

June Birds of Fulton County, Pa.

BY WITMER STONE

A COUNTY without a railroad would seem to be an attractive spot for a lover of nature, and Fulton being distinguished in this way from all the other counties of Pennsylvania, claimed our attention for a few days in June, 1905. Dr. Wm. E. Hughes and William L. Baily had planned the trip in the hope of learning more of the breeding habits of some of the Warblers and other Alleghanian species which occur along the broken chains of the Appalachian system farther north in the state, and it was my good fortune to be able to join them.

We left the sleeper early on the morning of June 3 at Chambersburg and travelled to Mercersburg on a winding single-track road through a rich agricultural district with alternating fields of ripening wheat, timothy grass and growing corn. It was a clear, cool, delightful June morning, and the familiar notes of the farmland birds floated in from every side. One could make up a good day's list from ear alone without leaving the car; and with the familiar songs came the oft-recurring reflection—what was such a region like in the primæval days? What were the original haunts of the Barn Swallow and the Chipping Sparrow? And what was the native flora of the farmer's acres where everything is now either cultivated or a weed? Questions I fear which will not soon be answered.

But the country through which we had just passed brought up other thoughts as well. The region is historic, for this was the boyhood hunting-ground of Prof. Spencer F. Baird, and from his home at Carlisle, before any thought of the Smithsonian or the Fish Commission had entered his mind, he roamed over these valleys and onto the hills which skirt them, gathering the materials for his List of the Birds of Carlisle and Vicinity, published in 1844—one of the first local lists of Amer-

ican birds, and one which set the standard for the hundreds that have followed.

Arrived at Mercersburg, we made the last stage of our journey by wagon over the Tuscarora Mountain, which marks the eastern boundary of Fulton county, and down the other side into another valley much like the one we had left to McConnellsburg, the county-seat, where we made our headquarters. The Tuscarora Mountain is a steep, narrow, outlying ridge of the Appalachians, nearly flat on top, and well wooded with deciduous trees and bushes. Red-eyed Vireos, Ovenbirds, Chewinks, Wood Pewees, and other typical woodland birds, were heard continually, and the clear song of the Hooded Warbler accompanied us quite to the summit. Here, also, we later found some feathers of the Wild Turkey and spots where the noble birds had evidently been scratching about among the leaves. This is a well-known Turkey country and not a few are yearly brought in by the gunners.* Rattlesnakes are also of frequent occurrence, and several recently killed were to be seen along the roadside. And on the top of this same mountain we had one of those tantalizing and yet instructive experiences that now and then fall to the lot of the bird-student. A new note came to us from the tree-tops, something different from anything with which we were familiar. A tiresome search failed to obtain a good view of the songster, and the gun was finally brought into play, when, lo, we had before us a Red-eyed Vireo!

The valley in which nestles the village of McConnellsburg we found to be to a great extent Carolinian, as evidenced by the occurrence of such birds as the Tufted Titmouse and Cardinal Grosbeak, but on the ridges to the west, known as Scrub and Meadow Ground Mountain, we found traces of the Alleghanian fauna, in the presence of Chestnut-sided and Blackburnian Warblers, while a bog on the latter elevation sheltered a few

* Mr. S. N. Rhoads flushed a Turkey hen with a brood of young when crossing the ridge of mountains bordering the western side of Fulton Co., in June, 1894. *Cf.* Auk, 1899, p. 310, where date and range are wrongly given.

Mr. E. A. Preble, in June, 1893, found a nest with fourteen eggs in Somerset Co., Pa., some miles farther west. *Cf.* Judd, Bull. 24, Biol. Survey U. S. Dept. Agr.

northern species of plants. From the summit of Scrub ridge we looked off from a precipitous cliff over an immense cultivated valley stretching away to the western boundary of the county, where another wall of mountains interrupted the view, though above them we could see faintly outlined the main chain of the Alleghanies.

The view here was superb, and as an interesting foreground setting there was an old nest occupying a ledge in the rocks where they jutted out farther than usual, which we looked upon as a possible former home of the Raven, a bird which is well-known to frequent this vicinity. Far down below us, too, was a tall pine-tree bearing at its very summit a Red-tailed Hawk's nest containing two young, which we could study with ease by the aid of a glass, while the parent birds circled above and below us in great concern.

These ridges were all covered with deciduous trees or with pines—the pitch and Table Mountain pines predominating with some considerable patches of white pine. Those who ought to know told us that hemlock had never covered these mountains, and certainly there was no evidence of the noble forest which once enveloped the main Alleghanian plateau, and of which fragments still remain in Sullivan and Wyoming and Somerset counties, though rapidly disappearing to satisfy the greed of the lumbermen.

