

5-1966

Kentucky Warbler (Vol. 42, no. 2)

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The Kentucky Warbler

(Published by the Kentucky Ornithological Society)

VOL. XLII

MAY, 1966

NO. 2



Mississippi Kite by John L. Ridgway

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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

Organ of the **Kentucky Ornithological Society**. Published quarterly in February, May, August, and November. The **KENTUCKY WARBLER** is sent to all members not in arrears for dues. Membership dues are: Active or Regular, \$3.00; Contributing, \$5.00; Student, \$2.00; Corresponding, \$2.50; Life, \$50.00. All articles and communications should be addressed to the editor. Subscriptions, memberships, and requests for back issues should be sent to the treasurer.

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NEWS AND VIEWS

THE COVER

The cover picture is a reproduction of John L. Ridgway's painting of the Mississippi Kite made in the late 1800's and included in A. K. Fisher's book, *The Hawks and Owls of the United States* (Washington, 1893).

(Continued on page 36)

NOTES FROM FULTON COUNTY

JOSEPH CROFT AND WILLIAM ROWE

Fulton County, the southwesternmost of Kentucky's counties and situated partly in the rich alluvial lowlands of the Mississippi River, has long been of especial ornithological interest on account of the southern element in its avifauna. Our primary knowledge of the birds of this area comes from the pioneer work of Dr. L. Otley Pindar, who studied here for variously extended periods during the years 1884-1893 and published three major papers summarizing his observations (*Ornithologist and Oologist*, 12:54-55, 84-85, 1887; *Auk*, 6:310-316, 1889; *Wilson Bull.*, 37:77-88, 163-169, 1925); in the years since, others have made occasional observations, though there has been no resident student of birds in the area. In the notes below are presented a few recent observations, based primarily on our visit to Fulton County on June 26-27, 1965, and supplemented by a few additional observations made by Croft, April 13-15, 1966. We were particularly interested in searching for birds characteristic of the lower Mississippi Valley—notably the Mississippi Kite, Fish Crow, and Swainson's Warbler—and notes on all three species are included here. In many cases we have made comparisons, necessarily limited and tentative on account of the brevity of our observations, with conditions as Pindar found them some three-quarters of a century ago; plainly there have been some significant changes in the composition of the avifauna. All references to Pindar's work are taken from his final paper, published in the *Wilson Bulletin* and cited above.

Hérons. On our June visit we recorded five species, none in notable numbers. In addition to the Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*), these were the Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), 47; Common Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), eight; Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*), one; and Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*), three. In April two additional species were noted, Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) and Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). Though the Snowy Egret varied in abundance during Pindar's time, and the Little Blue Heron was fairly common in summer, the Common Egret and Yellow-crowned Night Heron were known, respectively, only from feathers of one specimen and a dead bird examined by Pindar. These changes of status in this area are of course what would be expected from the recovery of numbers and extension of range, respectively, of these two species in the present century.

We were unsuccessful in finding evidence of any active heronries, though it is to be expected there are such in the county. We were told by a local fisherman and trapper of two areas formerly used as nesting grounds; we had not time to visit one of these, and are uncertain we found the exact location of the other. We kept close watch of pastures and other areas for possible Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), which have recently established a nesting site only 30 miles southward in Tennessee, near Dyersburg (Coffey, *Migrant*, 35:54, 1964), but saw none.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). This species headed our list of desired birds, and we were rewarded with extended studies of nine of these graceful and confiding raptors. On June 26 we found a loose group of five birds some miles north of Hickman, very near the Mississippi and at the edge of a swampy woods and extensive corn fields. Before the birds came into sight, our attention was called to them by the distinctive two-noted call, a high-pitched whistle, the first note higher and quite emphatic, the second falling as though in a release of breath. We observed the birds both in flight and perched in the tops of trees. The very long, pointed wings made the birds appear surprisingly large in flight, when the white area of the upper rear edge of the secondaries was especially striking. Three of the birds had the black tails of adults; the tail pattern of a fourth, seen only at some distance, could not be determined. The fifth bird, seen perched in a tree at some 30 yards, had black and white bands on the tail, indicating a sub-adult plumage, though it lacked completely the breast streaking of immature birds pictured in plates. This bird, unlike the others, had a brown cast to the back and was darker on the back of the head, where the heads of the others appeared lightest. We watched these birds time and again make seemingly effortless forays out over the fields, sporting in the air and uttering their call note at frequent intervals.

