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The Kentucky Warbler

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THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

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OUR COVER

We thank Dr. Herbert L. Clay, Jr. of Louisville for this photograph of a Bobolink taken on the Hickman Farm, Goshen, Kentucky.

THE WINTER SEASON OF 1983-84

ANNE L. STAMM

This was an unusual winter. The early part of December was rather mild, but a great change took place the latter part of the month, when temperatures were the lowest on record. On December 24, Louisville and Lexington had seven and eight degrees below zero, with wind gusts up to 35 mph and a wind-chill factor around 50-60 degrees below zero. The cold front triggered some waterfowl migration and flights of ducks and geese moved through the state for several weeks in January. Another arctic blast came on January 19-22 shattering records throughout the state; Covington had 21 degrees below zero which was the official low for the state. In sharp contrast, daily highs ranged from the mid-60s to 73 degrees during the week of February 12-18—about 15 degrees above normal for mid-February. Cold weather set in again in late February, with a snowfall of three to five inches across the state and temperatures dropped to the low 20s.

Many observers commented on the scarcity of food supply. Little food was produced due to the extreme summer drought. Seed-eating birds were numerous at feeders. Birds were in lower numbers than in previous years in some parts of central Kentucky.

A number of unusual gull sightings at Louisville, Smithland, Kentucky and Barkley Lake Dams added interest to the season which many observers felt was a rather dull period.

Loons through Herons—Common Loons did not linger this year and latest records included five at Cave Run Lake, December 5 (FB) and one in Shelby County during the Christmas Bird Count period (WHB). Pied-billed Grebes were higher in numbers during late December than last winter and were fairly widespread in occurrence. Horned Grebes lingered through mid-January at Green River Lake (JEL). One to three Double-crested Cormorants were seen at Towhead Island during December by many observers and one at Lake Cumberland, near Bronston, January 2 (JEL). Great Blue Herons were widespread from December 1 through January 1, with highs of 17 at Mayfair Basins (S, FS, DN), 22 at Lake Barkley (DN *et al.*), and 23 at BWMA (BPB); eighteen were early migrants at Clark Fish Hatchery, February 18, where only three had been on February 13 (FB).

Waterfowl—Snow Geese peaked at 5000 and Canada Geese at 100,000 at BWMA, but by February 12 all had gone northward, with the exception of 1400 of the latter species (TY). A total of 670 Canada Geese was present in the Danville area on January 28 (FL) and a flock of 250 at E. W. Brown Power Plant, Mercer County, January 4 built up to a high of 600-700 by February 9, but none were there two weeks later (JCa). Northward migration of small flocks of Canada Geese was noted all across the state during late January and early February (m. ob). The duck population this winter was rather low. The Ohio River at Louisville was unusually high and swift and fewer ducks were seen. High counts of Black Ducks included 250 at Green River Lake State Park on January 8 (JEL) and 150 at Cave Hill Cemetery on February 19 (S). Fair numbers of Mallards were present statewide and in late December numbered more than during the same period last year (m. ob); the high of 1500 at Brown Power Plant on January 4 was of interest (JCa) as were the 350 at the Green River State Park on January 8 (JEL). Five to 12 Greater Scaup were present

in the Louisville area from December 24 to January 29 (DN, LR, BPB). Single White-winged Scoters were noted at Louisville from January 26 to February 11 (BPB, DN, m. ob.) and at Smithland Dam, Livingston County on February 4 (B. Peterjohn, BPB). Common Goldeneyes were fairly widespread and in greater numbers than in most winters (m. ob.), with the largest number of 500 at Kentucky and Barkley Lakes in January and early February (BPB). The 40 Hooded Mergansers at Green River Lake State Park on January 8 were considered numerous (JEL). Small numbers of Common Mergansers were observed at Green River Lake State Park, January 8 (JEL) and at Louisville during January (DN, BPB), with the largest concentrations in western Kentucky: 250 below Kentucky Dam and approximately 1500 at Silo Overlook (BPB). Only a few Red-breasted Mergansers were reported; singles at Towhead Island, December 4 (S, FS), above McAlpine Dam, January 7 (LR), and at Kentucky Lake, February 10-11 (DN, with Dr. Noonan).

