



# *The Raven*

BULLETIN OF THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY  
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DR. J. J. MURRAY, EDITOR  
LEXINGTON, VA.

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Merriam Garretson Lewis

1893 - 1941

In Memoriam

The opening days of 1941 brought sad news to the members of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. On Sunday afternoon, January 5, Merriam Garretson Lewis was stricken with a heart attack and died within a few minutes. In addition to the members of his family, to whom our deep sympathy goes out, he leaves a host of friends who will miss him sorely. All of the V. S. O. members were his friends and most of them knew him intimately and affectionately as "M. G.". This is the first break within the official group in the V. S. O. since its organization.

When Prof. Ruskin Freer conceived the idea of organizing a group of birds students in Virginia, M. G. Lewis was one of the first men to be called into consultation by him. Lewis made the first talk at the organization meeting at Lynchburg, on December 7, 1929. From that day he has been active in the work of the society giving freely both of his thought and time. He was made a member of the Executive Committee the first year and has served on that committee every year since. During 1938 and 1939 he was President. He made frequent contributions to The Raven, his latest contribution and his last special interest being connected with the birds of the neglected Patrick-Franklin-Henry County area. His best contribution always to the society was his unfailing loyalty to all its work and his abounding friendliness at all its meetings

After serving as County Farm Agent first in Scott County and then for twelve years in Rockbridge County, Lewis took up similar duties in Roanoke County on July 1, 1932. Wherever he lived he was active in church, civic, and welfare affairs. His interests were many. He was chairman of a Salem Boy Scout Troop Committee, member of American Legion Post 19, of the Grange, the Wildlife Federation, and past president of the Appalachian Trail Club.

Born in 1893, he was forty-seven at the time of his death. He received his education at Berea Academy in Kentucky and at the University of Kentucky. During the World War he served at Camp Lee, being discharged in November, 1918, as Second Lieutenant. Surviving him are Mrs. Gertrude B. Lewis; three children, Dorothy, Florence and Markham, the latter a student at the University of Virginia; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lewis, of Triplet, Virginia; a sister and two brothers. Funeral services were held by his pastor, Dr. Leroy Gresham, and the writer, his former pastor, at the Presbyterian Church of Salem at 4:00 P. M. on Tuesday, January 7. In the throng of friends who gathered to honor a life so well used and mourn a death so untimely were many of his associates of the V. S. O., which was so close to his heart.

J. J. Murray,  
Lexington, Virginia.

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### The Season (1940) at Blacksburg

#### Montgomery County, Virginia

The first two months of the year were very cold, with snow falling days at a time, and the lakes frozen over during most of the period. Therefore, it was quite natural that few birds would be seen at this season. However, two Barn Owls were picked up dead near Blacksburg, one on January 26, and the other on March 27. Near the end of this cold spell ducks were abundant and 94 Canada Geese were seen on March 8, and 125 on the 9th.

As the weather became warmer there were several heavy rains, and it was after such a rain on April 12, that a large flock of gulls congregated in a freshly plowed field near Blacksburg. There were 14 Ring-billed Gulls, and seven Bonaparte's and one Herring in the flock. A Double-crested Cormorant was seen along New River on April 28.

In May the migration of small birds went into high gear and a list of 97 species was made on May 5. On May 8, a Duck Hawk was seen on May 9, White-eyed Vireos were abundant, east of Blacksburg. On the 10th the largest single flight of warblers of the spring was observed, Kentucky, Mourning, and Tennessee Warblers as well as Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen. Cerulean Warblers were seen on April 29, and May 5, and a Prairie-horned Lark nest containing 4 eggs was discovered on May 13. From May 27-29, as the last of the Warblers were passing thru, Mourning Warblers in full song were observed daily.

On May 27, the Black Rails arrived and were seen in increasing numbers up until about the 5th of June. About this time they became increasingly hard to flush, indicating nesting. The last birds were flushed on June 14, and by this time the marsh plants had grown so thick that it required the service of a dog to flush the rails. During the period of observation there were 4 or more pairs of Black Rails in two of the larger marshes near Blacksburg. During this same period the nests of 4 Virginia Rails were located in three different marshes, and from June 12-14 an American Bittern was heard "pumping" in a marsh south of Blacksburg, but close observation failed to disclose either the bittern



or a nest. An American Bittern was collected on April 19.

During June and July little time was spent at Blacksburg and consequently few interesting observations were made. However, during this time there was a non-breeding female Baldpate on the College lake continuously, and one American Egret was seen on July 29.

As herons of all species were rare this year, I was surprised to see 2 Little-blue Herons on August 4, the first I have seen here since 1936.

From August 6, to September 6, there were large concentrations of Cliff Bank, Rough-winged, and Barn Swallows about the College lakes. Tree Swallows were present from August 9, to October 3.

The passing of the hurricane on August 10, brought heavy rains which continued for more than a week. During this period the low areas along Strouble's Creek were continually flooded. About these small pools, large numbers of shore birds gathered from August 14 - 17. On August 14, 41 Pectoral Sandpipers and 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen. Forty Lesser Yellow-legs were seen on the 15th, and small numbers of Least Sandpipers occurred throughout the period. Five Western Sandpipers were present from the 14th to the 17th and one was collected on the 16th. Three Dowichers were present from August 16-19, and Upland Plovers were present until August 17. Wilson's Snipes appeared on August 14, and Bobolinks on August 17. Both of these were abnormally early.

The fall migration of warblers was large and Connecticut Warblers were seen on September 5 and 6th, a Kentucky Warbler on the 6th and Mourning Warblers on September 17. All species of hawks were rare this fall, with the Sparrow Hawk almost totally absent. A Duck Hawk was seen on September 12, and a Pigeon Hawk on October 18. A White-eyed Vireo was seen on September 28, and a Philadelphia Vireo on October 5, with the last of the migrating warblers. Only one Short-billed Marsh Wren was seen this fall, that on October 1.

Just as in the spring the ducks were more numerous than usual in the fall, with most species arriving early. The Shoveller on September 11, and the Wood Duck on the 23rd. Seven Shovellers were present for several weeks and a flock of four was still on the lake on December 27, when this paper was written. In the past two years the Wood Duck has showed a remarkable increase in Montgomery County. Up until 1939 it had been recorded only three times. Since then it has become so numerous as to cause no surprise when seen. In flocks as large as 25 and 30, it was seen from April 8-21, in the spring and from September 23, - December 23, in the fall of this year. A female American Merganser was seen on November 26, the first for the county. One Greater Yellow-legs was seen on November 20, a rather late date for this species. The bird had a crippled leg.

During the fall Lincoln's Sparrows were much more numerous than usual, being present from September 25 - October 20. Three were banded on the latter date. On October 12, 6 were seen in one small briar patch.

The most interesting record of the whole year was in the form of an adult male Gambel's Sparrow, the first for Virginia. This subspecies of the White-crowned Sparrow was caught in a bird banding trap on November 16, during the first snow of the season. It seems likely that it may have been driven east by the blizzard that was raging across the western states at the time.

The mild weather of December held over a number of small birds which are ordinarily not present at this season. Bewick's Wrens and Western Palm Warblers were seen on December 12, and 23rd, two of each on the latter date. Two Myrtle Warblers were also seen on December 22, and 23rd. Two Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen at widely separated points on Stroubles Creek and Brush Mountain on December 23.

Charles Handley, Jr.

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#### Five New Birds from Montgomery County

#### Virginia

1. American Merganser - A female stopped on the larger of the V. P. I. campus lakes for a few minutes on November 26, 1940. She was very wild and a passing car soon frightened her away.
2. Western Sandpiper - Following the hurricane weather of August 10, 1940, many sandpipers gathered along the flooded areas bordering Stroubles Creek. Among these were five Western Sandpipers. They were readily distinguishable from the accompanying Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers by their noticeably longer, down-curved bills and darker breasts. A specimen of this species was collected on August 16.
3. Loggerhead Shrike - A specimen of this species was collected near Blacksburg by C. E. Addy on December 24, 1939.
4. Kentucky Warbler - One bright male was noted in the whitethorne bushes near the larger of the V. P. I. campus ponds on May 10, 1940, and another on the College farm on September 6, 1940.
5. Gambel's Sparrow - On November 16, 1940, during the period that a severe blizzard swept the Western States, a Gambel's Sparrow entered one of the bird banding traps being operated on the V. P. I. farm. The bird, an adult male in excellent plumage, was kept as a specimen and placed in the V. P. I. collection. Since coming to Blacksburg in 1935, I have banded 253 White-crowned Sparrows, but not until this fall have I examined each bird carefully in hope of finding this western subspecies. Of the 89 White-crowns banded this fall, this bird was the only one recognized as being the Gambel's Sparrow. This observation constitutes the first record for the occurrence of the Gambel's Sparrow in Virginia and the second for the Atlantic Seaboard States, the other being South Carolina.

With these five additions and the five (Blue Grosbeak, Gray-checked Thrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Lapland Longspur, and Hudsonian Curlew), mentioned by Mr. Ralph Brown in the August-September 1940 issue of The Raven, the number of birds recorded for Montgomery County has been increased to 241 species.

Charles Handley, Jr.



## Whistling Swan in Giles County

Giles County - November 13, 1940, while assisting with the elk hunt in the Giles-Bland Elk Range, I arrived at the Shuler Ramsey Farm on Dismal Creek at about 7:30 A. M. A few minutes later 30 wild ducks of an unidentified species were seen at a distance flying just under the dense fog which hung low over the mountain tops. Shortly afterwards a flock of 4 Whistling Swans flying in single file, passed directly over head at an elevation of not more than 300 feet. One clear call was heard as the birds approached me and in a moment they had disappeared into the fog. Both the ducks and the swans were flying in a southeasterly direction. The swans were also observed by Roy K. Wood, a graduate student in wildlife at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and several game wardens. To see waterfowl while on an elk hunt in the largest mountain wilderness tract yet remaining in Virginia may seem rather out of place, however, it will be recalled that a great blizzard was raging over the northcentral states at the time.

This observation constitutes the second occurrence of the Whistling Swan in Southwest Virginia, the other being a crippled bird which took up its abode at a mill pond in Wythe County and reported in the Raven, Vol. VIII, p. 6, January 1937. C. O. Handley.

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THE CHRISTMAS CENSUS

Norfolk, Va. (Little Creek, Hunchback Road, Little Creek Lake by city airport and city waterworks, Lynnhaven Inlet, White Pond in Seashore State Park). Dec. 27; 8:25 A. M. to 5:15 P. M. Fog; visibility never more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, most of the time less; drizzle part of morning, rain at 4:30 P. M.; wind light, north-east; temp. 53° at start, 51° at return. Observers together; about 10 miles on foot, 25 miles in car between points mentioned,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile in rowboat to sand bars in Lynnhaven Inlet. Horned Grebe, 1; Pied-billed Grebe, 11; Great Blue Heron, 4; American Bittern, 1; Mallard, 8; Black Duck, 55; Baldpate, 18; Green-winged Teal, 1; Ring-necked Duck, 44; Lesser Scaup, 30; White-winged Scoter, 1; Red-breasted Merganser, 350 (est); Bald Eagle, 3; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Coot, 1; Sanderling, 5; Herring Gull, 101; Ring-billed Gull, 31; Bonaparte's Gull, 1; Kingfisher, 2; Flicker, 7; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Crow, 35; Fish Crow, 3; Chickadee, 5; Tufted Titmouse, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Brown-headed Nuthatch, 2; Brown Creeper, 2; Carolina Wren, 8; Mockingbird, 3; Bluebird, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 8; Pipit, 75 (est.); Starling, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 500 (est.) Pine Warbler, 3; English Sparrow, 15; Meadowlark, 4; Red-wing, 30; Cardinal, 6; Goldfinch, 1; Towhee, 13; Junco, 3; Field Sparrow, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Fox Sparrow, 5; Swamp Sparrow, 6; Song Sparrow, 8. Total, 53 species; 1438 (est.) individuals. Mrs. Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Mrs. Louis R. Lester, and Mrs. A. C. Reed.

Seward Forest, in southeastern Brunswick County, Virginia. Through farm and pasture lands to Rattlesnake Creek; along creek in beech-oak-holly woods to Wright's Bridge; through pine woods to "Devil's Swamp". In afternoon,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles by auto to Quarrels Creek near Simms old mill, then on foot through mixed woods, cotton and tobacco fields. Dec. 23, 7:15 A. M. to 4:30 P. M., with one hour out for lunch and rest. About 7 miles on foot, 9 by auto. Weather: clear all day, light north wind in P. M. Temp. at start 27°, noon temp. 48°. Observer alone. (Territory covered comparatively new to observer, having formerly reported from Amelia, Virginia.)

Turkey Vulture, 3; Woodcock, 1; Screech Owl, 1; Great Horned Owl, 1; Flicker, 4; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Blue Jay, 4; Crow, 89; Carolina Chickadee, 4; Tufted Titmouse, 5; Brown Creeper, 1; Winter Wren, 4; Carolina Wren, 3; Mockingbird, 4; Hermit Thrush, 12; Bluebird, 8; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 12; Loggerhead Shrike, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 4; Meadowlark, 41; Cardinal, 5; Savannah Sparrow, 6; Slate-colored Junco, 48; Field Sparrow, 6; White-throated Sparrow, 9; Song Sparrow, 18. Species, 30; individuals, 309. Black Vulture, Bob-white, Wild Turkey, Killdeer, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Goldfinch, and Fox Sparrow had all been seen in the last few days.

Strange as it seems, in more than three months residence here, I have not seen an English Sparrow or Starling in the area covered.

John B. Lewis

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Richmond, Va. (Area around Byrd Park lakes in city, then along Route 10, to Brookbury Farm near Chesterfield Court House. The latter area of open fields, pine woods, and swamp lands covered thoroughly.) December 24; 7:30 A. M. to 3:00 P. M. Clear, with light northeast wind. Temp. 26° at start, 50° maximum. Two observers, in groups as follows: Party one, 3 hours alone; Party two, together five hours. Total miles afoot, four miles; by automobile (used only to get to observation areas) 20 miles. Mallard, 28; Baldpate, 15; Ring-necked Duck, 126; Lesser Scaup, 11; Turkey Vulture, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 4; Red-headed Woodpecker, 2; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy-Woodpecker, 4; Blue Jay, 2; Crow, 4; Chickadee, 3; Tufted Titmouse, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Carolina Wren, 3; Mockingbird, 3; Bluebird, 7; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 7; Shrike, 1; Starling, 45; English Sparrow, 7; Meadowlark, 15; Cardinal, 4; Purple Finch, 18; Goldfinch, 1; Junco, 70; White-throated Sparrow, 18; Song Sparrow, 8. Total, 30 species; 419 individuals. ---Henry Hoare, James R. Sydnor.

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Orange, Va. (open fields, woodlands, river bank) - Dec. 28; 9 A. M. to 3:45 P. M., with 45 minutes out for lunch. Very cloudy, drizzling rain much of the day. A very bad day for observing; no wind; Temp. 50°. Observers together. About 11 miles afoot, 13 miles by car. Turkey Vulture, 8; Black Vulture, 5; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Mourning Dove, approximately 30; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 5; Red-headed Woodpecker, 3; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 5; Flicker, 1; Blue Jay, 30; Crow, 16; Carolina Chickadee, 8; Tufted Titmouse, 1; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Brown Creeper, 2; Mockingbird, 7; Bluebird, 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3; Shrike, 1; Starling, 75 (est.); Myrtle Warbler, 2; Palm Warbler, 1; Meadowlark, 18; Cardinal, 8; English Sparrow, 20; American Goldfinch, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 100 (est.); Field Sparrow, 17; Song Sparrow, 10. Total, 30 species; 383 individuals. The Palm Warbler may possibly have been a Yellow Palm Warbler, as the light was poor, but I think not. C. Emerson Smith and William B. Ward.

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Lynchburg, Va. (fields, woods, low ground around Timber Lake, College Lake, Tomahawk Swamp). Dec. 23; 7:20 A. M. - 12 M., 1 - 3:45 P. M. Clear; ground bare; no wind; temp. 29° at start, 55° at end. Seven observers in 3 parties in A. M., 2 parties in P. M. Total party hours afield, 15½ (13¾ on foot, 1½ in car); total party miles, 29 (18 on foot, 11 in car). Mallard, 2; Ring-necked Duck, 5;



Lesser Scaup, 8, Turkey Vulture, 11; Black Vulture, 8; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Bob-white, 9; Mourning Dove, 13; Kingfisher, 3; Flicker, 3; Pileated Woodpecker, 2; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2; Red-headed Woodpecker, 3; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 7; Blue Jay, 22; Crow, 549 (partly est.); Chickadee, 40; Tufted Titmouse, 35; White-breasted Nuthatch, 8; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 5; Brown Creeper, 3; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 16; Mockingbird, 2; Robin, 1; Bluebird, 38; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 27; Starling, 53; English Sparrow, 38; Meadowlark, 1; Cardinal, 35; Purple Finch, 14; Goldfinch, 62; Towhee, 1; Junco, 386; Tree Sparrow, 8; Field Sparrow, 51; White-throated Sparrow, 74; Fox Sparrow, 1; Swamp Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 71. Total, 43 species; 1623 individuals. -- Lynchburg Chapter, Virginia Society of Ornithology (Edward Calvert, Ruskin S. Freer, Kenneth Lawless, Billy McIntosh, Kingsley Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Wiltshire, Jr.)

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Harrisonburg, Va. (Waterman's Wood to Tide Spring and return, diameter 12 miles; farmland, pine-cedar, oak, and oak-cedar woodlots, one with shallow stream; 21 miles by auto,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles on foot). Dec. 24; 8:45 A. M. to 3:30 P. M. Clear entire day with few cirrus clouds in east at sunrise;  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch covering of ice over pools and ponds; brisk south wind; temp.  $33^{\circ}$  at start,  $48^{\circ}$  at noon,  $52^{\circ}$  at return. Four observers working together. Turkey Vulture, 30; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Bob-white, 10 (one covey); Downy Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 2; Crow, 587; Tufted Titmouse, 3; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 1; Bluebird, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3; Starling, 56; Myrtle Warbler, 18; English Sparrow, 55; Cardinal, 10; Junco, 50; Tree Sparrow, 8; Song Sparrow, 1. Total, 20 species, 844 individuals. - D. Ralph Hostetter, Mrs. D. Ralph Hostetter, Kathryn E. Hostetter, Elizabeth L. Hostetter.

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Lexington, Virginia. (Edge of town on Honeysuckle Hill, Andersons Meadows, and Woods Creek; thence by car to White Rock Mountain side, by Dale Mountain side, and back home.) Edge of town from 10:00 to 12:00 A. M. Mountain territory from 1:00 to 5:30 P. M. Eight miles on foot and ten in a car;  $6\frac{1}{2}$  man and car hours. Observers: one man and one setter. Weather: Heavy fog with occasional mists and showers all day, no wind. Temperature: Warm - from  $50^{\circ}$  to  $60^{\circ}$  all day. Turkey Vulture, 3; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 5; Mourning Dove, 2; Great Horned Owl, 1; Kingfisher, 1; Flicker, 2; Pileated Woodpecker, 4; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Horned Lark, 17; Blue Jay, 2; Raven, 3; (heard two of them) Crow, 33; Carolina Chickadee, 6; Tufted Titmouse, 4; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 3; Robins, 200 (one flock eating dogwood berries); Hermit Thrush, 2; Cedar Waxwing, 15; Starlings, 24; House Sparrows, 27; Meadow Lark, 6; Cardinal, 2; Goldfinch, 2; Junco, 56; Tree Sparrow, 5; White-throated Sparrow, 7; Song Sparrow, 3. Total, 30 species, 442 individuals. Robert P. Carroll.

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Salem, Va. Our Christmas census from the Roanoke Area this time seems so incomplete that it is not being sent to Bird Lore. Although it represents practically a full day which seemed almost ideal as far as weather conditions are concerned birds seemed unusually scarce throughout the territory covered by the four observers. I am inclined, at this point, to speculate a little on the reasons.

The day was unusually warm and followed nearly a week of bright, clear, sunny days. Most kinds of food are plentiful this fall. Perhaps birds of most kinds were by this time so completely well fed, and might we say lazy, that they were very inactive and stayed largely out of sight.

M. G. Lewis,  
Salem, Virginia.

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Salem, Va. (Roanoke to Hollins to Salem by way of Peterscreek; along Roanoke River from Three miles east of Salem to ten miles west including open and wooded country, and hill lands back from the river). Dec. 22; 7:00 A. M. to 4:00 P. M. Clear, light west wind, temperature minimum 38° and maximum 47°. Observers in two groups, two together. About 10 miles on foot, remainder by auto. Turkey Vulture, 8; Bob-white, 10; Killdeer, 7; Cooper's Hawk, 1; Kingfisher, 1; Flicker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Blue Jay, 4; Crow, 30; Chickadee, 5; Tufted Titmouse, 2; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Carolina Wren, 4; Mockingbird, 5; Hermit Thrush, 1; Bluebird, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 8; Cedar Waxwing, 12; Shrike, 2; Starling, 50; English Sparrow, 30; Cardinal, 11; Eastern Goldfinch, 5; Junco, 45; Tree Sparrow, 2; Field Sparrow, 3; White-crowned Sparrow, 14; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 14; Total 29 species, 285 individuals. Mr. & Mrs. A. O. English, M. G. Lewis, Mrs. Elsie W. Garst.