The following morning, some twenty miles distant in the isolated "Kentucky Bend" section, we found four additional birds about the edges of extensive woods and cotton fields. Two of these birds had banded tails, with wing and head patches only slightly paler than the overall gray coloring, while the other two had distinctly whitish patches and solidly black tails. On both days we observed one of the kites harrying a Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), a habit noted by Audubon in his early description of the species ("it . . . soon forces a Crow to retreat to the woods": quoted in Bent, U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 167, p. 68). We have since received word that three kites were seen at the ferry crossing at Hickman on August 16, 1964, by Richard Anderson and other observers from St. Louis.

Toward the end of the last century the range of this essentially southern hawk extended rather far up the Mississippi Valley, as did that of the Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), and there were reports of its occurrence as a common bird in parts of southern Illinois (see, e.g., Cory, *Birds of Illinois and Wisconsin*, 1909, p. 454). Our knowledge of the bird in Kentucky during that period is limited (aside from Nelson's observations around Cairo, Illinois, made partly over the Ohio River: see Mengel, *Birds of Kentucky*, pp. 204-205) to Pindar's report that it was then, like the Swallow-tailed Kite, a rare summer visitant, and "never seen earlier than July 15"; he made no intimation regarding its possible nesting, as he did in the case of other species suspected of breeding in the county.

At any rate, for reasons not entirely clear, although probably including observations made along gunights, sometime early in the present century this gentle and unsuspecting bird of prey virtually disappeared from its range along the Mississippi River north of Memphis; although on the basis of an observation made as late as 1927 it was sug-

gested that the bird might yet be breeding in southern Illinois (Cahn and Hyde, *Wilson Bull.*, 41:35-36, 1929). During the period between Pindar's time and the present, the only Kentucky observations have been of wandering birds reported much to the northeast, in Bullitt County in 1937 (Carpenter, *Ky. Warbler*, 13:29-30, 1937) and in Jefferson County in the springs of 1953 (Stamm and Cole, *Ky. Warbler*, 30:12, 1954) and 1955 (Carpenter, *Ky. Warbler*, 31:70, 1955).

Since at least 1961, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the Mississippi Kite is re-occupying its former range in this section, at the same time that it has been showing a notable increase in the Gulf states. Apparently the bird may now reasonably be looked for in suitable areas between Memphis and St. Louis; at the latter and northernmost locality two juvenile birds were seen in late summer of 1962, where an adult pair had been noted through the summer (*Audubon Field Notes*, 16:479, 1962). The species has also been seen there irregularly each summer since; on June 7, 1965, for example, shortly before our trip to Fulton County, Rowe saw two adult birds in bottomlands near St. Louis. Since 1961 the kite has been observed a number of times at Reelfoot Lake, not far below the Kentucky line, and in 1964 members of the Tennessee Ornithological Society watched a pair carrying material to a nest there (Ganier, *Migrant*, 35:30, 1964). It seems not unlikely that the same is to be expected in Kentucky, and it is welcome indeed to have this bird back in the Kentucky avifauna after so long an absence.

Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*). On June 26 we saw four of these birds flying over the Mississippi. Listed by Pindar as "a very rare summer habitant," this species has since been found breeding (see Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 262).

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). This is plainly one species whose status has changed radically in Kentucky in this century. Pindar listed the subspecies *praticola* as "a common winter habitant," making no mention of any summer observations. As would be expected, we found it fairly common in June in the extensive open fields of this area, and the bird was considerably more in evidence in April. It might be noted that in the last century Pindar likewise recorded the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) only as a winter bird, while today it has become fairly common in suitable habitats here and has spread far southward into the Gulf states.

Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*). On our June visit we gave careful attention to the crows in the Mississippi bottomlands, but found none that were assignable by their calls to this species. Some, naturally, kept their silence while we were around. On April 14, however, Croft, who is familiar with the species and its calls in eastern Virginia and Maryland, found four Fish Crows in the Kentucky Bend section (one single, calling, and one calling in a close-knit group of three like-sized crows). None of these four gave indication of attachment to a particular area. The following day several others were found about four miles below the Kentucky line, around Reelfoot Lake. Mengel (*op. cit.*, p. 518) includes this species on the hypothetical list for Kentucky, on the basis of Coffey's observation of two birds at Hickman in May 1959. It seems not unlikely

that an occasional pair nests in the bottomlands. This species has just recently been added to the Missouri list, on the basis of observations and a specimen, in breeding condition, from Mississippi County, just across the river from Fulton County (Easterla, **Wilson Bull.**, 77:297-298, 1965).

Vireos. In June we noted the four regular summer vireos of central and western Kentucky. The White-eyed (**Vireo griseus**) was common in shrubby areas, a decided change from its status in Pindar's time, when it was, rather surprisingly, recorded as rare in summer. We noted only one Warbling Vireo (**V. gilvus**), called by Pindar "a rare migrant, and probably a very rare summer habitant."

