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# Kentucky Warbler (Vol. 51, no. 2)

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# The Kentucky Warbler

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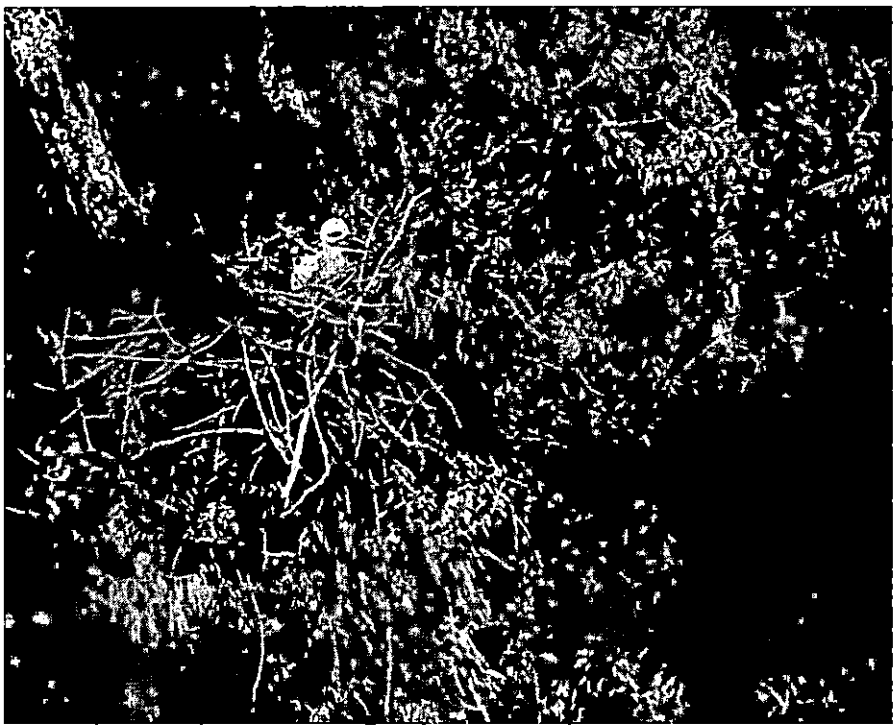

IN THIS ISSUE

## THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1923 by B. C. Bacon, L. Otley Pindar, and Gordon Wilson



### THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

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Editor ..... H. E. Shadowen, Biology Department, Western Kentucky Univ., Bowling Green 42101



### OUR COVER

The photograph of the nestling Red-tailed Hawk was taken by Malcolm Guy Briggs of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Western Kentucky Univ., on April 25, 1975. The nest was approximately 60 feet from the ground in a large oak tree.

# SUMMER CENSUS OF SCREECH OWLS IN BREATHITT COUNTY

PIERRE N. ALLAIRE AND D. FRED LANDRUM

## INTRODUCTION

Nocturnal bird study has long been one of the areas of ornithology which has lacked investigation. There is a paucity of information in the literature and understandably so. These birds and their lifestyle are part of a world quite alien to man. However in recent years, with the aid of sophisticated audio and visual equipment, man has begun to probe into their world of darkness.

It was our intention at the beginning of this study to gain more knowledge concerning one of our local nocturnal residents, the Eastern Screech Owl *(Otus asio asio)*. Mengel (1965) recognizes this subspecies as the breeding race.

There were a number of events that prompted us to begin researching this species. We first looked at its status in Kentucky. Mengel (op. cit.), Monroe (1969), and Barbour et. al. (1973), all consider the Screech Owl to be an uncommon resident. But we were unable to find out what criteria they used in determining this bird's abundance. Able (1974) pointed out that there were little quantitative data regarding the status of many of the North American owls. Further perusal of the literature proved that these data were quite meager. One study conducted by Casner (1974) did address itself to obtaining quantitative information. He directed a census of "all" owls with the Nile Christmas Bird County (CBC) circle. Four hundred and fifty call stops were planned with 343 actually done during a 24 hour period. He and his fellow investigators recorded six different species and an amazing total of 181 Screech Owls.

Our project had a number of objectives, but primarily we were interested in determining the Screech Owl population within the Jackson CBC circle in Breathitt County (Figure I). Although our method of operation was not exactly like Casner's, we did try to estimate with reasonable accuracy the population of Screech Owls within our Count circle. We also feel this may be indicative of the general population in the eastern Kentucky area.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

From 5 May to 19 August 1974 a weekly census of owls was conducted by both authors within the Jackson CBC circle in Breathitt County. The census consisted of 20 stops approximately one mile (1.6 km) apart beginning atop Town Mountain in Jackson along Hwy 30 SW to Hwy 1877 ending just N of the junction of Hwy 1877 and 1110 (Figure I). Each week the census was made either on a Sunday or Monday after dusk beginning at about 9 p.m. and ending about 11 p.m. A duration of three to five minutes was spent at each stop calling (vocal imitations of the Screech Owl) and listening for responses. The results were compiled on data sheets. Temperature and weather conditions at the beginning and end of the census route were also recorded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*The Census Route.* — The census route, (Figure I) was chosen because we felt that it probably best represented the habitat and terrain within the Count circle. It passed through or near open fields, mountains, rivers, small communities and some isolated areas.