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Blacksburg, Montgomery County, Va. (V. F. I. campus and farm, along Strouble's Creek, Tom's Creek, New River (8 miles), and Brush Mountain, within 15 mile diameter.) Dec. 23; 6:00 A. M. to 6:00 P. M. Ground bare; no wind except slight breeze at mid-day; temp. 28° at start, 34° at finish. Twelve observers working in 5 groups except for short periods. Total party hours afield, 61 (44 afoot, 8 by car); total party miles, 118 (53 afoot, 65 by car). Mallard, 9; Red-legged Black Duck, 2; Common Black Duck, 96; Gadwall, 3; Baldpate, 6; Pintail, 2; Green-winged Teal, 10; Shoveller, 4; Ring-necked Duck, 5; Wood Duck, 1; Hooded Merganser, 20; Turkey Vulture, 99; Black Vulture, 16; Cooper's Hawk, 3; Red-tailed Hawk, 5; Red-shouldered Hawk, 3; Marsh Hawk, 3; Sparrow Hawk, 4; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Bob-white, 49 (7 coveys, also 2 additional coveys were heard whistling at daybreak); Killdeer, 7; Wilson's Snipe, 5; Rock Dove (mostly feral), 37; Mourning Dove, 128; Screech Owl, 1; Great Horned Owl, 3 (heard before daybreak); Barred Owl, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 4; Flicker, 22; Pileated Woodpecker, 4; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 4; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 3; Hairy Woodpecker, 5; Downy Woodpecker, 16; Prairie Horned Lark, 8; Blue Jay, 9; Northern Raven, 1; Crow, 217; Carolina Chickadee, 83; Tufted Titmouse, 42; White-breasted Nuthatch, 33; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 8; Brown Creeper, 4; Winter Wren, 13; Bewick's Wren, 2; Carolina Wren, 7; Mockingbird, 9; Robin, 8; Hermit Thrush, 2; Bluebird, 46; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 49; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2 (1 each by McInteer and Watson, C. O. Handley, Jr. and Wood with 6X and 8X binoculars); Cedar Waxwing, 1; Migrant Shrike, 1; Starling, 420; Palm Warbler, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 3; English Sparrow, 97; Meadowlark, 127; Red-winged Blackbirds, 23; Rusty Blackbird, 12; Grackle, 1; Cardinal, 61; Pine Siskin, 3; Goldfinch, 99; Slate-colored Junco, 706; Tree Sparrow, 87; Field Sparrow, 88; White-crowned sparrow, 14; White-throated Sparrow, 6; Swamp Sparrow, 5; Song Sparrow, 217. Total, 72 species; 3098 individuals. -- Mr. and Mrs. Roy Wood, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard



Llewellyn, C. E. Addy, C. Henderson, C. F. De La Barre, A. B. Massey, J. F. McInteer, Jr., R. J. Watson, C. O. Handley, Jr. and C. O. Handley.

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Mountain Lake, Giles County, Virginia (Little Stony Creek Valley, from Bob Fields on Big Mountain (elevation 4100 feet) to beaver pond on Hoge farm (elevation 3100 feet). Dec. 27; 8:00 A. M. to 2:30 P. M. Heavy fog from 8:00 to 12:00, noon, with visibility less than 100 feet; intermittent rain remainder of period; strong southeast wind; temp. 46° at start, 54° at finish. Two observers working together. Total hours afield, 6½; total miles 16 (6 afoot, 10 by car). Ruffed Grouse, 3; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Northern Raven, 2; White-throated Sparrow, 1 (wintering at a small buckwheat field on Big Mountain at about 4000 feet elevation; also observed at the same point on Dec. 21); Carolina Junco, 73; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2. Total 5 species, 82 individuals. -- C. O. Handley, Jr. and C. O. Handley.



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## STUMPY LAKE

Stumpy Lake lies parallel to Indian River Road, and is about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Compostella Bridge, Norfolk, Virginia. I first visited 'Stumpy' July 3, 1938, then not again until February 1, 1940, at which date most of the ponds around Norfolk were frozen over. Stumpy, however, remained open in the center and there was a considerable congregation of ducks there, including 2,000 pintails. Since then the following trips, which form the basis of this article, have been made;-- in 1940: Feb. 29, March 7, 17, 26; May 26; July 14; Oct. 3; and in 1941: Jan. 9; Feb. 7, 13; March 13. The extent of walking about Stumpy done on each trip has probably amounted to from 2 to 4 miles. However, each time we have driven down the lake on Indian River Road and around on what is locally called the 'Elbow Road'. There are no records for April, June, August or September. The only summer records, therefore, are July 3, 1938, and July 14, 1940. Consequently there is little material about breeding birds, and this article is offered for whatever it may be worth. Others who have helped on the trips at times are: Mrs. Charles Barefield, Mrs. Colgate Darden, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Jos. E. Gould, Mrs. Louis Lester, and Mrs. St. Julion Marshall.

So much building is going up about Norfolk that many good 'birding' places are disappearing. The character of Stumpy will likewise probably be changed for the Government has almost completed an aqueduct from Stumpy Lake to Fort Story. When this goes into use, water will be steadily drawn from Stumpy and if we have a dry summer, I am told the lake will most likely become a meadow of tall green grass.

The lake is an interesting piece of water inasmuch as it is due entirely to rain water. It contains no springs. After a heavy rainfall, it rises rapidly. When full, about 300 acres are under water. It is never more than 7 feet deep in the deepest part. It receives drainage of water from an area about 14 square miles in extent. There are four lead ditches which help to expedite the flow of water into it.

At the lower end of Stumpy is a spillway and here the road makes an elbow turn passing the lake below the spillway. This part of the road to the next highway is called the Elbow Road. On the other side of this road is swampy bottomland which



forms the headwaters of the North River, which in turn empties into Currituck Sound. At the upper or north end, of Stumpy is a marsh bordered with cattails and with flat vegetation in the center. There is a causeway which crosses the lake at this end and it is an excellent place from which to look out over lake and marsh. At the west end of the causeway is an open field occasionally used for bombing. Only recently have I discovered one can traverse this field following the edge of the swamp woodland. Here one is apt to see black ducks and mallards feeding among the trees. Also north of the marsh is again wet woodlands, bisected by two lead ditches which empty into the marsh, and crossed by a lane running about parallel with the causeway. All around Stumpy is a strip of woodland maintained by the city as a watershed.

Painted turtles, snapping turtles, and water snakes are abundant about Stumpy. There is the unusual phase of the common water snake which is light chocolate brown in color and with a red belly. Water moccasins are here too and it is well to carry a forked stick. However, Mr. Davis, engineer in the City Waterworks and who lives at Stumpy Lake says, "the water moccasins will leave with any change in the character of the lake due to pumping the water. They will not tolerate disturbance." Small cypress trees dot the lake in picturesque fashion everywhere, and all along the shores are heaps of fallen and decaying logs.

The following species of birds have been noted at Stumpy during the trips listed:

1. Pied-billed Grebe. Oct. 3, to March 26, observed regularly in small numbers. On March 13, of this year, the grebes were calling in a finer fashion than I have ever heard them around Norfolk. The prolonged "Qwa-a-a-a" call was produced with real intensity. Then there were extraordinary outbursts of the "wop-wop" call, and various barking notes, all of which caused the dogs on the farms bordering Stumpy to bark excitedly.
2. Great Blue Heron. Observed regularly. On Jan. 9, when all the lake was frozen except a strip along the west shore, 4 Great Blues were seen. On July 3, 1938, six were observed coming in file from the swamp bottomlands below the spillway, while 3 others were in view around the spillway. I suspect there may be a heronry in this bottomland.
3. American Egret. May 26, 1; July 14, 11 adults and 13 young; Oct. 3, 1.
4. Little Blue Heron. May 26, 4 adults; July 14, 2 adults, and 4 young.
5. Green Heron. May 26, 2; July 14, 3; and Oct. 3, 1.
6. Black-crowned Night Heron. Feb. 18, 1; On this day a large part of the lake was frozen. In a sunny cove near the road, we saw an immature Black-crowned Night Heron standing on a log among the trees and thickets. The sun beat warmly down into the cove. The heron was so sleepy he could scarcely take the trouble to open his eyes occasionally to note our movements. Finally he flew a short distance away, then dropped into the thickets.
7. Yellow-crowned Night Heron. May 26, 2 in the marsh.

8. Canada Goose. On March 17, a small group of geese circled above the lake, honking, but did not descend.
9. Mallard. January 9 to March 13. Seen usually in small number, especially in wet woodlands upper end of the lake.
10. Black Duck. Nov. 29, to March 26. Largest group, 42, on March 13. On January 9, as I sat on the bank, the flapping leaves of my notebook attracted 11 Black ducks who came close to the logs along the shore, and with their heads and bills just poking above the logs they quietly watched me. One, leading a group of four, appeared considerably larger than all the others, with yellower bill and lighter head. Very possibly it was a red-logged Black Duck, as we note these in winter at the B. S. Refuge, but I did not see the legs.
11. Baldpate. Feb. 29, to March 7, a few; March 13, of this year, 1 pair.
12. Pintail. Feb. 1, 2000 (estimated by Warden Robertson); Feb. 29, 300; March 7, 200; and May 26, 50. Pintails like best the upper end of the lake where they may be seen swimming about among the flat vegetation. On spring-like days they give continually a high whistle, which to my ears, is pitched much like the call of the Tufted Titmouse. It is a bright morning when the marsh is filled with their whistling.
13. Green-winged Teal. Feb. 7 to March 31. Teal are most apt to be located in a cove on the western shore about half way down the lake. On March 7, a group of 16 were seen, most of them sleeping, standing on logs with their heads tucked in their scapulars. On Feb. 7, 2 immature teal were watched plucking a lush green vegetation, growing at the base of the trees.
14. Blue-winged Teal. March 7, 1 pair; March 17, 9; March 26, 22; Blue-winged Teal keep to the marsh above the causeway.
15. Wood Duck. On May 26, a mother with 7 babies on her back was seen from the causeway. On July 14, one moulting adult was seen with feathers sticking up from its head. Another adult with 2 young was found near a bank. The young climbed onto a log and preened themselves, calling, or talking softly, all the time. On January 9, the winter which had remained mild until then turned suddenly cold. Stumpy was frozen everywhere except along the west shore. Here I saw a handsome male wood duck with a little female. The male walked along on a log picking up food in its bill. Later I saw a male, probably the same one, swimming regally along in an open area.
16. Ring-necked Duck. Feb. 29, 500; March 17, 138. This year I have seen only 7 at Stumpy, March 13.
17. Canvas-back. Feb. 29, 4 males, 3 females.
18. Lesser Scaup. March 26, 7.
19. Ruddy Duck. March 17, 1 male; March 26, 1 male.



20. Hooded Merganser. Jan. 9, 4 males, 2 females; Feb. 7, 12; March 13, 11. On January 9, I saw the courtship display of this merganser better than I have seen it anywhere. There seemed to be four distinct types of display. 1. The male has a throw-back as protracted as that of the redhead. The beautiful crest, completely fanned, just touches the back. This was the most frequent display used. 2. The male swims toward the female and when near her, arches his head (much as a thoroughbred horse appears to do), then he shakes his fanned crest until it trembles. This I thought the most unusual display .. and quite coy! 3. The male rises out of the water and makes a jerky bow, bobbing the head forward. This is not spectacular, and sometimes is so quick as almost to evade the eye. 4. The usual dashing about in the water, opening and shutting the fan-shaped crest.
21. American Merganser. March 7, a few. On Feb. 16, of this year, there were 25 of these mergansers on the lake, but only 4 were in adult male plumage. This is the largest group of American Mergansers I have seen around Norfolk.
22. Red-breasted Merganser. Feb. 29, 1 pair.
23. Turkey Vulture. Regularly seen. Jan. 9, 1.
24. Sharp-shinned Hawk. On March 17, this little hawk flew up from the ground at the entrance of the causeway. He paused a moment in a tree to look at us. These little hawks are so rare, it is a thrill to see one. On March 13, of this year we watched a Sharp-shinned flying across the lake!
25. Red-shouldered Hawk. No record for January or February, otherwise a pair regularly observed. Sometimes an adult is seen perched in a tree, turning its head this way and that, scanning the ground.
26. Broad-winged Hawk. Feb. 18, 1. This small buteo was first seen by Mrs. Barefield. It was perched in a tree beside one of the lead ditches. Then it flew across the lane in front of us and lit deeper in the swamp.  
(This would seem to be a very early date for this hawk to occur in Virginia, ed.)
27. Bald Eagle. Adults and Immatures seen regularly. On Oct. 3, we watched the handsomest eagle I believe I ever saw flapping at an egret with its great wings. This finally induced the egret to drop whatever it had in its bill, which the eagle seized. The egret flew off a little way, then turned, and protested by opening its bill and jerking its head. On March 13, in courtship, an immature eagle was seen fiercely chasing another. Like thunderbolts, they rushed over lake and woods.
28. Osprey. March 7, to July 14, a Pair regularly observed.
29. Sparrow Hawk. March 17, 1 female was noted by farmhouse near the causeway.
30. Bob-white. May 26, and July 14, heard calling from farm and from bombing field.
31. Florida Gallinule. July 3, 1938, 1 immature; July 14, 1940, 2 adults among growth of Lizard's Tail, at upper end of lake. Oct. 3, 1 immature. This was a

close observation. The immature was adult size, but bill and forehead were brown.

32. Coot. Feb. 29, a few; March 17, 51; March 26, 24.
33. Black-bellied plover. March 26, 1; This was a hot day. The Plover was seen on the exposed grass and sandy shore at the spillway
34. Spotted Sandpiper. May 26, 1. Same place as above.
35. Greater Yellow-legs. May 26, 2. Same place as above.
36. Ring-billed Gull. Oct. 3, 6; Feb. 18, 12. On the last date our attention was attracted to the group of American Mergansers by the Ring-billed Gulls which were hovering over them. As the Mergansers came to the surface the Gulls swooped down upon them flapping, and at times, seemingly hitting the mergansers with their wings. While the mergansers were under water, the gulls simply hovered above. Sometimes the gulls would alight on the water among the diving and flashing ducks. Finally the mergansers began swimming down the lake in the swift way which is their habit of doing, diving and progressing beneath, then coming to the surface, all in unison. We could follow the progress of the mergansers when we could no longer see them very well by the gulls hovering above.
37. Least Tern. July 14, 1.
38. Mourning Dove. Heard May 26, and July 14.
39. Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Recorded May 26, and July 14.
40. On March 13, numerous large owl pellets were found in two places, on a path through the woods at the far end of the bombing field, - indicating quite definitely the presence of an owl.
41. Chimney Swift. May 26, recorded over lake.
42. Hummingbird. July 14. Twice we came upon a female ramming her head far into the orange blossoms of the trumpet vine.
43. Kingfisher. Nov. 7, 1. On a post by the spillway.
44. Flicker. Regularly recorded. On January 9, one was watched feeding on a floating log. Its colors twinkled out above the blue of the lake,
45. Pileated Woodpecker. Regularly recorded. The Pileated Woodpecker is most apt to be found in the woodlands at the lower end of the west shore. On Feb. 1 one was watched flying across the lake. On March 13, of this year, we heard one drumming and calling from the swamp bottomlands beyond the target field.
46. Red-bellied Woodpecker. Feb. 18. A pair was noted about a hole in a large plane tree at the lower end of the lake.
47. Hairy Woodpecker. May 26, 4, observed in the pine woods on the west shore. February 7, 1.



48. Downy Woodpecker. Two or three regularly observed.
49. Kingbird. July 14, a pair noted at edge of bombing field.
50. Crested Flycatcher. Recorded, May 26.
51. Phoebe. January 9. In a bright, sunny spot in the pine woodlands on the west shore, a phoebe was seen, flying down to the ground for insects. March 13, again one was seen by a lead ditch from the north lane. Quite possibly it was the same bird. Phoebes are not common here during migration.
52. Acadian Flycatcher. May 26 and July 14. On the last date, a nest, loosely constructed with material hanging down from it was found about 15 feet from the ground.
53. Wood Pewee. May 26, and July 14. Parents were seen feeding 3 babies in a pine tree near the entrance of the causeway on the last date.
54. Tree Swallow. March 7, 1; March 17, 35 - spillway.
55. Barn Swallow. Recorded July 14.
56. Purple Martin. July 14, 1 recorded over spillway basin.
57. Southern Crow. Common. Sometimes we notice crows which seem larger than the usual ones. Such a crow was noted Feb. 7, on a post by the road near Stumpy. It seemed very large to Mrs. Darden, Mrs. Lester, and myself. But it cawed like a common crow. These large crows I call eastern crows, and the smaller "cawing" crows, southern crows.
58. Fish Crow. March 17, mating. Fish crows are seen regularly in the pine woods on the west shore. Here several nests can be seen fairly close together.
59. Carolina Chickadee. Regularly observed.
60. Tufted Titmouse. Regularly observed. January 9, 7.
61. White-breasted Nuthatch. Feb. 29, 1; March 17, 1, March 13, '41, 1.
62. Winter Wren. Feb. 29, 1, seen fluttering along the banks of the causeway; March 7, 1 observed same place; March 17, 1, among logs jammed below the spillway, possibly the same one.
63. Carolina Wren. Common.
64. Mockingbird. May 26, July 14, a pair.
65. Catbird. May 26; July 14, adults and 2 young; Oct. 3, 2.
66. Brown Thrasher. Feb. 1, 2 at the entrance of causeway; May 26, 2 in same place; January 9, 1.

67. Robin. March 17, 5; March 26, 12; February 7, 5; March 13, 6; all near causeway.
68. Hermit Thrush. January 9, 1; February 18, 1; March 13, 1; all in woodlands on west shore.
69. Bluebird. February 29, 12 were seen near edge of woods by spillway. March 17, a pair near the edge of bombing field; May 26, adults and 2 young taking baths in standing water by the field; February 7, a pair about a hole in tree lower end of lake; March 13, another pair, far end of bombing field.
70. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. May 26, recorded, woodland west shore.
71. Golden-crowned Kinglet. February 7, several kinglets, woodlands west shore; March 13, 1.
72. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. February 7, 1; March 13, 3.
73. White-eyed Vireo. Recorded May 26, and July 14.
74. Red-eyed Vireo. May 26; July 14, 3;
75. Black and White Warbler. May 26, 1.
76. Prothonotary Warbler. May 26, and July 14.
77. Parula Warbler. May 26, 1.
78. Yellow Warbler. May 26, on the Elbow Road.
79. Myrtle Warbler. February 29. On this day little groups of Myrtles were constantly taking off from the lower end of the lake and flying north. Wind was from the south. Several hundred must have passed. March 7. Still large numbers of Myrtles were present, feeding about fallen logs, along the shore, and on rocks of the dam. March 26, 15.
80. Pine Warbler. Regularly observed except on January 9. Feb. 29, singing.
81. Prairie Warbler. July 14, 1; edge of woodlands, west shore.
82. Ovenbird. May 26, 1, in woodlands on the Elbow Road, about 1 mile beyond spillway.
83. Yellow-breasted Chat. May 26, and July 14. Always in same place, in a corner of the woods by the marsh.
84. Hooded Warbler. May 26; July 14, a little female was feeding 2 young in a blackberry thicket.
85. Meadowlark. Recorded regularly from target field and farm.



86. Redwing. March 7, a resident redwing had taken up its abode in cat-tail marsh. February 18, 1941. On this day, a large flock of about 1000 blackbirds were seen on the Elbow Road about 3 miles beyond the spillway. This flock included males, the smaller females, and the young males.
87. Orchard Oriole. May 26, 1, on little farm by Stumpy.
88. Purple Grackle. February 18, a few hundred among the large flock of Redwings.
89. Cowbird. February 18, estimated about 60, males and females, among the redwings and grackles.
90. Summer Tanager. May 26, 1, in woodlands at opposite end of causeway.
91. Cardinal. Regularly observed; July 14, parents and 2 young.
92. Indigo Bunting. May 26, 2, a singing male by the target field, another on the Elbow Road; July 14.
93. Goldfinch. February 7, 1, in woodlands west shore. February 18, 45. In a cornfield along the Elbow Road we saw this flock of Goldfinches, the largest I have seen about Norfolk.
94. Red-eyed Towhee. February 29; May 26.
95. Junco. March 17, a few at the entrance of the causeway.
96. Chipping Sparrow. March 26, 1, near edge of bombing field.
97. Field Sparrow. Regularly recorded, bombing field.
98. White-throated Sparrow. January 9, 5; February 7, 5; February 18, 2; March 13, 1.
99. Fox Sparrow. January 9, 3; February 29, 2.
100. Swamp Sparrow. February 18, 2; March 13, walking along the whole length of the bombing field bordering the swamp bottomland, we flushed up 50 swamp sparrows that we counted. There were many more. As they flew steadily up ahead of us from the grasses into the thickets, the sides of their heads appeared quite bluish. It was a pretty sight. Doubtless they winter here.
101. Song Sparrow. Common.

Mrs. A. C. Reed,  
Norfolk, Virginia.

## V. S. O. ANNUAL MEETING

The Executive Committee has voted to hold the next Annual Meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology at Roanoke, Virginia, on Friday and Saturday, May 9, and 10th. The Hotel Roanoke has been selected by the local committee as headquarters for the meeting. Room rates run from \$2.50 for single rooms, and from \$4.00 for double rooms. The hotel has agreed to provide a private room for the meetings; and a room for the banquet, which will be served at \$1.50 per plate. There will be plenty of parking space for cars inside the hotel grounds.

The Friday program will begin shortly after noon. Saturday will be reserved for the field trip. The dates are set so as to take fullest advantage of the height of the warbler and songbird migration in the higher mountains about Roanoke.

Professor C. O. Handley is arranging the program. Those who are planning to read papers, present exhibits, or have any part on the program are requested to communicate with him. The meetings, including the banquet, will be open to all who are interested in birds.

