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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

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Bowling Green 42101
Assistant Editor .................... Herbert E. Shadowen, Bowling Green

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THE COVER

We thank Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr., for the excellent photograph of the Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii) nest taken at the Peabody Martwick Surface Mine, Muhlenberg County, Kentucky on 26 May 1989 (See, Field Notes).
IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT M. MENGEL, 1921-1990

Robert M. Mengel was born on 19 August 1921 at Glenview, Kentucky, and died 15 January 1990 in Lawrence, Kansas, at the age of 68. No one since the time of John James Audubon has had as great an impact on Kentucky Ornithology as Bob Mengel. It was he who produced the first definitive work on birds from the state with *The Birds of Kentucky* in 1965 (American Ornithological Union's Ornithological Monograph No. 3). Not only was it a great contribution for the state's ornithology, but the work was of such high quality that this treatise has since become a model for state bird books.

Bob was the nearest thing I ever had to a brother. A few years older than I, he became my father's protege in birds. The story of his association with my family in his early days (and my even earlier ones) was related magnificently by Bob (known to all of us then as "Bobby") in his memorandum to my father, and I direct you to that article for the full story (1971, *The Auk* 88: 88-96). But my own recollections of those early days are dim, inasmuch as I was at a very young age. I came to know Bob much better in our associations through the American Ornithologists' Union in later years.

After attending secondary schools in Louisville and in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Bob was drafted and served in the U.S. Army Air Force from 1942 to 1946, a year and a half of which he spent overseas (I remember vividly his recounting of his adventures while stationed in the Middle East in Arabia, Egypt and Libya). Following the service, he completed his Bachelor of Science degree in 1947 at Cornell University, and obtained his Master of Arts degree in 1950 and his Doctor of Philosophy in 1958 at the University of Michigan. In 1953, he became a University Research Associate at the University of Kansas, and he taught as an Instructor and Lecturer in Zoology at Kansas until 1967. From 1967 to the time of his death, he was Curator-in-charge of Ornithology at the Museum of Natural History at Kansas, as well as Associate Professor (then Professor) in Systematics and Ecology.

Between 1947 and 1958, Bob was married to Jane Strahan, who helped him considerably during his trips in Kentucky gathering data for the Kentucky book. This marriage ended in divorce, but he was later married to Marion Jenkinson (1963 to the present). Marion is at Kansas and is also an excellent ornithologist in her own right; currently she is Treasurer of the A.O.U.

Bob was a multi-talented person. Perhaps his greatest talent, and one shared by few indeed, was his ability as a bird artist. He was one of the very best in the ornithological world. Although he had numerous paintings published as well as displayed at most of the bird art shows, he was probably best known for his illustrations in Ralph Palmer's *Handbook of North American Birds* series (Yale University Press, 1962, and volumes published since then to the present). I presently have several of his paintings hanging on my walls, including probably his first serious one of a Peregrine Falcon with a captured Blue-winged Teal, perched on the lone dead tree left on a small island in the Ohio River just offshore from Glenview (the island is now gone, but some of you may recall its existence better than 40 years ago).

Bob was also superb with the pen. In addition to the Kentucky book,
he published over 100 papers in scientific journals. He was editor of several journals and publication series, the most notable of which were *The Auk* from 1963-1967 and the Monograph Series (mentioned earlier) from 1970 to 1974. He was also never at a loss for words. He could be sharp and caustic if he felt such criticism was deserved, but he was never unfair; however, I know many an author who cringed when he learned that Bob was reviewing his book.

But the thing I remember most about Bob Mengel was his wit. He had a terrific sense of humor and was as quick with an appropriate retort and as clever with words as anyone I ever knew. Sitting around in a group and listening to Bob Mengel, my father, and several of their cronies going at it during one of the off-hours at an A.O.U. or Wilson Society meeting was one of the great pleasures I can recall in my younger days. In some of those sessions, I had been literally rolling on the floor with laughter.

Bob's passing marks one of the saddest times for Ornithology. I know of no one who will ever be able to do the things for Ornithology, especially for Kentucky, that he did. Bob Mengel will be sorely missed by everyone.

Burt L. Monroe, Jr.
Department of Biology
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky 40292

THE SPRING SEASON, 1990

Anne L. Stamm and Burt L. Monroe, Jr.

This spring was unusual weather-wise. March was warmer than usual. From March 1-15 the temperature averaged 13° above normal. On March 10 the temperature hit 79° and set a record at Paducah; a temperature of 80° at Louisville on March 14 also broke a record. At Louisville the month averaged 6.1° above normal. Precipitation averaged 1.95 inches below normal.

April was cool for the most part except for the last week in the month. The first 15 days at Louisville averaged 6° below normal and for the month averaged 1.1° below normal. Precipitation for the month averaged 0.65 inches below normal.

May was unusually wet all over the state; the rainfall at Louisville was 11.57 inches for the month and was the highest ever for the month of May, averaging 7.42 inches above normal. The temperature averaged 1.2° below normal.

**Abbreviations:**

- BPS = Big Pond Sanctuary, Grayson County
- BWMA = Ballard Waterfowl Management Area, Ballard County
- BBC = Beckham Bird Club
- CRL = Cave Run Lake, Rowan County
- KDFWR = Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- KOS = Kentucky Ornithological Society
- LBL = Land Between the Lakes
- MCFH = Minor E. Clark Fish Hatchery
- MCNP = Mammoth Cave National Park
- PHSM = Peabody Homestead Surface Mine, Ohio County
- PKSM = Peabody Ken Surface Mine, Ohio County
- RCSS = Rowan County Sphagnum Swamp
- SWMA = Sauerheber Wildlife Management Area, Henderson County
- Chaney and McElroy Lakes are the transient lakes south of Bowling Green, Warren County.

Loons through Cormorants — Common Loons returned in late March
with two birds first sighted at Lake Pewee on March 28 (JH) and five at BPS on March 31 (KC); fifteen birds had arrived on Kentucky Lake above the dam on April 1, at least one was still present on May 7 (BPB), and numbers were recorded at CRL (ten on April 14; 48 in one small group and five additional 100 yards away for a total of 53 on April 6; two on May 13; six on April 20; and one on May 22 - FB). Pied-billed Grebes were not numerous this year and were first noticed at McElroy Lake on March 9 (DCC); six was the maximum number reported there on March 24 (BPB). Birds were heard calling “as if territorial” at three places on SWMA (BPB), and a bird was displaying on Caperton’s Swamp, Louisville on May 19 (BM); nesting at both locations may occur if water levels remain high. Although Horned Grebes were fairly widespread they were not as numerous as last year; five were first observed at McElroy Lake, Warren County on March 3 (BPB) where they peaked with 10-12 on March 17 (BPB); five were seen on the Ohio River at Louisville on March 6 (LR), one at Camp Ernst Lake, near Burlington, Boone County on March 7-8 (LMc), three on CRL on March 12, three on April 20 (FB), and one was as late as May 1 on Lake Barkley near Kuttawa (BPB). Numbers of Double-crested Cormorants continued to improve in some areas with maxima of 60+ to 75+ on Lake Barkley (JB, PB, and BPB, respectively), more than 100 on Mississippi River at Chalk Bluff, Hickman County (BPB) on May 6, and seven to 20 elsewhere (LR, K. Prather, BPB et al.); 16 were present at MCFH on April 14 (FB).

**Bitterns through Herons** — Single Least Bitterns were heard at RGSS on May 23 and 25 (FB). Birds seldom recorded included two American Bitterns at Hardy Slough on April 1 (LR) and one bird there on April 21 (BPB, LR). Only small numbers of Great Blue Herons were reported this spring with 15 as the largest number observed flying in the vicinity of Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley (JB, PB); up to ten birds were at MCFH between April 6 and May 23 (FB). Three nests were observed on the 20th Century portion of PKSM; two nests were being brooded by adults, and the third contained two large young on May 20 (BPB, LR, C. Rebar). Four Great Egrets were first observed at Reelfoot NWR on April 3 and 12 in that general vicinity on May 3 (BPB, Landon McKinney); three were at MCFH on April 20 (FB). A Snowy Egret was also seen at Reelfoot NWR on May 3 (same observers as above); three were seen on BWMA (Mitchell Lake) on May 6 (BPB, DP) and one on a slough nearby on May 7 (BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin). Little Blue Herons were first noted at BWMA and Swan Lake WMA on May 6 (BPB, DP), and about 15 on BWMA on May 7 (same observers plus J. T. Erwin). Cattle Egrets were not as numerous this spring as last year. Four birds were first noticed in flight near SWMA on April 29 (BPB), one along the Ohio River in Boone County on May 5 (JCam, KCam); a flock of 22 on a jetty at Kentucky Dam Village State Park with a large flock of gulls on May 6 (BPB, DP); about 25 each at both BWMA and Swan Lake WMA the following day (BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin); and a flock of 22 on Rose Island Road, Prospect, Jefferson County (BM, MM, S. Brown, L. McGrath). Green-backed Herons were scarce, only a few reported; two have been present at BPS from April 8- May 30 (KC), up to 18 at MCFH from April 6-May 30 (FB), and several at RCSS from May 6-23 (FB); singles at two other locations. Black-crowned Night-Herons returned to Shippingport Island by March 16 where 19 were observed (LR); one along the Ohio River, Steel Bottom Road, Gallatin County on March 25 (JCam, KCam); four at Marydale Lake, Boone County on April 9 (KCam); and one at MCFH from April 13-
May 18 (FB); and an adult first noted at Chaney Lake on April 22 (BPB, DE). One adult was at a small lake across the street from our house on April 17, but three were there three days later (S, FS). Numbers began arriving by May 1 when 161 were counted at Shippingport Island (LR); and the birds had returned to Lake Barkley rookery by May 4-7 where they were numerous in the trees (BPB). In Louisville during May, the Ohio River was high on the Falls of the Ohio, causing the herons to disburse. Three Yellow-crowned Night Herons were present on the River Road at Louisville on March 17 and four near Brownsboro Road, Louisville on April 9 (KC); a pair was constructing a nest in a large sycamore tree in Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve, Louisville, on April 25 (BM).