The mile (1.6 km) interval between stops was based on Nowicki's (1974) study that the audibility of Screech Owls in open fields is approximately 0.60 miles (1 km) while about 0.25 miles (0.4 km) for woodlands. If our imitative calls were directed 360 degrees at each of our stops during the allotted time, then we felt that we were reaching vocally around 20 square miles (51.8 km$^2$) along the entire census route.

*Species Encountered.* — Unexpectedly we encountered a variety of species besides owls. Table I represents all the species heard during the study.

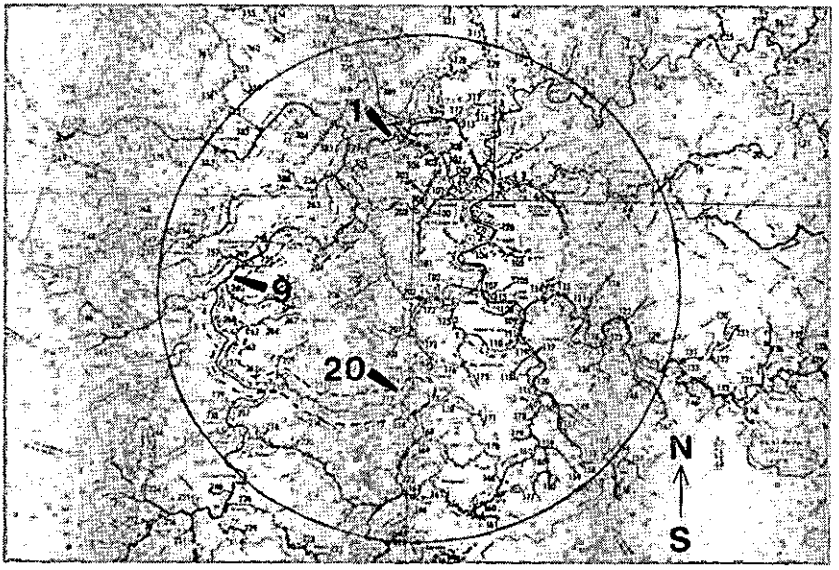


*Figure I. Map of Jackson CBC circle.*

*Twenty mile (32.3 km) census route beginning from the top of Town Mountain in Jackson on Hwy 30 SW to Hwy 1877 and ending just N of the junction of Hwy 1877 and 1110. Dashed lines give approximate range of vocal coverage. Arrows represent stops 1, 9 and 20. Circle diameter is equal to 15 miles (24.2 km).*

Table I. Total number of individuals heard or seen each week during a 16 week period along a 20 mile (32.3 km) census route from 5 May-19 August 1974 in Breathitt Co., Kentucky.

| DATE | | SPECIES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SO* | BO | WPW | YBCh | CF | YBCo | M | TT | EWP | W |
| MAY | 5 | | 1 | 17 | | | | | | | 1 |
| | 13 | 6 | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | |
| | 19 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |
| | 26 | 1 | | 3 | 1 | | | | | | |
| JUNE | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | |
| | 9 | 4 | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | |
| | 17 | 2 | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| | 24 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| | 30 | | | | 2 | | | | | | |
| JULY | 8 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| | 14 | 7 | | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | |
| | 21 | 9 | 2 | | | | 2 | | | | |
| | 28 | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| AUG. | 5 | 10 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 11 | 13 | 5 | | | | 1 | | | | |
| | 19 | 5 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | | 63 | 10 | 26 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

*SO=Screech Owl; BO=Barred Owl; WPW=Whip-poor-will; YBCh=Yellow-breasted Chat; CF=Common Flicker; YBCo=Yellow-billed Cuckoo; M=Mockingbird; TT=Tufted Titmouse; EWP=Eastern Wood Pewee; W=Woodcock.

Screech Owls were the most common bird that we heard. It is interesting to note that the first 8 weeks produced about 25% of the individuals heard (none were ever seen), while the second 8 weeks produced 75% of the individuals heard. In analyzing this situation we feel that possibly most birds were active in rearing the newly hatched young during the first 8 weeks of the study. Bent (1938) states that this is about the time of feeding and fledging. Our data, although not specifically shown in Table I, show that we recorded some immature Screech Owls but only during July and August. Their call can be described as similar to the call note of the Common Flicker *(Colaptes auratus)*. We were assured of our conclusion of the immature call note by the fact that at Stop Number (SN) 11, (Figure II) in July, one adult Screech Owl was being answered by one, and possibly two, immature Screech Owls using this call. We also located what may have been the nesting tree. It was a large Sycamore *(Platanus occidentalis)* in the middle of a corn field where plenty of rodents and snakes would be available to feed the young. We subsequently heard a number of these calls on different nights and at different stops.