Vultures through Falcons—Although Black Vultures are generally considered rare in Hopkins County, five were seen on December 12 (JH); no roosts were reported. Twenty-four Turkey Vultures were seen in flight over Barren County on December 6 (JCa); migrants were noted in Boone County on February 18 (LMc). Bald Eagles were fairly well distributed across the state and present during the entire period. The January survey totaled 209. There were two interesting reports of Bald Eagles feeding on dead animals; an adult fed on a dead calf in a pasture in Rockcastle County (AR) and several eagles fed on two deer carcasses, which were lying on the ice on Cave Run Lake, Rowan County (FB). Small numbers of Northern Harriers were reported, although an increase was noted in the Murray area (CP). Single Sharp-shinned Hawks were reported from the following locations: Boone County (LMc), Madison County (GR), Pulaski County (JEL), Taylor County (JEL), and two in Boyle (FL) and Jefferson Counties (DN); one captured in a net at Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area (GR). There was a slight improvement in the number of Cooper's Hawks reported while Red-shouldered Hawks remained scarce. The winter population of Red-tailed Hawks was about the same as last winter, although at Danville the species was thought to be "way under normal" (FL). A hawk representative of the *kriderii* type was seen at Land Between the Lakes on February 11 (DN). The Rough-legged Hawk population was about the same as last winter, but below that of the 1981-82 season; numbers low at Lexington (RM) and at Danville (FL). The Golden Eagle survey totaled 10 birds from three localities (*vide* JD). Although the CBCs showed a decrease from last winter for the American Kestrel, it was one of the best years for the species at Murray (CP). The only Peregrine Falcon reported for the period was an immature at Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area on February 26 (Charles Kellner *vide* GR).

Gallinaceous—Ruffed Grouse are seldom reported and it was of interest that one was flushed in the woods at Mt. Vernon on February 12 (AR). Northern Bobwhites were still below the normal winter population and 12-15 recorded at Mt. Vernon on February 27 (AR) were the only ones reported after the CBCs.

Coots through Shorebirds—Twelve American Coots were still present at Doe Run Lake on January 7 (S, DN, FS) and the 51 at Lake Pewee, February 20 may have been early migrants (JH). A late flock of nine

Sandhill Cranes was seen flying south over the Cumberland Parkway, Russell County, December 7 (JCa); two over Otter Creek Park, Meade County, December 16 (Richard Cassell, DN); spring arrivals noted in Munfordville, Hart County, February 15, with 45 on February 21 (SK); four at Louisville, February 16 (LR); and seven over Versailles, March 1 (RM, with B. Maxson). There were 76 Killdeer at Clark Hatchery on December 2 (FB) and 164+ in the Fishing Creek Recreation Area, Pulaski County, December 5 (JEL), but difficult to find after the cold weather. Courtship displays of the American Woodcock observed as early as January 22 at Murray (RE); others at Louisville, February 12-13 (DN), Surrey Hill Farm, Louisville, February 18 (BPB) and February 22 at Fort Wright, Kenton County (EG).

