long as the hay was thick and tall. Since the area was predominantly orchard grass it was hard to tell whether the wrens would accept any other habitat. They seemed to avoid the areas that were strictly weeds, although we often found them on the fringes, where the grass and weeds blend. One nest found in Johnson grass seems to indicate that the birds might nest in Johnson grass alone if it were thick enough.

An odd habit of this wren is the building of one or more dummy nests, which are apparently left unlined (no fur, feathers, or other material added) and are not used for raising young. We found three of these. The first was in Field 2 in a section of mixed orchard and Johnson grass. A wren carrying a piece of dead grass in its bill led John Westerman and me to it. The bird was apparently a male, since we later heard it sing. The nest was in a tall clump of Johnson grass. It was woven partly from the living grass of the clump and partly from pieces of dead grass. It was roughly spherical, about one foot off the ground, 3-4 inches in diameter, and had a hole in the side of $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch diameter. Al Westerman spotted the second, 30-50 feet from the first, while watching the same wren, which we think made both nests. This one was similar to the other. Croft found the third nest in Field 6 on July 21. Wiley described it as "capsule-shaped with small hole on one side near top, an elbow-length from the ground in an orchard grass clump, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, empty." Unfortunately we found no active nests.

Singing males were often easy to watch, sometimes perching on a grass stalk, a pokeweed or other such plant, or a fence, sometimes singing from near the ground. If approached too closely they would generally fly a short distance and resume singing. Females and silent males were secretive and hard to observe, except for an occasional bird that boldly fussed and scolded as though the observer were near an active nest (one approached John Westerman to within a yard). At least once Westerman and I observed a wren singing in flight, with its head thrown back as when perched.

The wrens seemed to sing at all times of day, at least between 9:00 a.m. and sunset (extreme observation times). Wrens were still singing repeatedly on August 23 in Field 7 and one in the small field behind the house (the only unmown fields—there was no evidence of wrens in any mown field). On the same date I heard three Short-bills singing in two large fields of thick Johnson grass in bottomland between Brandenburg and Battletown. These birds may have been resident, but I failed to hear them on previous trips past the same place. On September 3 two wrens sang a few times in Field 7 and a third gave its call note. I heard no wrens in the Johnson grass fields.

The Short-billed Marsh Wren should be looked and listened for in Kentucky anywhere orchard grass is left unmown through June and July. It may also nest in Johnson grass or other thick cover. I would enjoy hearing from anyone who finds this bird in the summer months.

I thank Haven Wiley for the use of his notes.

* * *

NOTES ON THE CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW

JOSEPH CROFT AND ANNE L. STAMM

Nearly twenty years ago, Miss Evelyn Schneider (Ky. Warbler, 20: 13-19, 1944) showed that the Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) in Kentucky was largely restricted to the southern and western portions of the State; she also indicated that the bird was definitely extending its range northward. Since that time, when there was but one record of the species in Jefferson County, Chuck-will's-widows have become regular breeding birds near Louisville. Although the species generally is present only in moderate numbers, a recent experience of ours shows it to be a very common bird in at least one section of Jefferson County.

On July 4, 1963, in company with Frederick W. Stamm, we spent about two hours, starting at dusk, listening for Chuck-will's-widows and Whip-poor-wills (*Caprimulgus vociferus*) in an area south of Taylorsville Road, between Jeffersontown and Fisherville. It was in this area that Croft and Haven Wiley first began hearing Chucks in June 1961. It is mostly a district of small farms, with much open country and woods of only moderate size, watered by Floyds Fork and several smaller branches. Elevation ranges from about 500 to 720 feet.

The moon was almost full on July 4, and the sky clear. Both goat-suckers were singing vigorously; in 14 miles we counted 20 Chuck-will's-widows and 14 Whip-poor-wills. Chuck-will's-widows tended to be commoner in the more low-lying areas along the branches and in woodlands of relatively small size, Whip-poor-wills commoner in the higher and more heavily wooded locations. However, no hard and fast line could be drawn, and at two locations both species were heard singing simultaneously.