Warblers. In lowland woods in June the three commonest warblers were, in order, the Redstart (**Setophaga ruticilla**), Prothonotary Warbler (**Protonotaria citrea**), and Parula Warbler (**Parula americana**). Plainly, then, the composition of the breeding warbler population has shifted notably since Pindar's time, for he mentions the Redstart and Parula only as migrants, and the Prothonotary only as a "rather rare" summer bird. The earlier status of all three seems surprising, especially since suitable habitats would likely have been more widespread then. Pindar was also uncertain whether the Cerulean Warbler (**Dendroica cerulea**) was a summer bird, and found the Hooded Warbler (**Wilsonia citrina**) "very rare." We noted two of the former, and found the latter uncommon or fairly common locally. The Kentucky Warbler (**Oporornis formosus**), most surprisingly considered a rare summer bird by Pindar, was fairly common in many wooded areas. On the other hand, we failed to note any Ovenbirds, while in Pindar's time they were common in summer.

The one warbler for which we made a special search was the Swainson's Warbler (**Limnothlypis swainsonii**). On June 26 we found one of these birds singing persistently in a large bottomland woods not far from the area where the Mississippi Kites were first found. Though the singer was seen only briefly, very near the ground in the undergrowth, the brown coloration of the crown, the white line over the eye, and the dingy white unstreaked underparts were seen clearly. We were somewhat surprised by the habitat; for though the area was wet and low-lying, and had obviously been recently overflowed, it could not well be classified as swampland, despite the presence of one junior-sized cottonmouth moccasin (**Agkistrodon piscivorus**). We have since been interested to learn that Mengel (*op. cit.*, pp. 289-290), who some years earlier found several of these birds in the county, had a similar experience, finding the birds invariably in wet woodlands rather than, as expected, in the cypress swamps.

Icterids-Finches. Pindar found the Orchard Oriole (**Icterus spurius**) primarily a migrant, and only a rare summer bird in two years; today it seems fairly common in at least some farming areas. The Dickcissel (**Spiza americana**), traditionally erratic in distribution and abundance, was recorded by Pindar as a "very rare migrant" and a summer resident in only two years; today it is common and one of the most conspicuous birds in open farming country.

TELEVISION TOWER MORTALITY NEAR LOUISVILLE

KENNETH P. ABLE

WHAS-TV in Louisville has recently (spring, 1965) constructed a television tower on Christian Road, in the Knobs of Floyd County, Indiana. In fall, 1965, this tower produced what is apparently the first migrant mortality due to such a structure in the Louisville region.

The tower is 973 feet tall and is situated on a hill 976 feet above sea level, giving the tower a total height of 1,949 feet a.s.l. The tower is guyed by three groups of wires made up of four cables each, attached at progressively higher points on the tower. Presumably the guy wires are the lethal factor to the migrants.

Dead birds were found on five dates during the fall. On all occasions kills were small and all birds found on a given date were not necessarily killed on the preceding night. Those which were obviously killed more than 24 hours before the collection time are indicated in the following summary by an asterisk (*). The weather data are taken from maps published by the U.S. Weather Bureau.

September 14 — Gray-cheeked Thrush, 1; Veery, 1; Black-and-white Warbler, 1*; Golden-winged Warbler, 1; Magnolia Warbler, 1; Black-burnian Warbler, 1; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1; Bobolink, 1 (adult female). The Louisville area was under the influence of low pressure centered just east of Louisville. A cold front passed through the city on Sept. 12 and the system became a stationary front north of the area on the night of Sept. 13-14 (the night of the kill). This condition was accompanied by rain and heavy fog which, according to the attendant, completely obscured the tower by 3:00 a.m. Wind at Louisville was from the SW at 9-14 m.p.h. at 1:00 a.m. (Sept. 14) but was NNE to the north of the area (at Indianapolis).

September 25 (Probably killed on the night of Sept. 23-24)—Swainson's Thrush, 1; Gray-cheeked Thrush, 3; Black-throated Green Warbler, 1*; Bay-breasted Warbler, 1; Ovenbird, 1; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, 2. A cold front passed through the region on Sept. 23 and rain fell on that date and during the night of Sept. 23-24. Winds during the night (1:00 a.m.) were from the north at 9-14 m.p.h.

October 1—Tennessee Warbler, 1*; Bay-breasted Warbler 1. A cold front reached the Louisville area about 1:00 a.m. accompanied by rain and westerly winds which did not shift to the north after passage of the front.