Waterfowl — A Tundra Swan was present near the Grassy Pond Unit of Sloughs WMA in western Henderson County on March 11 (LR, BPB, DE). Two Mute Swans were observed on ponds adjacent to U.S. 62 four miles west of Georgetown, Scott County on March 21 and April 4 (FK). Small numbers of Canada Geese were found at a few places where they are seldom seen: one at Long Run County Park, Jefferson County on April 1 (S, FS), two at a small pond in Oldham County on May 6, and three at Williams Lake in the Ten Broeck subdivision, northeast Jefferson County (S, FS). No others were reported. Snow Geese peaked at McElroy Lake on March 3 with 19 birds (three white morphs and 16 blue morphs — BPB). A Ross' Goose was present with the Snow Geese from late February-March 3 (BPB et al.). Fifteen Wood Ducks noted at Chaney Lake on March 10 (BPB); five near Cool Springs-Wysox Lake, Ohio County on March 17 (KC); 20 birds at Hematite Lake area on April 13-15 (JB, PB); and four to six at BPS most of the period (KC). The variety of waterfowl was good in northern Kentucky, but numbers were low (LMc). It was a good migration of Green-winged Teal at the transient lakes this year: 50-1- birds arrived at McElroy Lake by March 10 and 20 at Chaney Lake, a similar number at McElroy Lake on March 24 but 90 at Chaney Lake, and 75 were still present at McElroy on March 31 and 50 at Chaney (BPB). Also, some 50+ birds were present in western Henderson County on March 11 and 30 at Reelfoot NWR, Fulton County on April 3 (BPB). Black Ducks were scarce. Twenty to 25 Northern Pintails were present during early March at McElroy Lake and in western Henderson County on March 11 (BPB). Blue-winged Teal were not numerous but were widespread from March 22 (the earliest at Lake Pewee — JH) to April 10 (three birds) on a pond in Spencer County (DC) with the largest concentration of 75-100 birds at Reelfoot NWR on April 3 (BPB). Northern Shovelers reached McElroy Lake in late February with 12 there on March 3, numbers built up by March 17, but peaked at 85 on March 24 (BPB); six were present at Lentz's Pond, Louisville on March 9 (LR); four at Lake Pewee, Hopkins County from March 28-April 5 (JH); six on Cool Springs-Wysox Lake on March 17 (KC); about 12 on Lake Barkley on April 1 above the dam; and about 50 at Reelfoot NWR on April 3, three birds lingering there until May 7 (BPB). About 50 Gadwalls were seen at McElroy Lake on March 3 with a peak of 50-75 there on March 10 (BPB); about 50 noted in western Henderson County on March 11 (BPB); and 85 at Reelfoot NWR on April 3 with 15 still present there on May 7 (BPB). Twenty-five to 50 American Widgeon were present at McElroy Lake from March 3 to March 10 with 30 still present on March 24 (BPB) and 38 at Chaney Lake on the latter date. Five to six birds were also observed on the Cool Springs-Wysox Lake on March 17 (KC). Canvasbacks were few: seven at McElroy Lake on March 3 (BPB), two at Lake Pewee on March 5 (JH), and three on
Lake Barkley above the dam on April 7 (BPB). A nice group of 60 Redheads was found on McElroy Lake on March 3 (BPB). Fair numbers of Ring-necked Ducks were found with 107 on March 5 on Lake Pewee (JH), 125 at McElroy Lake on March 10 and 80 at Chaney Lake on March 24 (BPB), and two on the lake at Long Run County Park, Jefferson County, on April 1 (S). Five Greater Scaups appeared at Lake Pewee on March 28, and two still there on April 5 (JH); also reported at McElroy Lake on March 15 (no number given — DCC). Lesser Scaup were fairly widespread: twenty-three birds reached Lake Pewee on March 5 (JH); 75 on March 14 at CRL (FB); peaked at McElroy Lake with 225 on March 24 (BPB); about 250 on Lake Barkley above the dam and several hundred at Kentucky Lake above the dam on April 1 (BPB); and 102 at Camp Ernst Lake, Boone County, with a flock of 37 at a smaller lake nearby (LMc). Two Oldsquaws were recorded at McElroy Lake on March 17 and 18 (BPB et al.). A fair number of Buffleheads appeared at McElroy Lake with a peak of 40-50 on March 24 (BPB); 12 was the maximum at Lake Pewee on March 12 (JH); 30-40 birds were seen on Lake Barkley above the dam (BPB); and ten were present at CRL on March 12 (FB). Four Hooded Mergansers were seen on Lake Pewee on April 5 (JH) and present at McElroy (no number given — DCC). Three Common Mergansers were sighted at Kentucky Dam on April 13-15 (JB, PB). Red-breasted Mergansers were present from March 10-May 5, with several hundred on Lake Barkley above the dam on April 1, and small numbers (up to 12 on Kentucky Lake on May 1) were scattered about, on the northern end of the lakes and on the Tennessee River through the first week of May (BPB); up to 15 were present on MCFH (FB). Highest concentration of Ruddy Ducks occurred at Lake Pewee with 58 on April 5 (JH); 45+ was the peak at McElroy Lake (BPB); and a few were present on MCFH from March 13-April 15 (FB).

Raptors — Eight Black Vultures with six Turkey Vultures were observed eating dead fish in a draining reservoir on Mayfair Avenue, Louisville on March 30 (LR). Turkey Vultures peaked at MCFH with 100 on March 12 and 53 on March 14 (FB). Ospreys arrived on time, and a pair was attending a nest at Bayou, Livingston County on April 8 (BPB) and observed again in late May (D. Yancy, fide BPB); two birds were picking up sticks flying to a nest in the Honker Lake LBL area on April 13-15 (JB, PB); one bird was noted flying over Hebron, Boone County on May 5 (KCam, JCam); and one or two birds were present at MCFH from April 6-May 4. Mississippi Kites were first seen at BWMA, Axe Lake, Ballard County, and Chalk Bluff on May 6 (BPB, DP) and again at BWMA on May 7 (no number given — BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin). Two Bald Eagle nests in Land Between the Lakes, and one at BWMA contained young in late May (Steve Bloemer with TVA and D. Yancy with KDFWR, respectively, fide BPB); an adult was observed as it brought food to the BWMA nest on May 6, another adult at Mitchell Lake, and an immature perched along the Ohio River, all at BWMA (BPB, DP). In addition a pair was seen at Lake #9, Fulton County on May 6 (BPB, DP). Northern Harriers were not as numerous this year as last; a total of 15 was counted in Ohio County near the Homestead Mine area on March 17 (KC), with four noted in another section of Ohio County on April 2 (KC). One to two birds were also noted in Breckinridge and Muhlenberg counties during early April (KC), and one observed near Dozier Lake, Hopkins County on March 5 (JH). Only small numbers of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were reported. Three Rough-legged Hawks were still in southern Ohio County on March 17 (KC),
and one was in the same area as late as April 1 (KC). An immature and one sub-adult Golden Eagle were seen at Bernheim Forest, Bullitt County on March 3 (BPB, LR, DE, JB, PB); at least one was in the area as of April (no date — D. Brunley fide BPB). A total of 12 American Kestrels was found within a 17-mile drive of Falls of Rough, Grayson County (KC). An immature Merlin was turned in to the Louisville Zoo for rehabilitation in mid-March. An unaged Peregrine Falcon was noted flying near Double Arch, Powell County on May 13 (BPB) and another was reported in downtown Louisville in mid-May (C. Lindsay fide BPB).

**Wild Turkey through Cranes** — A Wild Turkey was seen at Mammoth Cave National Park on April 8 and two others on April 16 (JB, PB). Bobwhites were thought to have increased in Grayson County this spring (KC). There were three reports of a rare transient, the Virginia Rail: one flushed at SWMA on April 29 (BPB, DE), another at Mitchell Lake, BWMA on May 7 (BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin), and one in a small marsh in the Homestead Mine area, Ohio County on May 8 (KC). Twelve to 15 Soras were present at SWMA on April 21 (BPB, LR) and at least six there on April 29 (BPB, DE); one heard on the Peabody Homestead Surface Mine on April 28 (BPB, DE, KCam); and two in marshy area in Florence, Boone County on May 5 (JCam, KCam). Two Common Moorhens were observed at a marsh near Cool Springs-Wysox Lake on May 8 (KC), and at least one bird on marshy pond on Peabody Homestead Surface Mine (BPB, M. Bierly), both sightings in southern Ohio County. The American Coot migration was fairly good with 104 birds at Lake Pewee on March 5 (JH) and about 200 at McElroy Lake on March 3-18 (BPB); peaked at Lake Pewee on March 12 with 141 birds (JH) and at McElroy on March 24 with 500 birds (BPB); about 100 were still at SWMA on April 21 (BPB). There were no reports for the month of May. Sandhill Cranes were moving north in Kentucky the first week of March: a flock of 57 noted at McElroy Lake on March 3 (BPB); heard in MCNP on March 4 (JB, PB); a good movement on March 4 when flocks of 22, 30–, 45– and 50 passed over eastern Grayson County (BPB, DE). The flock of 150 Sandhill Cranes on the ground at Cecilia, Hardin County in late February remained until early March (BPB); also, a flock of 17 birds was seen at the upper end of Big Beech Creek, Taylorsville Lake, Spencer County on March 19 (Kerry Prather).

**Shorebirds** — “Very little shorebird migration evident in Boone County, with little good habitat available during peak periods” (LMc). Little habitat available in the Louisville area this year. The Falls of the Ohio rockbed was covered with water for much of the period. Best localities appeared to be at the transient lakes and western Kentucky. A Lesser Golden-Plover arrived early — March 9 representing an early state date — at McElroy Lake (BPB) where they peaked on March 31 with 60-75 birds (BPB); 30 near Reelfoot NWR and 100-150 in lower Hickman Bottoms, Fulton County on April 3, smaller numbers scattered elsewhere. Semipalmated Plovers were reported from four locations with 20-25 as the highest count on May 6 at Lake #9, Fulton County (BPB, DP); birds were present at MCFH from May 20-30, with a peak of 28 on May 25 (PB). Only two to three Greater Yellowlegs were present at McElroy Lake in March, but 15 to 20 were at Chaney Lake on April 22 (BPB); 30– in or near Reelfoot NWR on April 3 (BPB); about 20 in Ohio River bottoms near Bayou, Livingston County on April 8 (BPB); 35-50 on SWMA on April 21 and 10 still there on April 29 (BPB); and up to six at MCFH from April 13-May 25 (FB).
Lesser Yellowlegs arrived later than usual with four present at McElroy Lake on March 3 but 12-15 there by March 31 (BPB); 50+ in or near Reelfoot NWR on April 3 (BPB); five in a field near Honker Lake on April 13-15 (JB, PB); up to nine at MCFH from May 18-25 (FB); 35-50 on SWMA on April 21; and about 35 at Chaney Lake (BPB). Solitary Sandpipers peaked at 12+ at Chaney Lake on April 22 (BPB); three birds were at a marsh in southern Ohio County on May 8 (KC); and up to three at MCFH on May 18 and at RCSS from May 6-23 (FB). The only Willets reported were the two near the dam of Rough River Lake, Grayson County on April 27 (LMc). Spotted Sandpipers were first discovered on April 19 along the Green River, Mammoth Cave National Park, where the species was well distributed on gravel bars and exposed shorelines (BPB, R. Ciccerello) and one was noted at Lake Pewee on April 23 (JH); these dates are much later than usual. Numbers peaked at MCFH with 13 on May 18 (FB). There were 100+ Semipalmated Sandpipers on the PHSM on May 20 (BPB, M. Bierly et al.); at MCFH, birds were present from May 4-30, with a peak of about 150 on May 20 (FB). Western Sandpipers were present at MCFH from May 4-30, with a peak of 15 on May 20 (FB). Least Sandpipers were reported in Warren (BPB) and Rowan (FB) counties, with the earliest bird at McElroy Lake on March 17 (BPB). Interesting records of the White-rumped Sandpiper included several in a flooded field north of Flaherty; Meade County in mid-May (RH, fide BPB) and one there on May 19 (BPB, RH); one present on PHSM in southern Ohio County on May 20 (BPB, M. Bierly et al.); and 4-6 birds at MCFH on May 28-30 (FB). There was a good flight of Pectorals at McElroy; they arrived on March 3 (7 birds), numbers increased with 100-150 on March 24 and a peak of 250-300 there on March 30 (BPB). Also, 20 in a field near Honker Lake on April 13-15 (JB, PB); 30 at Chaney on April 22 (BPB); six to eight at Mayfair Basins on May 13 (S, FS). Ten Baird's Sandpipers were present at MCFH on May 20, with lesser numbers until May 30 (FB). Dunlin were scarce: one bird at McElroy on March 31 (BPB), two at Chaney Lake on April 22 (BPB, DE), and two flocks of birds in breeding plumage at MCFH (seven on May 28, and 11 on May 30 — FB). A Short-billed Dowitcher was heard and seen well at SWMA on April 29 (BPB, DE). Common Snipes were present from March 10 to May 7 and reported from four counties: Fulton, Livingston, Oldham and Warren counties, with the greatest number — 35 — along the Ohio River near Bayou, Livingston County on April 8 (BPB). These records included a total of 78 birds (BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin, S, FS, DCC). Six American Woodcocks were heard calling and were seen displaying at Joe Creason Park, on March 5 (JB, PB); courtship flights noted in Crittenden, Grant County on March 18 (JC, KCam); one bird first appeared on March 9, with two adults and two juveniles present on May 15 (FB); about four heard at BPS the first week of March (KC); and one heard “peenting” over a field in Leitchfield, Grayson County on the late date of May 8 (KC). Three Wilson’s Phalaropes were present at MCFH on May 18 (FB).

Gulls — Two Laughing Gulls (adults in breeding plumage) were seen on Kentucky Lake at the Kentucky Dam Village Marina on May 6 (BPB, DP). A few Franklin Gulls were present: an adult with Bonaparte’s Gulls was seen on April 8 at Calvert City (BPB); two at Kentucky Dam on April 13-15 (JB, PB); single adult on an island in Lake Barkley near Boyd’s Landing on May 1 (BPB); an adult in breeding plumage at MCFH on May 4 (FB); and another on Kentucky Lake above the dam on May 6 and 8 (BPB, DP). The Bonaparte’s Gull migration was quite
good, particularly in early April, and reported from at least six widely separated localities from March 18-May 9 (JCam, KCam, BPB, LMc, LR); up to 41 were reported at MCFH from March 18-May 4 (FB). Maxima numbers were about 1000 on the Tennessee River from below Kentucky Dam to below Calvert City and 300-500 on Lake Barkley above the dam, smaller numbers elsewhere. Ring-billed Gulls were found at six locations in low numbers except at Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley; it was unusual to see a total of 86 at the Mayfair Basins, Louisville on March 27 (LR); up to 30 were reported at MCFH and CRL from March 2-May 4 (FB). A third-winter Herring Gull was present at MCFH on March 23 (FB). The second- to third-year Lesser Black-backed Gull observed during the winter (or another individual) was present on Kentucky Lake above the dam on April 1 and observed again on Lake Barkley on April 7 (BPB). One of the first-year Great Black-backed Gulls was seen in the vicinity of Kentucky Dam on April 1, 7 and May 1 and again on Lake Barkley above the dam on May 8-9 (good photo on May 1 — BPB).