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## SHORE BIRD TRIP

Norfolk members of the VSO will have a field trip for shore birds on Saturday, May 17. Any members of the society who would also like to go on the trip will be cordially welcomed.

Meeting place: in the free parking lot at the far south end of Atlantic Boulevard, which is the main street running through Virginia Beach. Here the road leaves the beach in a sharp right angle turn and the free parking lot forms the inner corner of this turn.

Time: 8 A. M.

Trip: the usual excursion down the beach in the CCC truck under the supervision of Mr. Harry Bailey. Stops will be made whenever desired (and the tide permits) for observation of shore birds. The truck will go all the way down the beach to the lower end of the Refuge; cross the ramp here to the flats behind the dunes and bordering the bay. Then group will progress slowly back up to Headquarters, walking or riding as desired.

Lunch: this will be held at the end of the trip, on Long Island. Here Mr. Bailey has a picnic place beneath the holly and live oak trees. Members from away are invited to be guests of the Norfolk group.

All those planning to be on the trip, please write or telephone, not later than May 15, Mrs. A. C. Reed, 1519 Morris Avenue, Norfolk, Va.

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## AN EARLY NESTING RECORD FOR THE PRAIRIE HORNED LARK

On February 26, 1941, Howard Price, an employee of the Building and Grounds Department of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, while engaged in levelling



on the V. P. I., airport just outside Blacksburg, Virginia, discovered a nest containing three eggs. Knowing my interest in birds, he, on March 6, 1941, reported his find to me. From his description of the nest, the eggs, and the location and placing of the nest, I decided that the nest was that of the prairie horned lark. Unfortunately he could not take me out to the airport until March 13, 1941, when we found the nest without the eggs. Since the incubation period of the bird is eleven days, the eggs had probably been hatched out a week or so before. I am well acquainted with the prairie horned lark and its nest, having studied them out in North Dakota in 1924-1925, and I am of the opinion that this nest (I have it in my possession) is that of a prairie horned lark. It is believed that this nesting record is one of the earliest, if not the earliest nesting record of this bird in Virginia.

Ralph M. Brown  
Blacksburg, Va.

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#### HOUSE WREN WINTERING AT NARUNA, VA.

On the morning of December 16, 1940, I heard the song of the House Wren at a home near Naruna. I was somewhat skeptical about a House Wren wintering here, so I only made a note of it for future reference, provided I saw the Wren. On January 28, I heard the song of the House Wren again at another home here. On February 20, and 24th, the House Wren came to my home and I had a pleasant time listening to its ecstatic song on a cold, frosty morning. Seeing is believing, so I write this down as another winter bird resident I had not known before. The House Wren was singing again on March 3.

A couple of Bewick's Wrens have been wintering here, too. They began singing on January 18.

Bertha Daniel.

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#### STILT SANDPIPER AT ROANOKE

On Sunday, September 8, while watching a flock of shorebirds, which had gathered at a wet-weather pond, I noticed feeding with three lesser yellow-legs a bird which proved to be a Stilt Sandpiper. The manner of feeding first attracted my attention as it was noticeably different from the others. Apparently holding the head in a stiff manner it would then plunge the bill straight down in the water to the eyes, and quite regularly tilt the head from side to side as if swinging the bill while submerged. The bird was followed closely with glasses for twenty or more minutes. Once it walked out on a mud island and after preening for a few minutes waded in and resumed feeding. When flushed, it flew for a short distance, joining other yellow-legs and resumed feeding. In each instance the dark greenish leg coloring was noted as well as other markings. I believe the distinct manner of feeding, alone, would serve to identify this bird. The bird was noted again the following morning, but could not be found that afternoon or afterwards.

Two other records of unusual interest were made at the same pond on Sept. 14, and 18th. On each date a Golden Plover was observed feeding among other birds.

Other notes for this pond are as follows: September 8-9, Killdeer, 125 (est.); Greater Yellow-legs, 10; Lesser Yellow-legs, 16; Least Sandpiper, 8; Stilt Sandpiper, 1; Starling, and Red-wings, 80 (est.).

September 14, Golden Plover, 1; Greater Yellow-legs, 3; Lesser Yellow-legs, 8; Least Sandpiper, 2; Black Duck, 8; (also noted on 12th) - Pied-billed Grebe, 2.

September 18, Golden Plover, 1; Greater Yellow-legs, 1; Lesser Yellow-legs, 5.

September 24, Semipalmated Sandpiper, 1; Wilson Snipe, 1.

This wet-weather pond (small truck garden) was one of many formed by the torrential rains during August and the first part of September. It proved particularly attractive to birds and on account of being situated beside a highway and adjacent to a farm yard, traffic and persons on foot had little affect on the birds. Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs are common migrants through this area. The occurrence of the Plovers and Sandpipers might be attributed to the hurricane which moved up the coast during this period.

A. O. English,  
Roanoke, Virginia.

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#### AN ALBINO QUAIL

Hunting just before the holidays, Mr. J. M. Witten of Culpepper, Virginia, killed a white quail. It was not just an ordinary albino as its eye color and leg color were normal. One brown feather was found in the neck and one in each wing. This quail was killed in the vicinity of Berry Hill where it grew up with seven others, all quite normal. The specimen was taken and mounted and is now in the possession of Mr. Witten. This was first reported by Cadet J. P. Thrift of the first class at V. M. I.

Robert Carroll  
Lexington, Virginia.

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#### NEST OF GREAT HORNED OWL

One day Mrs. Tyler in charge of the W. P. A. wildflower sanctuary told me that on Jan. 10, she had seen an owl being chased by crows. This chase kept up every day she said until its nest, which they found, fell down. It contained two eggs and tan striped feathers. After that she did not see the owl.

On Feb. 13, I went to see the fallen nest. It had been placed in a skimpy pine, in a crutch of the boughs and must have been 2 feet wide. I think possibly it had been an old osprey's nest. The bottom had fallen out of the nest. On the ground were large bunches of dried grasses from the marsh and also loblolly pine needles. Many large pellets lay on the ground. One egg was broken quite cleanly in half. This I took to Mr. Jos. E. Gould. He said immediately, "Great Horned Owl." And I was delighted to see it was exactly like the eggs of this owl, of which he had several



sets in his collection.

Mrs. A. C. Reed, Norfolk, Va.

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BALD EAGLE NESTING IN CITY

Mrs. Tyler, referred to in the note above, likewise said that the colored workers had reported an eagle's nest not far from the sanctuary, which is located on Granby Street. On Feb. 13, we had a colored girl lead us to the nest. It proved to be in a piece of woods where Cottage Toll Road intersects Sewells Point Road. Both adults were on the nest when we got there. On March 21, and again on March 27, I could see the white head of an adult above the rim of the nest from the boulevard. It is in a loblolly pine and the plumey boughs of the pine well conceal the nest. I have not been able to visit the nest recently.

Mrs. A. C. Reed,  
Norfolk, Virginia.



# The Raven

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PUBLISHED AT LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

DR. J. J. MURRAY, EDITOR  
LEXINGTON, VA.

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## THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE V.S.O. Roanoke, Virginia, May 9 & 10, 1941

The eleventh Annual Meeting of The V. S. O. was called to order at 2:30 P. M. on Friday, May 9, in the Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, Va., by President, Mr. A. O. English. In addition to welcoming the Society to this, its second Annual Meeting in Roanoke, Mr. English reported that the membership has passed the one hundred mark, thirty new members having been gained since the last annual meeting. Announcement was made of the field trip for Saturday, part of the route of which was to be along the Blue Ridge Parkway. A telegram from Prof. Ruskin S. Freer was read expressing regret that his plans for attending the meeting had to be cancelled at the last minute. Dr. Murray was asked to draw up resolutions regarding Mr. M. G. Lewis.

The first paper on the afternoon program was Dr. D. Ralph Hostetter's report on his studies on the Carolina Junco at Mountain Lake. The varied locations of nests were well illustrated on the screen both in black and white and in color. His finding that the birds will follow a nest with eggs not more than seven feet, when he moved the nests from their original site, but will follow a nest with young many times that distance, and that brooding birds would feed young transferred to their nests in place of eggs, but that the Juncos would not retrogress from feeding young to brooding eggs, when that change was made, makes grist for the psychologist's mill as well as for the ornithologist's.

Miss Edna Becker's study of the Brown Thrashers on the campus of Hollins College was illustrated by kodachrome slides and showed distinct territorial boundaries for the pairs studied, as well as something about their habits of mating and returning to the same region if not the same territory in successive years.

In "Days Afield in Europe", Dr. J. J. Murray narrated some of his most interesting bird experiences in his last brief trip to Europe. While only two days were devoted to field trips, he added to his life list of birds from the train, in city parks and on a trip up the Jungfrau. A film from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Haunts for the Hunted, which showed some of the waterfowl



breeding grounds in North Dakota and vicinity, ended the afternoon program.

At the business session which followed, the reading of the report of the last Annual Meeting was dispensed with because it had appeared in *The Raven*. The treasurer's report was read and there were some comments on the effect of reducing the dues. The following committees were named by the President: Nominating, Dr. Hostetter, Chairman, Mrs. Wiltshire, and Mrs. Barefield; Auditing, Mr. Dean, Chairman, Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Burgess; Resolutions, Dr. McIlwaine, Chairman, Miss Edna Becker and Mrs. Darden. After some discussion it was decided to start on the field trip at 7 A. M.

Dr. Murray reported that *The Raven*, now in its twelfth year, is receiving fewer substantial papers than it did earlier. The lists of arrivals and departures have furnished basic data and might now be superseded by lists from special localities covering at least five years or by summer lists from more remote areas. Life histories would be very acceptable material. Dr. Murray's suggestion of needing a new Editor for *The Raven* was heartily disapproved. The possibility of a Junior page was mentioned.

Suggestions for a place for the next annual meeting were called for. Prof. C. O. Handley invited the Society to Blacksburg, if it should meet in the same part of the State again next year and if the housing emergency is passed. The possibility and desirability of a field trip to Dismal Swamp were discussed briefly and the meeting adjourned.

The Executive Committee met between the afternoon and evening sessions and made the following decisions: That new officers should take office at the Annual Meeting; that membership in the National Audubon Society should be renewed for 1941; that Messrs English and Engleby should constitute a committee to arrange for the publishing of *The Raven* for the remainder of the year; that The V. S. O. accept the suggestion made to Dr. Murray of affiliating, without fee or definite responsibilities, with the Wilson Ornithological Club; and that back numbers of the *Wilson Bulletin* sent to Dr. Murray in exchange for copies of *The Raven* should become his personal property. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation for the work of Mrs. Elsie Garst, who has continued without remuneration the work of publishing *The Raven* since the death of Mr. M. G. Lewis.

Thirty-nine members and friends gathered for the Annual Dinner. At its close the reports of committees were heard and officers elected. Dr. Murray presented the following Resolution which was adopted with instructions that it should be sent to Mrs. M. G. Lewis and children, and to Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Lewis.

Whereas, The V. S. O. in the death of Merriam Garretson Lewis has lost one of its most enthusiastic and useful members, and many of us have lost a loyal friend and pleasant companion on field trips; and

Whereas, this is the first time there has been a death in the active ranks of the Society; and

Whereas, because of this loss we meet with an unusual feeling of sadness

Be it resolved: That we put on record our appreciation both of his high qualities of character and personality, and his long and valuable service to our organization;

And that we extend to his wife and children and to his parents our deepest sympathy and affection.

For his committee Mr. Hostetter reported the following nominations: President, Mr. English; Vice-President, Dr. McIlwaine; Secretary, Dr. Hague; Treasurer, Mr. Engleby; - for the Executive Committee for one year, Prof. Handley and Miss Becker; for two years, Col. Carroll and Mrs. Reed; for three years, Mr. Hostetter and Mrs. Darden. There being no response to a call for nominations from the floor, the above named were elected. Prof. Handley read the report of the auditing committee. For the resolutions committee Dr. McIlwaine moved an expression of appreciation to the local committee for their arrangements for the meeting and to Mr. Henderson for his successful manipulation of the motion pictures and slides.

After a brief interval during which the tables were removed we re-assembled in the same room for the evening program about 9 P. M. Mrs. Wiltshire accompanied her kodachrome slides with interesting anecdotes of the birds or of her experiences with photography.

Mrs. Darden's Kodachrome film showed the birds of the Back Bay Refuge at various seasons. A poem, Migrating Waterfowl, expressed some of Mrs. Reed's impressions gained in different geographical localities. Mr. Bailey, our host at the Back Bay Refuge in February of 1939, presented a film of the Birdlife of Back Bay Refuge. Again from the Fish and Wildlife Service there came through Mr. R. C. McClanahan a summary of the present status of North American Waterfowl and a kodachrome film showing Birds of the Western Arctic. Because of the lateness of the hour two papers by Prof. Handley were not given.

A group of twenty-nine went on the field trip and then enjoyed Mr. Engleby's hospitality, both the generous picnic lunch and the pleasant surroundings.

Florence S. Hague, Secretary.

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#### THE ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

On Saturday morning, May 10, seven cars left the downtown section of the City shortly after seven o'clock on the Eleventh Annual Field Trip. At the start the day appeared perfect for a day in the field, but before we reached the first stop, a fresh breeze had set in and continued for most of the day. The first stop was made at Back Creek School, in the valley at the foot of Bent Mountain where the list of birds seen quickly mounted into the forties. From this point we continued the trip up Bent Mountain and on the Blue Ridge Parkway to a newly opened picnic area, Smartview. Named for the nearby Post Office of Smart, it is



a vantage point at an elevation of 2,750 feet, wooded and traversed by many winding trails. On account of the wind, the quest was continued by many on the lee side of the mountain. Some took advantage of the opportunity to examine more closely the wild azalea which appeared in gorgeous full bloom, bordering both sides of the Parkway. Partly retracing our route, several stops were made before we descended Poor Mountain, then continued our trip through the town of Salem, and on to Bennett Springs. Here, at his cabin, Mr. Engleby had supervised the preparation of a delicious luncheon which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. While we were at ease on the sunny lawn in front of the cabin Miss Hague compiled the results of the day's observation, as follows: Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Cooper's Hawk, Bob-white, Killdeer, Wilson Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Hummingbird, Bolted Kingfisher, Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Kingbird, Crested Flycatcher, Phoebe, Acadian Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Wood Pewee, Horned Lark, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Bewick's Wren, Carolina Wren, Mocking Bird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood Thrush, Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Starling, Yellow-throated Vireo, Solitary Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Black and White Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Ovenbird, Louisiana Water Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, Maryland Yellow-throat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Hooded Warbler, Canada Warbler, Redstart, English Sparrow, Bobolink, Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Grackle, Scarlet Tanager, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Goldfinch, Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow. Total, 81 species.

A. O. English

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Statement of Treasurer, covering receipts and disbursements from January 1, 1940 to December 31, 1940.....

December 31, 1939 - Balance on hand as per last report..... \$ 135.44

Receipt account of memberships:

Memberships.....	\$132.50	
Sale of "Raven".....	4.00	136.50

Total including old balance..... \$ 271.94

Disbursements:

Voucher No. 53 - A. O. English	
February Postage.....	\$ 2.38
" " 54 - Mrs. J. Frank Key	
Junior Audubon Club Work....	20.00
" " 55 - M. G. Lewis	
Mailing "Raven".....	7.00

Voucher No. 56	-	John H. Grey, Jr.	
		Expense a/c Annual Meeting.....	\$ 16.00
"	"	1 - Salem Publishing Company	
		Letterheads & envelopes.....	11.50
"	"	2 - M. G. Lewis	
		Postage for "Raven".....	9.00
"	"	3 - Economy Printing Co.	
		Cards per A. O. E.....	7.50
"	"	4 - M. G. Lewis	
		Postage for "Raven" & Stationery.	26.08
Total amount of disbursements.....			\$ 99.48
Balance on hand December 31, 1940 as			
per bank statements.....			<u>172.48</u>
Total			\$271.94

Respectfully submitted,

T. L. Engleby, Treasurer.

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#### Camp Rapidan in the Blue Ridge Mountains

The eastern side of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Madison County, Virginia, was the region in which we studied birds for four days, May 19-23, 1941. Our camp was on the bank of the Rapidan River between Fork Mountain and Double Top, at an elevation of 2300 feet. We were just a mile from Hoover's Camp, and in the midst of a heavily wooded region. Aside from one day spent in the area around Nethers, Virginia, and climbing Old Rag Mountain about 8 miles north of our camp on the Rapidan, the rest of the observing was done right around the camp. The highest elevation reached was 3500 feet on Fork Mountain.

The total number of species seen on the trip was 80, including the birds seen while riding from Orange to the mountains. However, we are including on the list below only those birds observed in the region about Camp Rapidan and Old Rag Mountain.

1. Turkey Vulture - very common
2. Black Vulture - only one observed
3. Red-tailed Hawk - one
4. Cooper's Hawk - one or two
5. Bob-white - one or two
6. Mourning Dove - scarce
7. Yellow-billed Cuckoo - a few seen
8. Black-billed Cuckoo - one  
One large owl, unidentified, but seen several times
9. Whip-poor-will - common
10. Nighthawk - scarce, only one or two
11. Chimney Swift - common
12. Ruby-throated Hummingbird - fairly common



13. Belted Kingfisher - one
14. Flicker - scarce. All woodpeckers surprisingly rare.
15. Downy Woodpecker - scarce.
16. Eastern Kingbird - scarce in the mountains.
17. Crested Flycatcher - abundant.
18. Phoebe - abundant. Two nests were found, one with eggs, and the other with young birds almost grown.
19. Acadian Flycatcher - fairly common. One specimen was shot to make identification certain.
20. Wood Pewee - abundant.
21. Barn Swallow - common about the last farm houses before entering the Park. Rough-winged Swallows and Purple Martins were seen in the farming country outside the mountainous area.
22. Blue Jay - scarce
23. Raven - One pair of Ravens was found nesting on the top of Old Rag Mountain. The nest was placed in a niche on the vertical side of a cliff which was about as inaccessible as any spot a raven could find. Through binoculars we could see at least one young bird in the nest, about half grown. There may be others. The elevation is about 3200 feet, and the whole mountain quite rugged and rocky.
24. Crow - common
25. Carolina Chickadee - abundant.
26. Tufted Titmouse - two seen
27. House Wren - fairly common
28. Carolina Wren - fairly common
29. Catbird - abundant.
30. Robin - abundant.
31. Wood Thrush - abundant. Several nests found, the highest at an elevation of 3500 feet, with the bird setting on 2 eggs. Nests lower down had full sets of eggs, and the birds were setting.
32. Olive-backed Thrush - fairly common.
33. Veery - Common at the headwaters of the Staunton River on Fork Mountain, at an elevation of 3000-3500. None were seen below this elevation.
34. Cedar Waxwing - 1 flock seen on Old Rag
35. Mountain Solitary Vireo - fairly common. One nest was found near the camp (2300), containing young birds about half grown.
36. Red-eyed Vireo - common. One nest was found.
37. Black and White Warbler - common.
38. Parula Warbler - fairly common.
39. Yellow Warbler - common down in the plain, but scarce in the mountains.
40. Cairn's Warbler - very common, especially at the higher elevations of Fork Mountain.
41. Blackburnian Warbler - one seen.
42. Yellow-throated Warbler - fairly common. One nest found.
43. Chestnut-sided Warbler - abundant.
44. Black-pol Warbler - fairly common.
45. Prairie Warbler - Common.
46. Oven-bird - Perhaps the most common warbler.
47. Louisiana Water-Thrush - abundant. Two nests were found. One contained young just hatched, and one egg, the other half grown young. The song of the Louisiana Water-Thrush was one of the most common notes heard about the camp.

48. Kentucky Warbler - several.
49. Maryland Yellow-throat - common.
50. Yellow-breasted Chat - several were seen.
51. Hooded Warbler - fairly common.
52. Canada Warbler - common.
53. Redstart - fairly common.
54. Meadowlark - scarce in the mountains.
55. Baltimore Oriole- several.
56. Orchard Oriole - one.
57. Purple Grackle - scarce in the mountains.
58. Scarlet Tanager - fairly common above the elevation of 3000 feet.
59. Summer Tanager - one.
60. Rose-breasted Grosbeak - several were seen.
61. Cardinal - common.
62. Indigo Bunting - a few.
63. Goldfinch - abundant.
64. Red-eyed Towhee - several were seen. One nest, containing eggs, was found.
65. Carolina Junco - several were found above an elevation of 3000 feet. Evidently they were nesting.
66. Chipping Sparrow - rare in the mountains. All sparrows were very rare.
67. Field Sparrow - the most common sparrow in the mountains.
68. White-throated Sparrow - scarce.
69. Swamp Sparrow - one seen, at an elevation of about 2800 feet.

James R. Sydnor,  
 Assembly's Training School  
 Richmond, Virginia

William B. Ward,  
 Orange, Virginia.

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#### RED CROSSBILLS AT LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

It has long been known that the Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is a bird of erratic occurrence. So much so is this true that several years ago the Crossbill from Sitka, Alaska appeared in Washington, D. C.

I have spent several years in the central part of New York State and during these years, only two records of an invasion of these birds were called to my attention. I had never seen the birds until this year when a small invasion of this species visited the area near Cornell University.

During my spring vacation, April 2, 1941, Miss Sally Foresman and I visited my family in Lexington. While there but three days, we spent most of our time in the field photographing and studying the birds. Our greatest surprise was when on April 3, we found a flock of twenty-seven Red Crossbills in a small pine tree not more than fifteen feet from a road about three miles northwest of Lexington. While watching these birds feeding on the seeds in the pine cones, a



small flock of nine birds of both sexes drifted down to a mud puddle ten feet from where we were standing. Here they slowly and deliberately drank for several minutes, allowing us ample time to make very close and interesting observations. These few soon flew up to another small pine and were joined by the rest of the flock. They continued to mill around in the top of this tree for about ten minutes before they flew off to a clump of pines on a nearby hill, calling as they went.