October 3—Swainson's Thrush, 1; Tennessee Warbler, 1*; Magnolia Warbler, 1; Bay-breasted Warbler, 1; Palm Warbler, 1. Following close behind the cold front of Oct. 1, a more intense low and cold front reached the area on Oct. 3. The front passed sometime between 1:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. with no precipitation. There was an abrupt wind shift from WSW to N. The kill probably preceded the passage of the front on this date since the front apparently did not reach the Louisville area until after daybreak.

October 23—Virginia Rail, 1; Bay-breasted Warbler, 1. Oct. 23 was marked by the approach of an occluded front from the NW, which

reached Louisville on the afternoon of this date. Louisville experienced SW winds during the night of Oct. 22-23. There was no precipitation during the night though rain fell on both dates. Visibility, however, was reduced due to low ceiling.

In summary, five minor bird kills occurred during fall, 1966, at a television tower in southern Indiana. All occurred when the region was under the influence of low pressure and frontal conditions. On two occasions, mortality occurred prior to front passage and wind shift to the north. The other kills could have occurred either before or after front passage, depending on what time during the night the birds were killed. On four of the five nights there was precipitation and/or reduced visibility due to fog or other factors.

Ed. note: It may be noted that Dr. Harvey B. Lovell (*Ky. Warbler*, 28:5-6, 1952) recorded a kill of some 100 birds at the Standiford Field ceilometer, in the fall of 1951.

* * * *

SPRING MEETING — MARCH 18-20, 1966

The Kentucky Ornithological Society held its 1966 Spring Meeting at Bowling Green, Kentucky, on March 18-20, with headquarters at the Lost River Motel.

The first session, on Friday evening at Western Kentucky State University's Science Building, was opened by Howard P. Jones, President. After the president welcomed members and guests, Dr. H. E. Shadowen suggested several field trips for Saturday. Although the McElroy Lake is again open to K.O.S. members, the water had gone down in both Chaney and McElroy Lakes, leaving only a few small pools. Dr. Shadowen proposed an alternate Saturday trip to the Barren River Reservoir some thirty miles from Bowling Green. However, the group chose to visit the lakes as usual, hoping that some shore birds would be seen in the absence of the customary concentration of waterfowl. The Saturday afternoon trip to Drake's Creek in the vicinity of Burton Memorial Chapel was also scheduled. Dr. L. Y. Lancaster extended his invitation and that of Mrs. Lancaster to the Lancaster cabin, at the Mouth of Gasper, for the Sunday morning field trip.

The program consisted of color slides, taken by Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Stamm, of avocets at the Federal Fish Hatchery near Frankfort, groups at various K.O.S. meetings, and the area and bird life at the Falls of the Ohio. The slides were followed by a color-sound motion picture, "Know Your Ducks." The first session was thereupon adjourned, with some members afterward stopping by the room housing the University's collection of bird skins.

On Saturday morning, two field groups left headquarters about 8:00. One group went to McElroy Lake and another to Chaney, changing lakes in mid-morning. After a picnic lunch at the roadside park near Bowling Green, the group went to Burton's Chapel and divided into two parties, one covering the familiar Drake's Creek area beyond the church and another covering a new area along the creek northwest of the church.

The dinner meeting was held at the Holiday Inn at 6:45. Mr. Jones voiced the regret of all members at Dr. Gordon Wilson's absence, due to illness, from the meeting. Mr. Leonard Brecher proposed that the Society take official recognition of this feeling, and the secretary was instructed to take the appropriate action.

Mr. Jones advised that Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology has asked the K.O.S. to participate again in its nesting study and that new cards are available from the four Kentucky regional directors—James W. Hancock, Madisonville; Mrs. F. W. Stamm, Louisville; Dr. Gordon Wilson, Bowling Green; Howard P. Jones, Frankfort.

The compilation of the bird list for the day was made by Dr. Shadowen, for a total of 61 species.

Mr. Jones asked that members meet at Dr. Lancaster's cabin at 10:30 Sunday morning for a short business session to be devoted to a report by Dr. Hunter Hancock on plans for the preservation of Murphy's Pond in southwestern Kentucky.

The program was divided into three sections. Joseph Croft gave a most interesting talk on the range of the Mississippi Kite, historically and at present. His own sightings, made together with William Rowe and reported elsewhere in this issue, have been in the far southwestern corner of Kentucky. Since Mr. Croft cited Mr. Albert F. Ganier as the authority for some of his information, it was most appropriate that Mr. Ganier was present to add his own observations on the nesting and feeding habits of this bird.

Mrs. F. W. Stamm used charts to show the information obtained from banding White-crowned Sparrows in her backyard in a Louisville suburb. Of particular interest was the return of birds banded in previous seasons, indicating that the same bird winters repeatedly in an area.