Terns — A few Caspian Terns were reported from April 1-first week of May, with the first (1 bird) noted on Lake Barkley on April 1 (BPB); two below McAlpine Dam, Louisville on April 11 (LR); one on a slough in farmland of western Henderson County on April 21 (BPB); and up to five on MCFH from April 13-May 4 (FB). Small numbers (one to five) of Forster's Terns were recorded April 1 to first week of May at McAlpine Dam (LR), scattered places on the west Kentucky lakes (BPB), and Cool Springs-Wysox Lake (BPB, DE, KCam); up to five were present at MCFH from April 13-May 4 (FB); and a group of seven Forster's Terns flying down the Ohio River at Westport, Oldham County on May 12 was followed a few minutes later by five Black Terns (BM, MM, S. Brown, L. McGrath). Two Black Terns were noted at MCFH on May 18 (FB).

Cuckoo through Woodpeckers — There were more reports of Black-billed Cuckoos than normal with the first heard at BPS on April 28 (KC), one at Madisonville, Hopkins County on April 29 (JH), and singles in Graves and Calloway counties on May 3 and 7, respectively (BPB, with DP and J. T. Erwin on the latter date). Also, two birds were heard and seen on the SWMA sloughs on April 29 (BPB, DE); first noted at Glasgow, Barren County on May 18 (RS) and on PHSM on May 20 (BPB, M. Bierly et al.). Two Chuck-wills-widows were heard at BPS on April 14 and still present throughout May (KC); two at Madisonville on April 23 (JH). Only two reports of the Whip-poor-will: first heard at Hanson, Hopkins County on April 16 (B. West fide JH) and four at BPS on May 1-30 (KC). Common Nighthawks appeared to be late in arriving and few in number. Chimney Swifts were first reported from Kentucky Dam (1 bird) on April 13-15 (JB, PB); numerous and flying low over Beargrass Creek, Seneca Park, Louisville on May 6 (S, FS). A single male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was the first arrival at BPS on April 8, but 12 were there by April 30 (KC). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was last observed at BPS on April 26 (KC); also observed at Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve, Jefferson County on April 29 (JB; PB). Young Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were calling from the nest east of Cumberland Falls, Whitley County on May 28 (BPB, LR, C. Rebar); both adults were observed foraging nearby. According to Steve Phillips of the U.S. Forest Service, four nests were active in late May.

Flycatchers through Nuthatches — Olive-sided Flycatchers appeared to
be late in arriving: one at MCFH on May 4 (FB), two separate birds on BWMA on May 6 (DP, BPB), and one at Joe Creason Park on May 14 (MS). At least two Alder Flycatchers were seen and heard on PHSM on May 20 (BPB, M. Bierly et al.). Several Willow Flycatchers were also observed at the same location and same date (same group as above). The Willow Flycatcher was also present in numbers near Petersburg, Boone County on May 28 (LMc), one at Elk Creek bridge, Hopkins County on May 18 and 30 (JH), and 2-3 at MCFH from May 4-25 (FB). Eastern Phoebes were first recorded at Green River Lake, Taylor County on March 4 (LR). There were few reports of the Great Crested Flycatcher with the first being at Brigadoon, Barren County on April 22 (RS), and one the following day in Hopkins County (JH). We believe the bird has been rather scarce this spring, although no one has made any such comments. Purple Martins appeared to be late in arriving and fewer were observed than usual; the species was still migrating on May 5 when small groups of four or five were seen along Old Brownsboro Road, northeast Jefferson County totaling at least 25+ birds, but they were gone the following day (S, FS). Fifteen males reached a martin complex in Leitchfield, Grayson County on April 1 (A. Wilson, KC). A male Tree Swallow was quite early at Crittenden, Grant County on March 10 (KCam, JCam); up to 350 birds were present at MCFH on April 6 (FB). One Bank Swallow was early at Lake Barkley on April 7 (BPB). Cliff Swallows were numerous on the Rough River on the Grayson/Breckinridge county line on May 4 (KC). Barn Swallows do not seem to be as numerous this spring. A good number — 15-20 — of Fish Crows was seen along Obion Creek at Ky. 123 in Hickman County on April 2 (BPB, Bill Hendricks); about six there, one bird at Three Ponds, Hickman County, and a pair at Bayou de Chien at Ky. 239 along the Fulton-Hickman County line, all on April 3 (BPB). A Common Raven was calling near the summit of Big Black Mountain, Harlan County on May 27 (BBC). A single Red-breasted Nuthatch was observed at MCNP (JB, PB) and in east Louisville (DN) on April 21 and 25, respectively. Greater numbers of Brown Creepers were noted at CRL and RCSS in winter 1990 than in 1989 (FB), with up to five on several occasions from March 15-30 (FB).

Wrens through Shrikes — House Wrens arrived on time and first recorded at Mayfair Basins, Louisville on April 13 (LR), and only one Bewick’s Wren was reported at Grand Rivers, Livingston County on May 1 (BPB). Single Winter Wrens were present at Madisonville, Hopkins County on April 9 (JH) and at MCNP on April 18 (BPB). A few Sedge Wrens were seen in May: one in Northern LBL on May 1 (BPB), one heard at Reelfoot NWR on May 3 (BPB), and a pair observed in rural Meade County north of Flaherty on May 19 (R. Healy, BPB). A single Marsh Wren was seen at SWMA on April 21 and 29 (BPB). Greater numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets were recorded in eastern Kentucky this winter than in 1989, with a peak of ten on March 16 at High Bank Picnic Area, CRL (FB). Ruby-crowned Kinglets were reported from seven locations: BPS (KC), Hopkins County (JH), MCNP (JB, PB), Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve (JB, PB), Natural Bridge State Park, Powell County (JB, PB), southwest Jefferson County (DS), and Rough River State Park, Grayson County (KOS). Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen on Mayfair Avenue, northern Jefferson County on March 20, and this tied our earliest record for the species (LR); two also observed at BPS on March 30 (KC); all other records in April. Four Veeries were seen at the Boone County Cliffs Nature Preserve on May 5 (LMc). Thrushes
were not present in large numbers. The few Hermit Thrushes reported were present from April 8 to 28. The Wood Thrush continues to be scarce in some areas particularly Louisville (S) and at surrounding areas of BPS (KC). Arrival dates were later than usual, with the first reported being on April 13-15 at LBL (JB, PB) and then Madisonville on April 21 (JH). The Gray Catbird has been present in lower numbers in the Louisville area for some time and is now in lower numbers in a section of Grayson County (KC). The same is true for the Brown Thrasher in sections of Louisville (S), but thought to be increasing in numbers around the Rough River area (KC). There was a fair migration of Water Pipits with a peak of 75-100 at McElroy Lake on March 24 (BPB); two birds at Camp Ernst, Boone County on March 24; and four at Rough River airstrip, Grayson County on April 28 (LMc). There was a good movement of Cedar Waxwings in late March and in April: a flock of 146+ was found near Brownsboro, Oldham County on March 25 (S, FS); a large flock in a yard in the Highlands, Louisville (MSu) on April 14, and another flock of 20 in the Valley Station area on April 19 (DS); 30 or more at BPS (KC); and small numbers still present in late April at Madisonville (JH) and at Beargrass Nature Preserve on April 29 (JB, PB). There were several good sightings of the Loggerhead Shrike in Scott, Harrison and Franklin counties, central Kentucky (FK); other records were in Breckinridge and Grayson counties (KC).

Vireos through Warblers — Two territorial male Bell’s Vireos were seen on May 20 on the PHSM where the birds nested last season (BPB, M. Bierly et al.); also a singing male was found in a new location north of the above birds (same date and observers as above). Two Philadelphia Vireos were reported on May 15-16 in east Louisville (DN). Warbler migration seemed to lack numbers of the various species, and there were no early dates with the exception of one species, the Northern Parula. One observer said the “Warbler migration was somewhat concentrated, with the best numbers seen on May 5”; another thought the best migration days were May 4 and 12. Blue-winged Warblers were first recorded in Barren County on April 20 (RS) and Golden-winged on April 27 at Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve (JB, PB). Three males of the latter species were seen at once on May 5 in LBL and eight in one day on May 7 (RPB, and with DP and J. T. Erwin on the latter date); and one in Caperton Swamp, Louisville on May 20 (BM). The Orange-crowned Warbler, usually rare in spring, was seen on three occasions: one near Kentucky Lake-Scenic Drive on April 13-15, JB, PB; one at Bernheim Forest on April 22 (BBC, BPB); and one at Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve, Louisville on April 25 (BM). The Northern Parula was “everywhere” near Honker and Hematic Lake in LBL on April 13-15 (JB, PB); three to four at MCNP on April 21-22 (JB, PB); and one was present in northeast Louisville on March 28, establishing an early state date (DN). A Yellow Warbler was noted in northeast Louisville as early as April 10 (DN). Yellow-rumped Warblers began moving in from the south on March 13 at RCSS (FB) and March 16 at BPS where there were some 20 birds by April 16 (KC); they were “everywhere” at Beargrass Nature Preserve, Louisville on April 25 (JB, PB) and last observed at Madisonville on May 7 (JH) where on some days in April they were very common. Pine Warblers were first noted at BPS (KC) and at a pine plantation in Madisonville on March 11 (JH); six were seen in pine trees at Honker Lake on April 13-15 (JB, PB), The Blackpoll Warbler sightings at Joe Creason Park and Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve on May 13 were “numerous” (BBC), but the species was
only recorded on May 14 in the Madisonville area (JH). Black-and-white Warblers (one to four) were seen in MCNP from April 8-22 (JB, PB); other sightings occurred during late April at BPS (KC), Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve and Natural Bridge State Park (JB, PB). Single Swainson's Warblers were heard singing at two locations in eastern Calloway County on May 7 (BPB, DP, J. T. Erwin), and at least two were seen at Bad Branch State Nature Preserve, Letcher County on May 27 (BBC). Many species of warblers arrived on April 21 and 22 ahead of warm fronts, including the Ovenbird and Worm-eating Warblers (RS). There were only two reports for the Northern Waterthrush: Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve on April 29 (JB, PB) and in Hopkins County on May 7 (JH); no number given in either case. Louisiana Waterthrushes were fairly widespread, but numbers were small with the earliest arrival on April 2 along overflow of Cool Springs-Wysox Lake (A. Wilson fide KC); one was noted at MCFP on April 6 (FB). Kentucky Warblers arrived at Brigadoon on April 22 (RS). A Mourning Warbler was seen earlier than usual on May 3 at New Concord, Letcher County (BPB). Common Yellow-throats were late in arriving and were first observed in Barren County on April 20 (RS) and in Hopkins County on April 23 (JH); between 5 and 11 individuals daily were recorded at RCSS from May 6-25 (FB). There were only two reports of the Wilson's Warbler: first observed in LBL on May 5 (BPB, C. Rebar) and one on the University of Louisville Campus on May 18 (BM).