J. Southgate Y. Hoyt,  
Laboratory of Ornithology,  
Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

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Virginia Field Notes  
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Lynchburg. A female Northern Phalarope was seen here on May 12, 1941. It was observed with a 30x telescope.

Ruskin S. Freer.

Charlottesville. March 21, first Towhee in the city; it has been absent all winter. April 7, to 22nd, American Crossbills, about twenty, at the University. April 7, Yellow-throated Warbler. April 27, Summer Tanager. May 1, White-crowned Sparrow.

Martin S. Curtler.

Appomattox County. - Near Bent Creek. April 14, Prairie Horned Lark, singing from a fence post, thus probably indicating a breeding station.

J. J. Murray.

Amherst County. June 2, Veery nest, bird incubating two eggs, at about 3500 feet on the Cardinal mountain.

Mrs. J. J. Murray

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In Memory of Wirt Robinson

Many of the friends and admirers of Colonel Wirt Robinson will be glad to know that a beautiful and suitable memorial has been built for him at West Point. I had the pleasure of seeing this memorial on a recent trip to the United States Military Academy.

The memorial, which is located not far from the Chapel, takes the form of a bird pool in the corner of the terraced gardens. Water runs over a moss-covered rock into a shallow pool. At the right stands a small bronze group of ducks, male, female, and young. In front is a low, rough stone with a small bronze plaque, in the center of which is a simple inscription:

## THE WIRT ROBINSON MEMORIAL

A gift to the Military Academy

From the friends of

Colonel Wirt Robinson, Professor, U.S.M.A.

In affectionate remembrance of his

Eminent attainments in the Natural Sciences

And of his

Great love of nature and of wildlife

1940

Around the edges of the plaque are reliefs of wild animals -- birds, mammals, fish, and a butterfly.

Colonel Robinson was a distinguished Virginian. For twenty-two years, from 1906 to 1928, he taught chemistry at West Point. In his special field, the chemistry of explosives, he attained high distinction. All his holiday periods were used in the study of natural history, particularly birds. He was an Associate of the American Ornithologist's Union from 1897, and a member from 1901.

Quite as remarkable as his ability in his profession and in his life-long avocation of ornithology was his genius for friendship, to which this memorial is a spontaneous tribute. Two of his old students in Washington had told me about the memorial; and there was evident affection in the way in which they spoke of him. The same admiration and affection was shown by one of the workmen in the Academy grounds. When I asked him if he could show me the way to this memorial he answered: "That I can. I knowed him well. He was a good man, and I knowed he would've liked that duck". He went on to speak proudly of his association with Colonel Robinson, and of the Colonel's kindness to him.

J. J. Murray

(Because of its special interest to Virginians this sketch, which appeared in *The Auk*, January 1941, pages 132-133, is here reprinted.)

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## Wirt Robinson Indian Collection

The Wirt Robinson collection of more than 20,000 items of Virginia Indian remains, considered one of the most representative groups ever assembled in the State, has been acquired by the Jamestown Island Museum of Colonial National Historical Park, according to the December issue of *The Regional Review*, published by the National Park Service, Region 1, here.



The late Colonel Robinson, who was an instructor in the natural sciences at the U. S. Military Academy, was said to have spent his vacations at his home near Wingina on the James River and most of the objects in the collection came from Indian Sites in the neighborhood.

The magazine article stated that the area which supplied the artifacts in the collection had been identified on Captain John Smith's map as the village or district of Monahassanugh. "The inhabitants," the article explained, "chipped native stone for weapons and many of their carefully worked arrowheads and spearheads are in the collection. There are crudely chipped stone hoes, pots and dishes of clay, and several massive vessels of sandstone. Beads and gorgets are well represented, as well as pottery discs, which, it is believed, were used as counters in games".

Colonel Robinson's extensive notes will be photocopied as a permanent record of the collection, considered culturally significant, and placed in the museum.

(From the Times-Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, January 14, 1941.)

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ORNITHOLOGY LABORATORY NOTEBOOK - By Arthur A. Allen. Comstock Publishing Company, Inc., Ithaca, N. Y. Fourth Edition, 1941. 204 pages, plus 32 pages of plates, colored map frontispiece, and many maps and illustrations. When one picks up a book with Dr. Allen's name on the cover he feels it will fulfill its purpose satisfactorily. That expectation is abundantly justified in this case. Unlike Dr. Allen's former books, this is not a book for literary enjoyment, but a working manual. It is just what its title indicates, a laboratory notebook; and as such should prove very useful not only to teachers of ornithology but also to all biology teachers who wish to bring into their courses some emphasis on ornithology. The frontispiece is a large colored faunal map of North America. The illustrations, which are good, are from photographs or from sketches by Louis A. Fuertes, Miles Pirnie and William Montagna. The book provides general diagrams of birds, external and skeletal; an illustrated key to the orders of North American birds; a key to nests, with photographs; life history charts to be filled in; field check lists; and outline drawings of 188 species.

J. J. Murray

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The Editor has been trying to secure for the Wilson Club Library at the University of Michigan a complete set of The Raven. There are still certain gaps in the file which has been sent them consisting of the following numbers: Vol. I, 1930, April, June, August, September, October. Vol. II, 1931, May, June. Vol. III, 1932, January. Vol. IV, 1933, February. Vol. VI, 1935, June. If any members have copies of these numbers which they do not need the Editor would like very much to have them.



# The Raven

BULLETIN OF THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY  
PUBLISHED AT LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

DR. J. J. MURRAY, EDITOR  
LEXINGTON, VA.

Vol. XII

JUNE, 1941

No. 6

## The Life History of the Brown Thrasher

By Edna Becker

This paper is a summary of a thesis prepared in connection with work toward an M. S. degree at Cornell University. The work was fairly comprehensive--including a study of the available literature, analysis of the Biological Survey banding records and food habits data, as well as an intensive observation of the five pairs of thrashers nesting on the Hollins College, Virginia, campus during the season of 1940. The pairs are numbered in their order of nesting. The adults (eight of the ten) were banded with Biological Survey and colored celluloid bands in such a way that each could be readily identified. The young were weighed and measured daily and were marked individually with colored yarn, around the neck for the first week, and then, when banded, the yarn was tied to the band. This made it possible to follow post-nesting activities. The first young thrasher to be reared had pink yarn and is the one referred to as "Pink".

### Classification

The thrasher is in the family Mimidae or mockers. It was one of the last of the Passerine groups to have been given full family rank - by Ridgway in 1907. Before this the group had been included first with the wrens, Troglodytidae, then with the thrushes, Turdidae, and later with the wrens again. The presence of rictal bristles in the Mimidae differentiate them from the wrens. The booted tarsus and rudimentary first primary of the thrushes are lacking in the thrashers. The present Mimidae family, which stands between Troglodytidae and Turdidae in the A. O. U. check-list, includes three genera--Mimus, Dumetella, and Toxostoma--represented in eastern United States by the mockingbird, catbird and brown thrasher respectively.

The thrasher genus is characterized primarily by the bill, (generic name is derived from the Latin toxon meaning bow and stoma meaning mouth) which is in all species long and varies in degree of curvature from T. rufum, which is the straightest to T. dorsale dorsale (Crissal Thrasher) which is much decurved. The genus Toxostoma has its center of distribution in south western United States and Mexico. Of the eight species and six sub-species (not counting T.r. longicauda, the western sub-species of our eastern thrasher) only one, Toxostoma rufum, is



found east of the Mississippi. It is one of the relatively few species which is confined almost entirely to the eastern United States. While there are breeding records for southern Canada, I could find no references to its occurrence south of the United States.

#### Habits At Night

The sleeping time of thrashers, as of most birds, coincides very closely with the daily period of darkness since they "go to bed" at dusk and "get up" at dawn. It is likely that they need this full period of rest since the daylight hours must needs be a constant vigil. The chances are that adult thrashers snatch a few "cat-naps" during the day as the young often do. However, these periods of relaxation are negligible or lacking entirely during the nesting period. At no time in my observation of either incubation or brooding did I find a thrasher asleep at his post. The importance of an enemy-free territory at night is apparently realized by thrashers since at dusk and also at dawn they resent intrusion much more than during the daylight hours. This is manifested in the use of their hoarse, guttural scold-rather than the usual kissing note--as long as an intruder is anywhere near. An approach to the nest or to the sleeping quarters at a distance which, during the day, is no cause for alarm, is promptly and continuously answered by this unpleasant expression of disapproval.

For sleeping, thrashers assume a squatting position on a well-concealed branch of a bush. Female #2 was observed thus, low in a dense syringa tangle. Pair #1, during the first part of the nesting period--before there were eggs or young to care for--slept in the same hawthorn tree, the female a foot or two above the male on the same side of the tree. In both these cases, the second nest of the season was built in the same tree or bush--almost in the same spot--in which they chose to spend the night before the first nest duties were started. This would indicate that thrashers are careful to choose a well-protected spot in which to spend the night. It looks, too, as though it is the female who chooses the spot. It is she who no doubt chooses the place for the second nest since she does all the work connected with it--the male caring for the first brood--and the second nest is often placed where both birds originally spend the night.

Sleeping with the "head under the wing" (really with the head turned and the bill placed between scapulars and dorsal tract) was observed numerous times in Rufus, my pet young thrasher. Often he would "teeter" from side to side when sleeping. I was unable to determine whether or not these habits are general with thrashers.

#### Habits During Storms

Brown thrashers are much like most people as far as reaction to storm is concerned. They are sensible enough to keep under shelter when the onslaught of the elements is too severe for comfort, but thoroughly enjoy the feel of a gentle "April shower". Several times I have seen thrashers who continued to sing regardless of a shower having come up. Other times thrashers would begin to sing while a shower was in progress. Once, when a hard shower came up rather suddenly, female #4 stayed out in the open field where she was feeding, jumped around and apparently enjoyed it.

### Bathing

Enjoyment of showers fits in with a thrasher's instinctive fondness for bathing. Using Rufus, the captive young thrasher, as an example again--he had never seen a large dish of water, much less had he witnessed a bird taking a bath, but it was scarcely two hours after the water dish was put within his reach until he took a thorough bath, splashing water for a radius of at least a foot.

Dust baths are sometimes taken, too. This probably done mainly to rid themselves of parasites. The only dust bath I witnessed during the entire period of observation was by female #1, who utilized for the purpose the untraveled dirt road near the nest. It was nest #1 (and #5) which harbored the only parasites I encountered, so it would seem that they might have been the impetus of such behavior.

### External Parasites

Birds are susceptible to parasitism by bird lice and by mites, the latter being the only type I found in the handling of five pairs of thrashers and their young. It appears that if the parent birds are infested, the nest, and the young, too, will soon be over-run with the mites. Since mites are blood-suckers, it is inevitable that they are a drain upon the energy of their hosts, who suffer considerably as a result. The birds which harbor these parasites do their best to rid themselves of them, mainly by picking them off with their bill. Infestation of the young gives an added burden (as well as food supply) to the parents since after nearly every trip to the nest with food they pause for a moment and pick some of the mites from the young and from the nest. The young birds begin to pick their own and each other's mites by the time they are a week old.

Since parasites weaken a bird and since a weak bird is more susceptible to attack by parasites than a healthy one, the infested bird is at a decided disadvantage. Blue, The weakest of the young of pair #1 (weighed the least), left the nest along with the others but was almost too weak to stand up and made little attempt to fly. In a few hours it was dead and I found that it was literally covered with mites which were, apparently, the direct cause of death.

### Keeping Cool

To compensate for their lack of sweat glands, birds (thrashers not excepted) have the habit of keeping their mouths open on really hot days. This was first observed on May 7, which was our first hot day, and was observed thereafter whenever the weather was uncomfortably hot. On the 8th, pair #1 was perched in a tree, both with mouths held open. Later the same day, the female was brooding (just straddling the young) with mouth open and the male was searching for food with his mouth still open. He even attempted, open-mouthed, to catch a flying insect. Young birds, both in the nest and soon after leaving it, were observed doing the same thing. In extreme heat the feathers are ruffled to expose to the air as much of the skin, particularly the region of the oil gland, as is possible.



### Longevity

The banding records of the United State Biological Survey (Fish and Wildlife Service) furnish the only records we have which are of value in determining the age of wild birds. Of the more than 1500 thrasher returns, the oldest recorded thrasher was one banded August 19, 1926 and retaken at the same station (Waynesville, N. C.) on May 22, 1935. Another thrasher was retaken eight years after banding. Such cases are the exception rather than the rule, however.

### Individual Differences

Thrashers living in the same area show definite individuality. The most noticeable point of difference was in their reaction to me--the degree of wariness shown toward intruders. This varied from the decidedly pugnacious and offensive attitude of Pair #1, both of whom tended pretty much to the business of caring for the young while I was there and who made no bones about fighting me--struck me any number of times on the hand, back and head--to the mere defensive, scolding attitude of pair #3, both of whom would leave the nest when I was still a considerable distance from it and refuse to go back until sometime after I had gone. This pair stayed away from the newly-hatched young for an hour and a half because I had weighed them. In the case of nest #1, I had to watch for a chance to take the young out of the nest since they were so carefully guarded. While there was yet only one egg in the nest, male #1 went back on to incubate five minutes after I had chased him off in order to mark it. Pair #2 reacted differently from both of these others. While they stayed near the young and were always ready to protect them, this police duty seemed to absorb their whole energy. At least the young received very little food when I was around; the parents were too busy scolding me. Pair #4 showed a difference from the "normal" in that the male did much of the incubating of the eggs. It was the exception to find any of the other males on the nest, but after finding male #4 in the process of incubating the eggs every time I approached the nest for several days in a row, I had about concluded that the female had either deserted or been killed, and that the male had undertaken to do double duty. This was a false alarm, however, since the female soon re-appeared.

The differences between male and female thrashers are definite, and apparently quite consistently uniform. All five males were easily trapped--food and the young both being effective bait. None of the females entered the trap to feed the young; two of them went in it to feed--female #2 being caught along with the male (who had already been banded); female #4 the day after the male was caught. The other three never would enter the trap and two of them remained unbanded--#1 being caught in a nest trap.

That interest in these later phases of the reproductive cycle reach their peak earlier in the female than in the male was quite evident. The female ordinarily shows more interest than the male during the time of incubation and until the young are nearly ready to leave the nest. This interest seems to lag then and by the time the young leave the nest and soon after, it is the male who assumes the main responsibility. It is the male, also, who shows the first interest in territory and nest building.

### Song and Call Notes

The song of the brown thrasher would, from its very nature, command attention regardless of where it were delivered, since it may be heard for half a

mile. Add to this the fact that the thrasher loses his characteristic shyness when he sings and mounts to the highest perch, from where he may be seen and heard by all, and we have an idea as to the reason for his fame as a songster. Besides, he is of great endurance and often sings for long periods at a time. I have heard thrashers sing for as long as forty-five minutes with hardly a break.

When the urge to sing overtakes a thrasher, it apparently takes effect immediately since often he does not wait to begin singing until he has reached his final perch. Many times I have seen thrashers, who had started to sing while on the ground or in a low bush, move progressively up--either in one tree (if it were high enough) or in several--singing all the while. The increase in fervor is apparent then not only in the song itself, which grows more and more determined, but in the actions and behavior of the bird, who becomes ever more absorbed in his singing. Quite often it is true that the higher/<sup>the</sup> perch from which a thrasher sings, the longer will the concert last.

Unfortunately, these mad fits of singing are of comparatively short seasonal duration--ending almost simultaneously with the choosing of a mate and the consequent beginning of nesting duties. Before mating, when singing and feeding are the chief daylight pastimes, the two occur intermittently. The singing periods are then long-continued (15 minutes to half an hour being the average duration); the perches are tall trees or telegraph wires. Although early morning and late afternoon are the favorite times for singing, the male thrasher is so intent upon acquiring a mate that he sings almost continuously throughout the day until he has succeeded in his purpose. Once he has a mate, the thrasher no longer needs to proclaim his presence and his singing promptly diminishes. There is a slight recurrence of song--but not rendered so enthusiastically nor from so high a perch, as a rule--after nest-building is well started and again when the eggs are about ready to hatch. Quite often, too, the male sings briefly, near the nest, immediately after he has been incubating. He sometimes uses a very low singing, combined with a call note, to urge the female to leave the nest when it is his turn to incubate. A few days after the young are out of the nest, the male resumes singing to some extent--sometimes even using a high perch again. After July 1, when nesting is usually over, thrasher songs are rare indeed. I have, however, heard thrashers sing the "whisper song" as late as the latter part of September--just before departing for their winter home. This is the regular thrasher song but sung very softly with closed bill, making a melody which is "inespressibly sweet but which can be heard only when very near them".\*

(\*"Some Florida Birds", by F. W. Roe, Bird-Lore, 6: 188)

The brown thrasher is not one of those few species in which the female sings equally as well as the male. The female thrasher does sing, however, and on occasion, can compete quite successfully with the male in all except endurance and loudness. It was while the eggs of nest #1 were hatching that I first heard female #1 sing. Some time later, about the time the young left the nest, she again sang--softly but definitely--and the male answered her. A month later, when they had their third set of eggs, female #1 sang louder than the male in answer to his soft singing.

All thrashers--regardless of sex or age (excepting nestlings)--seem to be equally adept at rendering the thrasher call notes. These consist of a whistled wheeu, which may be given in one, two or three syllables, as wheèu, wheè-u,



or whe-è-u, the last resembling somewhat the pee-a-wee of the wood pewee; the loud kissing note, which is promptly used at the approach of an intruder and which is responsible for the bird being spoken of as the "great American chipper";\* thirdly there is the hoarse, guttural note, "half a hiss and half a whistle",\*\* which is used mainly at dusk and again at dawn.

The first mentioned of these, the whistled whee, in its various modifications, is the principal call note of the birds, being used by parents in "talking" to the young and to each other. The second, the kissing note, is sometimes used as a call note, also--to announce to the young the approach of food, etc.--but is used chiefly as a notice of warning or disapproval to intruders. The guttural sound is, apparently, used almost exclusively to express disapproval--particularly in early morning or at dusk.

### Territory

The male thrashers ordinarily arrive in the breeding area several weeks ahead of the females. They migrate singly, as a rule. As soon as a suitable site is reached, the male begins to announce to the world--particularly to other males of his kind--where his selected territory is. He does this by singing loudly from a high perch. Should another male appear too close, he increases the volume and ferventness of his singing, in an attempt to out-do the intruder. The closer the selected territories are, the more frequent and the more violent will the conflicts be. In most territorial disputes which I witnessed the original occupant asserted his rights vigorously when an intruder appeared but before long they tolerated each other so long as the intimacy was not too close. This relationship persisted throughout the nesting period--toleration so long as the other remained at a safe distance. As soon as any thrasher came too close to a nest, however, both male and female would be equally prompt to chase away the intruder. This happened several times in my observation.

When there is rivalry between two males for a single female, territorial boundaries are temporarily forgotten--both males keeping near the female regardless of whose territory she may enter. Male #4, who had previously lost in such a situation to male #2, met a similar fate with male #5 in spite of going to the farthest limit of the latter's territory in addition to singing valiantly.

As soon as all nesting activities are over for the season, territory is no longer important. Apparently, it is customary for the female, with half of the young, to leave the territory within a few days after the young are fledged, if no second nest is contemplated. Female #3, with two young, and female #4, with one, both left their respective territories on the second day after the young had come off the nest, and were not seen after that.

### Courtship and Mating

Thrasher courtship is simple--lacking in antics and display--and consists mainly of song. Actual mating does not usually occur until after nest-building has been started. In pair #4 it was first observed just twenty-four hours before egg #1 was laid. For the second clutch of eggs of pair #1, mating

\* Birds and Poets, by Burroughs, 1904; p. 114

\*\* The Birds of Eastern North America, by Maynard; 1879; p. 21.

occurred more than three full days before the first egg appeared. In both cases it took place on the ground--the female squatting low in the grass, wings quivering violently; the male alighting over her. The whole procedure lasted just a few seconds.

#### The Nest

In my observation it was usually the male who had the final say in regard to location of the first nest and the female who selected subsequent nest sites. Choice of a site is announced by the bird carrying a stick or leaf into the selected spot. The mate must be satisfied with the other's choice before he or she will cooperate.

Once the site has been selected, the birds do not, as a rule, proceed with active building at once. They work short periods at a time with numerous long intermissions for feeding. This applies chiefly to early nests since these are built, usually, with more care than later ones. This difference in time between early and late nests is well shown by pair #1, who nested three times.

	<u>Date Started</u>	<u>Egg No. 1</u>	<u>No. of Days</u>
Nest No. 1	April 7	April 21	14
Nest No. 2	May 21	May 26	5
Nest No. 3	June 18	June 20	2

The number of days refers to the time elapsing between the time the first stick was brought and the laying of the first egg. In no case was the full time used in actual building. In the case of nest #1, the birds were away from the nest so much that, more than once, I had given it up as deserted. Nest #2 was made partially from nesting material taken from nest #1. Nest #3 was an old nest slightly repaired.

#### The Eggs

Eggs in the same clutch are usually quite similar in coloration and markings. However, eggs in two clutches from the same female may vary from brown to a definite greenish. This was true in the case of pair #1--the first eggs were green, the second brown. I found that four was the usual number for first sets, and three for second and third sets. Removing one egg did not stimulate further disposition.

There seems to be a definite correlation between length of season and number of broods. In the northern states the thrasher is ordinarily a single brooded species--due, no doubt, to the lateness in getting started. Further south they regularly have two broods and occasionally three. In Virginia the ones which begin early have more than one brood; those which are long in acquiring a mate ordinarily have but one brood.