Gulls — Gulls provided some of the more interesting records this winter. A Franklin's Gull in first winter plumage was seen at Kentucky Dam, December 3 (DN, BPB, with R. Cassell and Barry Nichols). Fair numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls were present during December at Shippingport Island (S, FS), Falls of the Ohio (DN, BPB), Towhead Island (S, FS), and highest numbers at Kentucky Dam, with 30 to 100 (DN, BPB). Ring-billed Gulls were widespread, but not as numerous as in some winters. The high water at Louisville at certain times during the period sent gulls elsewhere, yet when the water went down and the rock ledge was exposed good numbers were seen. Largest concentrations, as expected, were seen in western Kentucky: 5000 at Kentucky, Barkley and Smithland Dams during December (BPB *et al.*) and 3500 at Kentucky Dam Village Park marina, February 4 (TOS); smaller groups, but interesting ones were found farther east, with 100+ at Green River Lake, January 8 (JEL), 130+ at Cave Run Lake, February 18 (FB) and 150 at Barren River during the period (WM); also observed in small numbers along the Ohio River in Boone County (LMc) and in Danville area (FL). Two albinistic Ring-billed Gulls noted: an immature on December 3 at Kentucky Dam (DN, BPB, *et al.*) and an adult at Kentucky Dam, December 20 (BPB, LR, with B. Nichols) and February 4 at Smithland Dam (B. Peterjohn, BPB). As usual, concentrations of Herring Gulls were at Kentucky, Barkley and Smithland Dams, with smaller numbers scattered in central Kentucky (m. ob.). A Thayer's Gull in its first winter plumage was unexpected at Shippingport Island, December 9 (S, FS); three first-winter plumage birds: one at Smithland Dam, January 17 (BPB, with J. Caruso), one at the same place, January 28-30, possibly the same bird (BPB, R. Cassell) and one there on February 4 (BPB, B. Peterjohn); one to two second-year birds at Smithland Dam, January 7, 17, 28-30 and February 4 (BPB, TOS members, R. Cassell, J. Caruso, B. Peterjohn); also a Thayer's Gull in the third-winter plumage at Smithland Dam, February 4 and one at Kentucky Dam, January 29 (BPB *et al.*). One of the rarities of the season was the Iceland Gull which was identified by Bruce Peterjohn on February 4. The bird was found on the Falls of the Ohio by Doxie Noonan on December 27 where it remained through February 6. A good number of Glaucous Gulls in various plumages were present this winter. The first Glaucous Gull appeared on the Ohio River, near McAlpine Dam, December 26 (KC); singles at two different times at the Falls of the Ohio between December 27 and January 20 (DN, BPB, m. ob.); single birds were found at Newburgh, Smithland, Barkley and Kentucky Dams on various trips between January 7 and February 5 (BPB, TOS, DN *et al.*). An immature Great Black-backed Gull in first-winter plumage on the Falls of the Ohio, Janu-

ary 29 was unusual (DN, with J. Noonan). An adult Black-legged Kittiwake found below Kentucky Dam, December 3 was extraordinary (DN, BPB, R. Cassell, B. Nichols).

Owls—The only Barn Owl report was of a road kill found along I-64 in Rowan County, February 2 (FB). There were no reports of Short-eared Owls, although the species was looked for in suitable habitat.

Woodpeckers through Wrens—Woodpeckers showed some decline in Boone and Kenton Counties (LMc, EG), but appeared stable elsewhere. Red-headed Woodpeckers were doing well in western Kentucky. In some areas, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were absent. Wintering Eastern Phoebes were seen on January 4 and 6 at Cumberland Falls and Cave Run Lake, respectively (JEL, FB). A single migrant returned to Cherokee Park on February 18 (JB, PB). There were good counts of Horned Larks at Sorgho, Hopkinsville and Shelbyville during late December, but were scarce after the zero temperature (m. ob.). Fair numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches were present and fairly well distributed. Brown Creepers exceeded those of last winter in Rowan County (FB). The Carolina Wren showed improvement in most areas.

Kinglets through Shrikes—Golden-crowned Kinglets were scarce in northern Kentucky (LMc) and in the Danville area (FL) and showed some slight decrease throughout the state. The Eastern Bluebird showed marked increases in central Kentucky and lesser gains in western sections of the state (m. ob.). Good numbers of Hermit Thrushes were present during late December, particularly in central Kentucky. Flocks of American Robins were found where food was plentiful, but few in areas where food was scarce. Wild fruit was scarce this winter due to the summer's drought. Robins were difficult to find in January after the frigid weather set in, but migrants began appearing in mid-February. Wintering Brown Thrashers were seen at Fort Wright on January 27 (EG) and at Somerset, February 9 (JEL). Cedar Waxwings were common in late December and were widespread; a flock of 100 were observed eating honeysuckle berries in south Louisville, January 8 (WJ). The Loggerhead Shrike population was similar to that in the winter of 1982-83.