Tanagers through Sparrows — There was nothing impressive about the tanager migration, with several sightings around April 21-28, but no large numbers, etc. There was a good migration of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in northern Kentucky this spring with many birds at feeding stations in early May (LMc). There was a fairly early record of a bird at a feeder in Middletown, Jefferson County on March 24 (R. Klapheke fide BPB), others sighted on April 15 at BPS (KC), MNCP on April 21 (JB, PB), Falls of Rough on April 28 (KOS), Madisonville on three dates from April 24 to May 13 (JH), many in the Louisville area, and Natural Bridge State Park on April 28 (JB, PB). Blue Grosbeaks were reported from Barren, Hopkins and Grayson counties (RS, JH, KOS, KC). There were no large numbers of Indigo Buntings reported other than the 15 sighted on May 30 in Madisonville (JH). A flock of 15 Tree Sparrows was present in western Henderson County on March 11 (BPB); and one lingered at Louisville until May 6 (BBC). A Vesper Sparrow was seen at McElroy Lake on March 24 and a flock of eight at Chaney Lake with several smaller groups in Warren and Simpson counties on March 31 (BPB); also observed in lower Hickman Bottoms of Fulton County on April 3 (BPB); and three birds at East Bend and two at Camp Ernst, Boone County on April 7 (LMc). A Lark Sparrow was seen in eastern Calloway County on May 4 and 7 (BPB, with DP and J. T. Erwin on latter date). Henslow's Sparrows were singing at two locations in Breckinridge County on April 29 and May 15 (BPB); also present at the 1989 nesting area on the PKSM on May 20 (BPB, M. Bierly et al.). Interesting, too, were the three Henslow's observed on the Hopewell Church Road on May 4 (KC) and one bird on Hwy. #108 E. on April 28 (DC fide KC). At least 30 to 40 Grasshopper Sparrows were counted in southern Ohio County (no date given but probably in May — HC fide KC). Twelve Song Sparrows were counted at a few places in Hopkins County on May 30 (JH). Swamp Sparrows were present at RCSS from March 9-May 15, with a peak of 52 on March 13 (FB). There was a fair movement of White-throated Sparrows on April
25 when the birds were reported as "everywhere" in Joe Creason Park and Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve (JB, PB). The species was last recorded at Madisonville on May 20 (JH). Dark-eyed Juncos were last reported in Rowan County on April 20 (FB).

Bobolinks through Finches — There was a good movement of Bobolinks during early May with up to 125 in eastern Calloway County on May 3 (BPB); a flock of 141 west of Hebron, Boone County on May 6 (Carmen Schulte *fide* LMc); and a male, near Caneyville, Grayson County, as late as May 31 (HC *fide* KC). A flock of 1000 Red-winged Blackbirds with a few Brown-headed Cowbirds was seen on Covered Bridge Road, Oldham County on March 11 (S, FS). Fifty to 100 Rusty Blackbirds was the peak count in the vicinity of McElroy Lake on March 10 (BPB); numbers still present on March 15 (DCC). Brewer's Blackbirds peaked at 45-50 in the vicinity of McElroy Lake on March 24 (BPB), but a more impressive group of 75 and probably 100 were seen in Hickman County at Hailwell on April 3 (BPB; Bill Hendricks). Another noteworthy record was that of a female Yellow-headed Blackbird, just south of Bowling Green, Warren County on March 10 (BPB, R. Cicerello, Bob English, Camille Crenshaw). Both Orchard and Northern Orioles do not seem as numerous as usual. Purple Finches were not as numerous this spring; the peak count was only 20 at BPS on March 30 (KC); 14 birds were seen in Eva Bandman Park, Louisville on April 18 (LR); and smaller numbers at the woods at Hematite Lake in LBL (JB, PB), Beargrass Creek Nature Preserve (JB, PB), and two Louisville yards (DS, JB). Pine Siskins lingered throughout the winter in some areas, but populations increased in April when 40-50 were present at Valley Station feeders on April 19 (DS); 50 or more at BPS on April 24-30 (KC); 20-30 at Woodland Nature Center in LBL on May 4 (BPB); and last observed at BPS on May 15 (KC). The surprise at a Surrey Hills feeder was an adult Pine Siskin feeding a full grown fledgling on May 29-30 (BPB).

Contributors — Jane Bell (JB), Pat Bell (PB), Fred Busroe (FB), Joe Caminiti (JC), K. Caminiti (KC), D. C. Chaffin (DCC), Herbert Clay, Jr. (HC), Kathryn Clay (KC), Donna Coates (DC), Diane Ebel (DE), James W. Hancock (JH), Richard Healy (RH), Frank Krull, Jr. (FK), Lee McNeely (LMc), Burt L. Monroe, Jr. (BM), Mark Monroe (MM), Doxie Noonan (DN), Brainard Palmer-Ball (BPB), Lene Rauth (LR), Charles Whalen (CW).
KENTUCKY BALD EAGLE COUNT FOR 1990

James Durell, David Yancy

Target dates for the 1990 eagle census were January 11 or 12, within a time frame of January 4-18. Weather was unusually mild, with little or no ice. The state was thoroughly censused, there was severe weather up north, and a new record population (322 eagles) was reported.

Immature Bald Eagles increased from 75 to 99 but the percentage decreased from 36% to 33%. Mature birds increased from 129 to 195. Eagles on the north bank of the Ohio and west bank of the Mississippi were not counted.

Barlow Bottoms near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, was partially censused, but had a low report. Mayfield and Obion Creek bottoms were not censused.

The Ballard Waterfowl Area gained 34 eagles, Land Between the Lakes gained 58 and Lake Cumberland gained 23. The Mississippi River lost 8, Dale Hollow lost 18 and Cave Run Lake lost 7.

Table I summarizes the 1990 census, with some earlier high records. Eagles within 15 miles of similar birds previously reported were not added to the totals.

TABLE I — Kentucky Bald Eagle Census, January 4-18, 1990, with some earlier high counts.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ROUTE</th>
<th>Ad.</th>
<th>Imm.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Land Between the Lakes</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td>Blood River — S. Calloway</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Mississippi River</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89</td>
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<td>Ohio R., Carrsville-Owensboro</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Ohio R., Meade Co., Louisville</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Kentucky R., north</td>
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<td>Ohio Co., near Green River</td>
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<td>Rough River Lake</td>
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<td>Nolin R. Lake</td>
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<td>Barren R. Lake</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green R. Lake</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Lake Cumberland</td>
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<td>Cumberland R., dam to state line</td>
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<td>Cave Run Lake</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Dewey Lake</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Bald Eagles</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>301</td>
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</table>

Golden Eagles........................................7
Unidentified eagles, Ballard Co. WA..............14

* Ballard Co. Wildlife Area reported 25 adult and 17 juvenile Bald Eagles and 14 unidentified eagles. There were also 2 Bald Eagles, age unknown, on the Ohio.
† Includes Bald Eagles, age unknown.
7 Golden Eagles: 1 immature on Mississippi, 4 adults Ballard Co. WA, 1 adult above Cincinnati, 1 adult Green River Lake.
Eighty-four observers in 39 parties, reported 394 other raptors. Totals for the four preceding years are in parenthesis: Black Vulture 69 (23); Turkey Vulture 18 (10); Osprey 1; Northern Harrier 12 (19); Sharp-shinned Hawk 4 (7); Coopers Hawk 4 (5); Goshawk 1 (Yellowbank); Red-shouldered Hawk 4 (12); Red-tailed Hawk 112 (306); Rough-legged Hawk 2 (10); American Kestrel 141 (369); Merlin 1 (upper Ohio); Peregrine Falcon 3 (not verified by a biologist); unknown hawks 22; Common Barn Owl 0 (1).

Assistance of 185 participants in 86 teams is gratefully acknowledged. They represented the Kentucky Ornithological Society, federal and state Fish and Wildlife agencies, TVA, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Kentucky Dept. of Parks, Audubon Society, Bernheim Forest, Owensboro Area Museum and Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources.

— Kentucky Ornithological Society, 308 Meadow Lane, Frankfort.
— Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, Frankfort 40601.

KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP ROLL

Individual Memberships:

Abell, Jr., Mrs. Irwin, Mockingbird Valley Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Adams, Dorothy E., 3810 Klondike Ln., Louisville, KY 40218
Adams, Dr. Garrett, 2975 Lexington Rd., Louisville, KY 40206
Adler, Mr. & Mrs. Greg, 221 Weilsey Way, Paducah, KY 42003
Ahrens, Dr. Edward, 21 Autumn Hill Ct., Prospect, KY 40059
Alcock, W. C., 518 Dogwood Dr., Danville, KY 40422
Andres, Brad, 346 W. 2nd Ave., Columbus, OH 43201
Andrews, Lynda J., 304 Horseshoe Dr., Somerset, KY 42501-9258
Aylward, Janet, 1228 Lynnmar Dr., #2, Louisville, KY 40222
Bagian, Mr. & Mrs. Edward B., 302 Santee Path, Louisville, KY 40207
Ball, Mr. & Mrs. Steve, 108 Elm St., Henderson, KY 42420
Barbour, Dr. Roger W., 4880 Tates Creek Pike, Lexington, KY 40515
Barr, Mr. & Mrs. Charles C., 463 Swing Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Bauer, Mr. & Mrs. Williams E., 119 N. Birchwood Ave., Louisville, KY 40206
Beck, Dorothy, 532 S. Ft. Thomas Ave., Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
Bell, Frances, 929 Walnut Park Dr., Owensboro, KY 42301
Bell, Jane & Pat, 306 Fairlawn Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Bell, John D., 169 Smith-Ballard Apt. A, Richmond, KY 40475
Beria, Patricia, 3106 Lime Kiln Ln., Louisville, KY 40222
Bitey, Phillip & Joan, 13800 Fairway Ln., Goshen, KY 40026
Black, Mrs. Lois, 1307 Nassau Ave., Owensboro, KY 42301
Blackwell, J. Mark, 2825 Lexington Rd., Box 1025, Louisville, KY 40280-1025
Blahnik, Mr. & Mrs. Roland, 5806 Bonfire Dr., Louisville, KY 40207-2216
Blakemore, Jr., Neville, 424 Mayfair Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Block, Mr. & Mrs. Austin, 7410 Moreland Rd., Louisville, KY 40222
Boggs, Earl, 1645 Logana Rd., Nicholasville, KY 40356
Boggs, Gary, 568 Hammet Hill Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Boone, Bette, 910 Ann Mark Ct., Elizabethtown, KY 42701
Borders, Melanie, 1121 Ellison Ave., Louisville, KY 40204
Boswell, Bess, 4401 Mt. Vernon Rd., Louisville, KY 40220
Bowman, Karen, 2910 Brinkley Way, #1, Louisville, KY 40218
Bowman, Kate, 1711 Richmond Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Bowne, Mr. & Mrs. Edward, 1321 Woodmere Ln., Owensboro, KY 42301
Boyd, Paul & Elizabeth, 8601 Shelbyville Rd., Louisville, KY 40222
Brandon, Elizabeth, 2205 Grandview Dr., Floyds Knobs, IN 47119
Bray, Mr. & Mrs. James, 5850 Rollingwood Trail, Louisville, KY 40214
Brendel, Col. Jo, 726 Fairhill Dr., Louisville, KY 40207
Brines, Wally, RR #6, Box 214, Murray, KY 42071
Brown, Mike, 6148 Scott Ct., Owensboro, KY 42303-9736
Brown, Mrs. Randolph, 507 Country Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Brown, J. Jones, Robert, 47 Sterling Rd., Louisville, KY 40220
Brown, William H., 527½ Main St., Shelbyville, KY 40065
Bruce, Joseph & Sandy, 825 Fountain Ave., Louisville, KY 40222
Bryant, Mrs. Glen W., 527 Ridgewood Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Bullock, Anderson & Dorothy, RR #2, Box 2145, Bates City, MO 64011-9802
Burdine, Lola, 1840 Gresham Rd., Louisville, KY 40205
Burns, Mike, 4189 Heartwood Rd., Lexington, KY 40515
Burns Mr. & Mrs. G. L., 5742 Athens-Walnut Hill Rd., Lexington, KY 40515
Burns, Roland Louis, 939 Bolts Fork, Rush, KY 41168
Busroe, Mr. & Mrs. Fred, 80 Green Valley Acres, Morehead, KY 40351
Caminiti, Joe & Kathy, RR #2, Box 44D Hopewell Rd., Crittenden, KY 40030
Carroll, Elaine, 2314 Rice Pike, Union, KY 41091
Caruso, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph T., 1203 Ekin Ave., New Albany, IN 47150
Cary, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur, 4001 Napanee Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Cassell, Richard, 4003 Poplar Level Rd., Louisville, KY 40213
Chaffin, Dr. David, 1606 Everhart Dr., N.W., Cleveland, TN 37311-1523
Chambers, Harriet, P. O. Box 47, Hazel, KY 42049
Check, II, John A., Box 421, 116 Caroline Blvd., Penny Farms, FL 32079
Chenault, William T., 4003 Winchester Rd., Mt. Sterling, KY 40353
Clapp, Roger B., Museum Specialist, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC 20560
Clay, Dr. & Mrs. Herbert, 434 Mallard Creek Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Coates, Mr. & Mrs. Roger, Rt. #1, Box 124, Cox's Creek, KY 40013
Colburn, Mrs. Ralph, 614 Wallace Ave., Louisville, KY 40207
Coleman, Mrs. Caroline H., 1701 N/W 24th St., Gainesville, FL 32605
Coleman, Roger & Roberta, RR #3, Box 88, Campton Rd., Floyds Knobs, IN 47119-9402
Conner, Glenn, 9216 Holland Rd., Scottsville, KY 42164
Conrad, Mr. & Mrs. E. J., RR #2, Box 31, Gilbertsville, KY 42044
Coombs, Shirley, 4605 Ky. 81, Owensboro, KY 42301
Cooper, Mrs. Mildred, 102 Marshall Dr., Apt. #2, Louisville, KY 40207
Cornett, Manton R., 482 Denver Ln., Lexington, KY 40503
Corya, Betty, 9112 Wilson Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46278
Curse, Mr. & Mrs. Randall, 270 Forest Hill, Hodgenville, KY 42748
Curry, Lloyd, P. O. Box 59, Greensburg, KY 42743
Cypert, Mrs. Eugene, P. O. Box 1344, Waycross, GA 31502
Cypert, Mr. Eugene, P. O. Box 1344, Waycross, GA 31502
Dahl, Wayne, 7706 Dominique Dr., Louisville, KY 40228
Danak, Dorothy L., 2015 Grasmere, Louisville, KY 40205
Davis, Mrs. Lawrence, 28 Pawnee Terrace, Louisville, KY 40207
Davis, Dr. Wayne H., 130 Jesselin Dr., Lexington, KY 40503
Davis, Mr. & Mrs. David, 10117 Closterwood Dr., Louisville, KY 40229
De St. Croix, Brian C., Rosewood Hill Farm, RR 3, Box 61-A, Elizabeth, IN 47117
Doolittle, Mrs. William B., 2215 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Dubke, Kenneth H., 8139 Roy Ln., Ooltewah, TN 37363
Duffy, Robert J., 1352 S. 6th St., Louisville, KY 40208
Durell, James, 308 Meadow Ln., Frankfort, KY 40601
Eaden, Mrs. Tony, 12784 U.S. 231, Utica, KY 42376
Ebel, Diane, 222 Bonner Ave., Louisville, KY 40207
Eff, Jane, 125 Pennsylvania Ave., Louisville, KY 40206
Eklund, Mr. & Mrs. Neil, 130 Winterhawk Ln., Danville, KY 40422
Elam, Mr. & Mrs. Gary, 515 Main St., West Liberty, KY 41472
Elliott, Charles, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475
Elliott, George, c/o Helmwood Medical Ctr. Pharmacy, N. 31 W, Elizabethtown, KY 42701
Elliison, Candy Currin/Kyle, 185 North Bellaire, Louisville, KY 40206
Elmore, Mr. & Mrs. Jackie B., 1940 Heaton-Ford Rd., Science Hill, KY 42553
Elred, Mr. & Mrs. Marshal P., 515 Club Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Embry, Mr. & Mrs. Richard, RR #4, Box 193 A, Shelbyville, KY 40065
Erwin, Joe Tom, H C Box 152-5, New Concord, KY 40065
Eubank, Mr. & Mrs. Harold, 615 Roseview Terrace, New Albany, IN 47150
Ewing, Mr. Niels O., 840 River Dell Ct., Louisville, KY 40206
Ferrell, Dr. Blaine R., Biology Dept., Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101
Figg, Steven Arthur, 1040 Everett Ave., #3, Louisville, KY 40204
Finley, John & Linda Stahl, 1512 Schuff Ln., Louisville, KY 40205
Finucane, Thomas W., 1434 Watauga St., Kingsport, TN 37664
Fisher, Mrs. Stanley, 102 Kristi Ln., Bolivar, TN 38008
Fisher, W. B., 6705 Bedford Ln., Louisville, KY 40222
Flynn, Mr. & Mrs. Michael B., 218 Shady Ln., Lexington, KY 40503
Ford, Dr. & Mrs. Jerald M., 800 Rogers Ct., Ashland, KY 41101
Ford, James B., Box 808, Warsaw, KY 40085
Ford, Joseph M., 1917 Merriewood Dr., Owensboro, KY 42301-4915
Foster, Tobin, 210 S. Alta Ave., Danville, KY 40422
Franck, Mildred, 4520 Cordova Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Frazer, Chastain, Box 246, Marion, KY 42064
Freeman, Mr. & Mrs. Donovan, P. O. Box 861, Bowling Green, KY 42102
Fulkerson, Mrs. Samuel C., 1021 Watterson Trail, Louisville, KY 40299
Garst, Mrs. John, 1001 Glenridge Dr., Apt. #213, Louisville, KY 40242
Gillenwater, Mrs. James E., P. O. Box 526, Glasgow, KY 42141
Glover, Miriam Anne, 210 Crescent Ave., Louisville, KY 40206
Goldman, Mrs. George, Rt. 1, Box 154, New Salisbury, IN 47161
Gorman, Mr. & Mrs. Patrick, 4300 Talahi Way, Louisville, KY 40207
Graves, Jr., Mrs. Stuart, 116 Sweetbriar Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Gray, Willard, 500 Marywood Dr., Henderson, KY 42420
Greene, Jr., Dr. William C., P. O. Box 706, Sandy Hook, KY 41171
Greenwell, Miss Mary Lydia, 2541 Griffith Ave., Owensboro, KY 42301
Groneman, Ed, 4213 Farmwood Ct., Erlanger, KY 41018
Guthrie, Charles, 1660 Normal Dr., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Haag, Wendell, 3052 Wilce Ave., Columbus, OH 43202
Haight, LaJuanda, 950 Tierra Linda Dr., #1, Frankfort, KY 40601-4675
Hall, Dr. Sue, 1904 Lynn Way, Louisville, KY 40222
Hancock, Dr. Hunter, Rt. #2, Box 80 K, Buchanan, TN 38222
Hancock, Mrs. Hunter, Rt. #2, Box 80 K, Buchanan, TN 38222
Hancock, James W., 235 Beagle Park Loop, Madisonville, KY 42431-9701
Hankla, Scott, 934 Brookhaven Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601
Hardesty, Adrienne, 209 Franklin St., Jeffersonville, IN 47130
Harker, Mr. & Mrs. George S., 10016 Prairie Dr., Valley Station, KY 40272
Harm, Mr. Ray, Walking H. Ranch, Sasabe Star Rt., Box 95A3, Tucson, AZ 85736
Harpole, Jr., Mr. Bill, 2416 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206
Hartung, Bertha Ann, 925 North Elm St., Henderson, KY 42420
Haswell, Mr. & Mrs. William, 2619 Drayton Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Hawkins, Mr. & Mrs. Jeffery, 6920 Mt. Vernon Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45227
Head, Mr. & Mrs. Robert W., Box 2438, Art Department, Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071
Heck, Edna D., 3310 Tates Creek Rd., #607, Lexington, KY 40502-3408
Hecdorke, Dr. & Mrs. R. L., 2316 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Hedge, Roger, Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, 605 State Office Bldg., Indianapolis, IN 46204
Hedgepath, Steve & Marty, 2319 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Helfrich, Mr. Eric, RR #3, RD 375N, Churubusco, IN 46723
Henderson, Mrs. Sue, 4028 Leland Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Hensel, Rose M., 7030 Corydon Ridge Rd., Lanesville, IN 47136
Hill, Mr. & Mrs. James, 14 Rio Vista Dr., Louisville, KY 40207
Hill, Mr. & Mrs. James H., 5787 Brandt Pike, Huber Heights, OH 45424-4365
Hinkle, Mr. & Mrs. Wayne, 7504 Millet Place, Crestwood, KY 40014
Hodges, Mrs. Carolyn, 141 Waters Edge Dr., Somerset, KY 42501
Hokons, Richard, 2210 Edinborough Dr., Murray, KY 42071
Holstein, W. R., 3307 Fine Needle Ln., Louisville, KY 40241
Homan, Marilyn, 3017 Brownstown Rd., #2, Louisville, KY 40206
Hook, Mrs. O. F., Box 146, Prospect, KY 40059
Horrar, Jean, 189 N. Broadway, Berea, KY 40403
Howard, Barry, 998 Levi Jackson Rd., London, KY 40741
Howard, Janet, 3534 Parrish Ave., Owensboro, KY 42301
Huang, Mary, 4407 Comanche Trail, Louisville, KY 40207
Hughes, Jr., Henry J., 2826 Adams Ave., Ashland, KY 41101
Hulvershorn, Tom K., 6014 Indainola, Indianapolis, IN 46220
Hyatt, Carol, 6313 Mint Spring Branch, Prospect, KY 40059
Iles, Mr. & Mrs. Raymond, 2223 St. James Ct., Owensboro, KY 42301
Jackson, Jerome, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Drawer # Z, Miss. State Univ., Starkville, MS 39762
Jackson, Mr. & Mrs. Wilbur F., 4910 Manslick Rd., Louisville, KY 40216
Jenkins, Mr. & Mrs. Stuart, 1215 Tranquil Dr., Jeffersonville, IN 47130
Jenkinson, Marian, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2454
Johnson, George, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Arkansas Technical University, Russellville, AR 72801
Johnson, Mrs. C. T., 1214 Summit Ave., Louisville, KY 40204
Johnson, Thomas & Marilyn, 4606 Tween Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Johnston, Rev. Carol, 319 Idlewyld, Apt. 3, Louisville, KY 40206
Jones, Dr. Hunt B., 1371 Bardstown Rd., Louisville, KY 40204
Jones, Jeffrey, Box 156, Bowling Green, KY 42102-0156
Jones, Joe & Barbara, 31 Brownstown Hill Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Jones, Mr. & Mrs. Howard M., 108 W. Brown St., Glasgow, KY 42141
Jones, Mr. & Mrs. Howard P., 2061 Switzer Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601
Jones, Stephen & Cheryl, 11110 Halkirk Place, Louisville, KY 40243
Jordan, Carol & Foster, 1703 Barnes Mill Rd., Richmond, KY 40475
Karem, Kenneth L., 126 Crescent Ave., Louisville, KY 40206
Kathman, Clare, 3081 Cameo Ln., Cincinnati, OH 45239
Keller, Ned, 7066 Wesselman Rd., Cleves, OH 45002
Kemper, Mr. & Mrs. Wesley, 8735 Linton Rd., Cadiz, KY 42211
Kemper, William, 412 N. Maple Ave., Danville, KY 40422
Kennedy, Mrs. Edward T., 38 East 4th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202
Kickert, Steve, 701 Cherry Grove Rd., Somerset, KY 42501
Kingsolver, Dr. Wendell R., RR #2, Carlisle, KY 40311
Kingsolver, Mrs. Virginia, RR #2, Carlisle, KY 40311
Kirkland, L. B., 8757 Williams Ln., Lexington, KY 40515
Kistler, Steve, RR #3, Box 114-A, Munfordville, KY 42765
Kleen, Vernon M., RR #2, Athens, IL 62613
Knight, Rick, 804 N. Hills Dr., Johnson City, TN 37601
Korfhage, Harriet A., 2001 Glenview Ave., Louisville, KY 40222
Kornmam, Lewis, 2001 Glenview Ave., Louisville, KY 40222
Krieger, Mrs. William, 130 Maple Ave., Haworth, NJ 07641
Kruger, Helen, 6706 Fegenbush Ln., Louisville, KY 40223
Krull, Frank H., 418 LaFontenay Ct., Louisville, KY 40223
Krull, Mr. & Mrs. Frank X., 7304 Shadwell Ln., Prospect, KY 40059