One disappointment was the Barred Owl *(Strix varia)* population. We had expected the numbers to be lower than the number of Screech Owls but consistent throughout the study. This was not the case. Again the last half of the study showed a considerable increase in numbers. The other most likely owl that we could have encountered, the Great Horned Owl *(Bubo virginianus)*, was never heard or seen.

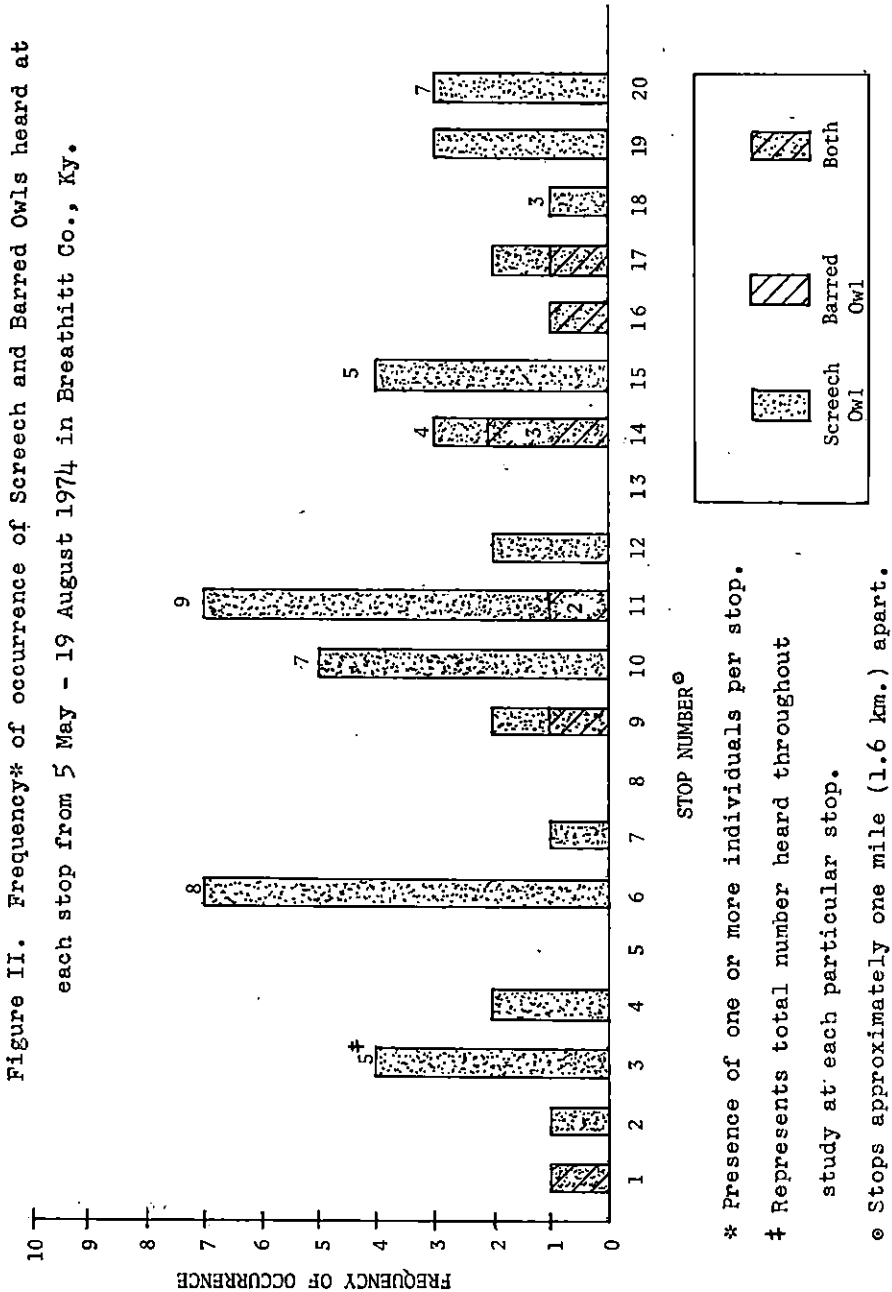


Figure II. Frequency* of occurrence of Screech and Barred Owls heard at each stop from 5 May - 19 August 1974 in Breathitt Co., Ky.

* Presence of one or more individuals per stop.

‡ Represents total number heard throughout study at each particular stop.

⊙ Stops approximately one mile (1.6 km.) apart.