Warblers through Fingillids—Yellow-rumped Warblers showed some decrease across the state although 60 were counted at Granhampton, Meade County, February 24 (BN). A few Pine Warblers were reported on the CBCs (HJ, JB, PB) and previously published; one was present at Lake Cumberland, February 13 (BPB). Tree Sparrows were again scarce in some areas, particularly in Burlington (LMc). There were fewer sightings of Fox Sparrows and most reports were of one to two birds at feeders, after the three to five-inch snowfall, February 28 (m. ob.). White-crowned Sparrows were low in numbers across the state compared with last winter's CBCs and particularly scarce at Louisville (S) and at Murray (CP). Few Lapland Longspurs were present, highest count 15-20 birds in Louisville, December 29 (BPB). The majority of Red-winged Blackbirds left the Louisville and Danville areas after the advent of severe weather, but were back by mid-February (FL, S). Eastern Meadowlarks were scattered again and not up to normal numbers. Numbers of Rusty Blackbirds arrived at feeders around January 10 and remained throughout the period (DN, S). A few Brewer's Blackbirds were seen: two females, December 19 in east Louisville (DN), and a male, February 29, just a few miles from the other

sighting (S, FS). Blackbirds were generally scarce with the exception of a large roost in Somerset which was estimated at 1.2 million birds in mid-January (JEl). (The estimate was made by Fish and Wildlife biologists.) Purple Finches were uncommon in most areas until mid-January and highs of 300 were counted at Murray (RE) and 75-100 at Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area (GR); smaller numbers elsewhere. House Finches continued to spread, with a high count of 200 at Eubank (JEl). Three Common Redpolls at Murray, December 18 were the only ones reported (RE). Pine Siskins were fairly widespread, but in much smaller numbers; flocks of 25 remained throughout the period at two Louisville locations (DS, B. Bradley). American Goldfinches were down about 20% compared with their numbers last winter. Evening Grosbeaks began appearing in early December, with 17 at Fishing Creek, Pulaski County, December 5 (JEl); four at Madisonville the following day (JH); and large numbers around Kentucky Lake area (CP) and regular visitors in the Burlington area since mid-December (LMc). Hundreds were reported from southwest Louisville since December 24 and remained throughout the period (DS). The species peaked at 90-100 birds at Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area (GR) and were still present at the end of the period; also, widespread throughout Rowan County (FB).

Correction—The White-rumped Sandpiper in Calloway County, May 7 reported in the 1983 August issue was credited to John Callahan, but instead should have been credited to Michael Miller (*Ky. Warbler*, 59: 41, 1983).

Contributors—Jane Bell (JB), Patricia Bell (PB), W. H. Brown (WHB), Fred Busroe (FB), John Callahan (JCa), K. Clay (KC), Jim Durrell (JD), Roger Eberhardt (RE), Jackie Elmore (JEl), Ed Groneman (EG), James W. Hancock (JH), Wilbur Jackson (WJ), Howard Jones (HJ), Steve Kistler (SK), Frederick Loetscher (FL), Lee McNeely (LMc), Wayne Mason (WM), Robert Morris (RM), Barry Nichols (BN), Doxie Noonan (DN), B. Palmer-Ball, Jr. (BPB), Clell Peterson (CP), Ann Ramsay (AR), Lene Rauth (LR), Gary Ritchison (GR), Anne L. Stamm (S), F. W. Stamm (FS), Donald Summerfield (DS), Tom Young (TY). Other abbreviations—Tennessee Ornithological Society (TOS), Ballard Waterfowl Management Area (BWMA).

—9101 Spokane Way, Louisville 40222.

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Spring Meeting — April 27-29, 1984

The 61st annual spring meeting of the Kentucky Ornithological Society was held at Berea College, Berea, Ky. on April 27-29, 1984.

The Friday evening session was called to order by the president, Pierre Allaire. He introduced the vice-president, Fred Busroe, who presented the 6 speakers: 1) Gary Ritchison — The Blue Grosbeak in Kentucky, 2) Chris Kellner — Predatory Behavior of American Kestrels in Central Kentucky (radio telemetry), 3) William Lynch — Nesting Observations on the Turkey Vulture, 4) William McComb — Bluebird Use of Reclaimed Surface Mines, 5) Steve Bonney — Food Habits of Ruffed Grouse in the Outer Blue Grass, 6) Gail McPeck — Birds in Forest Stands, Robinson Forest.