Kuhl, Frances, 11819 Garr Ave., Louisville, KY 40223
Kuhl, Martha, 11819 Garr Ave., Louisville, KY 40223
Kurfees, Dr. James F., Dept. of Family Practice, 550 S. Jackson, Louisville, KY 40202
Lacy, Mr. & Mrs. Don, 2809 Aldergate, Owensboro, KY 42301
Lash, Gene & Audrey, 1421 Woodcrest Manor Ct., #A, Ballwin, MO 63021-8456
Lashbrook, Mrs. Emogene, 1625 Dean Ave., Owensboro, KY 42301
Lawrence, Col. Austin R., 92 Foster Ln., Palm Coast, FL 32137
Lawson, Mr. & Mrs. Sam, Red Bird Mission, HC 69, Box 575, Beverly, KY 40913
Leedam, Sarah, 710 Vine St., Murray, KY 42071
Leggett, Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth, P. O. Box 1609, Dyersburg, TN 38025
Lehman, Robert G., 501 Ridgewood Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Lemons, John W., 104 Loftus Dr., Hopkinsville, KY 42240
Lemons, Mrs. John W., 104 Loftus Dr., Hopkinsville, KY 42240
Lewis, Dr. Jerry, 217 W. Carter Ave., Clarksville, IN 47130
Lindsay, Colin, 1222 Cherokee Rd. (Carriage House), Louisville, KY 40204
Little, Ernestine W., Box 81, Mousie, KY 41839
Lodato, Michael J., 325 Park Plaza Dr., Evansville, IN 47715
Loetscher, Jr., Dr. Frederick W., 2064 Cardinal Dr., Danville, KY 40422
Loe, Timothy, 3011 University Rd., Louisville, KY 40206
Maclean, Father John S., 401 Lagrange Rd., Peewee Valley, KY 40056
Mankelover, Mr. & Mrs. Gary, 7513 Briarwood Dr., Crestwood, KY 40014
Mansmith, Fred & Colleen, 425 S. Hubbards Ln., #255, Louisville, KY 40207
Marion, Mr. & Mrs. H. P., 7402 Lanfair Dr., Louisville, KY 40222
Marksberry, Jeff & Debbie, 148 Northbd Rd., Hebron, KY 41048
Marshall, Mitchell, P. O. Box 477, Grayson, KY 41143
Martin, M.D., Jery W., 1167 31W By Pass, Bowling Green, KY 42101
Martin, Mrs. Francis W., 2114 Starmont, Louisville, KY 40207
Martin, Mrs. Spencer F., 1703 Clayton Rd., Louisville, KY 40206
Martin, Mr. & Mrs. P. K. 2290 Dublin Arbor Ln., Dublin, OH 43017
Mason, Wayne, 925 Park St., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Mastrangelo, Philip, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P. O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241
Mathes, Mr. & Mrs. William B., 2712 Thompson Dr., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Maxson, Mrs. Betty, 1076 Spurlock Ln., Nicholasville, KY 40356
McBeath, Mr. & Mrs. James, 4226 Telovi Ct., Louisville, KY 40241
McCandless, Judith, 330 Wildwood Place, Louisville, KY 40206
McFarland, Mr. & Mrs. James, 8406 Robin Hill Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
McIntyre, Robert & Judith, 604 Jarvis Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
McKee, Steven M., 1594 Kings Corner Rd., Lexington, OH 44904
McKinley, Dr. George G., 106 Central Ave., P. O. Box Drawer B, Glasgow, KY
42141
McKune, Miss Marie E., 3703 Warner Ave., Louisville, KY 40207
McNeely, Lee K., Box 463, Burlington, KY 41005
Meier, Evelyn, 6400 Chenoweth Run Rd., Louisville, KY 40299-5150
Meriwether, B. Corbin, 287 N. 38th St., Paducah, KY 42002-7032
Merker, Mr. & Mrs. Steve, 1409 Rosewood Ave., Louisville, KY 40204
Metzger, Mr. & Mrs. Ted R., 3107 Dunlieth Ct., Louisville, KY 40241
Middleton, Cap, P. O. Box 639, Munfordville, KY 42765
Miller, Dr. Michael G., Rt. #2, Box 114-A, Murray, KY 42071
Mitchell, Mrs. Thomas K., 3209 Beals Branch Rd., Louisville, KY 40206
Monohan, Alice, P. O. Box 7862, Louisville, KY 40207
Monroe, Jr., Dr. & Mrs. Burt, Dept. of Biology, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40208
Morford, Dr. & Mrs. Jack T., Rt. #4, Carlisle, KY 40311
Morgan, Mr. & Mrs. Allen F., 1701 Continental Dr., Madisonville, KY 42431
Moriarty, Mr. & Mrs. Edwin, 2017 Bainbridge Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Morris, Mr. Robert L., 219 Taylor Dr., Lexington, KY 40505
Mosley, Charlotte, Rt. 2, Box 96, Beaver Dam, KY 42230
Moss, Mrs. Ronald, P. O. Box 579, Cynthiana, KY 41031
Mowery, Carl D., 1406 Vine St., Murray, KY 42071
Mudd, Mrs. Charles, 4107 Ciremos Terrace, Louisville, KY 40241
Mullen, Andrew, 3047 Corydon Pike, New Albany, IN 47150
Muntan, Mrs. J. V., 3216 Bon Air, Louisville, KY 40220
Needham, Mr. Mark, 5402 Apache Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Nelson, Deloris H., 2057 Greentree Dr., Richmond, KY 40475
Nelson, Lee K., 6651 U.S. 431, Owensboro, KY 42301
Newton, Mary, 2209 Napoleon Blvd., Louisville, KY 40205
Nichols, James, 5304 Oak Creek Ln., Louisville, KY 40291
Nicholson, Debbie, 2008 Evergreen Rd., Louisville, KY 40223
Nielhoff, P. Tim, 1715 Dundee Way, Louisville, KY 40205
Nightingale, Austin, 6900 U.S. Hwv. 42, Louisville, KY 40241
Noel, Mrs. Joan N., 645 Foxfire Rd., Elizabethtown, KY 42701
Noonan, Doxie, 1915 Redleaf Dr., Louisville, KY 40242
Noonan, Dr. Robert, 721 Executive Park, Louisville, KY 40207
Osborn, Virginia E., 1023 Parkway Dr., Louisville, KY 40217
O’Hara, Patricia, Rt. #2, Box 370, Marion, KY 42064
Palmer-Ball, Sr., Mr. & Mrs. Brainard, 8207 Old Westport Rd., Louisville, KY 40222
Parker, Donald, 5705 Midnight Ln., Louisville, KY 40229
Partin, Foley, Box 182, Star Rt., Clearfield, KY 40313
Pasikowski, Mr. & Mrs. James C., 317 Iola Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Passmore, Barry, Rt. #1, Box 567, South Point, OH 45680
Patrick, Robert P., 2222 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Peak, Dr. & Mrs. William P. 19 Eastover Ct., Louisville, KY 40206
Peake, Dr. Richard H., F. O. Box 28, Wise, VA 24293
Perkins, William T., 3720 Marseille Dr., Owensboro, KY 42301
Peterson, Dr. Clell T., 901 N. 18th St., Murray, KY 42071
Pfingst, Dorothy, 199 Westwind Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Phillips, Donna, 4838 Boxwood Dr., Owensboro, KY 42303
Pike, Mrs. Robert L., 2143 Goldsmith Ln., Louisville, KY 40218
Pitts, Dr. David, Biology Dept., UTM, Martin, TN 38237
Porter, Mrs. Edwin, 1820 Evergreen Rd., Anchorage, KY 40223
Porter, Joyce, P. O. Box 555, Fall of Rough, KY 40019
Poundstone, Mrs. Bruce, 130 Hamilton Park, Lexington, KY 40504
Powell, Mrs. A. L., 9122 Hwy. 405, Maceo, KY 42355
Powell, Mr. A. L. 9122 Hwy. 405, Maceo, KY 42355
Prather, Kerry, 5060 Louisville Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601
Pratt, William, 212 Oakhill Dr., Oxford, OH 45056
Raleigh, R. Glenn, 1558 Samara Glen Way, Lexington, KY 40502-5393
Rauth, Mrs. Lene, 106 E. Maple Ct., Clarksville, IN 47129
Read, Gordon, 3031 Eagle Pass, Louisville, KY 40217
Reed, Dr. Robert G., 1919 Sussex Place, Owensboro, KY 42301
Reed, Mrs. Robert G., 1919 Sussex Place, Owensboro, KY 42301
Richardson, Mrs. Nancy E., 2045 Alves Ferry Rd., Henderson, KY 42420
Rickett, Mr. & Mrs. Jon, 804 Dogwood Dr., Elizabethtown, KY 42701
Ricketts, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur, 412 Center St., Berea, KY 40403
Riggs, Mr. & Mrs. Michael, 3804 Willmar Ave., Louisville, KY 40218
Rigli, Joseph C., 6877 C. Road 14, Ft. Morgan, CO 80701
Ritchison, Gary, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475
Robinson, Harriet M., 608 Creasbrook, Louisville, KY 40206
Roberts, Edwards, 204 Wyckcliff Dr., Otisco, IN 47163
Roberts, Waldon, 3792 Illinois Ave., Louisville, KY 40213
Robertson, Richard R. Phil; Rt. #1, Box 26-B, Brownstown, IN 47220
Robinson, Mrs. Ann, 207 Elizabeth St., Elizabethtown, KY 42701
Robinson, Mark, 3501 Pimlico Pkwy., #48, Lexington, KY 40517
Robinson, Mrs. Vera, 3501 Pimlico Pkwy., #48, Lexington, KY 40517
Roman, Christopher, 7802 Lesane Dr., Louisville, KY 40214
Rommel, Mrs. Virginia, 134 N. Peterson, #8, Louisville, KY 40206
Rowe, William C., 9033 Big Bend, St. Louis, MO 63119
Royer, Lawrence, 235 S. 900 West, Cedar City, UT 84720
Russell, Mr. H. Joseph, 763 McBreyer Dr., Harrodsburg, KY 40330
Rust, Delbert H., 885 North St., Columbus, IN 47203
Rutledge, C. E., 234 Kelly Dr., Glasgow, KY 42141
Sandlin, Dr. Dennis, P. O. Box 7069, Hazard, KY 41702
Sandlin, Eileen W., Box 21, Buckhorn, KY 41721
Schneider, Miss Evelyn J., 211 W. Oak, #922, Louisville, KY 40203
Scheetzler, Mr. Frank W., 180 Edgewood Dr., Louisville, KY 40243
Schulte, Carmen, 6506 Camp Ernest Rd., Burlington, KY 41005
Schultz, Carl J., 501 Old Stone Ln., Louisville, KY 40207
Schutte, Helga, #11 Green Hill, 3017 Brownsboro Rd., Louisville, KY 40206
Selvidge, Mr. & Mrs. Roger, 904 North Dr., Hopkinsville, KY 42240
Shadowen, Dr. Herbert, 1927 Cedar Ridge Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Shannon, Mr. & Mrs. Francis P., 3021 Eagle Pass, Louisville, KY 40217
Sherrell, Michael, 317 Idlewyld Dr., #4, Louisville, KY 40206
Sherwood, Shari Seeders, HC RI, Box 330, New Concord, KY 42076
Sherwood, Tom, HC RI, Box 330, New Concord, KY 42076
Short, Mrs. Eugene, 1566 Eastview Ave., Louisville, KY 40205
Smith, Lawrence D., 7010 Bearcreek Dr., Louisville, KY 40207
Smith, Mr. Tony, 1614 Deerwood Ave., Louisville, KY 40205-1004
Smock, Mr. & Mrs. William, 409 Mockingbird Valley Rd., Louisville, KY 40207
Snyder, David, Department of Biology, Austin Peay University, Clarksville, TN 37044
Sparks, Larry, 211 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205
Spencer, Dr. Donnie, P. O. Box 1129, Hazard, KY 41701
Stamm, F. W., 9101 Spokane Way, Louisville, KY 40241-2425
Stamm, Mrs. F. W., 9101 Spokane Way, Louisville, KY 40241-2425
Starks, Randolph & Linda, 2212 Sieger Villa Ct., Louisville, KY 40218-1543
Starr, Dr. & Mrs. Russell, Rt. #7, Glasgow, KY 42141
Steffen, Ted & Pam, 2404 Park Boundary Rd., Louisville, KY 40205
Steffert, Dr. & Mrs. Arthur, P. O. Box 72361, Valley Station, KY 40272
Stephens, Mr. & Mrs. Tom, 1884 Hidden Springs, Burlington, KY 41005
Stevenson, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas, P. O. Box #7, Stanley, KY 42375
Stinson, Michael C., 107 Fenley, #N8, Louisville, KY 40207
Stokes, Mrs. Louise B., 276 Water Tower Rd., Cadiz, KY 42211
Straughan, Dr. Marion, Box 856, Wise, VA 24293
Sturgeon, Mitchell, 308 Walnut St., Cave City, KY 42127
Sullivan, Mrs. James, 2332 Manchester Rd., Louisville, KY 40205
Summerfield, Donald P., 9910 Prairie Dr., Valley Station, KY 40272
Susie, Mrs. Alfred G., 3105 Haddon Rd., Louisville, KY 40222
Sutton, E. Marie, 2634 Westmoreland Rd., Lexington, KY 40511
Tarbox, Jeff & Kim, 827 Carter Ave., Ashland, KY 41101
Taylor, Dot, 106 Kratz Ln., Middletown, KY 40248
Thacker, Sr., Mr. & Mrs. Ralph, 1738 Freeman Ave., Owensboro, KY 42301
Theiss, Dr. & Mrs. Chester, 1508 Valley Vista, Borden, IN 47106
Thomas, Dr. Betty E., 1106 Cherokee Rd., #6, Louisville, KY 40204-1261
Thomas, Mrs. Ben Allen, Chenoweth Farm, Shelbyville, KY 40065
Thompson, Dr. Pete, Moore 235, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475
Thompson, Dr. Ralph L., CPO 2325, Berea, KY 40404
Trapp, John L., 400 W. Burke St., Martinsburg, WV 25401
Triner, Ed, 5601 Coach Gate Wynde, #26, Louisville, KY 40207
Tucker, William T., 61 Main St., Kingston, NH 03848
Tungland, Barry, 4608 Hwy. #53 South, Crestwood, KY 40014
Tyler, William, 2309 Mayfair Dr., Owensboro, KY 42301
Utherhart, Dr. & Mrs. Andrew, 469 Stratford Dr., Lexington, KY 40509
Vail, Mr. & Mrs. Robert T., 3920 Altwood Ct., Anchorage, KY 40245
Voit, Betty, 690 Wataga Dr., Louisville, KY 40206
Walter, Mary, 220 Pennsylvania Ave., Louisville, KY 40206-1540
Washburn, Mr. & Mrs. Steve, 1231 Bardstown Rd., #5, Louisville, KY 40204
Weatherby, Alfred Dudley & Nancy, 223 N. Madison Ave., Middletown, KY 40424
Webb, Larry W., 10730 Barren River Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Wedekind, Carl, 3226 Boxhill Ln., Louisville, KY 40222-6105
Wells, Mrs. Herbert, 105 Ashford Dr.,Winchetser, KY 40391
Westerman, Mr. & Mrs. Albert, 715 Bellaire Ave., Lexington, KY 40508
Whalen, Dr. Charles, 152 Minkelson Dr., Florence, KY 41042
Whitt, Professor A. L., Department of Biology, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475
Whittington, Ann, 612 Brightwood Ct., #3, Louisville, KY 40207
Wickersham, Janet, 2757 Northmont Ln., Richmond, IN 47374
Wiglesworth, Mr. William, Box 386, Cynthiana, KY 41038
Wiley, Jr., Dr. R. Haven, 102 Keith Rd., Carrboro, NC 27510
Wilhelmi, Mr. & Mrs. Keith, 2913 Cambridge Rd., Louisville, KY 40220
Williams, Morris D., Box 167, Rt. #5, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464
Williams, Mr. & Mrs. James M., 480 Seeley Dr., Lexington, KY 40502
Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Robert, 3417 Barclay Dr., Louisville, KY 40299
Willing, D. Sherrill, 4005 Bowen Circle, P. O. Box 540, Crestwood, KY 40014
Wilson, Mrs. F. Eugene, #5 Park View Dr., Bowling Green, KY 42101
Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Ed, 1220 S. KY 279-S, Owensboro, KY 42301
Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Montelle, 1863 Elizabethtown Rd., Leitchfield, KY 42754
Wissinger, Greg, 2709 Grinstead Dr., #2, Louisville, KY 40206
Wolanin, Janet, 118 S. Birchwood, Louisville, KY 40206
Worthington, Charles, 1019 Worthington Rd., Owensboro, KY 42301
Wright, Miss Audrey, 1312 Hepburn Ave., Louisville, KY 40204
Yater, Marjory, 417 Belgravia Ct., Louisville, KY 40208
Young, John H., Rt. #3, Bedford, KY 40006
Young, M.D., Paul G., 1401 Harrodsburg Rd., #A550, Lexington, KY 40504
Zimmerman, Mr. Herbert M., 1363 Tyler Park Dr., Louisville, KY 40204
Zollner, Mr. Raymond J., 3126 Dogwood Dr., Louisville, KY 40220

