

A June Trip to Pocono Lake, Monroe County, Pennsylvania

BY JOHN D. CARTER

Most of the ornithological notes from the Pocono Lake region, including those published in a previous issue of *CASSINIA*, have been made near the close of the nesting-season. An occasional nest of Hermit Thrush and Junco, and a very interesting family of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported, but it seemed probable that a search made earlier in the season would yield more complete results. With this end in view four members of the D. V. O. C., Wm. L. Baily, Wm. B. Evans, Witmer Stone and the writer, accompanied by an interested friend, reached the lake on the afternoon of the 15th of 6th month (June), 1906.

The character of the lake and the country surrounding it have already been sufficiently described. On arriving at the boat landing we were quite surprised to see instead of the usual expanse of water only the narrow Tobyhanna winding its way among a profusion of blackened stumps. The explanation of this was that the owners of the lake had opened the dam-gates and allowed most of the water to escape, in order to remove rubbish from the shores. After photographing a Kingbird's nest and eggs, and looking in vain for those of the Alder Flycatcher, the party reached the cabin at the foot of the lake before nightfall.

A bivouac under the silent stars sounds very romantic and sometimes works very well, but we were thankful to have a civilized roof over our heads, for before morning a cold mist began to drive across the lake,—a mild hint of what was in store for us. According to agreement the writer, who slept on the porch, wakened those inside to hear the hoo-hoo hoo-hoo of a Great Horned Owl, but their drowsy ears had difficulty in dis-

tinguishing the notes from the bellowings of a numerous tribe of bullfrogs which lived near our shore of the lake.

Our cabin was located on a grassy slope which was dotted with beautifully-pointed spruces, standing singly and in small clumps. The tops of these trees were the favorite resting-places of Purple Finches and Cedarbirds. Later in the season flocks of Red Crossbills resorted to them also, picking and twisting at the green, sticky cones, but usually tarrying only a few minutes at a visit. At the time of our stay the Purple Finches were in full song, furnishing a most acceptable accompaniment to the more distant Hermit Thrushes. Before we had been there many hours one of the party discovered that the Finches were carrying nesting materials to one of the upper branches of a spruce. Three days later, at the time of our departure, this nest was finished and contained one egg, while another nest near by contained four eggs. Both of these nests were of rather loose construction, placed upon horizontal limbs without any pretense of being attached to their support.

One of the chief purposes of our trip was to settle the identity of a certain small Thrush, of elusive habits, which lived in a cold spruce swamp across the lake from our cabin. To this problem many of our precious hours were devoted. Our theory was that in looking for the chief objects others of less importance might turn up incidentally. This proved to be the case, for our Thrush hunt led to the rediscovery of several interesting birds previously reported from that locality, besides the nests of Blue Jay and Maryland Yellowthroat with young, Magnolia Warbler with eggs, and no end of Catbirds' nests placed in the midst of the densest clumps of young spruces.

As for the Thrush itself we confirmed our impressions that it was a difficult matter to see it satisfactorily. Early in the morning and again toward evening it would mount to the top of some tall tree, either living or dead, and sing beautifully. To my ear the song bore no resemblance to that of the Wood Thrush or Hermit, and was longer than that of the Veery, as well as clearer, more powerful and varied. Although no specimen was secured, by piecing together all the information available we now feel satisfied that this bird is the Olive-backed

Thrush. Its nest was not to be found although we searched through rain and shine.

Perhaps our second ambition was to find the nest of the White-throated Sparrow. The birds were always to be found on a hillside which was covered with a rather dense but short growth of huckleberries and other shrubby plants. On landing from our boats near one edge of the promising territory, we spread out so as to cover as much ground as possible. Before we had reached the place which it was hoped would furnish the treasure, a brown bird crept off a nest on the ground a few feet in front of one of the party. The motion was noticed of course. The bird kept quiet and hidden for a few seconds; then it came into full view, chirping sharply in a voice which could be confused only with that of the Swamp Sparrow. It was a White-throat. The nest contained four beautiful eggs and one nestling, naked except for a tuft or two of blackish down. It was ascertained later that the eggs were quite fresh, so it has been supposed that the nestling was a Cowbird. So far as known, however, this bird has not been seen at Pocono Lake; but since it is frequent at a locality only a few miles distant, the above identification may be correct. In any case the presence of fresh eggs and a nestling in the same nest is of interest. This appears to be the first record of the nest of this bird for the State of Pennsylvania.