In the nests I observed the incubation period was eleven days for one nest and twelve days for four, counting from the day the last egg was laid until the first was hatched. This makes the true period of incubation longer than the time indicated since incubation often begins with the laying of the first egg. Without exception, the fertile eggs in each nest for which complete data were known hatched in the order in which they were laid. The female does most of the incubating--the male taking his turn, however, so the female can feed. The male



is ordinarily quite cooperative in this and was often observed waiting his turn and even urging the female to leave since she is often reluctant to do so--especially when the nest is being watched--and on one occasion female #1 resisted  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours of coaxing by the male without leaving her post. This was the day before the eggs hatched and both birds ordinarily showed increased interest in them--probably because they could feel movement within--at this time. Both would make their feeding periods shorter than and would come back to the nest anxious to incubate. It was evident that the female didn't completely trust her developing offspring to her mate. Sometimes she would get off the eggs temporarily when the male was there to assist and then, instead of going off to feed, would come back on the eggs, without having gone more than a foot away. Perhaps she was justified in her distrust of his behavior, since the male is always more prone to desert his post when disturbed and will leave the eggs more readily than does the female. He often gets off, too, without giving her any indication of his intended departure, whereas the female is likely to be sure he is at hand before she leaves. Also the female gets on the eggs more readily than the male.

Calling, interspersed with very low singing, is the male's method of telling the female he wants his turn at incubating. The female ordinarily calls, sometimes quite lowly, if the male stays away too long. Once in a while she sings in an effort to call him. The male sometimes sings briefly from a nearby bush after he has finished his turn at incubating. Although he gets off the eggs more readily than the female, he often makes a bigger fuss when the eggs or young are disturbed. When I marked egg #4 in nest #2, the male made such a loud and plaintive disturbance that two yellow warblers and one yellowthroat came to the nest to investigate.

Once the shell has been pipped enough to make an opening, it does not usually take long for the bird to make his appearance. In the case of nest #3, all but one of the four eggs had hatched by 8:00 A. M. The remaining egg showed no signs of hatching. At 8:30 the shell was broken all the way around except for  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch. The shell is split into two halves--the smaller one being at the narrow end. It is this "cap" which is pushed off first, the body of the bird remaining in the lower shell until, by struggling with its wings, it can work its way out. The parents do not assist in the hatching in any way--except keeping the nest warm--but watch the process with great interest--looking in the nest every few minutes during the struggle. As soon as the young bird is free, its shell is removed--carried off by one of the parents; Part of the shell of egg #1 in nest #1 was found 48 feet from the nest. An egg which does not hatch is left in the nest during the entire period of development. At least, that is what happened in nest #2, where the third egg was infertile.

#### The Young

At the time of hatching the average length of (13 birds) was 51 mm.; weight (average of 14) was 4.9 grams. The tail feathers are the only mature ones which are through the skin and these are only about  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch long. The down feathers, which are much in evidence on the dorsal side, are brownish-gray and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long. Underneath newly-hatched thrashers are naked except for a row of white down, usually consisting of ten feathers, on either side of the lower abdomen and a tuft of three white down feathers on either side postero-lateral to the anus.

At three days, the eyes begin to open, the birds start to wriggle when handled and also cling to objects with their claws. All primaries, primary coverts, secondaries, greater and middle coverts are through the skin and the ventral tract is almost ready to break through. The primary sheaths are  $1/8$  inch long.

By the time the birds are five days old, they definitely have a will of their own and begin to get difficult to weigh and measure. It was at this age that I began putting them in a sock for weighing.

It is at nine days that the young first show a definite fear instinct--try to escape, cry, "freeze" in the nest and in general are quite unmanageable. Some leave the nest at this time but ten days is the time when most of the birds leave. By this time the tail feathers are  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long, down feathers are still attached to the juvenile plumage, the bill begins to be definitely curved, and the egg tooth is almost gone but usually still visible.

During the nestling period both parents share the duties of feeding and sanitation but the female does most of the brooding.

When first out of the nest the young stay on the ground or low in the bushes. They stay in one place unless disturbed, waiting to be fed. They are well-behaved children--being quiet (no sound being heard except a faint food call when the parent is there with food) and obedient to every suggestion of the parents. They are proficient in the art of "freezing" in position to avoid detection and tend to point their bill upward which helps in the dissimulation. It is possible to get within a few feet of them but it is difficult, if not impossible, to catch them. For a week or more the young do not venture beyond the sheltered area where they are taken by the parents--except when the female with half the young, leaves the territory for good. The young of pair #1 stayed in a honeysuckle tangle within a radius of 25' for about two weeks.

The young are aware of danger by the time they leave the nest and protect themselves without a suggestion from the parent. This was also illustrated by Pink. I had entered the honeysuckle tangle where he was without being seen by the male who was caring for him but had been noticed by Pink. The male came with food and called to Pink but received no response. Pink kept perfectly still until I left several minutes later.

By the time the young have been out of the nest a week they run and fly from limb to limb very readily but still stay in a small area and don't try long flights. They allow intrusion only to about six feet or less. The appearance at this time seemed to me to be quite wren-like because of the tail, which is about one and one-half inches long and at times is held quite upright. The birds are still being fed regularly but are learning to feed themselves. By the time they have been out of the nest seven days, the young can scold quite effectively but not quite so loudly as the adults.

Young thrashers, by the time they are out of the nest fifteen to twenty days, have a tail about two and one-half inches long and look very much like adults. However, the plumage is fluffier and they are, of course, less steady in perching and flying. The tail tends to bob up and down considerably as an aid in balancing. The most obvious difference between the young and adults, by the time the young are full grown, is the color of the eyes. The yellow iris is not acquired until the end of the first summer. The young begin to feed themselves by this



by this time but the male was seen with them as late as nineteen days out of the nest.

Pink was observed up to the time he had been out of the nest fifty days (sixty-one days old). When he had been out of the nest twenty-five days, he was seen feeding on the ground just a few feet from the nest. He was scratching for food with his bill and then squatted on a limb of the apple tree overhanging the nest. He even tried, unsuccessfully, to catch a flying insect.

Curiosity and fearlessness seem to be characteristics of young thrashers. On the twenty-sixth day out of the nest Pink looked so much like an adult that I first mistook him for female #4--until I saw the dark, rather than yellow, eye. Closer observation revealed the pink yarn on his band. He was listening to the song of male #4, who apparently didn't like the intrusion since he chased Pink just as much as would have another adult. Pink, however, came back for more. Five days later (forty-two days old) Pink was seen with male #2, who was more tolerant of his company--chased him just once when he came too close--and even scolded me away to protect him as he would his own young. This time Pink was seen to chase a song sparrow which had been near where he was feeding. The parents (pair #1) had not been seen for several days. Apparently, then, by the time the young have been out of the nest a month they are completely independent and "on their own".

A strange young thrasher about the same age as Pink likewise exemplified both these characteristics. He was observed about two feet from two young screech owls and was scolding loudly. He used both types of scolding note characteristic of adult thrashers. Other birds had been scolding at the owls but the young thrasher came the nearest and stayed the longest.

#### Parental Care

Since all the young of a brood rarely leave the nest at the same time, it is necessary for the parents to divide their energies. In every case where I observed the young leaving the nest it was the female who cared for those which left first. This happened in the case of nests #1, 2 and 3. Both young of nest #4 left without my witnessing the departure and in the case of nest #5--the only one which was more than a few feet above the ground and from which, therefore, the young would require additional assistance in leaving--both adult birds seemed to take equal responsibility in coaxing the young and both of them stayed together until all had left the nest.

The male and female care for the young jointly the first two days after they leave the nest although each takes particular interest in certain ones of the young--dividing the number equally when possible. The male usually assumes most of the responsibility at this time, however. In the case of nest #1, where three young were successfully fledged, the male cared for two and the female for one.

In cases where a second nest is built the female relinquishes the young in her care to the male--usually the second day after the first brood is out. Thereafter, the male has almost complete care of the young and the female tends to the second nest, building it and incubating the eggs without much assistance from the male. Pairs #1 and #2 did this.

When no second nest is made, the pair usually separate--each with half the young--after two days. Female #3, with two young, and female #4, with one young, both disappeared completely from the territory on the second day after the young were fledged.

After the young are completely independent (about a month out of the nest) they leave the home territory and wander around by themselves. Pink (of nest #1) was seen in the territory of pair #2 and of #4. Also, by this time, the parents are tolerant of the young but not willing to have them interfere too much. Thus, Pink, perched on the apple tree which overhung the nest where he was hatched, watched his parents begin their third nest. (He had been out of the nest 44 days.) As long as Pink stayed in the tree (fifteen feet from the adults) it was alright, but when he flew down and joined them, the female immediately chased him off. This happened again, later the same day, when Pink approached the new nest site.

#### Summary of Nesting Activities

The reproductive capacity of the brown thrasher may be regarded as the percent of eggs which become fledglings. This figure is much higher than would be the case could we determine how many fledged birds reach adulthood, since the post-nesting period is nearly as precarious for young birds as the time spent in the nest. The five pairs of thrashers studied had nine nests between them and laid a total of 30 eggs. Two nests, containing a total of 4 eggs, were deserted; 1 egg was broken; and another infertile. Another set (containing 3 eggs) was in the process of being incubated when I left the area so no further data were obtained. Of the 22 eggs in the 6 nests which were observed throughout the incubation and nestling periods, 21 hatched. Of these, 15 young birds -- 68% -- left the nest. Of these 15, however, one died within a few hours, and it is practically certain that two more, at least, died within the first few days--at least they were not seen again in spite of thorough searching as well as observation of the parents. This leaves an estimate of two offspring surviving to the fledgling stage from each pair.

#### Conclusions

There are a few apparently new contributions which this study has added but, since birds are individual creatures, observations made on a few pairs may be only the exception rather than the rule of thrasher behavior. These observations are given as tentative, therefore, subject to further observation and verification elsewhere. These include:

- 1-The male ordinarily chooses the first nest site; the female selects subsequent ones.
- 2-The call note, a whistled whceu, may be given in 1, 2, or 3 syllables. The significance of the three different versions was not determined.
- 3-The male and female are practically identical in appearance but, if there is a difference, it is the female which is more vividly colored. The chief difference is in the breast streakings--the female usually having more prominent ones than the male.
- 4-The female sings, on occasion, and does a creditable job of it.
- 5-The young receive parental care for approximately a month after leaving the nest. They remain in the home territory during most of this time and are almost entirely dependent for the first week, after





# *The Raven*

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JUNE BIRDS OF

FAIRY STONE STATE PARK

By J. J. Murray

(This paper is dedicated to the memory of Merriam Garretson Lewis—a good bird student, a good companion of many mountain trips, and a good friend. When the fact was pointed out at the Harrisonburg meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology that the Patrick-Henry-Franklin County section was ornithologically one of the most neglected regions of Virginia, Lewis proposed to take this region as a study project. He was able to make only two brief trips to the area; one in June to the Blue Ridge Parkway (*The Raven*, August-September, 1940, p. 47); and one in September to the Fairy Stone State Park (*The Raven*, October, 1940, p. 61). The writer, as he did the field work recorded below, felt that he was in part, at least, carrying out the work that Lewis had planned.)

In a paper entitled "A Topographic Survey of Virginia Ornithology", read at the Harrisonburg meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, and published in *The Raven*, Vol. XI, May-June, 1940, the writer mentioned eight sections in Virginia needing special attention. One of these was the Patrick-Henry-Franklin County region, which has been entirely neglected by bird students and which because of its southern position and its low and broken type of mountain country should be of special interest. Consequently, I looked forward with much pleasure to spending the week of June 23-30, 1941, with my family at the Fairy Stone State Park, which lies in the extreme north-eastern corner of Patrick County, near where this county joins Franklin and Henry.

The Virginia Conservation Commission is due a great deal of credit for its wisely planned and efficiently administered system of state parks. Six of them, so spaced as to serve the needs of the whole population of the State, provide splendid facilities for recreation and, incidentally, good opportunity for all forms of nature study. Fairy Stone, like the two other mountain parks, Douthat

and Hungry Mother, has an attractive lake with a man-made sandy beach, camping and picnic areas, and a limited number of comfortable and completely furnished log cabins. Our cabin was set on a point in a grove of little pines almost at the water edge. It was an ideal place to rest after a long hike. By day we heard Yellow-throated Warblers singing overhead and the squawks of the Green Herons as they carried food to their young, and at night we went to sleep to the songs of the Whip-poor-wills and the screams of the Barred Owls down the lake.

Fairy Stone State Park takes its name from the famous fairy stones, brown staurolite crosses, which are found only in that section. There are five thousand acres in the park. The lake, which is the largest in the State system, covers one hundred and sixty-eight acres. Mr. William Worthington, Park Custodian, told me that ninety percent of the park is in forest. That estimate, if anything, is too small. There is practically no open ground except for the recreational areas. The forest consists mostly of a mixed growth of pine and hardwoods, with some pure stands of pine. There are many scattered white pines. Much of the area is covered with a thin cut over growth, which was once regularly swept by fire. Now that the fire has been kept out for eight years - the forest is retaining much of its original beauty. In places, particularly in the ravines, there are beautiful beech woods and thick shade. The growth on the higher ridges is very scanty. On some hillsides a dense growth of Mountain Laurel is found under pines, in which it is a tough job to stalk an elusive warbler. The elevation at the lake is about 1,000 feet, the ridges generally going to 1,500 or 1,600 feet, and Little Mountain, the highest point in the park, reaching some 2,000 feet. Of course, still higher elevations are found as one moves from the park toward the Blue Ridge, the crest of which is twenty miles away. The territory in and around the park is broken foothill country. In general the ridges are narrow, and very steep, and the valleys and ravines between correspondingly narrow. Rhododendron maximum grows profusely at the lake level and in the shady ravines, while Kalmia is found everywhere except on top of the dry ridges. The Rhododendron was in full bloom when we arrived on the 23rd, while only a few last blossoms of Kalmia remained.

The flora has a definite Alleghanian tinge. In fact, the very atmosphere of the park was Alleghanian. We felt all the time that we were in a country higher than the map showed. The Avifauna, however, as will be seen by a study of the list, is almost purely Carolinian. If the Zonal references in Dr. Chapman's "Handbook" which apply to the species on this list are consulted, and if the birds are then excluded which have no zonal preferences or which are found in both the Transition and Upper Austral Zones, such as the House Wren, and the Scarlet Tanager, twenty birds will be left. These twenty birds may be placed in four groups:

(1) Birds whose ranges are Definitely Transition (Alleghanian), or Transition and Canadian. Only two birds fall in this group, the Least Flycatcher and the Golden-winged Warbler (of which the identification was not absolutely certain). Dr. Chapman's remarks on the Redstart, "mainly in the Canadian and Transition Zones", would place this bird here; but the Redstart breeds throughout the Upper Austral in Virginia and so must be ignored in this analysis.

(2) Birds whose ranges are chiefly Upper Austral (Carolinian): Bowick's Wren, Worm-eating Warbler, and Louisiana Water-thrush. All of these occasionally move over into Transition Zone territory.



(3) Birds whose ranges are Chiefly Austral, Upper and Lower: Yellow-billed Cuckoo; White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grasshopper Sparrow. It may be remarked that in Virginia the Chat is quite common even to the Upper limit of the Transition, when its desired scrub areas are found.

(4) Birds whose ranges are Definitely Austral, Upper and Lower. We have eleven in this group: Acadian Flycatcher, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers, Summer Tanager, Cardinal. I should hesitate to limit all of those as Dr. Chapman does to the Austral. In Virginia the Prairie Warbler, like the Chat, goes far up into the Transition; and the Carolina Chickadee, Titmouse, and Hooded Warbler, are all found breeding at times in Transition territory.

It will thus be seen that in spite of the surprising appearance of the Least Flycatcher and the probable breeding of the Golden-winged Warbler on some of the ridges, the picture of the bird life of this foothill country is clearly upper Austral. There do not seem, moreover, to be any reasons for differentiating the characteristics of the highest and lowest sections of the region. Since this is the first report from this region, the annotated list which follows goes at times into some detail. The list will be divided into four sections.

#### I. Birds Seen In The Park

1. Green Heron. Three or four pairs around the lake; also seen on Smith River; nest, probably with young, June 25, in a grove of slender pines, near the edge of the lake.
2. Turkey Vulture. Not common in this wooded region. From one to four seen each day.
3. Sharp-shinned Hawk. A Kingbird chased one across the lake, June 24.
4. Red-tailed Hawk. A pair nested this season on the high hill across the lake from the beach. I heard one or more young squealing, and both adults were seen.
5. Sparrow Hawk. Two were seen near the beach on June 24, and one at the same place the following day. This is not suitable territory for this bird.
6. Bob-white. Only one heard in the park; fairly common in the surrounding country.
7. Woodcock. One was flushed on June 25, in a marshy spot at the edge of the lake.
8. Mourning Dove. A few in the park; abundant in the surrounding country. Already flocking on a farm where shocks of grain were being hauled out of the fields.
9. Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Two seen in the park. June 24, and 25th.

10. Barred Owl. One was heard calling near the dam almost every night; two others heard on June 29, from the upper end of the lake. Mr. Worthington says that this bird is common in the park.
11. Whip-poor-will. One heard at the lake every night, and two others several nights.
12. Chimney Swift. About six pairs occur in the park. There are not many available nesting places.
13. Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Common.
14. Pileated Woodpecker. Two heard June 24, near the dam. Mr. Worthington says that it is not uncommon in the higher and wilder parts of the park.
15. Flicker. Fairly common.
16. Hairy Woodpecker. Two seen in the park on June 26, and one on June 29.
17. Downy Woodpecker. Common.
18. Kingbird. Common. Nest with young, June 25, in an apple tree near the beach; another nest with large young, June 26, at Stone's Store in Henry County. Frequently seen chasing one of the Red-tailed Hawks.
19. Crested Flycatcher. Scarce; two seen in the park and one outside.
20. Phoebe. Common.
21. Acadian Flycatcher. Common.
22. Wood Pewee. Abundant
23. Rough-winged Swallow. About six seen regularly over the lake; common outside the park.
24. Crow. Fairly common.
25. Carolina Chickadee. Common.
26. Tufted Titmouse. Common.
27. Carolina Wren. Fairly common; family group with young on the wing June 29.
28. Catbird. One of the most abundant and widely distributed birds in the region.
29. Brown Thrasher. Uncommon. The scarcity of this bird in such a rough, cut-over region is very surprising. I never saw more than three in any one day either inside the park or in the farming country outside.



30. Robin. Only fairly common anywhere in the region.
31. Wood Thrush. Abundant.
32. Bluebird. Only a few in the park; common in places outside.
33. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Common.
34. Cedar Waxwing. Five or six seen in the park, around the abandoned C. C. C. Camp; none outside.
35. Starling. Only one seen in the park; only fairly common outside. A flock of about forty seen on a farm in Patrick county; nest with large young in telephone post at Stone's Store in Henry County.
36. White-eyed Vireo. Seven or eight pairs seen in the park; also fairly common outside. Seen mostly along streams, but two males were found on a dry hillside where a thick growth of Kalmia stood under pines. Feeding young on the wing, June 24, and 25.
37. Red-eyed Vireo. One of the most common and certainly the most widely distributed bird in the region. It could be heard anywhere and at all times of the day.
38. Black and White Warbler. Common
39. Worm-eating Warbler. One was heard and after much patient waiting seen on June 25, in a shaded glen near the dam.
40. Parula Warbler. Fairly common; young on the wing, June 29.
41. Yellow-throated Warbler. Abundant; except for the Oven-bird, the most common warbler of the park; feeding young on the wing, June 24. This bird is definitely the Yellow-throated Warbler (Dendroica dominica dominica) and not the Sycamore Warbler (Dendroica dominica albilora) which occurs in Southwest Virginia. I had a chance to study one at a range of ten feet with a close-focusing pair of Zeiss glasses, and distinctly saw the yellow in the fore-part of the eye stripe.
42. Pine Warbler. Uncommon. One to four heard each day.
43. Prairie Warbler. Fairly Common. As is well known, the songs of the birds of certain species vary much in different parts of the ranges. The Prairie Warbler of Fairy Stone Park is a case in point. Its song is very different from the song of birds across the Blue Ridge one hundred miles away at Lexington. It is so thin that it cannot be heard at any great distance, so high that it resembles the song of the Field Sparrow, and so fast in certain birds that it almost becomes a trill. One bird heard on Little Mountain in the park had a song that was not only weak and high but hesitant, not running straight up the scale, but wavering up and down at the end until it sounded like a little file working on steel.
44. Oven-bird. Abundant; the most common warbler in the park and except for the Red-eyed Vireo the most wholly distributed bird; feeding young on the wing, June 25.

45. Kentucky Warbler. Fairly common; at least ten singing males found in and around the park; feeding young on the wing, June 25.
46. Maryland Yellow-throat. Common; carrying food, June 24. The yellow was noticeably pale.
47. Yellow-breasted Chat. Abundant and widely distributed.
48. Hooded Warbler. Common.
49. American Redstart. Common; feeding young on the wing, June 25.
50. Scarlet Tanager. Fairly common; rather more common than the Summer Tanager.
51. Summer Tanager. Fairly common. It has been my experience at Lexington that the ranges of the two Tanagers do not overlap in elevation. There the Summer Tanager does not seem to go above nor the Scarlet Tanager below 1,500 feet, except where the Scarlet Tanager may occasionally follow a wooded ravine somewhat lower. At Fairy Stone the occurrence of the two species was much more a matter of habitat than of elevation, the Scarlet occurring in thick woods, and the Summer in open places. Even this did not strictly hold, as I found a Summer Tanager singing in the woods near the top of Little Mountain, the highest point in the park, at an elevation of about 1,800 feet, while Scarlet Tanagers were seen in the same type of woods lower down the mountain.
52. Cardinal. Common, but not abundant.
53. Indigo Bunting. Fairly common, but not so common as one would expect in such territory.
54. Towhee. Remarkably scarce for a country that would seem to suit the bird perfectly. I never found more than six or seven in a walk of several miles. It was naturally less common inside the park than in the farming regions outside.
55. Goldfinch. Fairly common.
56. Chipping Sparrow. Abundant; feeding young on the wing, June 24.
57. Field Sparrow. Abundant.