Field trips for Saturday morning were announced. A social hour followed the meeting.

Saturday morning field trips began at 8:15 a.m. from Boone Tavern. Trip #1 led by Gary Ritchison of Eastern Kentucky University went to the Central Kentucky Wildlife Area. There was a demonstration of radio telemetry and current observations on Screech Owls, Kestrels and Cardinals. Trip #2 led by Frank Gailey of Berea College went to the top of Indian Fort Mountain. The weather was overcast but both deep forest birds (including the nesting and migratory warblers) and the low grassland species were observed in the two habitats covered. At 2:30 p.m., Mike Hurst, wildlife biologist of the Somerset Ranger District, gave a slide presentation of wildlife management in the Daniel Boone National Forest — Emphasis on Avian Species. The board of directors met at 4:00 p.m. in the Alumni Building of the college. A banquet held in Boone Tavern was followed by an excellent slide presentation of birds and other wildlife in the national parks given by Glen R. Wells, biology professor at Midway College and summer naturalist with the National Park Service.

Fred Busroe recorded the group's observations of 97 species. Six species were added Sunday morning, bringing the total to 103 species for the spring meeting.

The fall meeting will be held at Morehead on September 28-30. The members voted to hold the fall of 1985 KOS meeting at Pine Mountain State Park in order to observe the hawk migration over Cumberland Gap.

The secretary was asked to read the following recommendation from the board of directors: "that the KOS go on record as being against legalization of taxidermy mounts of any accidentally killed non game birds and to support already existing federal regulations which do not allow taxidermy mounts of any birds other than game birds killed in season." The members unanimously approved the recommendation. Dr. Allaire will write a letter to the Department of Wildlife in Frankfort.

Field trips to the same two locations visited Saturday took place on Sunday morning.

There were 56 members and guests registered for the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia Kingsolver
Recording Secretary

BIRDS OBSERVED AT THE SPRING MEETING, 1984

Green-backed Heron, Wood Duck, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite, Sora, Killdeer, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Euro-

pean Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, House Sparrow; total species 103.

ATTENDANCE AT THE SPRING MEETING, 1984

BEREA: Frank Gailey

BOWLING GREEN: Dr. and Mrs. Blaine Ferrell, Dr. and Mrs. Herbert E. Shadowen, Mr. and Mrs. Allen R. Stickley, Jr.

CARLISLE: Wendell and Virginia Kingsolver

FRANKFORT: James Durell, Mark and Sherri Evans

HAZARD: Mr. and Mrs. D. Sandlin, Donnie Spencer

JACKSON: Dr. and Mrs. Pierre Allaire

LEXINGTON: Jayne Bolotin, Steve Bonney, Betty Day, Carrie Koontz, William McComb, Gail McPeck, Sally Wasielewski, Mr. and Mrs. James Williams

LOUISVILLE: Ralph Bates, Diane Ebel, Sue Henderson, Doxie Noonan, Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Stamm

MACEO: Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Powell

MIDWAY: Glen R. Wells

MOUNT VERNON: Anne Ramsay

MOREHEAD: Fred Busroe

MURRAY: Michael Miller, Clell Peterson

OWENSBORO: M. L. Greenwell, Mr. and Mrs. Ramon Iles, Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Wilson

RICHMOND: Paul Cavanagh, Chris Kellner, William Lynch, Gary Ritchison, A. L. Whitt, Jr.

SANDY HOOK: Mr. and Mrs. William Greene

STANLEY: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

FLINT, MICHIGAN: Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ricketts

FIELD NOTES

THE BLUE GROSBEAK IN KENTUCKY

The Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) has recently been expanding its range in Kentucky (Monroe, Ky. Warbler 55:23-28, 1979; Stamm, Ky. Warbler 57:71-75, 1981) and there have been many reports of sightings in the last few years. However, there are only three documented reports of Blue Grosbeaks breeding in the state (Dubke, Ky. Warbler 42:55, 1966;

Stamm and Croft, Ky. Warbler 44:23-30, 1968; Monroe, Ky. Warbler 52:39-64, 1976). During the summer of 1983 I located three Blue Grosbeak nests within the Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area located approximately 11 miles SSE of Richmond, Madison County.