Although this district seems to provide especially favorable habitat for the Chuck-will's-widow, the density of the population suggests that the species may be more common in other areas than is generally realized.

It would be interesting to have a series of counts from representative areas of the State.

Chuck-will's-widows occasionally occur within the city limits of Louisville; in July 1961 Croft heard one singing near the amphitheater in Iroquois Park. Our latest date is July 20 (1962), when Croft heard it singing near Jeffersontown. The species may be expected to remain here until September, but it is a difficult bird to locate once it has stopped singing.

At the time of Miss Schneider's study, Chuck-will's-widows were unknown in the eastern mountains. It is interesting to note, then, that in Allan Trout's "Greetings" column in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, August 17, 1963, Mrs. Russelle Riggs of Owensboro reports hearing one at Pine Mountain State Park in May. While this report cannot be taken as a definite record, in view of Mrs. Riggs' rather puzzling description of the song, it at least indicates that observers ought to be on the alert for this bird in southeastern Kentucky. In recent years Chuck-will's-widows have been found to be of regular occurrence, in limited numbers, in Tennessee mountain areas within 50-75 miles of the Kentucky line. On recent spring counts Chucks have been reported from Knoxville, Greenville, Bristol, Kingsport, and Elizabethton (see *Migrant*, 31:31, 1960; 32:31, 1961; 33:29, 1962; 34:31, 1963). Joseph C. Howell and Muriel B. Monroe (*Migrant*, 29:21, 1958) state that the species is fairly common in the Knoxville area, occurring April 12 to August 1.

FIELD NOTES

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS AT LAKE CUMBERLAND

While on a recent canoe trip on Lake Cumberland, I observed on several occasions Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos borealis*). The observations were made in mixed pine, cedar, and hardwood forest in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Dam, approximately four miles from Lake Cumberland State Park. On July 27, 1963, I saw one male on a dead pine tree. Often moving in nuthatch fashion, the woodpecker came down the tree to within 30 feet of where I was standing. The following morning I found three birds feeding simultaneously on the same tree. This dead pine obviously held great attraction for the birds, for when I returned to the location on August 8, I again found a bird.

Other birds of interest that I noted during my seventeen-day trip up the lake were the following: an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), an albino buteo, probably a Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*), and a number of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*).—ALBERT G. WESTERMAN, Muldraugh.

* * *

SORA RAIL IN MID-SUMMER

An adult Sora (*Porzana carolina*) was observed each day from June

25 until July 22, 1963, in a small stream which borders our farm about four miles southwest of Glasgow in Barren County. A gravel bar covered with vegetation diverted the shallow water into two channels, with both banks grown to the water's edge with tall grasses and honeysuckle. The bird spent most of its time on the gravel bar and along the eastern bank in a spot some thirty feet from the culvert under a fairly well-travelled road. On July 22 a heavy rain filled the creek, clearing the gravel bar and disturbing the bank growth, and the Sora was not seen again.

Gordon Wilson reports in *Birds of South-Central Kentucky (Ky. Warbler*, 38:11, 1962) the Sora as transient with extreme spring dates of April 3 and May 12 and extreme fall dates of September 10 and October 25. Burt L. Monroe, Sr. and Jr., in *Birds of the Louisville Region (Ky. Warbler*, 37:29, 1961) give extreme spring dates of March 26 and May 17 and fall dates of August 21 and October 5, with one bird reported by Monroe, Sr. on July 22.—MARQUITA GILLENWATER, Glasgow.

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SNOW BUNTINGS OBSERVED IN GRANT COUNTY

On December 26, 1963, I saw a group of about half a dozen Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) on Interstate Highway 75 near Crittenden, Grant County, Kentucky. The birds flew low across the highway in front of my car, and alit on the shoulder of the far side of the highway. I am familiar with this species from having lived in Minnesota and Vermont.—WAYNE H. DAVIS, Zoology Department, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

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SOME NOTES ON THE TWO-DAY COUNT

Dr. Gordon Wilson sent the following comments about our K. O. S. spring count for April 11-12:

1. Total species—112
2. Water species—29, 16 being ducks, a large figure for this time of month.
3. Our hawks were almost perfect, the **Sharp-shinned** being the only one missing.
4. The **Oldsquaw** was recorded for only the fifth time in 50 years.
5. Our nine warblers were good for this early.