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FIELD NOTES

A NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL SPECIMEN FROM KENTUCKY

Among several frozen specimens obtained from Gene Boaz, a raptor rehabilitator from Paducah, was a Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). The owl was captured in Pryorsburg, Graves County on 26 November 1988, given to Boaz the same day, and died in a cage that night.

I prepared the owl as a study skin (GEW 5852). It was an adult-plumaged male (testes 4x1) weighing only 60.0 g, somewhat emaciated, with no fat. The longest primaries on each wing are broken. I suspect this occurred during the overnight in the cage. The remainder of the plumage is in good condition. I detected no molt. Sequential wear of the undamaged primaries suggests the owl was hatched in 1988 (Evans and Rosenfield pp. 209-214 in Nero et al. eds. 1987. Biology and conservation of northern forest owls: symposium proceedings. U.S.D.A. General Tech. Rpt. RM-142). The stomach was empty. Emaciation is supported by the fact that the average weight of male Saw-whet Owls is considerably heavier at 74.9g (Earhart and Johnson. 1970. Condor 72:251-264.)

The recent “Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Kentucky” (Monroe, Stamm, Palmer-Ball. 1988.) describes the species as an “extremely rare spring, fall and winter visitant,” and lists 13 records. These 13 records are concentrated in northern Kentucky extending west to Land Between the Lakes, which is a short distance from Graves County. I suspect this secretive species is far more regular in Kentucky than currently realized. Perhaps playing recordings of their calls would test this idea.

It is a pleasure to donate the specimen (now UL 6269) to the growing collections at the University of Louisville, which are under the care of Burt L. Monroe, Jr. I thank my mother, Ethel Woolfenden, of Paducah for establishing the contact with Gene Boaz.

— GLEN E. WOOLFENDEN, Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

NOTES ON BREEDING BIRDS OF THE RECLAIMED SURFACE MINES IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

During the winter of 1988-89, a number of noteworthy bird records were reported from the extensive, reclaimed surface mines of Ohio and
Muhlenberg counties (see KW 65:31-38, 1989). These observations helped fuel enthusiasm for investigating the possibility that the reclaimed mines held good potential for unique breeding records, as well. During late May and June 1989, as part of the Kentucky Breeding Bird Atlas Project, we devoted approximately a week of field time to making a preliminary investigation of the breeding avifauna of the reclaimed surface mines in a portion of the Shawnee Hills (Western Coalfield). In addition, several subsequent visits were made later in the year to follow up on earlier observations. Efforts were focused on Ohio and Muhlenberg counties where earlier observations suggested the probability of nesting of Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*): On November 25, Don Parker and Palmer-Ball observed three Great Blue Heron nests in a mature deciduous tree situated on the shore of a small impoundment on the Peabody 20th Century Mine in southern Ohio County. Subsequent conversation with K.O.S. member Tony Eaden brought to light the fact that he had observed these same nests as early as 1987, and that successful nesting had occurred there at least once. During the November 1989 observation, single birds were seen perched on two of the three nests. This record represents an eastward extension of the nesting range of the Great Blue Heron in Kentucky of approximately 50 miles and is the first documentation of a rookery composed of only a few pairs of this species in the state.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*): The Northern Harrier or Marsh Hawk was reported nesting in the “Barrens” of Kentucky by Audubon in the early 1800s and vague reference was made to nesting in Nelson County in 1927 (Mengel, *Birds of Kentucky*, p. 218). Otherwise, the harrier has been reported only occasionally during summer, and without further evidence of nesting, from a few localities scattered across the western two-thirds of the state.

On the afternoon of May 26, we visited the reclaimed Peabody Sinclair Mine in eastern Muhlenberg County and began the task of studying the movements of several pairs of harriers. We focused our attention on a broad expanse of mixed grasses and forbs surrounded by gentle slopes where both a pair of Northern Harriers and a pair of Short-eared Owls seemed to have territories. Interestingly, both individuals of the pair of Harriers were brown in plumage and somewhat difficult to tell apart, but paired behavior was evident and we assumed the male to be a sub-adult. Although we were able to watch the pair of harriers for an extended period that afternoon, it was not until the morning of May 26 that Barron felt confident he had identified a spot in the tall grasses where repeated visits by the birds made probability of a nest site worthy of further investigation. We approached the site by foot, and when we were within 50 feet of it a harrier bolted from the ground. We walked up to the spot to find a loose, rather bulky mat of dead grasses and weed stalks built on the ground upon which lay two pale blue-green eggs. The nest was situated about halfway down a gentle, south-facing slope dominated by fescue (*Festuca* sp.) and yellow sweet-clover (*Melilotus officinalis*). After taking several photographs, we retreated and did not bother the site again. On June 8, Palmer-Ball returned to the nest site only to find one egg crushed and lying in the nest and the other lying intact in the grass off to the side. It is unknown whether or not our action caused abandonment or predation of the nest; but it was felt as though visiting the nest could have contributed to its failure. Another factor that may have been involved was the age of the...
pair. Since the male was still in brown plumage, it was probably only a year old and, thus inexperience may have also contributed to the demise of the nest. It is unknown whether or not this is the first documentation of a sub-adult bird attempting to nest.

Nearly within sight of the hunting range of this pair of harriers was the apparent home range of a second pair. The gray-plumaged male was observed engaging in courtship flight on several occasions and the pair seemed to work over one broad valley, indicating a probable nest site there. Having already found an active nest in the vicinity, we did not investigate the actions of this pair further, fearing that discovery of a nest might lead to predation or abandonment. In mid-October, Palmer-Ball revisited the general area of both pairs' territories and found no less than seven juvenile birds foraging within sight of one another. Several of the young birds were observed hunting together and engaging in casual aerial battles, suggesting they might be brood mates.

Just to the east, across the Green River in southwestern Ohio County, we discovered a second Northern Harrier nest later on the afternoon of May 26 on a reclaimed portion of the Peabody Ken Mine. This pair of adult birds was observed for nearly three quarters of an hour before we were able to determine the probable location of a nest when the gray-plumaged male dropped prey into the grass. Closer inspection of the spot turned up five downy young scattered about in a flattened area in the grasses of perhaps three square feet. The young varied in size from fist size to about half that. The nest site was on a gentle east-facing slope approximately one third down from the crest of a rise to the floor of a broad valley. All that remained of the "nest" was a flattened mat of dead grass and weed stalks. While we photographed the young, the female repeatedly dove overhead, calling continuously. After only a few minutes, we left the nest site and remained nearby long enough to see an adult return to it with prey. On July 16, Palmer-Ball returned to this site but was unable to relocate it in the tall grasses.

The presence of young in this nest at the same time that eggs were apparently being laid in the Muhlenberg County nest illustrated the length of the breeding season in this area. It also might be further evidence of "inexperience" on the part of the young Muhlenberg County pair in establishing a territory and initiating nesting activity.

About two miles to the southeast, on the recently reclaimed Peabody Homestead Mine south of Cool Springs, nesting evidence was apparent, but again, with a confirmed nest site identified in the area, we felt that further investigation for another was not warranted. Evidence of nesting in this area (the general area where a Short-eared Owl nest had been located in May by Stamm and Clay, KW 65:75-76, 1989) included persistent courtship flight by a gray-plumaged male. It might be worth mentioning that the opportunity to observe this spectacular behavior makes any trip to the area well worth the effort during late spring and summer. Males were observed in courtship flight from mid-May to mid-June, but the behavior probably was in evidence both before and after this period. The vertical dives and abrupt flips that sometimes included a complete somersault were certainly one of the most impressive avian displays we had ever witnessed. On August 3, we watched a gray-plumaged male attending a chestnut-bellied juvenile in this area as the two coursed back and forth in search of prey. On one occasion, the male appeared to capture prey and then waited on the ground until the juvenile came and took the prey from it. For all practical purposes, this seemed to confirm nesting
in this area, as well.

Sightings of harriers during the summer 1989 season were not limited to these areas. A pair of adult birds was observed foraging over a reclaimed surface mine in eastern McLean County near the community of Island on June 15 by Palmer-Ball. On one occasion, with both birds on the wing, the male approached the female from above and dropped prey to her, which she caught before it hit the ground. No nest site was discovered, and the leisure behavior of the birds, e.g. sitting on posts for long periods during approximately an hour of observation, prompted the speculation that perhaps the pair had experienced nesting failure and were subsequently passing time afterwards or perhaps prior to initiating a new nesting effort.