## II. Birds Seen Only Outside The Park.

58. Least Flycatcher. Two heard calling the characteristic "Chebec" note in a grove of walnut trees on a dry hillside above a little stream on June 26, in Patrick County near the Park.
59. Purple Martin. Five or six pairs flying about some gourds on a pole near Stone's Store, Henry County, June 26.
60. House Wren. One heard near Bassett, Henry County, June 28.



61. Bewick's Wren. Two seen in a yard near Stone's Store, June 26.
62. Golden-winged Warbler. In a dense growth of Kalmia on one of the higher ridges just outside the park on June 29, I followed for half an hour the song of a bird of which I could never catch sight but which I felt was this species.
63. Yellow Warbler. A family group of adults and young seen along Smith River just outside the park, June 29.
64. Louisiana Water-thrush. One, June 26, along a stream in Patrick County, three miles from the park entrance.
65. English Sparrow. Fairly common around farm yards. None were seen in the park, even around the stables where the riding horses are kept.
66. Meadowlark. A few seen on June 26, in both Patrick and Henry Counties.
67. Red-winged Blackbird. Two males, June 26. at Stone's Store.
68. Cowbird. Three males, June 26, in Patrick County.
69. Grasshopper Sparrow. Two singing males, June 26, Stone's Store.
70. Vesper Sparrow. Three singing males, June 26, Patrick County; one singing male, Stone's Store, same day.
71. Song Sparrow. Common along the streams outside the park. One of the mysteries of this trip was that not a single Song Sparrow was found in the park, although there were a fair number of suitable spots.

### III. Accidental, Non-Breeders.

72. Ring-necked Duck. A crippled male was present on the lake throughout our stay. Apparently he could not fly at all.
73. Tern (sp.?) A medium sized tern, either Common or Forster's appeared over the lake for a few minutes late in the afternoon of June 28, after a rainy day.

### IV. Additional Species.

Mr. William Worthington, Custodian of the Park, told me of certain additional species which occur regularly within the park.

1. Black Vulture
2. Ruffed Grouse
3. Screech Owl
4. Great Horned Owl
5. Kingfisher. Mr. Worthington told me that a pair nested near the dam. They were not in sight, however, during my stay.

## Negative Notes

None of the following species which I expected to find were seen anywhere near the park: Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Mockingbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Grackle. Most of these undoubtedly occur, although the region is not particularly suited for some of them. It was probably just an accident that no White-breasted Nuthatch was seen, even though some likely groves were searched. I was very much surprised not to see a Mockingbird, although I looked for them around the farm yards. This bird, as well as the two woodpeckers and orioles, would probably be found around the towns. Of course, observation over a longer period would add still other birds to the list. However, the list here presented is certainly representative of the summer birds of the Fairy Stone State Park, and it is representative in less degree of the birds of the thinly settled areas away from the towns in those three counties.

Lexington, Virginia.

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HEADED FOR COBB'S ISLAND

(June 11, 1941)

By William B. McIlwaine, Jr.

Fortunate indeed the friend of the Norfolk members of the V. S. O. I know.

An Unexpected trip - other folk's clothes, other folk's glasses, other folk's food, and all that. And for it all the happier.

Our destination was Cobb's Island - and we never got there. Who cares?

The group for this trip was different, but delightful. Of course, there were Mrs. A. C. Reed and Mrs. Colgate W. Darden, Jr. That had to be. Then Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Dobie, Captain and Mrs. Wm. A. Angwin (he is a doctor in the U. S. Navy), Mrs. Florence T. Marshall of Cape Henry, our old friend, Harry C. Bailey, of the Back Bay Game Refuge, and the writer. At Oyster, Va., we annexed Mr. John Dornan of Philadelphia (Delaware Valley Ornithological Club and Wyncote Bird Club). Mr. Dornan was after moving pictures, but found this to be against the regulations of the Audubon Society. Our boat was a covered launch, but the sun was partially obscured the greater part of a delightfully pleasant day. Our guide, Milton Doughty.

The start was certainly uneventful so far as birds were concerned. With the exception of a few Wilson's Petrels the trip both ways on the ferry was without particular incident. Not a scoter, - indeed, not a scoter all day. Even around Oyster birds were conspicuous for their absence. But the world was beautiful, - and we could hope to see birds somewhere. Certainly we were headed for a famous sanctuary. And Cobb's Island was looming larger and larger.

To the right of us Laughing Gulls and Forster's Terns were circling over Rappaesum Island. Mr. Doughty told us the birds had lost their early nests because



of a storm and high tides, and were nesting again. So into a towed rowboat we crowded, and polled to the shore. Island indeed, - when the tide is low; but when the tide is high there must be very little of its surface above the water. A tiny island, too; possibly 100 yards long, by much less across. It is covered with the salt marsh cord grass. And where drifting vegetation has caught on this grass, there the Laughing Gulls and the Forster's Terns place their nests. And they numbered into the scores on this particular June 11. Heavy masses of grass on the drift stuff, and separated by eighteen inches or more, here, there, yonder, the nests of the gulls; or in similar groups to themselves the nests of the Forster's Terns. Most nests had two or three eggs; one gull's nest held a fourth egg. A striking fact was the difference in color of eggs in the same nest. A few nestlings and a few pipped eggs. On the edge of a colony of terns' nests Mrs. Darden discovered, beautifully concealed, and holding eleven white eggs, the nest of a Clapper Rail.

Back to the boat, and on a little further to Bone Island. This island is well up from the water, and in parts covered with seashells. Among these shells how the Least Terns delighted to hide their two clay-colored (?) eggs! It takes sharp eyes to see them. On this island, too, nests of the Black Skimmer. "No shells or sticks." A nest of the Oyster Catcher, with three eggs. "No materials except shells." A Common Tern's nest, with its two long-shaped eggs. And a nest of the Gull-billed Tern. "Nest of drift stuff"; four eggs. As to the birds themselves, just a few Oyster-catchers, scores of Black Skimmers, many Least Terns, and of the Gull-billed Terns the word heard more than once was "More than I ever saw here before." I was interested in the preponderance of Forster's Terns over the Common. Of course the Laughing Gulls were everywhere. No, not everywhere, but very common. Four Hudsonian Curlews, possibly more.

Bone Island, or the part that we saw, is almost entirely without vegetation, - sand and shells. Across a tiny channel from Bone Island is Wreck Island, larger and higher, and covered, so far as I could see, with tall grass, mainly the cord grass. Here and there are low bushes looking much like myrtle, and called by the natives "salt water bush", but more properly termed "ground sel". On this island we looked long for Willets' nests. Too late; we found only one. This was in one of these salt water bushes, nearly a foot above the ground, well concealed. Two eggs. The Willets themselves were not numerous. I should say we saw several dozen. But these birds were very solicitous about something we could not see. Most probably the young were in the grass. Here, too, were two nests of the Green Heron, in those same little bushes, about 18 inches from the ground, and constructed of sticks. One nest held two pale blue-green eggs, the other five. A Red-winged Blackbird's nest in the bush with two eggs. But what kind of sparrow was it we saw here on Wreck Island, with its nest a deep cup, 20 inches up in the "myrtles", holding three eggs of a light slate color with heavy brown spots? The bird we took to be the householder did not have yellow before its eye; and it did not look like the pictures of - and the song did sound like the song of - But what's the use when you are told by the professionals that the only sparrows on these islands are the Seaside and the Song?

More or less worthy of mention are the American Egret out there on the edge of the ocean, and a few Ruddy Turnstones that had not gotten away to the North. Our list for the day included about fifty species.

A most interesting day! And I spent the night in Richmond.

Alexandria, Virginia.

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# The Raven

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## Bird Study at Camp Powhatan

By Howard Shaw

Camp Powhatan, the Roanoke Council Boy Scout summer camp, lies in the Jefferson National Forest some five miles from Natural Bridge Station at a point where two creeks, Elk and Little Hell Gate, merge. Approachable by a lone country road, it is literally buried in the great forest covering this part of Rockbridge County. This is a land of contrast. Thunder Ridge, rising menacingly in front of the camp, towers some 3,800 feet above sea level. The valley, thousands of feet below, is covered with the great forest, punctuated in various places by open fields which break the monotony of the timber. Great masses of limestone rock rise out of the mountains at various points. The James River, moving toward its constant goal, the Atlantic flows leisurely through the valley and is joined by a myriad of smaller streams. But everywhere there is the forest, and the visitor is constantly reminded that the valley is little more than a wilderness, that it is in the same condition as when the Rappahannock Indians roamed this land three hundred years ago. A great many relics of their lost civilization may be found yet in the valley and on the ridge.

For the past two summers, I served as nature counselor and provisional leader at Powhatan for the short summer season. During that time I took quite a few collecting trips through the valley, observing birds and collecting flower specimens. The contrasting country, offering almost every conceivable type of habitat, was ideal for these purposes.

The flora of this valley is, in my opinion, the most outstanding of any in Virginia. I located no less than five species of orchid, including *Pogonia* sp. This plant was not in bloom, and my be *P. affinis*, which is exceedingly rare, or *P. verticillata*, "not common", according to Gray's manual of Botany. In a swamp near camp the Green Wood Orchid was so common that one could hardly walk without crushing some of the plants. The Cardinal Flower grows in great profusion. No less than eighteen species of fern, including the Royal and Maidenhair Spleenwort, grow here. The Wood, Field, Day, and Turk's Cap Lillies may be found throughout the valley. Those flowers which we all may know but seldom see--the Bellwort, Solomon's Seal, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Indian Cucumber Root, Lady's Slipper, Columbine,



Wood Anemone, Spotted-Touch-Me-Not, Trailing Arbutus--are amazingly common. This part of Virginia has never been thoroughly covered by an expert botanist, and quite a few new species of plants may be growing in this region.

Bird life is very plentiful and varied. Of course, it is impossible to gain any adequate concept of the bird life of a region in six short summer weeks, but even my incomplete lists indicate that this is a fertile valley for ornithological research. It cannot compare with Tidewater and certain other parts of Virginia perhaps, but a great many species of birds visit the valley.

The James, as would be expected, is frequented by a large number of shore birds. The Great Blue Heron is a frequent visitor both there and in neighboring streams. One morning our camp truck frightened four of these large birds out of the water, and they were a beautiful sight rising into the air. Belted Kingfishers, Green Herons, Spotted Sandpipers, and Rough-winged Swallows are all present in varying numbers. I consider a trip to the James at Greenlee justified for the sole purpose of seeing the Rough-winged Swallows, which are usually perched on the telephone wire that spans the river.

The forest, of course, is an excellent place for woodpeckers and flycatchers. The Red-headed, Hairy, and Downy Woodpeckers are very common visitors, and the Pileated Woodpecker has been reported, but I have never seen it in the valley. The Phoebe, Wood Pewee, Crested Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher--these are some of the flycatcher group that inhabit the vast forest.

The greatest "find" I made during my stay at camp came this summer when I located a pair of Cerulean Warblers. This was the first time I have ever been able to observe the species in the field, and I watched them for some time. The usual mass of warblers--including a large number of Hooded--are present, but the Cerulean was the only uncommon species I was able to locate.

Certain species have become regular visitors at camp, some even nesting nearby. One summer a Phoebe built her nest beneath one of the cabins, and although she must have had many anxious moments, raised her family there. A pair of Phoebes have built near the camp hospital for years, even nesting in the eaves one summer. A Scarlet Tanager constructed her nest near a cabin one year, but the experience must have been too much for her as she never returned. A Mountain Vireo built her nest in a nearby beech tree for two years, and a large number of birds, including the Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole, and Brown Thrasher, have built in or near a swamp near camp. The Indigo Bunting is one of the most common of the species seen near camp, excluding the finches. Some eight species of sparrows, such as the Tree, White-throated, Savannah, and Grasshopper, regularly visit the valley in migration. Last year a bird sanctuary was begun at Camp, and every candidate for the Bird Study Merit Badge builds seven houses and two feeders for the preserve.

In keeping with the vastness of the region, this is essentially a country of large birds. Turkey Vultures are constantly drifting across the sky. Mourning Doves are present in great numbers, along with Sparrow and Marsh Hawks, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Red-winged Blackbirds, Purple Grackles, Shrikes, Crows, and Herons. The small members of birdland--the Hummingbirds, the Gnatcatchers, Vireos, and Goldfinches--are present also, but they are more or less absorbed by the vastness of this semi-wilderness.

1211 Oregon Avenue,  
Roanoke, Virginia.

## Nesting Records From the Seward Forest

By John B. Lewis

Black Vulture: Nest No. 1

While botanizing in a large tract of mixed woods on April 28, 1941, a nest of the Black Vulture, Coragyps atratus atratus, was found. The location was on a gentle slope about 60 yards from a small stream, and at one end of an outcrop of granite rock about 20 feet long and projecting about 5 feet above ground. A very large white oak, hollowed out to a shell, had broken off about 6 feet from the ground many years ago, leaving a cavity in the stump more than 2 feet across, with an opening a foot wide on the side next the rock. This cavity is open to the sky above, its floor is 6 inches below the ground level, and on the side opposite the opening a decaying root has left a hole large enough for a nearly grown buzzard to crawl into nearly out of sight.

When the nest was found on April 28 there were two clean, fresh-looking eggs, white with large reddish brown spots, mostly on the smaller end. An adult bird left the nest as I looked into it. The nest was visited May 13, and May 19, and each time an adult bird was flushed from it.

On May 26, one newly hatched chick and one egg that was evidently infertile were found in the nest. The down on the chick was not entirely dry, and it made no attempt to stand or to hiss. At this visit both adult birds were at the nest, remaining in the tree tops until I left, and then following me, flying from tree top to tree top a little ahead of me for a distance of 200 yards or more. When visited on June 5 the young buzzard was able to stand on its heels, tarsus and feet flat on the ground, and hiss sharply. The nest was visited on June 11, and 27th, July 5, 16th, and 28th. August 4, and 11th. The young buzzard seemed to develop slightly faster than those in nest No. 2, probably due to the fact that its parents had only one mouth to feed, instead of two. After this youngster was half grown he always crawled as far as possible into the hollow root on the north side of the stump when I looked into the opening.

When the nest was visited on August 23, the young buzzard was gone. Mr. Owen T. Batson, of New York City was with me, and we searched the woods to a distance of 200 yards or more all around the nest without finding the young buzzard. However, I do not feel at all sure that it was not overlooked, as there are many tall, dense trees there.

The incubation period in this case was at least 28 days, or from April 28 to May 26. It may have been longer, as the only evidence I have that the eggs were fresh when first seen is that they were still clean and fresh looking, a condition that does not usually last long in a buzzard's nest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Black Vulture: Nest No. 2.

On April 30, 1941, a nest of the Black Vulture, Coragyps atratus atratus, was found at the border of a wooded swamp in the central part of Brunswick County.



This swamp covers an area of about two acres and is surrounded on all sides by rather heavy mixed woods. It is fifteen miles from my home, which prevented me from doing more intensive work and spending more time with it. This "nest" was merely a place on the dry forest leaves, under a thin covering of greenbriers, *Smilax rotundifolia*, that trailed over some low shrubbery. When found it contained two young buzzards, that were in about the same stage of development as that of the occupant of nest No. 1 at ten days old. They stood up on their heels, tarsus and foot flat on the ground, backs level and heads lowered, and hissed sharply. They were covered with yellowish-buff down, and the legs and bills were black. On May 4, about 25 members of the Spring Foray of the Committee on Flora of the Virginia Academy of Science visited this swamp, and several of them took pictures of the birds after moving them into a sunlit spot.

On May 12, young buzzards much larger. Standing now with legs straight and backs leveled, their backs are a foot high. May 21, young buzzards the size of a leghorn hen. May 27, young buzzards still larger. Quill feathers starting on wings. Ground trampled smooth and well whitewashed over a considerable area around nest.

June 10, young buzzards with wing quills 4 inches long, tail quills about 1 inch long and body still covered with yellowish down. They walk about briskly, uttering two types of hiss. A short, sharp one, uttered with the bill well opened, is evidently produced by exhaling the breath; the other is of longer duration and is between a hiss and a growl, uttered with bill nearly, or quite closed and apparently produced by inhalation.

June 18. As I approached the nest, while still 100 yards distant, a low buzzing sound, beginning with short notes and closing with long ones, was heard several times. Then, as I drew near, an old buzzard arose from where the young were and left. I believe this to have been a sound produced by the young while being fed. The young buzzards were noticeably larger, with wing and tail feathers longer, but the bodies were still covered with the yellowish natal down, which contrasted oddly with the jet black of the wing and tail feathers.

June 26. Young buzzards active, still giving both hisses. Wing feathers a foot long, but only down on the bodies. No old birds. July 2. Wings and tails well grown, black feathers appearing among the down on body and thighs. Hisses mostly of the sharp type, with bill open. July 11. When approached the young buzzards ran with some speed. I followed and after going about 30 yards they circled back toward the nest, and one arose and flew about 20 yards, getting about 4 feet from the ground. They appear fully feathered, but wings and tail are not yet full length. They did little hissing. No old birds were seen. July 18. Found young buzzards on a horizontal limb about 20 feet high and 25 yards from the nest. Much hand clapping and shouting failed to cause them to move.

July 24. As I approached the nest place the young buzzards flew up from the top of an earth mound about two feet high, caused by the uprooting of a tree many years ago, and lit, side by side on the top of an arch formed by the bending over of a slender young pine. Hand clapping and shouting did not move them, but when I shook the pine sapling they flew to higher branches nearby.

August 1. Found young buzzards side by side on a limb of a big white oak, about 50 feet from the ground, and about 75 yards from the nest place. All efforts to make them fly failed. After botanizing along the stream for about 200 yards I again heard the half hissing, half groaning sound first heard on June 28, coming from where the young buzzards were located. The sound this time was louder, and suggested the hoarse barking of a large dog at a considerable distance. Hurrying back I saw a buzzard leave the big white oak, and found the two young ones on limbs slightly lower down, and on the opposite side of the tree. Again I believe the sounds to have been made by the young buzzards while being fed. August 8. A thorough search of the woods in widening circles all around the nest area to a distance of 200 yards or more on all sides failed to locate any buzzards.

Assuming that the young buzzards were 10 days old when first seen on April 30, and that they started out on their own the day following the one when they were last seen, gives a period of 111 days of what we may term nest feeding.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Green Heron:

Last spring a pair of Green Herons, *Butorides v. virescens*, built their nest in a dense growth of young pines about 50 feet high, near a small stream a short distance from Loblolly Lodge, our home in Seward Forest. The nest was the usual thin platform of sticks, placed against the trunk of the tree, on some small branches. It was about 25 feet up, a height greater than the writer has observed before, with the species.

In the afternoon of June 16, when the young herons were nearly full grown, one of our workers found a large snake at the foot of the nest tree, with the head and part of the neck of a young heron well on the way down its throat. He struck at the snake, but failed to kill it, whereupon it disgorged the heron and escaped into a nearby thicket of green briars. Dr. Akerman, our Director, reported this tragedy to me and together we went to the place, where we found the remaining three young herons had left the nest and were sitting side by side on a limb of another pine. They had evidently walked about six feet out on one of the horizontal limbs that supported the nest to where it crossed a branch of another pine tree, and then walked another 5 feet toward the trunk of the other tree. From that date until June 24, these young herons moved about on the pine limbs, gradually working to a greater height, and at the farthest going about 50 feet from the nest. Toward the end of the period they became quite widely separated. When visited at sunset June 24 one of them flew about 15 feet from one limb to another. At my next visit they had gone.

From the description given me of the snake, it was probably a pilot black snake, *Elaphe obsoleta*. My guess is that it had climbed to the nest, seized a young heron and fallen with it to the ground. That species is an expert climber.

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#### Bluebirds and Wrens:

Recently a pair of Bluebirds have been incubating their second set



of eggs in a bird house 20 feet from our dining room windows. Early in the morning of June 26 I heard a House Wren singing, and looked out just in time to see the Bluebirds driving him away from their nest. Thinking the wren was vanquished, I went at once on a plant collecting trip, and did not worry.

Returning at midday almost the first thing heard was a House Wren singing in the back yard. Looking out the wren was seen in the entrance to the bird house, while two blue eggs were lying on a two inch ledge, formed by the extension of the floor of the house. Hardly a minute later I shot the wren off the top of the house, and going out, saw a third Bluebird egg on the ground. Examining the eggs, the one on the grounds was found to be completely crushed. Those on the "porch" of the house, having fallen only about 5" were crushed just enough on the lower side to prevent their rolling, but each had a small hole in one side, about the size of a House Wren's bill. Each egg contained a half developed chick.

Before the two eggs were taken down from the "porch" of the bird house the Bluebirds came, and alighting by them, spent several minutes examining them and "talking" in low tones to each other.

The House Wren's reputation for destroying the eggs of other birds was well known to me, but this is the first time one had been caught in the act. While the wren was not actually seen throwing out the eggs, the circumstantial evidence was very clear.