The only other species which we recorded in any appreciable numbers was the Whip-poor-will *(Caprimulgus vociferus)*. The first night of the study 15 were heard and two actually seen along the road between two stops. The following week and thereafter only 1-3 individuals were heard. More than likely 5 May represented what we consider a major flight of migrant Whip-poor-wills through our area of which only a few remained as breeding or summer residents along the census route.

To account for the other species recorded is difficult because they are not considered nocturnal — except for the Woodcock *(Philohela minor)*. One possible explanation is that our imitative calls may have provoked a response either of fright, warning or defense of territory.

*Frequency of occurrence.* — As the study progressed we began noticing that particular stops consistently yielded Screech Owls. Figure II represents what we consider frequency of occurrence, i.e. the presence of one or more individuals at each stop throughout the study. Our two most productive stops were SN 6 and 11. As previously mentioned SN 11 probably contained a breeding pair and young. SN 3, 10, 14, 15, 19 and 20 contained a lower frequency than 6 and 11 but yet enough, we feel, to warrant these birds as individuals defending a specific territory. Our data show, although not specified in Figure II, that the frequency increased in the last two months of the study, a probable result of more fledgling and non-breeding adults. However, we can only surmize that this was the case.

Stops with a frequency of two or less are considered areas of transient Screech Owls. No doubt some birds do not breed but simply wander in search of food and/or nest sites. Also predation by mammals, other owls such as the Barred Owl (Mengel, op. cit.) and accidental death by automobiles at night, all contribute to population decreases. These vacant territories are then taken over by others in the transient population. Therefore, it is our belief that the low frequency does in fact reflect this transient portion of the population.

Three stops, 5, 8 and 13, were totally devoid of Screech Owls. We can only guess that this may have been poor Screech Owl habitat.

Figure II also includes the frequency of Barred Owls. Since we did not gather much quantitative data there is very little to be said about the Barred Owl population. One observation, however, is that our records show them more numerous and more often in the last ten stops. Coinciding with this is the fact that this part of the census route is more remote and isolated than the first ten stops. It is likely that the habitat (larger trees for nesting and less disturbance by man) could result in this increase.

*Determination of the Screech Owl Population.* — As was previously mentioned in the introduction the primary purpose of the study was to try to determine quantitatively the Screech Owls present within the Jackson CBC circle. In order to do this we performed a number of computations which are as follows.

We first calculated the area of our count circle and found it to be 153.9 square miles (398.6 $km^2$). If we assume that we were able to cover 20 square miles with our census route — and it was representative of the entire count circle — then we needed to find what percent coverage was actually achieved.

$$\frac{20 \text{ mi.}^2}{153.9 \text{ mi.}^2} \times 100 = 13.0\% \text{ coverage}$$

Our next step was to calculate the number of birds seen per night over the 16 weeks.

$$\frac{63 \text{ Screech Owls}}{16 \text{ weeks}} = 3.9/\text{night}$$

The final computation involved was to derive a proportion whereby we could extrapolate the total number of Screech Owls within the entire Count circle.

$$\frac{3.9/\text{night}}{13\%} = \frac{X/\text{night}}{100\%} = 30 \text{ Screech Owls/night}$$

This raises some serious questions in our minds. It appears to us that 30 owls is a relatively low number for such a large area. A problem factor directly involved with this has to do with who sings. Is it only the male? Or do both sexes engage in their characteristic calls? If only males sing our results should almost double — it would not be exactly doubled since we recorded immatures which are not part of a breeding pair — to account for the non-singing females. Nowicki (op. cit.) in his study also raises this question of who really does all the singing. Bent (op. cit.) makes no reference concerning female vocalizations. We see this as a definite problem in trying to accurately estimate the Screech Owl population.

Manipulation of the figures can produce some slightly different results. For example, if we divide the study in half, we find that the first 8 weeks produced an average of only 2.0 Screech Owls per night and 15.4 individuals within the Count circle. Doubling this to account for females would give 30.8 individuals. The second 8 weeks yielded an average of 5.0 individuals per night for a total of 38.5 individuals. This total excludes the 7 immature Screech Owls heard during this time. Now we doubled this to account for the females (67.0) and add the immature Screech Owls (7) to give a total of 74 individuals within our Count circle.

We may be justified in dividing the study into two 8 week periods; it is possible that during the months of May and June the parents were attending to feeding the fledglings, whereas in the months of July and August the parents became less involved with the young, thereby making available more time for other activities such as singing.

At best these results are quite conservative but none the less do represent quantitative data heretofore not obtained for this region. We have been able to begin defining some sort of quantitative base figures which may be compared to future results. This is one step towards a better determination of the local Screech Owl population in the Jackson CBC circle in Breathitt County.