The water species ran our numbers up; in some of our K. O. S. spring trips we would have had only 16 to 20 water species.

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BOOK REVIEW

NAMING THE BIRDS AT A GLANCE by Lou Blachly and Randolph Jenks with guide drawings by Sheridan Oman. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963. Price, \$3.95.

NAMING THE BIRDS AT A GLANCE is an effort to facilitate the

identification of birds for the beginning birder. The technique is based primarily on seven major color combinations: black; blue; brown, rufous, or chestnut; gray, olive-gray, or olive-green; red; white; and yellow or yellowish orange. As an example, in the color pattern guide under the heading of black, the following body regions are listed: head, throat or breast, upperparts, and body (entire). The reader is then referred to specific pages containing birds with the particular color pattern. There are black-and-white sketches accompanying the descriptions but no colored plates in the book. This arrangement enables the authors to place together those birds with similar color patterns. It also results in many birds being listed, described, and sketched several times.

Measurements are not given according to the metric system. The length of each bird is compared by means of a bar to that of either the House Sparrow, Robin, or Crow. Summer and winter range and voice are briefly given. Immature birds and birds in winter plumage are not included. The guide appears to be designed for summer birders in the northeastern part of North America. It omits many birds such as the shore birds, waders, and aquatic birds.

Beginning ornithology students were asked to evaluate the book using live birds, kodachrome slides, and mounted specimens. There were mixed reactions. Some birds, such as the Baltimore Oriole, House Sparrow, Meadowlark, Cardinal, and Fox Sparrow were quickly identified. Others, such as the Chimney Swift, Mourning Dove, and Bobwhite, proved difficult to locate. The students varied in their interpretations of color and the extent of different color patterns, so that much more than a glance was often necessary in order to locate the bird in the guide.

The book has two features not found in other bird guides. It groups together those birds that share similar color patterns, regardless of taxonomic position, and thus makes it easier to separate similar species. It eliminates the need of a basic knowledge of taxonomy by the construction of a key based entirely on color patterns. The book lacks certain desirable features of some other guides. It omits many birds included in other guides, and it does not include immature and winter plumages. It does not instill in the reader the benefits to be derived from the grasp of an orderly taxonomic arrangement. Also, one who has become acquainted with the lavish use of colored plates in other guides will immediately miss this helpful identifying tool. This writer has the impression that **NAMING THE BIRDS AT A GLANCE** will be used little by those who have made use of more extensive guides. The book will meet the objective of its authors in being of considerable introductory value to those interested primarily in the landbirds of northeastern North America.—**HERBERT E. SHADOWEN**, Department of Zoology, Western Kentucky State College, Bowling Green.

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SPRING MEETING

April 10-12, 1964

The Kentucky Ornithological Society held its 1964 Spring Meeting at Bowling Green, Kentucky, April 10-12, with headquarters at the Lost River Motel; 62 persons attended.

At the opening meeting on Friday evening in the Science Building, Western Kentucky State College, Dr. Clell Peterson, President, presided at an informal session of slides and field reports. The collection of bird skins was then visited in the adjoining rooms.

Dr. Gordon Wilson led the Saturday morning field trip to Chaney Lake and Leonard Brecher to the McElroy Farm. After picnic lunch at the roadside park just north of the Motel the group met at the Burton Memorial Church for a field trip to the wooded hillside along the nearby creek.

At 4:00 p.m. on Saturday the Board of Directors met in the president's suite at the Motel to discuss necessary business.