The House Wren was sent to the U. S. Biological Survey, and a letter received from Dr. John W. Aldrich reads, in part, as follows:

"I have just finished comparing the house wren with our series and find that it is a perfectly typical specimen of the eastern subspecies, Troglodytes domesticus domesticus. This is a particularly interesting record since the southwestern limits of that subspecies are very poorly understood."

A year ago a specimen of the breeding house wren of central Amelia County was sent in, and Dr. Oberholser wrote that it was of the western subspecies, Troglodytes domesticus baldwini, but not quite typical, showing intergradations with the typical race.

The Seward Forest  
Triplott, Virginia.

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#### Montgomery County Nesting Notes

February 1-July 1, 1941

1. February 16 - three or four pairs of Prairie-horned Larks, just east of Blacksburg, apparently preparing to nest. Numerous young seen at this point later in the season.
2. March 1 - the first nests of the year were those of the Starling.

On this date the young were leaving the nest; egg laying, therefore, must have taken place in early February. I think this is abnormally early for this region, however, two nests, about a quarter of a mile apart, were found.

May 12; second broods leaving the nest. This was the largest of three broods listed; several hundred birds nested in one small tract of woods.

June 24; third broods leaving the nest. Though these three broods (Mar. 1, May 12, and June 24) probably do not represent three nestings by the same birds, they do, however, represent three distinctly different nesting periods.

3. March 30; the first brood of English Sparrows leaving the nest; many still coming off July 1.

4. April 10; many Robin and Purple Grackle nests in various stages of construction, some with eggs. One Mallard nest with 13 eggs. The Mallards had a very successful nesting season this year; 7 or 8 broods of from 5-13 each had about 50% survival. The flock of Mallards on the college ponds is becoming so large that it is beginning to overflow to surrounding regions.

5. April 16; a Mourning Dove nest with young just beginning to feather; other nests with eggs up till now, July 1.

6. April 20; Great-horned Owl - Young out of the nest (Shipley).

7. April 23; Killdeer nest with four eggs on rocks at Sewage disposal plant; eggs hatching May 3.

8. May 5; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher incubating, nest 60 feet up in White Oak.

9. May; several completed Redwing nests. June 7; 25 nests in various stages of construction; also, nests with 1-4 eggs or young; many young already on the wing.

10. May 8; a Crow nest with young about 2 weeks old. At another place, young still in the nest May 18.

11. May 13; nine completed Barn Swallow nests in one barn and 52 or more Cliff, 5 Bank, 5 Tree, and 20 Barn Swallows lined up on telephone wires outside. The Barn Swallows were the only ones that nested in the vicinity.

12. May 18; Ovenbird nest with six eggs (R. J. Watson); Song Sparrow - three eggs.

13. May 22; Young Purple Grackles and Chipping Sparrows leaving the nest; many Chipping Sparrows just out of the nest July 1.

14. June 14; House Wrens and Downy Woodpeckers leaving the nest.

15. June 15; Price's Mt. - several groups of young Pine Warblers out of the nest being fed by parents; one group of La. Water Thrushes, also being fed by parents. A singing male Parula Warbler gave no evidence that its nesting acti-



vities had been completed.

16. June 16; many groups of young Vesper Sparrows out of the nest.

17. June 17; Tom's Creek - second brood of Phoebes out of the nest being fed by parents. A Rough-winged Swallow nest in the creek bank contained young birds; this is the only place in Montgomery County that I have found this swallow's nest except along New River where large colonies brood. Blacksburg - Brown Thrasher - second brood just begun; nest and 2 eggs. Brush Mt. (2,300 feet elevation)-- White-eyed Vireo, singing male, probably nesting; first time I have observed it in county during nesting season. June 26, a pair seen at same point, undoubtedly had a nest or young nearby - another singing male seen further down the slope.

18. June 19; with Mr. H. H. Bailey I searched two of the larger marshes near Blacksburg for rail nests. Not one nest was found, in fact I am afraid the rails aren't even nesting here this summer. It will be remembered that last year four Virginia Rail nests were found in three different marshes and egg fragments in another, making a total of at least 5 nests in the vicinity of Blacksburg. As far as I know each of these nests was successful. This year the Virginia Rails arrived rather early - April 25, and were common for a few days, then all but one disappeared. This one was heard "kikking" daily until June 7, and then he too disappeared. None have been seen since.

Last year Black Rails were fairly plentiful in two marshes until the middle of June when close observations became impossible. I think they nested, though I have no proof. This year the only Black Rail was seen on June 6.

Mr. Bailey suggested that the cause of the disappearance of rails from one marsh where they have nested in numbers every year since they were first detected in 1937, was the presence of a den of foxes not more than 30 feet from the marsh. However, the finding of 3 Meadowlark nests with young or eggs, all within a hundred yards of the den would tend to discount this theory. As rails are among the most interesting birds nesting in this region, I hope to find the reason for their decrease, and if possible, prevent its recurrence another year. It would be interesting to note at this point that Upland Plovers, which appeared in much smaller numbers than usual last year, are back at their normal abundance this year. Probably 15 or 20 pairs nested on the college farm this year.

During the drought of the early summer, grass in the fields became very short and most of the second brood Meadowlark nests were placed in the edges of marshes where the grass was higher; several were within a foot or so of the water.

19. June 26; Brush Mt. - Turkey Vulture - nest under a log near the summit of mountain; 2 young about the size of a chicken hen. Catbirds feeding young, and a nest with fresh eggs on June 28 was probably the beginning of the second nesting period for this species. Black and White Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos and Ovenbirds were feeding young birds out of the nest, while Worm-eating, Hooded and Prairie Warblers had apparently not progressed this far. Tom's Creek - Young Rough-winged Swallows on the wing.

I believe that this account gives a fairly good cross-section of the first half of the nesting season of all but a few of the common birds about Blacksburg.

## Lynchburg Notes

Since the publication of "The Birds of Lynchburg, Virginia, Vicinity" (Bull. Lbg. Coll. VII:1, Jan. 1939) a number of additions to the Lynchburg list have been made, including transients and breeding birds. The total number of species now stands at 213.

New additions to the list, in chronological order are:

Black-crowned Night Heron. July 6, 1939, Timber Lake, Campbell County.

Tennessee Warbler, October 13, 1939, By Dr. George Sutton, Sweet Briar College, Amherst County.

Western Palm Warbler. October 14, by Dr. George M. Sutton, Sweet Briar College, Amherst County.

Barred Owl. March 10, 1940, Timber Lake. (Also reported for Lynchburg by Billy McIntosh, About 1939.)

Golden-winged Warbler. August 23, 1940, one male and one female, by Miss Bertha Daniel, Naruna, Campbell County. (See RAVEN XI:8 & 9, p. 52.) One male, Timber Lake, August 24, 1941, Freer.

White-winged Scoter. April 25, 1940, five males, Timber Lake. (See RAVEN XI:7, p. 43.)

Laughing Gull. One bird, April 23, 1941, Timber Lake.

Caspian Tern. Eleven individuals, April 24, 1941, Timber Lake.

Northern Phalarope. Fifth record for Virginia. One female, May 11, 1941, Timber Lake. (see RAVEN XII: 4 & 5, p. 29.) (Also see RAVEN X: 10 & 11, p.5).

Florida Gallinule. May 19, 1941, Timber Lake.

American Bittern. May 24, 1941, Timber Lake.

It is interesting to note that five species were added to the list this past spring in a little over four weeks.

The finding of the following species during the breeding season brings the total for breeding birds to 113:

Nighthawk. July 8, 1939, also first week in June, 1937, 1938 and 1941. Lynchburg.

Barn Swallow. Feeding young, July 10, 1939, Timber Lake.

Warbling Vireo. Summer of 1939, Spring Hill Cemetery, Lynchburg.

Barred Owl. Summers of 1940, and 1941, Timber Lake.

Ruskin S. Freer  
Lynchburg, Virginia.



## Virginia Notes

It is a long while since we have seen anything unusual in the bird line, but the following notes may be of interest.

On July 21, 1941, we noted two egrets at Rinkerton, Shenandoah County. This seemed to us rather a strange place for egrets.

On July 31, 1941, we had a perfect view of a male dickcissel (Spiza americana) at Rileyville (Page County).

On July 31, 1941, we noted a hundred or more tree swallows (Iridoprocne bicolor) on telephone wires at Big Spring (Page County).

At Athlone (Rockingham County) we saw a score or more hummingbirds playing about some locust (Robinia pseudacacia) trees by the roadside or sitting on dead twigs. They were feeding in an adjacent clover field.

Austin H. Clark,  
Curator, Division of Echinoderms  
United States National Museum  
Washington, D. C.

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## Blacksburg Notes

January 1-July 1, 1941

For the most part this was a very poor year for waterfowl at Blacksburg. However, a few more species than usual wintered, though the number of individuals was smaller. For the first time since birds have been recorded at Blacksburg, Shovellers wintered; three till the first of the year and then one until March 21. The largest flock of a single species was 51 Ringnecks on March 21. Other species that wintered were: Pintail, Baldpate, Reg-logged & Common Black Ducks, Gadwell, Green-winged Teal, Ringneck, Lesser Scaup, Mallard and Hooded Merganser.

The only Pipit of the winter was seen during a heavy snow storm on January 26. Donald Shipley saw 200 on April 20. During all of January and early February Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets were unusually abundant.

Also for the first time, Western Palm Warblers were present all winter. In years past, I have seen a few of these warblers once or twice each winter, but this year a pair could be seen almost every day. During short periods of snow in February and March they could be found along the sewer lines where the snow had melted and at other times over a rather large area. The last Western Palm Warblers were seen on May 13, a rather late date.

Mourning Doves, rare or missing all winter; first migrants arrived February 16. Several Wilson's Snipes spent the winter but the first spring migrants arrived February 25. Through bird banding operations the first migrant Song and White-crowned Sparrows were detected on February 23, though numerous other individuals had spent the winter. In this same manner the first migrant Tree Sparrows

were noted on March 4, Fox and White-throated Sparrows on March 8, and Swamp Sparrows on March 22. All of the latter group of birds wintered in small numbers.

On February 23, with a cold northwest wind over Clayton Dam, Pulaski county, only three ducks were observed; however, a note of some interest concerned several hundred Turkey Vultures perched along the face of the precipice rising from the water along the northwest side of the river. Sheltered from the wind and warmed by the sun the vultures occupied practically every available perch for some distance along the cliff rising one hundred feet or more above the river. As new birds arrived, vultures on the cliff were often forced to give up their perches to the new-comers. Some of these birds sought other occupied perches thus resulting in a general shuffle, but many of them, apparently rested and warm, sailed off in a southerly direction as if in search of food.

The most interesting observation of the spring concerns a flock of White-winged Crossbills which appeared on the campus on March 18 and remained there three days. There is one other record of this species for the State - that by Dr. E. A. Smyth, Jr. on January 25, 1920 at this same place - possibly in the same tree. I first saw the birds, a flock of three, while walking home from school at noon. As I came up the front walk to our home, three medium sized birds darted from a large Norway spruce and flew directly overhead to a Hemlock just across the street. I thought nothing of them at the time and went on into the house. Fifteen minutes later, in an idle moment, I took my binoculars and went out to see what the birds were. All this time I never suspected that they were Crossbills, and was genuinely surprised at their identity when I discovered them still in the same Hemlock, quietly eating seeds. There were two females and a male in the flock and so quietly and slowly did they move about on the thick Hemlock branches, that it is quite possible they had been here for several days without being detected. This Hemlock in which they were feeding was heavily laden with cones. The birds were so engrossed in their feeding that they could be approached very closely. They often hung upside down on the branches and wrenched off whole cones. The falling cones proved helpful in locating the birds. On March 19 they were still feeding in the same tree, and as yet no calls of any sort had been heard. They were last seen at 7 A. M., on March 20. At this time they had become restless and were moving about from tree to tree with no apparent thought of feeding; for the first time they were calling, and every few minutes the male indulged in subdued song. The fact that the birds spent the first two days quietly feeding, after which, on the third day they became restless, calling and singing, would seem to indicate that they had come a long distance without feeding; possibly having been carried out of their normal range by the blizzard sweeping across the North central states at the time of their arrival.

Ring-billed Gulls were much more numerous than usual between April 4 and May 15. Sometimes there were several of them together, but most often there was only one. The only Bronzed Grackle seen during the spring was banded on April 5, a rather late date.

Black-throated Green Warblers arrived rather early, April 12, and Cape-May Warblers were commoner between May 1 and 17 than they have ever been in the spring in years before. On the 17th, 3 were caught in one trap. Grasshopper Sparrows appeared on April 14, a very early date for Blacksburg. I have an unpublished record for the Grasshopper Sparrow seen by my father and myself on January 30, 1938. As far as I know this is the only winter record for this species for



Virginia. The first spring record for the Short-billed Marsh Wren in this section was a bird seen by R. J. Watson on May 12, and by both of us at the same place on May 13.

On May 16 an adult Forster's Tern appeared on the campus lake for a few minutes. This boosts our county total to 243 species and subspecies. White-rumped Sandpipers have been seen each spring but one since 1937 and reappeared again this spring, this time earlier than usual - May 13.

Olive-backed Thrushes were much more numerous than usual. At times as many as ten could be heard singing at once. A number were banded between May 15 and 24, and a Gray-cheeked Thrush, the first that I have seen here, was banded May 22 and retaken May 24.

C. O. Handley, Jr.

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Saw-whet Owls at Roanoke

Each evening about dusk from August 4 to August 8 a pair of Saw-whet Owls came near my Cabin at Bennett Springs. The first and only ones of this species I have seen there - or near Roanoke.

T. L. Engleby.

Mountain Lake Notes

All notes except those otherwise designated were made between 3,800 and 4,000 feet elevation on the headwaters of Little Stony Creek.

April 13; Cascades - Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-throated Sparrow, and Mountain Vireo. A Raven, seen at Barney's Wall, was probably nesting.

April 19; Brown Thrasher.

April 23; Whip-poor-will, common. A Baldpate on the lake.

April 26; Towhee.

May 4; Black & White, Blackburnian, Cairns', Canada & Chestnut-sided Warblers, Ovenbirds, Wood Thrushes, Veeries, Catbirds, and White-throated Sparrows - common; Bewick's Wren - 1. Robin - nest with two fresh eggs.

June 1; Towhee nest with 4 eggs (R. J. Watson); Chimney Swift - 5.

June 21; Many young Cairns' and Black & White Warblers just out of the nest being fed by parents. Chestnut-sided Warblers still setting.

July 5; Many groups of young Chestnut-sided Warblers just out of the nest; also a few young Cairns' Warblers still coming off.

July 4 & 5; Louisiana Water-Thrush, at 3,800 feet elevation.

Indigo Buntings seem to be much more abundant this year, at least that is the case above 3,800 feet elevation on Little Stony Creek. This increase is probably due to the cutting of many clearings over the area. An increase was also noted in the abundance of Mountain Vireos and Sapsuckers in this same area.

C. O. Handley, Jr.





# The Raven

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## My South American Bird Voyage

By Ralph M. Brown

I had long known about the Humboldt Current, that 80° F., ocean river, running north from the Antarctic regions along the coasts of Chile and Peru, and I had often wished that one day I might get down there, and see the strange Antarctic birds which frequent that current, but it was not until 1941, that I was able to take the 5500 mile voyage and see these birds.

I boarded the steamer, *Imperial*, of the Chilean Line, in Brooklyn, on June 21. The *Imperial* is a 10,000 ton vessel, making about 17 miles an hour and was carrying steel rails for the Panama Railroad, a tissue-paper making machine for Lima, Peru, some Fairchild trainer planes for the Chilean Army, and miscellaneous cargo. There were 150 passengers on board, fifty per cent North Americans (in South America we Americans are called "North Americans") and fifty per cent South Americans. All the crew were Chileans and but few of them could speak or understand English. However, we North Americans, by using Spanish dictionaries and gestures, managed to get along all right. We did, however, get a lot of help from our South American fellow passengers.

No birds or other ocean wildlife were seen for the first three days, except a few herring gulls in New York Harbor, and a dozen or so Wilson Petrels following the ship, the first day at sea. On July 24, 100 miles off Miami, Florida, I saw the first flying fish, a yellow-billed tropic bird, Audubon shearwaters, and a laughing gull. We passed San Salvador (Columbus' first landfall) and then went between Cuba and Hayti. Colón breakwater and Cristóbal, on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal were reached on June 27 six days out from New York. Six frigate (man-of-war) birds and six laughing gulls were around the ship off the breakwater. The

frigates are marvellous flyers.

Laughing gulls were the most numerous birds during the day in the Canal, closely followed by frigate birds. I also saw long-tailed grackles, three mature little blue herons, seven first-year little blue herons, four brown pelicans, two American egrets, one great blue heron, four or five bigua cormorants (near the Pacific), one white-throated swallow, a half a dozen Panama rough-winged swallows, a plumbeous kite, and a large-billed hawk. I looked for crocodiles, but didn't see any of the ugly beasts. Sooty shearwaters began to follow the boat just out of Panama Bay. The next day, June 29, no birds appeared except one small unidentified gull. I did see flying fish occasionally. We saw the Ecuadorean coast for the first time on the morning of June 30, and crossed the equator at 9:30 A. M., "with four distinct bumps", said one of the boys.

Five Siméon gulls were seen off Deadman's Island, Ecuador, hovering over the boat and sometimes coming quite near to the vessel. Three Hornby's storm petrels appeared a little later in the day. At 3:00 P. M., we anchored a mile off Salinas, Ecuador, to discharge our Ecuadorean passengers. Simeon Gulls, Southern black-backed gulls, and Galápagos storm petrels were around the ship. The petrels fluttered over the waves like ballet dancers, with outspread wings and dainty tripping feet. "Ballerinas" or "danzarinas", South Americans call them - "ballet dancers" or "dancers". Marvellously appropriate names. It was one of the loveliest bird exhibitions that I have ever seen. Three hours after leaving Salinas, the air began to be cooler - we had entered the Humboldt Current.

July 1. Many Siméon gulls, flying low, above the waves. In the late morning, opposite an island, brown petrels, sooty shearwaters, Markhan's storm petrels, also eight or ten Peruvian boobies, and a few Galápagos storm petrels. I had never before seen any of these Pacific birds, with the exception of the sooty shearwaters. The brown petrels, in small numbers, were with us for the rest of the day, mostly at a distance. At four in the afternoon, some ten Chilean pelicans (alcetraces) sailed by in two lines, in steady measured flight. They always look so dignified and solemn when they are flying. A school of porpoises, playing around the ship. They are most interesting to watch as they swim close alongside the bow often cutting across the prow of the ship with the utmost ease.

July 2. At first, only a few brown petrels, then at 11 A. M. many sooty shearwaters and brown petrels, and three Peruvian boobies, skimming close to the water, but doing no diving for fish - too high a sea. Later several Galápagos storm petrels and a small whale. 2 P. M. five Chilean pelican and six Peruvian boobies flying in a line. These two birds seem to like to associate with one another. Occasional Peruvian boobies all day. At a distance they look like white balls skimming over the water. Guano islands, white as snow, off the port bow. Peruvian boobies in singles, pairs, and sixes and sevens. They usually fly just above the surface of the sea, occasionally rising twenty to thirty feet above the water. Honey Island ahead. Thousands of Peruvian cormorants (guanayes, they are called) heading for home. I first sighted the Peruvian cormorants at 2:30 P. M. Then we began, at 3 P. M., to see literally tens of thousands of sooty shearwaters flying toward the coastal islands. As far back as one could see, and as far out



as the limit of vision, the birds flew, in apparently never-ending open-formation lines. This bird procession lasted for over an hour. Chilean pelicans and Peruvian boobies were numerous, the pelicans sometimes coming so close to the boat that it seemed as if they would run into it. And, all at once, 10,000 to 15,000 Peruvian cormorants, on the water and in the air, harrying a great school of fish. And in the sky and close above the sea, like ducks, thousands more of the cormorants homeward bound. The bird show continued in a less degree until we anchored off the Callao (Peru), breakwater to await our pilot.

July 3. The Imperial left Callao at 4:30 A. M. Chilean pelicans flying by the ship. I am standing in the bow, on the port side, joying in the sight of the white-capped sea. Short, choppy waves every once in a while dash against the side of the ship. Wilbur Hallet (a 17 year old boy) and I love to stand in the bow of the boat and watch and dodge waves when one comes over the side. The boat pitches and tosses and the tall waves smash against the vessel, throwing spray high in the air. Sooty shearwaters, Peruvian boobies (piqueños), Peruvian diving petrels, Inca terns, and pintado petrels (Cape pigeons). The Cape pigeons (from Cape Horn) are the handsomest seabirds that I have ever seen, with their white underbodies and white-barred-on-black-wings - they are marvellous flyers. Then Kermadec petrels. The birds left suddenly, and just as suddenly, at 12:45 P. M. they appeared again. The sooty shearwaters are the most numerous, next piqueños (Peruvian boobies), and last of all Peruvian diving petrels. The diving petrels are usually surprised resting on the water, from which they rise, with quick strokes of their short wings, whiz over the waves for a few minutes, and then alight on the sea, and dive under the water. They are not capable of sustained flight, having very short wings. Now I began to see my first Chilean and South American terns. The sea is higher than ever. Six Inca terns and once in a while Galápagos storm petrels. There is always a piqueño in sight, planing over the surface of the waves. Three gray gulls and a Cape pigeon. 5:15 P. M. quite a number of sooty shearwaters, the usual scattering of piqueños, a few Inca terns, and one giant petrel. A flight of ten piqueños. Peruvian diving petrels.