It was equally evident that we were too far east and at too low an elevation to expect more than a tinge of the Alleghanian fauna, and the event showed that our most interesting experiences were connected with one exception with southern rather than northern birds.

Toward the southeastern corner of the county the first valley becomes quite narrow, and eventually near Big Cove Tannery the mountains run together. In this section we found our most interesting birds, species which only at one or two points regularly cross the Mason and Dixon line. These were the Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* and Red-bellied Woodpecker *Centurus carolinus*. We saw but one of the former, which flew about the barn and outbuilding of a farm-house, perched for a long time on the topmost twig of a buttonwood pouring out

his song, and then skulked away along a fence-row, scolding in the usual manner of the Wrens. The bird in its attitudes recalled the larger Carolina Wren, its song, however, was quite different, distantly reminding one of the Song Sparrow's ditty in the sudden rise at the beginning and the final trill, but it is shorter, more emphatic, and of a different quality. Mr. S. N. Rhoads had heard several of these birds on the top of Tuscarora Mountain in June, 1894, when he crossed the county on his bicycle. The Woodpeckers we encountered in a large walnut-tree in a meadow where they were making a great disturbance about some holes, one of which no doubt contained their young.

As we drove back to McConnellsburg we passed two birds sitting on the top rail of the roadside fence which we recognized at once as Prairie Horned Larks *Otocoris a. praticola*. We stopped, and as if to make identification doubly sure, the birds hopped down into the road and ran about close to the carriage wheels, feeding and chasing each other. They seemed evidently to be mated, and doubtless had a nest near by, for after some fifteen minutes they whirled away over the field to the east and disappeared. This is so far as I know the most southern summer record of this bird east of the Alleghanies.

The following is compiled from Mr. Baily's lists, which during the four days contained a total of seventy-two species:

I. Birds seen in the valley about McConnellsburg—

Killdeer Plover,	Crested Flycatcher,
Bobwhite,	Phœbe,
Mourning Dove,	Wood Pewee,
Turkey Vulture,	Prairie Horned Lark,
Yellow-billed Cuckoo,	Crow,
Kingfisher,	Cowbird,
Red-headed Woodpecker,	Red-winged Blackbird,
Flicker,	Meadow Lark,
Night Hawk,	Orchard Oriole,
Chimney Swift,	Baltimore Oriole,
Hummingbird,	Purple Grackle,
Kingbird,	Goldfinch,

Vesper Sparrow,	Red-eyed Vireo,
Grasshopper Sparrow,	Warbling Vireo,
Chipping Sparrow,	Yellow Warbler,
Field Sparrow,	Maryland Yellow-throat,
Song Sparrow,	Yellow-breasted Chat,
Cardinal,	Catbird,
Indigobird,	Brown Thrasher,
Purple Marten,	House Wren,
Cliff Swallow,	White-breasted Nuthatch,
Barn Swallow,	Tufted Titmouse,
Bank Swallow,	Robin,
Cedarbird,	Bluebird.

II. Additional species in the wooded slopes of the mountains—

Woodcock,	Towhee,
Ruffed Grouse,	White-eyed Vireo,
Sharp-shinned Hawk,	Black and White Warbler,
Red-tailed Hawk,	Chestnut-sided Warbler,
Hairy Woodpecker,	Blackburnian Warbler,
Downy Woodpecker,	Hooded Warbler,
Whip-poor-will,	Pine Warbler,
Least Flycatcher,	Ovenbird,
Blue Jay,	Black-capped Chickadee,
Scarlet Tanager,	Wood Thrush.

III. Additional species seen about Big Cove Tannery—

Red-bellied Woodpecker,	Louisiana Water Thrush,
Yellow-throated Vireo,	Bewick's Wren.*

* In Ridgway's *Birds of North and Middle America*, III, p. 554, Susquehanna County, Pa., is given as within the range of this bird. This is not one of the "southern and western" counties as stated, but in the extreme northeastern part of the state and largely boreal in its fauna. The record of Bewick's Wren from this county is obviously erroneous and is probably to be explained as follows: Mr. Ridgway based his statement on the localities given by Mr. Oberholser in his monograph of this genus (*Proc. U. S. N. M.*, 1898), which were not accompanied by the names of the respective counties. One of the specimens in the Carnegie Museum collection was cited as from "Springville, Pa." Mr. W. E. C. Todd kindly informs me that this locality is in Bedford Co., while the only "Springville, Pa.," in the gazetteers is in Susquehanna Co. [See beyond, p. 66, for additional data.]