The dinner meeting was held at Kerr Memorial Church in Bowling Green at 6:30 p.m. After dinner, which was served by the ladies of the church, and the introduction of guests, Dr. Peterson opened a short business session. He discussed the proposed dam to be built above Cumberland Falls and stated that the Board of Directors had voted unanimously to go on record as opposing this desecration of one of the state's finest assets. Mr. Weller felt that further study of the situation was needed before taking action. The membership present voted that the K. O. S. oppose the construction of the dam. This motion, Dr. Peterson added, would be included in the publicity of the meeting to the newspapers.

Dr. Peterson, in an outline of the Fall Meeting at Cumberland Lake, October 9-11, stated that the Friday evening program would consist in part of a showing of slides from the permanent K.O.S. collection to be organized within the next several months. He urged members to send their slides, as well as prints and photographs, of members, meeting places, birds, habitat scenes, etc., to Miss Schneider at the University of Louisville Library. They are to be duplicated by the Society and the originals returned insured to the owner. Dr. Peterson announced that the principal speaker at the fall meeting is to be Arthur Stupka, Chief Naturalist, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and that Mr. Weller will be in charge of field trips.

Dr. Lancaster outlined the field trips planned for the following morning, and Mr. Weller gave the schedule of Ray Harm as naturalist at the various state parks during May and June.

Dr. Peterson then presented Mrs. Harvey Lovell who gave an introduction to "Hawk Mountain Tour," illustrated with slides by members of the Hawk Mt. Sanctuary. Mrs. Lovell quoted from Maurice Broun's book, "Hawks Aloft; the Story of Hawk Mountain," and since she and Dr. Lovell had visited here, her personal commentary on each slide added greatly to our appreciation of this famous area. After Dr. Peterson's expression of thanks to those in charge of the dinner, the meeting was adjourned.

On Sunday morning members drove to Dr. and Mrs. L. Y. Lancaster's cabin near the Gasper River for field trips led by Dr. Wilson, Dr. Lancaster, and Dr. Shadowen. After the return for lunch at the cabin, the compiling of the birds recorded ended the 1964 Spring Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn J. Schneider
Recording Secretary

MEMBERS AND GUESTS ATTENDING THE MEETINGS

BEREA: Ray Harm

BOWLING GREEN: Mildred Allen and guests, Dr. Robert M. Barr, Mrs. Harry Bowman, William W. Frech, Dr. and Mrs. L. Y. Lancaster, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Long, Dr. Robert N. Pace, Frances Richards, Mary Ellen Richards, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert E. Shadowen, Mrs. F. Eugene Wilson, Dr. and Mrs. Gordon Wilson.

BURKESVILLE: Charles S. Guthrie

DEATSVILLE: Cletis Weller

EDMONTON: Donald Finn

FRANKFORT: Howard P. Jones

GLASGOW: Mr. and Mrs. James Gillenwater, Tim Gillenwater, Dr. Russell Starr

LOUISVILLE: Gudrun Andersen, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard C. Brecher, Floyd Carpenter, Carlyle D. Chamberlain, Amy Deane, Mrs. Harry H. Hummel, Andy Lewis, Dr. and Mrs. Harvey B. Lovell, Kate Peil, Evelyn Schneider, Mrs. Eugene Short, Mabel Slack, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Stamm, Elsie P. Stewart, Audrey Wright

MURRAY: Dr. Clell T. Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Pogue

PRINCETON: Mrs. Carl Beesley, Dr. Cynthia C. Counce

ROCKFIELD: Mr. and Mrs. Roy P. Milliken

SACRAMENTO: Willard Gray

NASHVILLE, TENN.: Albert F. Ganier

NEWS AND VIEWS

(Continued from page 22)

horses for circus performances, wild west shows, and cowboy work.

He was graduated from Cooper School of Art in Cleveland, Ohio, and later attended Cleveland Institute of Art. In 1963 he became the first Herman L. Donovan artist-in-residence at the University of Kentucky. He has had many exhibits of his wildlife paintings—including ones at the Museum of Science and Natural History in Miami; Vero Beach, Florida; Museum of Arts and Sciences at Evansville, Indiana; and in Louisville, Kentucky.