On 6 July I heard a Blue Grosbeak singing within the management area and, after observing the bird for several days, finally discovered its nest on 19 July. The nest, located about 18 inches from the ground in a small clump of poison ivy, contained one young grosbeak that appeared to be about eight or nine days old. This grosbeak subsequently fledged on 23 July. Another male was heard singing on 19 July and its nest was discovered the same day. This nest was located about three feet off the ground in a small sumac and contained three young grosbeaks about two days old. I checked this nest two days later and found it empty. On 21 July another Blue Grosbeak was observed singing and about 20 minutes later I noted three young grosbeaks flying after him. Over the next several days the adult male and female were frequently observed feeding these young grosbeaks. On 27 July I spotted the adult female flying with a snakeskin in her beak. I noted her approximate landing point and a brief search revealed a nest under construction. This nest was located about six feet off the ground in a small Catalpa. Nest construction was finished on 30 July and the first egg was laid on 31 July. Additional eggs were laid on each of the next two days. All three eggs hatched on 12 August; however, only one young grosbeak remained when I checked the nest on 14 August. This bird subsequently fledged on 25 August. In addition to the three pairs of grosbeaks already mentioned, two other pairs were also observed in the management area. Although I was not able to locate their nests, the female of one of these pairs was observed carrying insect larvae on two occasions and the other pair was observed with one young grosbeak on 25 August. It is probable, therefore, that there were at least five breeding pairs of Blue Grosbeaks within the management area. This unusual concentration of grosbeaks may have been due to the relatively large amount of suitable habitat. The management area is characterized by small woodlots interspersed with old fields and damp lowlands. This type of habitat almost perfectly matches the description of preferred Blue Grosbeak habitat as described by Terres (Aud. Soc. Encyc. of N.A. Birds, Knopf, New York, 1980), i.e., ". . . old field, overgrown with brambles, . . . , often in damp places . . ."

The Blue Grosbeak appears to have begun its movement into Kentucky in the late 1950's. Mengel (The Birds of Kentucky, A.O.U. Monogr. 3, 1965) reported a few unverified sightings in the 1930's; however, the first authenticated sighting appears to be Wyatt's (Ky. Warbler 25:55, 1949) observation of a small flock of Blue Grosbeaks near the Murray State campus on 25 April 1949. Mengel noted another sighting in 1950 in Marshall County; however, there were no further sightings until 1955 (Hancock, Ky. Warbler 32:39, 1956). The next sightings were reported in 1958 and since then Blue Grosbeak sightings have been reported nearly every spring. Only in the last few years, however, have such sightings become fairly common. Further, whereas early reports were limited to the western part of the state, sightings are now being reported as far east as Madison County and as far north as Oldham County. Summer sightings (June through August) have followed the same general pattern, i.e., an increase in the number of sightings in the last few years and more reports from the northern and eastern parts of the state.