The final feature of the program was a Karl Maslowski film, "Living Room for Wildlife in Kentucky," with the expected superb photography.

On exhibit in the meeting room were some new water colors by Newton Belt.

The group met Sunday morning at Dr. Lancaster's cabin for field trips led by Dr. Lancaster and Dr. Shadowen. Near noon the members met to hear Dr. Hunter Hancock report that the Nature Conservancy will provide funds for the purchase of Murphy's Pond, it appearing that a local drainage project will not affect the Pond. The advance of funds will be in the form of a loan bearing 2% interest to a yet-to-be-created Kentucky chapter of the Nature Conservancy. The proposal was brought to the attention of K.O.S. because Dr. Hancock and Dr. Roger Barbour are making up a list of persons who want to become charter members of such a chapter at yearly dues of \$5.00. It was felt that many K.O.S. members would like to be listed or would know others who would be interested in what seems to be the only way to preserve Murphy's Pond.

The final bird count for the meeting was 69 species.

Respectfully submitted,
Marquita Gillenwater
Recording Secretary

ATTENDANCE AT THE SPRING MEETING

BLANDVILLE: Newton Belt.

BOWLING GREEN: Mildred Allen and guest, Mrs. Harry Bowman, Mr. and Mrs. Roy P. Milliken, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert E. Shadowen, Mrs. W. G. Thomas, Mrs. F. Eugene Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Wilson, Jr.

FRANKFORT: Howard P. Jones.

GLASGOW: Judge and Mrs. James E. Gillenwater, Mrs. George J. Ellis, Jr.

GREENVILLE: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas S. Brizendine, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin M. Dyer.

HODGENVILLE: Kenneth Dubke.

LA CENTER: Willard Gray.

LOUISVILLE: Mr. and Mrs. Leonard C. Brecher, Floyd S. Carpenter, Carlyle D. Chamberlain, Joseph E. Croft, Andrew Lewis, Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth P. McConnell, Mrs. Spencer Martin, Evelyn J. Schneider, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Stamm, Mrs. Elsie P. Stewart, Mr. and Mrs. Guy B. Wood.

MURRAY: Dr. and Mrs. Hunter M. Hancock, Edwin Larson, Dr. Clell T. Peterson.

RICHMOND: Mr. and Mrs. John A. Cheek, II.

HUNTINGBURG, IND.: Robert H. Menke.

NASHVILLE, TENN.: Albert F. Ganier.

* * * *

FIELD NOTES

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER IN FRANKLIN COUNTY

On May 2, 1966, as I was driving from work about 5:00 p.m., I had the completely unexpected experience of coming upon a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*). The bird was perched characteristically on a small telephone cable between two utility poles at the edge of Switzer Road at Holton Brothers' farm, just north of Forks of Elkhorn. I drove past before it burst on me what I had seen, backed the car to within 25 feet of the bird, and observed it at least a minute before traffic from both directions forced me to move. The bird flew as traffic gathered and I had no chance to see it further although my family and I returned and searched the area.

A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is unmistakable. I first noted the long scissor-like tail giving it a rather frail appearance. The bird was facing away from me showing a pearly-gray head and black ends to the tail. As it flew from the cable, I got an impression of pinkish-tan sides and wing linings. I am familiar with this flycatcher from my military service in Oklahoma and from several trips through that state.

Mengel in *The Birds of Kentucky* lists this species on a hypothetical list. Only one observation has been reported, that by Pindar who reported one seen within the city limits of Versailles, Woodford County, on August 27, 1924. It seems most unusual for this sighting to be made only

16 miles from the locality of the first record. I can think of no obvious explanation for this occurrence. It may be pertinent that land bird migration is at its peak in Central Kentucky about this date. Just prior to this date heavy rainstorms—in some instances tornadoes—with flooding, had been present across the central southern United States, the usual range for this species.—HOWARD P. JONES, Frankfort.

* * * *

SIGHT RECORD OF A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER

One day in the spring of 1963—I believe it was in May—while driving one of our tractors along the Lydanne bridge road, five miles west of Owensboro, in Daviess County, I saw an unusual bird fly off the ground and alight on a fence beside the road. The bird seemed unafraid of me, and I was able to examine it at very close range while it preened its feathers. The bird was beautiful, with a delicate rose color on the sides, and a fawn-colored breast. The most striking feature was the exceedingly long matched tail feathers. When the bird finally flew, these feathers seemed a hindrance to easy flight. It had been seen in the area before, but everyone assumed it was an escaped bird. When I finally checked Peterson's **Field Guide to the Birds**, it was easily and positively identified as the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*). The bird seemed in good health, but gave the impression of being tired. It was the most unusual bird I have ever seen in Kentucky. I never saw it but the one time, and I watched carefully, so I assume it moved on to another locality.—JOSEPH M. FORD, Owensboro.