## SUMMARY

The Screech Owl population was censused from May to August 1974 along a 20 mile census route within the Jackson CBC circle in Breathitt County, Kentucky. Discussion centered around the census method, the census route, the number of species encountered in addition to owls, the frequency of occurrence of Screech and Barred Owls, and the determination of the Screech Owl population. The data indicate that an estimated 74 Screech Owls were present with the 153.9 square miles (398.6 km$^2$) of the Count circle during the study. — Department of Science and Mathematics, Lees Jr. College, Jackson, KY 41339.


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# THE FALL SHOREBIRD MIGRATION ON KENTUCKY LAKE, 1974

MICHAEL G. MILLER AND CLELL T. PETERSON

The authors of this paper made 20 trips to choice mud flats on the west shore of Kentucky Lake, specifically to an extensive mud flat in the Panther Creek area of Blood River Bay and to another at Bailey Hollow, at approximately mile 58 on Kentucky Lake (Tennessee River). The observations began September 7 with both authors and Joe Tom Erwin visiting the Blood River flats and ended with a visit by Mike Miller, alone, to Bailey Hollow on December 9. During this period, Kentucky Lake was consistently lower than it had been for many years. The lake level measured at Kentucky Dam varied only a foot, from 355.7 to 354.7, during the period. On the various occasions they visited the two sites, both authors went together on some trips, each went singly on some, and each was accompanied by one or more additional observers on a few trips. Miller contributed a majority of the observations. Fifteen species of shore birds were observed as indicated on the accompanying table.

Where Blood River widens out into the bay which eventually enters Kentucky Lake, the water is shallow and the silt bottom very level. Early in the season, with the lake level at about 355, the mud flats are extensive and moist to a considerable depth, with numerous small pools and channels meandering toward the open bay. At this time the area is attractive to shore birds but difficult for the observer who has to wade through mud and water frequently to a depth of 8 or 9 inches. The dominant vegetation of the mud flat is grass (Eragrostis hypnoides, [Lam.]), cocklebur (Xanthium, sp.), willow (Salix, sp.), and button bush (Cephalanthus occidentalis L.). Large cotton mouths (Agkistrodon piscivorus) are infrequently seen swimming in the shallow channels or sunning themselves on the numerous exposed snags and stumps. Though the animals are rarely seen, raccoons (Procyon lotor) leave their prints abundantly in the soft mud. Other than shore birds, various species of herons, egrets and terns use the area, at least in the earlier part of the season, and later waterfowl and gulls. Various hawks are not uncommon.

Early in the season most shorebirds seem remarkably tame. An observer who simply stands still for ten or fifteen minutes at a choice spot will discover that peeps of several species (Least Sandpipers and Semipalmated Plovers chiefly) will come very close, some within a few inches of the observer's boots. The authors speculate that these are young birds of the season who have had so few encounters with human beings that they still feel the security of their isolated breeding grounds.

This past year the long, dry autumn eventually dried out the flats which caked and cracked. Shorebirds were driven further toward the shoreline of the receding bay and became less numerous. They also became more wary so that eventually it was possible only to identify "shorebirds" or "peeps" at a considerable distance.

After the first of November, shorebird activity at the Blood River flats virtually ceased and observations were continued at Bailey Hollow, a stretch about half a mile long directly on Kentucky Lake, with exposed mud flats kept moist and shallow pools filled by a trickle of water from a spring on the hillside in the woods. Islands and numerous stumps and snags dot the shallow water in this area. Although reputedly not a particularly good hunting site, duck hunters have established blinds and put out decoys in the vicinity so that after the beginning of hunting, this area annually becomes less usable for shorebird observations. Usually by the beginning of the hunting season, however, the lake rises and covers the flats or periods of extreme cold moves the shorebirds on.

The accompanying table summarizes the observations made. On September 11, at about 5:00 p.m., Miller reported the largest concentration of shorebirds on the Blood River flats he had yet seen. A thousand individuals is "if anything a conservative estimate." The table indicates the numbers of species partially sorted out, but clearly does not show all the species that made up this concentration. As the Blood River flats dried up it became necessary to report small flocks of "peeps" seen at a distance. An x in a column indicates the species present but in totally indeterminate numbers (usually because of the rapid movements of the small groups).

Table 1. Shorebirds at Blood River and Bailey Hollow, Kentucky Lake, Fall and Winter of 1974.