July 4. A few piqueños, sooty shearwaters, and Hornby's storm petrels. The shearwaters alight on the water, occasionally, to rest. Not more than 50 birds all day. Now, at 5 P. M. a few sooty shearwaters, piqueños, and four Hornby's storm petrels. I just saw an island, on the port bow, and now there is another island on the same side of the ship. The first two sea lions (lobos) were seen at 2 P. M. and later forty more. They look a good deal like seals but are quite a bit larger. We reached Arica, Chile, at 11 P. M. At 6:30 A. M., July 5 we pulled out of this port. High, sheer, barren, granitic cliffs, with low bare mountains behind them. Soon a canyon appeared - a dry river bed. At 9:20 A. M. engine trouble developed and we stopped off Camerones (shrimp) Canyon. Southern black-backed gulls gray gulls, and a black-browed albatross this morning. A single Chilean pelican just flew by. Many gray gulls. Still anchored at 1 P. M. A flock of 70 or 80 guanayes (Peruvian cormorants) are streaming by, close to the water like ducks, with quick strokes of their wings. 3 P. M. - another flock of guanayes; headed for some distant quano-white islands just passed us. Galápagos storm petrels - a few of them staging their lovely dance on the water. One Andean gull. Piqueños (Peruvian boobies) usually fly with the guanayes - four or five to a flock of 50 or 60 guanayes.

Perhaps, the piqueros believe that the guanayas will lead them to good fishing grounds, and at nightfall, probably, the piqueros are going home the same as the guanayas and want company. We finally got under way at 6:30 P. M.

July 6. 7 A. M. saw us anchor off Tocopilla, Chile. Many bigua cormorants in the harbor - also gray gulls. We left Tocopilla at 6 P. M.

July 7. The birds have been few and far between today, an occasional Southern Black-backed gull, a Galapagos storm petrel or two, and a Cape pigeon.

July 8. In the early morning we were running along the Chilean coast. At 9 A. M. eight Cape pigeons, the most that I have ever seen at one time, and six Southern black-backed gulls following the steamer, and swooping down to the wake when garbage is dropped from the ship. The Cape pigeons are constantly winging back and forth across the wake, even if they have no hopes of picking up scraps of food. I love to watch them tilt their bodies to the waves when they are about to make a turn, the tip of the under wing almost touching the water. A school of humpbacked whales - six or seven of them - spouting and occasionally surfacing. At 11 A. M. the Cape pigeons left us, but three sooty shearwaters and three Southern black-backed gulls continued to follow the ship. 1:30 P. M. - twelve Cape pigeons and six Southern black-backed gulls are now with us. We arrived at Valparaiso, Chile, at 4 P. M.

July 12. Sailed from Valparaiso, Chile, and made our first stop at San Antonio, Chile, to load gold ore and wool. I saw Southern black-backed and gray gulls and a few Peruvian cormorants and Chilean pelicans at San Antonio.

July 13. We left San Antonio at 9:30 P. M. A half dozen Southern black-backed and gray gulls are following the steamer as we parallel, the Chilean coast. 500 to 600 Cape pigeons, looking like flecks of white foam, are following the ship about a quarter of a mile back, a marvellously beautiful sight. Some ten or twelve Southern black-backed gulls are also accompanying the steamer. The Cape pigeons gradually thinned out as the day wore on. Now, 4:45 P. M. there are only eight or ten of them. A giant petrel to port. And the Southern black-backed gulls are still convoying us. A few Peruvian boobies toward the coast. At 5:30 P. M. the Southern black-backed gulls finally left us. Only a few Cape pigeons remained in our wake.

July 14. A couple of sooty shearwaters, three Cape pigeons, and a lone Southern Black-backed gull. After luncheon, a dozen Galapagos storm petrels and a Southern black-backed gull or two. No boats nor land seen today.

July 15. We lay to off Antofogasta, Chile at 1:30 A. M. picked up four passengers, disembarked four, and sailed again in 30 minutes.

July 16. The day's bird list was a small one - not more than a dozen birds all told - Cape pigeons, Galapagos storm petrels, sooty shearwaters, and Southern black-backed gulls.

July 17. We stopped off Pisco, Peru at 4:30 A. M. to load cotton for New York. Many gray and Southern black-backed gulls around the boat. Flocks of



piqueros (Peruvian boobies) a mile or so away, ranging in number from five to 100 or more, following schools of fish, and diving into the sea from elevations of from 20 to 50 feet, often all together. When they strike the water the tossed-up spray looks like that thrown up by small shells fired from some warship. A few Galapagos storm petrels dancing on the water. We left Pisco at 12:15 P. M. and stopped at Tambo de Moro, Peru at 2 P. M. to load some more cotton. Gray and Southern black-backed gulls roosting on anchored lighters. We had only three lighters' loads of cotton to hoist on board so we soon got under way again.

July 18. We docked at Callao, Peru at 8 A. M. and left at 4 in the afternoon.

July 19. We arrived at Samanco, Peru at 6:30 A. M. to take on 10,000 bags of brown sugar. I can see many Chilean pelicans on a guano-covered rock near the shore. A few Peruvian cormorants are with them. The birds pay very little attention to a launch and its following lighters. A half dozen gray gulls are around the boat. A Galapagos storm petrel or two. I saw a dozen or so turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura jota* (Molina), over Lima yesterday. The Southern black-backed gulls are still with us - a half dozen or so. Some 3000 Peruvian cormorants (guanayes) just flew past the boat, settled on the water, probably in the midst of a school of fish, and then headed for their home, a guano-white island across the bay. Another flock of guanayes, and some 2000 Chilean pelicans (alcatrazes) flapping by in small flocks. And now 10,000 or more guanayes flying past, from their island, and alighting in the water about a mile away. They are following a large school of fish. The birds gobble up all the fish their stomachs can hold, rest on the water awhile to digest their meals, and then start in eating all over again. It is early afternoon, and I am watching the pelicans come back to the island after a fishing expedition. They certainly take their time about it. Guanayes fishing again just beyond the white-crested breakers. When any of the birds clean up the fish in one section, they leapfrog their still eating comrades to new fishing grounds. Some of the flock are almost constantly in motion. There are four Peruvian turkey vultures soaring above the mountains. Two piqueros at 5 P. M. the first of the day. A half dozen gray gulls flew on board last night and dashed against the cabins and masts. One gull even flew into the lounge-bar, through a porthole, where we were playing cards. Most of the birds were only temporarily stunned, and flew off when they regained consciousness. We took care of the lounge-bar gull until he was all right, and then tossed him over the side of the ship and he flapped away into the night. The boat was finally loaded at 12:00 midnight and we pulled out for Chicama, Peru, reaching there at 8:30 A. M. on the 21st. Here we loaded 24,000 bags of brown sugar.

July 21. We went on shore, at Chicama, and there I saw a young snowy egret walking around in one of the fish-drying huts. It was very tame and was apparently domesticated. Some Peruvian turkey vultures were roosting on a harbor buoy, and two inquisitive Peruvian white-throated sparrows (*Zonotrichia capensis peruviensis* (Lesson)) kept hopping and flying ahead of me along the path to the pier. Some 50 gray gulls, 25 Southern black-backed gulls, and a few Galapagos storm petrels around the boat. We left Chicama at 7 P. M.

July 22. Today the birds were few and far between, mostly Southern black-backed gulls, and a couple of gray gulls. July 23. At about 12:15 A. M. we anchored off Salina, Ecuador, and disembarked a number of passengers, getting underway soon afterwards. We are out of the Humboldt Current at last, and the day is warm and sunny. Many flying fish. A few Southern - black-backed gulls, sooty shearwaters, Markham's and Galapagos storm petrels. July 24. A bright warm day. No birds. Porpoises showed up about 5 P. M. - two hundred or more of them - dashing for the boat, swimming alongside and crossing the bow. We reached the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal at midnight. July 25. A hot, muggy day. One black petrel, a flock of bigua cormorants, laughing gulls, and one frigate bird - this at dawn. Later many frigate birds. We started through the Canal at 9:40 A. M. and did not get to Cristóbal, on the Atlantic side, until 12 hours later, being compelled to lie in Gatun Lake for four hours, waiting for the ships ahead of us to get through the locks. I saw a few long-tailed grackles and laughing gulls, and one Isthmian green kingfisher in the Canal.

July 26. The boat left Cristóbal, Panama Canal Zone, at 7:30 A. M. I just saw five blue-faced boobies, my first record, near the ship. The wind has increased to 23 miles an hour. July 27. No birds. July 28. The wind went down just as soon as we entered the Windward Passage, between Cuba and Hayti. Now the sea is like a millpond. Eight or ten brown boobies and a few blue-faced boobies this morning. Later in the day I saw a number of young laughing gulls, particularly off the island of the Bahamas group. We passed San Salvador Island (where Columbus first set foot on land), our last terra firma until we reach New York, from 10 to 12 A. M. A few flying fish. A barn swallow came on board this afternoon, circled around, and alighted on one of the masts. It must have headed back to land later on for I saw it no more. This about 75 miles off Miami, Florida, July 31. In the early morning some dusky shearwaters about a half mile from ship. August 1. We reached our dock, in Brooklyn at about 12 noon. My South American voyage was over.

Blacksburg, Virginia.

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IF YOU MUST SHOOT BIRDS, USE A CAMERA, MRS. DARDEN ADVISES CHILDREN

Taylor School Given Lesson in Ornithology  
 Movies Taken in Norfolk and Off Carolina Coast are Shown

-----  
 By Mary Eugenia Parke

A demonstration of the delights of shooting birds was given yesterday morning to youthful ornithologists-to-be by Mrs. Colgate W. Darden, Jr., First Lady-elect of Virginia, at the Walter Herron Taylor School assembly.

The shooting, which Mrs. Darden recommended, however, was done with a camera, not a gun or a bow and arrow. As a practical example of the superiority of such peaceful shooting over the more violent methods, Mrs. Darden showed a reel of colored movies of birds which, she pointed out, gave pleasure after months or even years, whereas a dead bird certainly would not.



Mrs. Darden's talk was sponsored by the newly formed Audubon Society of the Taylor School, and was given to the assembled pupils of the school in the auditorium. The colored movies, most of which were taken in this section of the country with many scenes at Crab Creek, and Sandy Point, here in Norfolk, and others at Ice Island, a refuge off the North Carolina coast, evoked varied interesting responses from the children. Soft 'oh's' from the little girls greeted all pictures of baby birds; delighted laughter some sequences where a group of ducks playing in the surf were bowled over by waves, and universal admiration was excited by a pair of screech owls who were shown being fed and taught by the Darden children.

Fun to Learn

The youthful audience was told in simple terms by Mrs. Darden the fun of learning about birds and the many places in this area where birds, rare elsewhere, may be studied. She also gave a brief explanatory commentary on the picture as it was being shown. Some of the most interesting pictures were those of a variety of tern. Mrs. Darden had many views of them, their nests and their eggs. The nests are in the sand in the hot sun, and Mrs. Darden pointed out that in this case the mother sat on the nest, not to hatch out the eggs, but to keep them from being cocked.

The future First Lady of the State has pursued the study of birds for the past five years. She has always been interested in and loved nature but she never took up ornithology seriously until 1936 when she was living in Alexandria where one of her neighbors was an ardent student of birds. Since then Mrs. Darden has studied birds and photographed birds, and like all enthusiasts who study the subject they love, the more she learns, the more she feels there is still for her to learn.

After the talk and pictures Betty Lou Ray presented Mrs. Darden a bouquet of flowers from the school and Joseph Fiveash, Jr., presented her an honorary membership in the school's Audubon Society with a button tokening membership and some bird stamps to be given the Darden children. Mrs. Darden took her leave of the school wearing the button and carrying the flowers.

The Audubon Society at the school is under the sponsorship of Miss Mary Leigh, school librarian, and is so newly formed that it has not yet elected its officers. Its membership, which this morning before Mrs. Darden's speech included representatives of all classes through 7-R, was expected to show a marked increase immediately.

(Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, Nov. 27, 1941)

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A NORFOLK NOTE

By Mrs. Elsie Angwin

Between Stumpy Lake and the Back Bay region on the afternoon of September 13, Dr. Angwin and I came upon a flight of Bobolinks, evidently on their way southward. In the brilliant sunlight as they wheeled en masse their post nuptial

plumage shone on throat and flanks with the strong yellow of parched corn kernels. I had not imagined they would be so definitely colored. In flocks of thirty to fifty birds (and about three groups) they wheeled and skimmed, lighting on the wild grass heads on which they were feeding. The sound they made on the wing reminded me of the aeolian tassels one hears clinking and tinkling with a frail nostalgic music from the eaves of a Chinese house, bunches of glass strips dangling on strings for the breeze to jangle pleasantly.

Quarters H-8-B  
Naval Operating Base  
Norfolk, Virginia.

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#### ELLISON ADGER SMYTH

Science in general and Virginia ornithology in particular suffered a great loss in the death of Dr. E. A. Smyth on August 19, 1941. A full account of his life and work is planned for a later issue. At this time we are reprinting two brief obituaries.

The first is from The Techgram, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, September 1, 1941:

Dr. Ellison Adger Smyth, Jr., former dean and professor of biology at Virginia Tech, died August 19 at his home near Salem, Va. For the semi-centennial celebration in 1922 of Virginia Tech's founding, he wrote a brief history of the college.

Born at Summerton, Clarendon County, S. C., October 26, 1863, he was the son of James Adger and Annie Briggs Smyth. He was reared in Charleston, where his family had long been prominent. Dr. Smyth received his A. B. Degree from Princeton University in 1884 and his A. M. degree from the same institution in 1887. He studied law at Columbia University in 1885 and also at the University of Virginia in 1887.

Dr. Smyth practiced law in Charleston as a member of the firm of Smyth and Lee until he accepted the chair of adjunct-professor of biology at the University of South Carolina in 1889. Two years later he was called to the professorship of biology at Tech, a position he held until his retirement from teaching in 1925.

From 1902 to 1906, he was dean of the V. P. I. faculty. In 1906 the University of Alabama conferred upon him the LL.D. degree. He did a great deal of original work in his scientific field. He was the author of a number of scientific papers which appeared in the Entomological News. He also contributed notes on birds to the Auk and prepared the biography and estimate of the works of John Bennett in the Library of Southern Literature. He was an associate member of the American Ornithologist's Union, was one of the founders of the Entomological Society of America, was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the New York Entomological Society, and Phi Kappa Phi.



Dr. Smyth organized and coached the first football team at Tech and for years was active in various student activities. He was active in the Presbyterian church, both at Blacksburg and Salem, and served as an elder for several years.

He married Grace C. Allan of Charleston, S. C., December 29, 1897, who survives, with four children: Thomas Smyth '20, Salem; the Rev. Ellison A. Smyth '25, Warrenton; Miss Grace Allan Smyth, Salem; and James Adger Smyth, Peru.

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The second is from Entomological News, November, 1941:

Prof. Ellison Adger Smyth, Jr., died on August 19, according to a note in Science for August 29. From biographical notices in Who's Who in American and in American Men of Science (fuller in the former), we learn that he was born in Summerton, South Carolina, October 26, 1853, received the A. B. (1884) and the A.M. (1887) from Princeton and the Honorary LL.D., from the University of Alabama in 1906. He was adjunct professor of biology at the University of South Carolina, 1889-91 and professor of biology at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute at Blacksburg, 1891-1925, when he retired. A. A. Girault, whose death we also announce in this issue, must have come in contact with him there. We recall Prof. Smyth as a not infrequent visitor to the late Dr. Henry Skinner, at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, in the eighteen nineties and the early nineteen hundreds, drawn by a common interest in the Lepidoptera. He contributed eighteen papers and notes to the volumes of the NEWS for 1895, 1899-1904, 1907, 1908, 1912, and 1916. They are concerned with the butterflies, sphingids, Catocalpa and Dynastes tityus of Montgomery County, Virginia, within which Blacksburg lies, butterflies and Allorhina of South Carolina, life histories of sphingids and descriptions of two new species from Mexico, a sphinx, Philampelus elisa, and a Morpho. (thoosa). In the NEWS of May, 1908, he figured and briefly described "Two Freaks:- Papilio ajax and Eudamus tityrus." Nearly twenty years later, the latter was "christened" Epargyreus tityrus aberration smythi by R. C. Williams, Jr. (Transactions, American Entomological Society 53: 262. 1927).

P. P. Calvert.

----- C O O O O O O -----

H. MARTYN MICKLEM

News has come of the death on March 21, 1941, at his home at Variety Mills, Virginia, of H. Martyn Micklem. Mr. Micklem had made a record for continuous bird observation in one locality that seems to be unequalled in the annals of Virginia ornithology and that has rarely been surpassed anywhere. How far back his observations went the writer does not know, but for a period of 63 years, since the year 1878, he had been regularly reporting spring migration data to the migration department of the Biological Survey and earlier organizations. Mr. Micklem was a quiet worker, who had few contacts away from his own home, and so was known to very few of the members of the V. S. O. His passing will leave a big gap in the ranks of migration reporters.

J. J. Murray.

## WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB MEETING

The twenty-seventh annual meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Club was held on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on November 20-23, 1941. A happy feature of the gathering was the affiliation of three strong ornithological societies, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the Georgia Ornithological Society, and the Inland Bird Banding Association, with the W. O. C.

Featured by a symposium dealing with the 'Distribution of Birds in Relation to Ecological Concepts', under the chairmanship of Dr. V. E. Shelford, and participated in by Dr. Eugene P. Odum, Dr. John W. Aldrich, Dr. S. C. Kendeigh, Dr. O. A. Stevens, and Mr. Roger Tory Peterson, the program also included the reading of 23 papers, the showing of a number of motion pictures of a very high order and the social events and good fellowship which make these meetings memorable. The various natural history agencies which center around the University of Illinois served as hosts, and there were excellent exhibits dealing with ecological techniques and methods in bird study.

Officers elected for the coming year are: President, George M. Sutton, Cornell University; First Vice-President, S. C. Kendeigh, University of Illinois; Second Vice-President, Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., Carleton College; Secretary, Maurice Brooks, West Virginia University; Treasurer, Gustav Swanson, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Editor of The Wilson Bulletin, Josselyn Van Tyne, University of Michigan; and Elected Members of the Executive Council, Lawrence Walkinshaw, Battle Creek, Mich., Eugene P. Odum, University of Georgia, and Burt Monroe, Louisville, Ky.

Representing the V. S. O. we were happy to have in attendance Dr. and Mrs. Hostetter of Harrisonburg, and Mr. and Mrs. Wiltshire of Lynchburg. Next year's meeting will be held during the week-end following Thanksgiving at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

Maurice Brooks.

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# The Raven

BULLETIN OF THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY  
PUBLISHED AT LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

DR. J. J. MURRAY, EDITOR  
LEXINGTON, VA.

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Vol. XII

December - 1941

No. 12

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## VIRGINIA IN THE 1941 LITERATURE

The Auk. There are several Virginia notes in the January issue. One (pp. 101-102), by John H. Grey and the writer, records the "Cowbird on the Virginia and North Carolina coasts" during the breeding season. In 'Unusual North Carolina records', by H. H. Brimley, (pp. 106-108) a record is given for the Avocet on the Virginia side of the line on September 8, 1939. "Notes from Princess Ann County, Virginia", (pp. 108-109) by John H. Grey and the writer, include records for the Parasitic (?) Jaeger, Laughing Gull, Southern Flicker (an addition to the Virginia list), Eastern Meadowlark, and Atlantic Song Sparrow. The same issue, (pp. 132-133,) contains an article about the Wirt Robinson Memorial at West Point, "In Memory of Wirt Robinson". In the July issue Chester F. Phelps of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, reports (p. 409) an "American Magpie in Virginia", a bird captured in a pole trap near Ballsville, Powhatan County, May 12, 1940, and now preserved in the Virginia State Museum. There is no other record for the State. In the discussion (pp. 411-413) of a "Second Flight of the Sitka Crossbill to Massachusetts" Ludlow Griscom cites a report of the occurrence of eleven Red Crossbills on April 12, 1941 at Westmoreland State Park. The collection of a specimen might have shown these birds to be the Sitka Crossbill, since a great flight of this sub-species into the United States occurred about that time. The same issue (p. 450) contains an obituary of Merriam Garretson Lewis, by J. J. Murray. In the October number Harold H. Bailey reports a "Purple Gallinule nesting in Virginia" (pp. 573-574), at Hog Island, Northampton County, June 17, 1916; and J. C. Dickenson, Jr., describes a "Chimney Swift having benign lymphangioma" (p. 581), which had been trapped at Charlottesville, Virginia.

The Wilson Bulletin. The December, 1940, issue has not been reported on. This issue contained a tremendously interesting and very important article by Maurice Brooks, "The Breeding Warblers of the Central Alleghany Mountain Region" (pp. 249-266), which has a lot of material on the part of the Alleghany Mountain region included in Virginia. In the case of almost every warbler mentioned he includes

Virginia data. A note, "Red Phalarope and Other Water Birds at Lexington, Virginia" (pp. 280-281), by J. J. Murray, adds King Rail, Yellow Rail, Purple Gallinule, White-rumped Sandpiper, and Red Phalarope to formerly published lists of water birds for Rockbridge County, and gives further data on other species. The first three issues for 1941 appear to have nothing that concerns our region.

The Audubon Magazine (formerly Bird-Lore). There are again nine Christmas censuses from Virginia in the Supplement to the January-February issue (pp. 99-102), from the following places: Blacksburg, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Orange, Richmond, Seward Forest (Brunswick County), and Washington's Birthplace. In "The Season", now issued as a supplement to each issue, reports from the Washington, D. C., Region have been discontinued; but reports continue from the Carolina region, which includes the Back Bay section of Virginia, and which rarely fails to have some interesting Virginia records. The "Carolina Region" report is prepared by two Raleigh men, C. S. Brimley and John H. Grey, the latter a V. S. O. member.

J. J. Murray,  
Lexington, Virginia.

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