Ed. note: It is of interest that L. Otley Pindar (*Wilson Bull.* 37:41, 1925) in reporting a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Versailles, on August 27, 1924, also said the bird "presented a picture of weariness almost to exhaustion."

* * * *

A SPRING SIGHT RECORD OF THE WHISTLING SWAN

On March 12, 1966, about 5:30 p.m., not far from Bernheim Forest, Bullitt County, I saw 42 Whistling Swans (*Olor columbianus*) flying in a northwesterly direction, actually more west than north. They were comparatively low and flew in and out of a V-formation with one side three to four times as long as the other. I could count them easily without field glasses. Ray Harm saw the same flight and he, too, counted 42 swans.

Two nights later, about 8:30 p.m., after dark, I heard another flight seemingly going in the same direction—CLETIS WELLER, Kentucky Department of Parks.

WHISTLING SWAN IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

Recently I made a sighting which seems to be worthy of record. I accompanied the Murray State College field biology class to Reelfoot Lake, January 15, 1966, and got a brief but excellent view of the Whistling Swan (*Olor columbianus*) which had been reported in the area several weeks earlier. Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Cypert, Dr. Hunter Hancock, his biology class of about thirty, and I made the observation at 4:30 p.m. inside Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge, in Kentucky, at an area called Long Point, just south of state highway 78. The swan had apparently been feeding in the flooded cornfield which surrounded most of the area but was not spotted until it was aloft. From a distance of less than one hundred yards, with the sun low and behind us, even the small yellow spot at the base of the black bill was discernible. We watched as the swan flew, with a grace all its own, parallel to and then away from our line of vision toward the lake until its form was lost behind some woods beyond the field.—EDWIN R. LAWSON, Murray.

* * * *

BOOK REVIEWS

THE BIRDS OF KENTUCKY, by Robert M. Mengel. Ornithological Monographs No. 3 of the American Ornithologists' Union. Lawrence, Kansas, 1965. Clothbound: pp. i-xv and 1-581, with 4 color plates, plus numerous text figures, maps, and vignettes. Price \$10.00 post-paid (\$8.00 to AOU members). Obtainable from Burt L. Monroe, Sr., Treasurer, Amer. Ornith. Union, Box 23447, Anchorage, Ky.

Anyone seriously interested in Kentucky birds simply must have this splendid volume, the fruition of half a lifetime's work. As is well known, Mengel's early mentor was Burt L. Monroe, Sr., whose observations and judicious collecting of specimens have contributed immeasurably to our knowledge of Kentucky's avifauna. The volume is fittingly dedicated to Monroe and to the late Josselyn Van Tyne, chairman of Mengel's doctoral committee at the University of Michigan. It may fairly be called a prolongation of Mengel's Ph.D. thesis, revised through 1960.

In the introduction, Mengel specifies the criteria he has used in deciding what constitutes a valid state record. Sight records are accepted "when one or more individuals of the species have been well observed in the field, either on one occasion by three or more people (collectively capable, in my opinion, of making identification accurately), or on repeated occasions by one person (similarly deemed capable)." Of the 296 bird species credited to the state, only 275, if the reviewer's count is correct, are represented by an extant Kentucky specimen known to Mengel, who has made a thorough search in museums scattered around the country and an exhaustive study of pertinent literature, as attested by a 35-page bibliography. Surprisingly, there appears to be no preserved Kentucky specimen of the Rock Dove, the Tree Swallow, or even of the House Sparrow! I might regretfully add that our state's bird-list, even if one accepts the figure of 296 species (plus 33 additional subspecies) is be-

low that of all but a very few other states. Clearly, opportunity awaits us here.

Valuable features of the book are the chapters on the physical and botanical environment, the distribution of breeding birds, recent changes in the Kentucky avifauna, bird distribution in relation to certain environmental features, systems of expressing bird distribution (life zones, biomes, biotic provinces, faunal areas), geographic variation in Kentucky breeding birds, the origin of the avifauna, and the history of ornithology in Kentucky. These chapters total about 150 pages; many of them will be of interest to a wider group than birders. Here, as elsewhere throughout the book, Dr. Mengel's scholarship and scientific training are evident.