| Species | Blood River | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Bailey Hollow | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | September | | | | | | | | | October | | | | | | November | | | | Dec. |
| | 7 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 18 | 22 | 25 | 26 | 29 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 17 | 24 | 30 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 15 | 9 |
| Semipal. Plover | 25 | 30 | 12 | | 1 | 3 | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Killdeer | 12 | x[1] | 8 | 12 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | 18 | 15 | x | x | x |
| Am. Golden Plover | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | |
| Common Snipe | 1 | | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | | | 10 | | | 1 | | | |
| Solitary Sandpiper | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | 4 | 50 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 50 | 7 | | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peeps | | | | 120 | 200 | 0 | 2 | | 17 | | | | | 10 | | | | | 60 | |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | 1 | | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 5 | | 13 | | 3 | | | | | | | | |
| Baird's Sandpiper | 25 | 2 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | |
| Least Sandpiper | 12 | 300 | 60 | | | | | | 3 | | | | | x | | x | 20 | 35 | | 17 |
| Dunlin | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 | 3 | | |
| Dowitcher | 2 | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | 18* | | | | |
| Stilt Sandpiper | 4 | | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Semipal. Sandpiper | 50 | x | 4 | x | | | | 2 | 2 | | | | | x | | x | | | | |
| Western Sandpiper | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1* | | |
| Sanderling | 1 | 30 | 3 | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1* | | | |

[1]Indicates that whatever the reason a careful count of the species, though present, was not recorded.

*Indicates a late date for the species to the observers' knowledge.

Observers of the fall shorebird migration along the western lakes have for several years been convinced that numbers, variety, and dates will set new records as they continue to observe and improve in observational skill. Three late dates are recorded in the accompanying table: Shortbilled Dowitcher, *Limnodromus griseus* (Nov. 3); Western Sandpiper, *Ereunetes mauri* (Nov. 5); and Sanderling, *Crocethis alba* (Nov. 9). In each case, prolonged, careful, and close observation and a check of all field marks as well as comparison with other, nearby species preceded identification.

The mud flats in many places along Kentucky Lake are becoming recreational areas for persons driving ORV's in what they dubiously think is a sport. The authors are deeply concerned that the shorebird flats will almost any day now, at low lake level, be discovered and torn up by irresponsible and uninformed drivers of ORV's. It may be possible to interest TVA, which controls these areas, to establish refuge areas for migrating shorebirds before it is too late. Such refuges would not interfere with hunters and fishermen.

## THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING MEETING

**April 18-20, 1975**

The Kentucky Ornithological Society held its 1975 Spring meeting at Bowling Green, Kentucky, with headquarters at the Holiday Inn Midtown. A total of 52 members and guests registered for the meeting.

The first session on Friday evening was held in the Science Building of Western Kentucky University. In the absence of A. L. Whitt, Vice-president in charge of the program, H. E. Shadowen presided. After his opening remarks, Dr. Shadowen told of a strange relationship between an adult male Bobwhite and a Rhode Island Red domestic hen on a farm near Bowling Green. A number of slides illustrated the behavior.

Blaine Ferrell gave a report on his research project concerning orientational responses in caged birds. Using migratory passerine species, he studied a combination of factors involved, including weather conditions, the birds' weights, wind direction, and celestial cues.

Pierre Allaire reported on his continued investigation of birds on reclaimed lands in the surface mining territory of Breathitt County.

Dr. Burt Monroe, Jr. gave an account of the results emerging from the summer bird counts made in the state during the last nine years.

After announcements regarding the Saturday field trips, the meeting adjourned.

The Saturday morning field trips to Chaney, McElroy and Grider Lakes were led by Dr. Monroe, Dr. Shadowen, and Mr. Willard Gray. The water was much higher than usual in the lakes, which dispersed the shore and water birds considerably. Additional field trips were made along the banks of the Barren River.

The Executive Board met at 4:00 p.m. to discuss necessary business.

The Saturday evening dinner was held at the Lone Oak Restaurant on Old Scottsville Road. The group then adjourned to the Science building at Western Kentucky University for the evening meeting and program with the president, Dr. Burt Monroe, Jr., presiding. Dr. Monroe recorded the bird list for the day, a total of 121 species. A discussion of field trips for Sunday followed.

Mrs. F. W. Stamm made an appeal for more participants in the nest record project for the Ornithological Laboratory at Cornell University. She stated that the K.O.S. has been declining in its numbers of participants in this project in recent years and urged more people to collect this much needed information.

Dr. and Mrs. W. R. Kingsolver gave a movie and slide presentation of the birds of Trinidad, Tobago, and Venezuela.

It was announced that the Fall meeting will be held at Kentucky Dam Village State Park on October 3, 4, and 5, 1975. The meeting was adjourned.

On Sunday morning several of the members traveled to Mammoth Cave National Park and other areas on field trips. A total of 65 species was recorded at Mammoth Cave National Park during the morning.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia Kingsolver
Recording Secretary

## ATTENDANCE AT THE SPRING MEETING, 1975

ANCHORAGE: Dr. Burt L. Monroe, Jr.

BOWLING GREEN: Mr. and Mrs. Blaine R. Ferrell, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert E. Shadowen, Mrs. Eugene Wilson.

CARLISLE: Dr. and Mrs. Wendell Kingsolver, Ann Kingsolver.

FRANKFORT: Mr. and Mrs. Howard Jones.

GEORGETOWN: Mr. and Mrs. Glen Wells.