The northward and eastward movement of the Blue Grosbeak is

certainly not limited to Kentucky. Increasing numbers have been reported in the last few years in Virginia and Maryland (Amer. Birds 36:965, 1982), Pennsylvania (Amer. Birds 35:926, 1981), Delaware and New Jersey (Amer. Birds 34:881, 1980), Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio (Amer. Birds 34:901, 1980). Further, the first nesting of the Blue Grosbeak in New York state was reported in 1982 (Amer. Birds 36:961, 1982) and the first verified sighting of a Blue Grosbeak in Quebec was also reported in 1982 (Amer. Birds 36:958, 1982). Thus, Blue Grosbeaks appear to be extending their range throughout the central and eastern United States. The reasons for this recent expansion are not clearly understood. However, Robertson (Amer. Birds 31:1106, 1977) suggested that a long-term warming trend in the eastern United States may be contributing to the northward expansion of several "southern species", including the Blue Grosbeak. An increased availability of suitable habitat may also be contributing to this expansion. As noted previously, Blue Grosbeaks are generally found in old (abandoned) fields with numerous brushy areas. Taber and Johnston (In: Bent, Life histories of N.A. cardinals, grosbeaks, buntings, towhees, finches, sparrows, and allies, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 237, 1968), in their discussion of the Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*), suggested that land use practices during the past several decades have resulted in an increased availability of such habitats. Since buntings prefer such habitat, they further suggested that such practices have led to the increases in population and the range extension noted in buntings. As pointed out by Bent (1968), Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks seem to prefer similar habitats. It is possible, therefore, that the same practices that have favored Indigo Buntings may also be contributing to the increases in population and to the range extension being reported in the Blue Grosbeak. — GARY RITCHISON, Department of Biological Sciences, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond.

OBSERVATIONS OF A GREAT BLUE HERON ROOKERY

On 23 July 1983, a survey was conducted in a swamp in Ballard County, Kentucky, to determine the size and extent of a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) rookery located during an arial survey in June. A direct count of nests and young was made during 1330 to 1600 hours (EST) using a rowboat along a series of transects through the colony.

The rookery occupied an area approximately 100 by 250 meters, in a Swamp Tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) — Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) swamp. Understory vegetation was absent except for an occasional Button-bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), and submergent vegetation consisted of dense mats of Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*). Duckweeds (*Lemna* sp.) covered the water surface, and water depth averaged 0.6 to 1.0 meters.

A total of 110 nests was counted, of which 87 were occupied by young herons beginning to fledge. A total of 117 young was counted in 54 of the nests; of these, 13 nests contained one bird, 22 nests had two birds, 17 had three birds, one had four birds and one had five. The total number of young could not be accurately determined in 33 of the occupied nests due to dense foliage, however, each of these nests contained at least one nestling. Consequently, a minimum of 150 young were produced in this colony in 1983. Based on a review of documented heron colonies on file with the Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, this is the largest Great Blue Heron colony

known in the state; there has been no census data previously available concerning this rookery.

Nests consisted of shallow stick platforms located 12 to 20 meters above the water surface on live, dead or dying branches. Nests were situated in the uppermost crotches or near the ends of horizontal limbs primarily in live tupelo trees. The nest trees were easily located, despite obstructing foliage, by noting the profusion of whitewash covering their trunks. The number of nests per tree ranged from one to four. Most nests were small and flimsy, unlike those one would expect to find in a long established colony.

During the survey, a number of adult Great Blue Herons were observed foraging along the perimeters of open water ponds within the swamp, and delivering food to young in nests directly above us. Although other heron species or egrets were searched for, none were found.

A special note of thanks is extended to Mr. James Moore of Barlow, Kentucky, for providing a boat and expert guidance through the swamp. — SHERRI A. EVANS, Nongame Wildlife Program, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Frankfort and MARC EVANS, Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission, 407 Broadway, Frankfort.

NEWS AND VIEWS

TAXIDERMY OF NONGAME BIRDS

As indicated in the minutes of the spring KOS meeting, we have collectively taken a stand against legalization of taxidermy mounts of any accidentally killed nongame birds and support existing laws regarding this matter. Although this collective opinion is important, receipt of letters from many individuals supporting this opinion are needed. Therefore, if you are opposed to legalizing taxidermy mounts of accidentally killed nongame birds, take the time to write William D. Graves, Director of Wildlife Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Nongame Wildlife Program, #1 Game Farm Road, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

MEMBER WILL BE MISSED

Emma Summerfield (Mrs. Donald) died May 1 at the age of 57. She and her husband were at the 1983 spring meeting and it was soon thereafter she learned that she had cancer. She was from Louisville, had been a KOS member for many, many years and will be missed by all of us.

MOVING?

If you are moving or know of any member who has moved or changed address, please notify the Corresponding Secretary-Treasurer in order that the mailing of The Kentucky Warbler may be carried out expeditiously. Thank you.