The accounts of species and subspecies comprise the bulk of the volume and contain a wealth of carefully chosen, adequately documented, and critically evaluated information. Most birds are treated under the following headings, when applicable: status, spring, breeding records, breeding distribution, summer, fall, winter, and specimens examined. Of interest to the specialist are the able and generally conservative discussions of geographic variation. Mengel consistently follows the standard "Check-List of North American Birds" (5th edition, 1957) in assigning common and scientific names. A noteworthy but well-justified exception is combining the Snow Goose and Blue Goose as *Chen caerulescens*, for which he uses the vernacular name "Wavy."

Ten species are discussed in the Hypothetical List. The probability that they will prove to be valid Kentucky birds varies in my opinion, and presumably in Dr. Mengel's, all the way from certainty (Bell's Vireo) to impossibility (Magellan Siskin). Thirty additional birds are treated under the heading "Species Recorded on Inadequate Grounds." A number of these (such as the Western Kingbird) are sure to be added to the state list before long. Seven "Dubious Species" (presumably non-existent) and several unsuccessfully introduced game birds are mentioned for completeness.

Adding much to the attractiveness of the book are about ten vignettes of Kentucky's varied landscape, several excellent drawings of thrushes and vireos, and four water colors, all executed by Mengel himself. These are of rather good quality, and depict the Eastern Phoebe, Ovenbird, Veery, and Hooded Warbler, all on or near their nests. There are no photographs of any kind. While some readers would have wished for more plates, we must realize that excellent color portraits of all our birds are readily available in other books, and we can be thankful that *The Birds of Kentucky* is so reasonably priced. Useful are the approximately 30 carefully prepared maps, for the most part depicting the breeding distribution in Kentucky of selected species. In a few cases, such information is unavailable in other publications.

In summation, I find little to criticize in this lucidly written, well edited volume. It should take its place among the best state bird books. Though there is much yet to be learned about Kentucky birds (for example, in the areas of their distribution, relative abundance, and behavior), Mengel's work is certain to remain for many years as the definitive treatise on Kentucky's avifauna.—FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER, JR., Biology Department, Centre College, Danville.

THE APPALACHIANS, by Maurice Brooks. Volume I of *The Naturalist's America*, Editors: Roger Tory Peterson and John A. Livingston. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965. Pp. xvii, 346. \$6.95.

Outdoor people of all kinds, whether actual scientists or just appreciators of our American scenery, will find in this new and beautiful book a challenge to see more of our eastern mountains, or, if that is impossible, to study a little more carefully their own little American area. Maurice Brooks is a naturalist in the true sense: he is at home in many of the biological sciences, he is an ornithologist of note, he is a well-known professor of forestry in the University of West Virginia. Here is no dry-as-dust presentation of our great mountain chain but a personally conducted tour, with our guide a man who has camped and studied in every portion of those mountains, from the Shickshocks of the Gaspe Peninsula to the end of the mountains in Alabama.

Somehow Professor Brooks knows what questions we want to ask about the various regions of the Appalachians and answers them for us: geological backgrounds, early and late scholars who have found the mountains a source of learning and of romantic adventure, the quaint and rugged people who live in the coves and on the ridges, the alluring bird calls of the thickets and along the streams, the Never-Never Land beauty of mountain wild flowers, the wild life all around us as we go adventuring in the forests. We bird students will find the most thrills in the unexpected warblers that are found much farther north or south than older books listed them. The Swainson's Warbler episodes are among the best-written sections of the book; this species had a hard time being recognized as a breeding species in West Virginia. An amateur ornithologist was instrumental in directing attention to the widespread area where the species is found. Professor Brooks's tribute to William C. Legg, the "discoverer" of the Swainson's Warbler in Nicholas County, West Virginia, is a worthy recognition of ability in unexpected places.

Gaudineer Knob, a picturesque mountain that rises 4,445 feet in southeastern West Virginia, might be called the author's specialty, for he has studied it literally from bottom to top. When we have gone with him on this many-traveled journey, we seem to have had a course in botany and ornithology in a sky-wide museum and laboratory.

Along the continental chain of mountains we visit the mountains of eastern Canada, of Maine, the White Mountains, the Green Mountains, the Catskills, the Blue Ridge to their very end. And we find such alluring places along the way as the entire stretch of the Appalachian Trail, from Mt. Katahdin to Springer Mountain, in north Georgia. We can visit such famous peaks as Mt. Washington, and, farther south, Mount Mitchell, and Clingman's Dome, and Mount LeConte. The Skyline Drive along the crest of the mountains in Shenandoah National Park, the great stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park are along our way. We get memorable glimpses of the effect of glaciation on plant and animal life; we see the various stages of how nature is re-entering the picture as farms have been retired from cultivation and are rapidly becoming again a part of the forest. As a devotee of these same mountains, with a far less extensive experience in them than the author

has had, I felt that I had gone back to some of my camping and hiking, in nearly all the areas of the mountain chain. The pictures, 55 of them, many in color, help to recreate memorable scenes, and the line drawings of Lois and Lewis Darling and the end-paper maps make the reader feel that he has been with the author on many treks and camps.—GORDON WILSON, Bowling Green.