In northern Todd County near the community of Epleys, some 30 miles south of the major reclaimed surface mine areas of the Shawnee Hills, Palmer-Ball observed a gray-plumaged male defending a large field of fescue from other raptors and Turkey Vultures on June 7. Although no further evidence of nesting could be observed, the defensive behavior of the male seemed to indicate that some sort of nesting effort might be under way.

In addition to these observations of probable and confirmed nesting activity, harriers were noted on mines in two other areas. On May 26, we observed a gray-plumaged male foraging over the reclaimed Peabody Martwick Mine along the Green River north of U.S. 62 in eastern Muhlenberg County. Another pair of adult Northern Harriers was observed by Palmer-Ball on a reclaimed surface mine in northern Ohio County approximately 4.0 miles northeast of Beaver Dam on June 29. Further evidence of nesting at these sites was not obtained.

Based on these observations, it seems clear that the Northern Harrier is not a rare nesting species of these extensive, grassy reclaimed surface mines. Moreover, it would seem probable that a substantial nesting population has been present for an undetermined number of years. In June 1982, we observed a female harrier harassing Turkey Vultures (Cathartes aura) over a reclaimed mine in Muhlenberg County (KW 58:82, 1982). At the time, the possibility of nesting was considered, but further investigation was not undertaken. From conversations we had with at least two employees of the Peabody Coal Company who frequent the mines all year long, it was clear that harriers were considered to be a normal summer resident of the area. It is interesting to suppose that if a nesting population of Northern Harriers has been present on the surface mines for some years, birds like the one in Todd County might actually represent spillover of excess birds into peripheral areas. Anyone who has visited these areas and witnessed the spectacular numbers of raptors to be found there certainly could not expect for the reclaimed surface mines to harbor any more harriers and other raptors than they appear to sustain at present! It would seem logical that if a successful nesting population has been established on the mines, some birds should be expanding into peripheral areas.

From our observations, it would seem that visitation of nest sites may be detrimental to nesting success. Moreover, it would appear that any closely associated pair of Northern Harriers observed from mid-May through July could be regarded as attempting to nest. It might be that the “safest” method of confirming nesting would be to visit potential areas in July when recently-fledged young are still being attended by parents.

COMMON MOORHEN (Gallinula chloropus): During early May 1989, Richard Healy found at least two Common Moorhens on a small, cattail-
ringed pond on the Peabody Homestead Mine, approximately 1.5 miles southwest of Cool Springs in southern Ohio County. Subsequent visits to this site by us and others yielded observations of up to four moorhens there. Palmer-Ball searched part of the pond’s margin for a nest several times during late May and June without success. On July 16, Palmer-Ball, Don Parker and Diane Ebel visited the pond and found a pair of adult moorhens attending four half-grown young along the edge of the cattails. The young were well-feathered and were beginning to acquire red color on their bills, but they probably could not fly. When approached, the entire family group disappeared into the thick cattails. On subsequent visits, none of the moorhens could be located, suggesting that perhaps something happened to the young, but this theory is unconfirmed. This represents only the third confirmed nesting of Common Moorhen in the state.

SHORT-EARED OWL (Asio flammeus): Following the initial discovery of nesting Short-eared Owls in Ohio County (Stamm and Clay, KW 65:75-76, 1989), we searched similar habitat across the Green River in Muhlenberg County. Palmer-Ball had observed a pair of seemingly territorial owls feeding over an extensive, grassy area on the reclaimed Peabody Sinclair Mine on May 18. On the evening of May 25, we returned to this site and watched the pair of owls for an extended period as they foraged over an area of open grassland of perhaps 50-100 acres in extent. After approximately forty-five minutes of observation, Barron became convinced that he had determined the location of a spot where adults had dropped into the tall grasses several times with prey. We approached the site on foot and flushed one of the adults from the ground where six downy young were found scattered over a couple of square feet in a slight depression of bare ground amid several clumps of grass. As expected, size of the young varied substantially, the largest being approximately six inches long with buffy down and open eyes to the smallest, which was only about three inches long with lighter down and closed eyes. The nest site was situated on a gentle, west-facing slope, approximately one-third down the slope from its crest and above a broad flat area below. The vegetation was dominated by fescue, orchard grass (Dactylis glomerata) and bird’s-foot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus). After several minutes of observation, we left the young and allowed the adults to come back to the nest site. On the only subsequent visit to this site on June 14, Palmer-Ball was not able to relocate any young, but the adult male flushed from the ground nearby and quietly flew away. As the young are quick to move about in the grasses surrounding a nest site as they grow, it must be presumed that relocating them would be difficult, and that at least some of these young were successful in fledging.

On June 14, during a visit to the Peabody Homestead Mine in southern Ohio County, Palmer-Ball encountered an intact family group of at least four full-grown young and an adult or two perched on one of the gravel roads running through the reclaimed mine. Upon initial approach by car, five owls were observed perched together on the gravel road, and on two occasions, the adult male (obvious because of its whitish wing-linings and light underparts) flew directly towards the car in harassment, veering only at the last second and passing overhead. It was unclear how many of the remaining five birds were young, but it was presumed that perhaps all or all but one were juveniles. No down was observed still being retained on any portion of their bodies, but at least four were obviously different from adults due to their buffy foreheads (in sharp contrast to the lighter foreheads of adults). Individuals within the group darted and dove playfully
at one another, and repeatedly landed together. The entire group was approached to within approximately a hundred feet by car before they flew and alighted nearby in a weedy area. Upon approach by foot, first the adult male rose from the grass and began barking in defense, then the young rose up and actually flew towards the observer, apparently curious about the strange intruder.

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*): Away from urban settings, this largely nocturnal aerialist is not well-known as a breeding species in Kentucky. Although we were not able to confirm nesting of nighthawks on the reclaimed surface mines, the presence of pairs and males engaged in territorial displays in late May and June suggested nesting on rocky substrates exposed amidst the open grasses in both Muhlenberg and Ohio counties.

BELL’S VIREO (*Vireo bellii*): On May 18, Palmer-Ball discovered a small colony of Bell’s Vireos on the Peabody Homestead Mine just south of Cool Springs in southern Ohio County. At least two territorial males were found singing on a gentle southeast-facing slope, planted in black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Upon closer study of one of the males, it was found to be assisting a mate in nest construction. The nearly completed nest was placed approximately two and one-half feet above the ground on the south side of an eight-foot tall black locust. On May 20, the nest contained four eggs and on June 14 it contained four fully feathered young ready to fledge. On July 16, the empty but intact nest was collected for preservation.

On May 26, we located a territorial pair of Bell’s Vireos and their nest containing four eggs (see cover) in similar habitat on the reclaimed Peabody Martwick Mine just north of US 62 and west of the Green River in eastern Muhlenberg County. The nest site was not revisited.

Also, on May 26, we located another colony of singing male Bell’s Vireos in southwestern Ohio County just across the Green River from the Paradise Steam Plant on the Peabody Ken Mine. Although no nests were located, three to five territorial males were noted in a vast area probably in excess of a hundred acres of scattered black locusts and other small saplings. It is likely that these birds are part of a more substantial nesting population in the immediate vicinity.

These observations represent an extension of the known nesting range of the Bell’s Vireo in Kentucky by more than 50 miles to the east-southeast of the population Barron discovered in Union County in 1988 (KW 64:65, 1988). In areas where early stages of successional woody vegetation (especially young black locusts and other shrubby legumes) dominate large portions of the reclaimed surface mines, it is probable that Bell’s Vireos find the habitat optimal for nesting. If a substantial nesting population of this species has not already developed in this portion of the state, it would appear that the future of the Bell’s Vireo there certainly looks bright.

HENSLOW’S SPARROW (*Ammodramus henslowii*): On May 26, we discovered a colony of singing Henslow’s Sparrows on an extensive, gently sloping hillside of tall grasses. The field was located on a reclaimed portion of the Peabody Ken Mine near the Hopewell Cemetery in southwestern Ohio County and covered at least 50 acres. This field was dominated by a thick growth of waist-high switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*) used as a seed source for revegetation efforts. In contrast to the much sparser growth of grasses prevalent on most portions of the reclaimed mines, the grasses
here were thick and somewhat matted, making the habitat character of this field quite different. This site was revisited by Palmer-Ball, Don Parker and Diane Ebel on July 16, when males were still singing and an agitated adult bird carrying food was approached to within approximately 30 feet, all but confirming breeding at this site. No less than five territorial males were present during the summer, although the presence of more was probable. A single Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) was heard singing in the field on our initial visit but could not be relocated on subsequent visits.

This represents the first summer record for Henslow's Sparrow in Ohio County and one of only a handful for the western half of the state. Although the presence of large tracts of idle grassland in this area might lead one to think that the mines must harbor good numbers of this species, it appears that over most of the territory the growth of grasses is not thick enough to be preferred as nesting habitat by Henslow's Sparrows. The sparsely distributed clumps of fescue and other grasses dominant over most of the mines are much more suited to the habitat preferences of the Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), a species that must reach its maximum breeding density over large portions of these reclaimed mines.

This summary of noteworthy breeding observations serves to provide a basis for further investigation of the nesting birds of the extensive, reclaimed surface mines in the Shawnee Hills section of western Kentucky. Included herein are only the most noteworthy observations made during the nesting season of 1989. Numerous nesting records of other species were obtained during this field work that have been incorporated into the Kentucky Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

It is unknown to what extent the species included in this summary actually nest in western Kentucky, nor is it clear how long these birds have been present as nesting species on the reclaimed surface mines. It does seem apparent that many noteworthy ornithological happenings have previously gone undetected since large scale habitat alteration, largely as a result of surface mining activities, began in the mid-1900s. The systematic replacement of large tracts of deciduous forest with grassland and early successful vegetation has probably introduced a permanent change in the avifauna of this region of Kentucky. In essence, these artificially-created openings simulate the once widespread prairies of the Pennyroyal that were distributed in a wide band across southern Kentucky just south of the Shawnee Hills. Today, the prairies have been converted completely to agricultural land, and the relatively undisturbed grasslands of the reclaimed mines just to the north are apparently sufficient to attract birds like the Northern Harrier to nest in the state after a hiatus of many years.

Other species like the Bell's Vireo and Prairie Falcon may be invading these habitats for the first time. The latter species has recently been reported in Kentucky in winter (**KW 65:14, 34-35, 78-79, 1989**), and like many other raptors, was greatly reduced in numbers during the era of widespread DDT use in the 1950s and '60s. Following the end of this period, numbers of most raptors have rebounded. One of the results of this trend has been a well-pronounced increase in the number of records of the Prairie Falcon east of the Mississippi River in the 1970s and 1980s. Prior to the 1950s, when the Prairie Falcon was more numerous, most of the Shawnee Hills of Kentucky was vegetated in natural woodlands, and species of expansive, open ground like the Prairie Falcon were non-existent. It appears that as this species' population has rebounded and consequently expanded into new areas, this graceful predator now finds suitable habitat
in regions where formerly it was never before known due to the lack of appropriate habitat.

This habitat is also much more extensive than one might realize, involving large portions of more than a half-dozen western Kentucky counties. Based on reports from similar surface mined areas of southern Illinois and Indiana, the unusual breeding records described herein are quite similar to those of these adjacent states where nesting of Northern Harriers, Short-eared Owls, Bell's Vireos and other species have been observed for a number of years in these reclaimed habitats (James Campbell, pers. comm.). Hopefully, as more and more birders become aware of the interesting opportunities that are available in these areas, more information will be gained about the region's avifauna. We wish to thank the Peabody Coal Company for allowing us access to certain areas in order to conduct this field work.

— Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr., Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission; 407 Broadway, Frankfort, KY 40601 and Alan Barron, 2460 Maciel Ln., Crescent City, CA 95531.

NEWS AND VIEWS

The fall meeting of the Kentucky Ornithological Society will be held at Kenlake State Resort Park on 28-30 September 1990. Anyone planning to attend should make their reservations and room accommodations early. Those interested in making a presentation at the Friday evening program should contact Lee McNeely, P. O. Box 463, Burlington, Kentucky 41005. Members are also encouraged to bring a couple of slides for the photo-quiz session.