LEXINGTON: Dr. and Mrs. Andrew Uterhart.

LOUISVILLE: Virginia Calvert, Mrs. Herbert Clay, Mr. and Mrs. Jackie Elmore, Betty Feltner, Doris Garst, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford T. Johnson, Ken Leggett, Donald Parker, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Pasikowski, Judy Robertson, Evelyn Schneider, L. D. Smith, Dr. and Mrs. Frederick Stamm, Audrey Wright

MADISONVILLE: Thelma Gentry, Sue Place, Mr. and Mrs. Nat Travis.

MURRAY: Mr. and Mrs. C. Wesley Kemper, Dr. Clell T. Peterson.

OWENSBORO: Mary Lydia Greenwell, Mr. and Mrs. Roman R. Iles, Margaret Medley, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wilson.

QUICKSAND: Pierre N. Allaire.

VALLEY STATION: Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ellison.

BOONEVILLE, INDIANA: Don Andrews, Jon Gray, Willard Gray.

# FIELD NOTES

## SHORT-EARED OWL OBSERVATION

Mengel in *Birds of Kentucky* gives March 10 as the latest spring date for the occurrence of the Short-eared Owl *(Asio flammeus)* in Kentucky. That the bird may occasionally linger beyond this date is suggested by a single April 24 record noted in Monroe's "Summary of Occurrence of Birds of Kentucky" and by the following observation, made on April 13, 1975. On that date, at approximately 6:00 p.m., I observed a bird of this species hunting and feeding over a small marshy field behind my home in Calloway Co. The field (2-3 acres) is primarily fescue and is bordered on one end by an alder thicket and on the other by a swampy woods (predominantly Willow and Sycamore). Roughly similar conditions are found all along the valley in which this field is located. I initially glimpsed the bird, flying quite low, drop into the grass some 200 yds. from my position; moments later through 7X binoculars I located it perched on a fence post feeding on whatever it had captured. That it was an owl was immediately apparent. After allowing an approach to within 100 yds. the bird flew and the light patches on the top of the wings were strikingly evident, as was the ungainly, flopping flight. It alighted nearby, and I flushed it twice more, noting the above field marks and flight characteristics each time. Though previously unacquainted with the species, I feel the identification was certain. — MICHAEL G. MILLER, Rt. 6, Murray, Ky. 42071.

## SANDHILL CRANES AT LOUISVILLE

On November 29, 1974 at 11:20 a.m. I saw a flock of 22 Sandhill Cranes *(Grus canadensis)* flying overhead in eastern Jefferson County. I observed the birds for about 3 minutes through 7-35 binoculars as they approached from the north and slowly circled the area before departing to the south. The birds were large and appeared uniformly gray, flying with necks fully extended and legs trailing behind. "Gurgling" flight calls were also heard. Sandhill Cranes are usually considered very rare and irregularly occurring transients in Kentucky. It is of interest to note that my observation occurred only one day after a flock of 145 Sandhill Cranes was reported from the vicinity of Frankfort (Jones, *Kentucky Warbler*, 51:20, 1975). — BARRY S. HOWARD, 3804 Little Bend Rd., Louisville, 40222.