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THE BIRD WATCHER'S AMERICA, edited by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1965: 441 pp., 50 line drawings. \$7.50.

Anyone interested in birds cannot help but derive from this enjoyable new book a desire to visit many more of our noteworthy birding places in the United States and Canada. The book, edited by Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., is somewhat different from his well-known Guides, *Bird Finding East* (1951) and *West of the Mississippi* (1953). In his Guides, Pettingill gives detailed information about routes, accommodations, and where to find birds in the 48 contiguous states. In this book, his concern is with selected locations—46 varied habitats, ranging all the way from the Southern United States to Hudson Bay and arctic Alaska—which are treated in much more detail. After selecting the areas he hoped to include in the book, he "proceeded to find the persons who could and would write about them." Some of the places had to be omitted from his original list for lack of "qualified authors," but the end result gives 46 accounts interestingly and enthusiastically written by 44 persons. The writers, although limited to 2,500 words, describe very vividly, each in his own way, one or more of their favorite birding spots.

The reader immediately senses the deep feeling the authors have for their special haunt as is illustrated by the following passage: "I first saw Malheur Lake in Oregon as a young federal biologist nearly a half-century ago, and the impression of that first visit is one of my most vivid memories. Since that time I have seen many spectacular concentrations of wildlife in various parts of the world, but nothing that I have seen since has dimmed the almost physical impact that the sight of Malheur Marsh made upon me as I stood breathless on a grassy ridge called Cole Island on a late summer morning."

The authors, all well chosen, are some of the outstanding naturalists in American ornithology (for instance, Ira N. Gabrielson, Alfred M. Bailey, Roger Tory Peterson, George Sutton, Allan Cruickshank, and Herbert Krause, to name a few). The editor introduces each chapter with a brief biographical sketch about the author and includes some notes on how and when the writer first became interested in birds.

The 50 line drawings by John Dick are attractive and depict cliffs, lakes, landscapes, and birds of the areas described; they add a decorative charm. All in all this is an enjoyable book with much information about noteworthy birding areas and what they have to offer. — ANNE L. STAMM.

NEWS AND VIEWS

(Continued from page 22)

PUBLICATIONS BY K.O.S. MEMBERS

Two of our members have recently authored papers appearing in other journals. Gordon Wilson has written on "Two Great Kentucky Ornithologists" for the *Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science* (25:3-4, 1965). This paper deals with two Kentucky ornithologists active in the late nineteenth century, L. Otley Pindar and C. W. Beckham. A. L. Whitt, Jr., has written a paper on a "Nesting Study of Cedar Waxwings at Mountain Lake, Virginia," in the September, 1965, issue of the *Raven*.

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THE NORTH AMERICAN NEST-RECORD CARD PROGRAM FOR 1966

The first year of the North American Nest-record Card Program went very well. The Laboratory of Ornithology mailed out over 45,000 cards to individuals and regional centers from Florida to Alaska. We were encouraged at the response; over 23,000 completed cards were received from 700 individuals. We have accumulated over 500 cards each for several species; among these are Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, House Wren, Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle. The Red-winged Blackbird has been selected for a trial run on the computer, and the data from our 2,300 cards on that species are now being punched onto IBM cards.

The principal aim of the program is to accumulate a large amount of data on the breeding biology of birds of the entire North American continent. This data will be stored on IBM cards in a form ready for analysis. This data, once processed, will be available to researchers interested in many areas of avian biology, such as annual and geographical variations in breeding seasons, clutch size, fledging periods, and nesting success. We hope that the program will also play a key role in the study of man's modification of his environment through marsh drainage, urbanization, and the use of pesticides.

We need data from all parts of the country. Observations from city parks and back yards, of the commonest species, are as important as those from remote parts of the continent. We need the co-operation of all competent field observers; please get in touch with your local organization and find out if it is cooperating as a regional center for the distribution of cards.—LABORATORY OF ORNITHOLOGY, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Ed. note: The K.O.S. is again participating in this study. Record cards may be obtained from the Kentucky regional chairmen. These are: James W. Hancock, Route 1, Madisonville (Western Kentucky); Dr. Gordon Wilson, 1434 Chestnut Street, Bowling Green (Southwestern Kentucky); Mrs. F. W. Stamm, 9101 Spokane Way, Louisville (Jefferson and surrounding counties); Howard P. Jones, Route 6, Box 119, Frankfort (Eastern Kentucky).