Upon one of our tramps we found a small, swampy tract close to the Tobyhanna, below the lake. The ground was covered with deep, wet sphagnum, which spread its spongy carpet over roots, stumps, and fallen trees. In this locality Nashville and Black-and-White Warblers were singing frequently. The presence of Veeries was also revealed by a very few of their ordinary calls. As I had never found the nests of any of these birds I decided to make a thorough examination of this small swamp. Securing a long stick for parting the foliage, I started at one side and worked slowly back and forth. A Catbird's nest, with a very indignant owner, and two or three empty nests of very definite construction, but uncertain identity, seemed to be all that the place would yield, when, upon moving the top of a two-foot-high hemlock, my eye caught the circular

arrangement of materials which so often is the most conspicuous feature of a nest. Looking more closely, I was delighted to see the four blue eggs of a Veery. The birds were silent and invisible, and remained so until our departure from the place. Their action in this case, or rather the lack of action, probably explains why the Veery's nest has the reputation of being a hard one to find. The birds simply do not help in any way.

One prominent feature of our trip has as yet scarcely been mentioned. This was the weather. If such a complicated thing could be indicated by one word, that word would be rain, writ large. Rain we had morning, noon-time and night, though not continuously, of all sizes, from mist to heavy down-pours, varied by one brisk hail-storm, and sometimes accompanied by most impressive thunder. After the hail, we were interested in revisiting the nests which we had found. Not one had been injured. Although the gates were open, the lake soon began to respond to the prodigious rainfall. While the water was rising, we found the nest and four eggs of a Spotted Sandpiper, placed between the temporary level of the lake, and high-water mark. We watched with much solicitude to see whether or not this housekeeping venture would be spoiled. The evening before our departure there still seemed to be a possibility of escape, but the next morning, as we were homeward bound, we found the eggs floating in about six inches of water. They were of no further use to the parents, so I gathered them up, and after a time placed them in cotton within a cracker-box, and stuffed the whole into a coat pocket. Late that evening I had the eggs spread upon a table at home, when I heard a clicking sound, and was astonished to find that one of the eggs was hatching! But little progress was made before bed-time, so a lamp was arranged in such a way as to furnish heat all night. By next morning we had a little Sandpiper. We dried him by means of a hot-water bag, and with many misgivings began his raising and education. The great difficulty was the supply and administering of food. The little fellow had no notion of picking up anything from the ground. The only motion which seemed like an attempt to secure food was an upward wriggling of the head and neck, as if to meet the beak of

the parent for the regurgitation process. (How young birds of this type are really fed I do not know.) Soft worms were tried, but these had to be placed well within the throat by means of forceps in order to be swallowed. Only once did a contented twitter seem to indicate an appreciation of the efforts of his foster-parents. Evidently conditions were not favorable, for on the third day his troubles ended. Considering that the egg floated in the cold lake water for probably six or more hours, and that it received practically no heat for twelve hours more, the hatching of it at all seems quite remarkable.

Beside the nests already alluded to, the following may deserve mention: Two or more of the Cedarbird, with eggs; two of the Magnolia Warbler, one building, the other with young; one or more of the Tree Swallow, with eggs; one of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; two of the Junco; one of the Hermit Thrush, and two of the Chestnut-sided Warbler. The young of the Black-and-White Warbler and the Small-billed Water Thrush were seen out of the nest.

The nests of the following were not revealed by the most careful search which we were able to make during our short stay, although we felt sure that they were or had been near at hand: Olive-sided and Alder Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Nashville, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, Olive-backed Thrush, and Prairie Horned Lark, besides several more common kinds. Since some of these have seldom if ever been found in Pennsylvania, there still remains abundant incentive for us to try again.

On the whole, we vote that the trip was a success. The days were full of interest, not to say excitement; the evenings beside the fire were enlivened by the tuneful voice of the ocarina, while the pouring of heavy rain on the roof at night served only to remind us that we were warm, dry, well-fed and happy, and were having a most enjoyable outing.