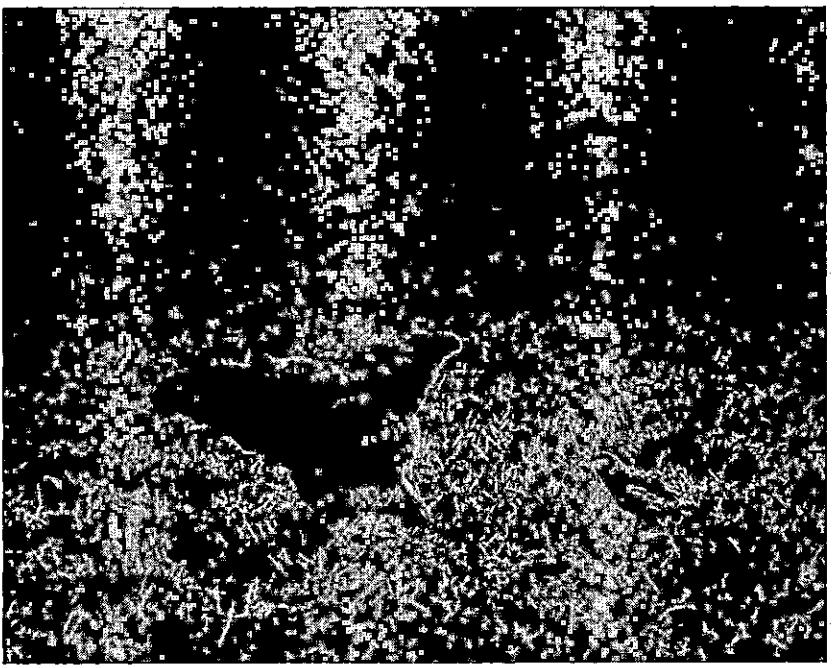
## ANOTHER SANDHILL CRANE SIGHTING

On November 29, 1974 at approximately 11:00 a.m. while working in a field on my family's farm in northeast Jefferson County, I noticed a group of large birds with a slow wingbeat flying toward me from the north about a half mile away. By the time I was able to get a pair of binoculars they were overhead. They were Sandhill Cranes *(Grus canadensis)* with large, dark grey bodies and long outstretched neck and legs being very evident. The flock of 22 birds, occasionally making their grunting call, circled several times looking over the recently cut cornfields before continuing on their southerly course. The birds stayed in view for another ten minutes as they went on. The day was sunny and cool. — BRAINARD L. PALMER-BALL, JR., 8207 Old Westport Road, Louisville, 40222.

## BOBWHITE'S ATTACHMENT TO A DOMESTIC HEN

In February of 1975, Dr. L. Y. Lancaster invited me to accompany him to the home of an acquaintance located on Route 3, six miles south of Bowling Green. Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Long welcomed us to their home and described a peculiar behavioral pattern of a Bobwhite *(Colinus virginianus)*. Early in the spring of 1974 Mr. Long noticed a full-grown male Bobwhite (old enough to sing) in the flock of 19 domestic hens. The Bobwhite would arrive early each morning, apparently wait for Mr. Long to release and feed the hens, and then would follow one particular hen wherever she went. The hen completely ignored the Bobwhite, but he persistently trailed her to the barn, henhouse, and about the yard and field. He also ate corn, wheat, bread, and other food along with the hens, and by the end of the summer had become very gentle. He sometimes attempted to chase the other hens (aggressive display?). The bird was not seen during the winter, but this spring it appeared again and attached itself to the same hen. It follows her constantly, sits on the roost with her, and perches on the side of the nest while she is laying.

Mr. Guy Briggs and I have traveled to the farm twice to observe this strange behavior. Many photographs, including the one accompanying this note, were taken by Mr. Briggs. Imprinting is usually defined as the attachment of young animals to the first moving object they see. However, the Bobwhite described above was apparently a mature male at the time of attachment. — H. E. SHADOWEN, Biology Dept., Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, 42101.



### RED-THROATED LOON IN FAYETTE COUNTY

In the afternoon of November 24, 1974, at 2 p.m., my wife and I were privileged to see a bird not often recorded in Kentucky. Barbour et al (Kentucky Birds — A Finding Guide, 1973, University Press of Kentucky, pp3) mention that the Red-throated Loon *(Gavia stellata)* is a casual visitor, thus far seen only in spring but probably wintering on occasion.

But there it was! Watching it with 40 power scope, and consulting Peterson's Field Guide, we were able to make the identification. The most outstanding characteristic was the sharp, slightly upturned bill, certainly not as compressed and straight as that of the Common Loon *(Gavia immer)*. It was smaller than the Common Loon, with continuous grey showing on its crown, occiput, and nape of the neck, blending to white on the throat and breast. Its back was also medium grey. No white spots were noted on the back, although this characteristic can be variable (Birds of America, 1936, Doubleday, Doran, and Company, Inc., Garden City, N. J., pp15).

Alluded to in literature and music as a lonely bird with plaintive song, it lived up to this image. No mate was found. It sat in the middle of Lexington Reservoir #3, 400 feet from us, with no other birds near.

Our speculation is that this was an immature bird, which probably came down from the Great Lakes. A stationary front had moved through the Bluegrass area the night before, followed by frigid Arctic air from the Northwest, which produced excessive freezing in the Great Lakes region. The day we saw this bird the temperature was 40 degrees with light rain.

We highly recommend the reservoirs located on Richmond Road, operated by the Lexington-American Water Company. Between mid-November and mid-February, 1975, we have seen Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant (1), Great Blue Heron (1), Redhead, and Canvasback (1), as well as many common species. — HAROLD L. and DEBORAH B. FRAZIER, Medical Center, Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington, 40506.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### PUBLICATION OF 1975 BIG SPRING LISTS

Members are urged to send Spring Bird Counts to the editor for publication in the August issue of the *Kentucky Warbler*.

### K.O.S. OFFICER MOVES TO NORTH CAROLINA

Dr. and Mrs. Russell Starr recently moved from Glasgow to North Carolina. Dr. Starr was completing a term as Councilor and for several years had served as the resident agent for the service of process for the Kentucky Ornithological Society.

### K.O.S. MEMBERSHIP LIST TO BE PUBLISHED IN AUGUST

If you know of names or addresses of members which are incorrectly listed or which have changed, please notify our Corr. Sec.-Treasurer, Mrs. Clifford T. Johnson, so that corrections can be made before July.