

Type Birds of Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey

BY SPENCER TROTTER

The title, "Type Birds," may not be exactly clear as to the meaning it is intended to convey. By "type" I mean the individual specimen that furnished the *first* or *original* description of a species under the Linnean or binomial nomenclature. Prior to this use of generic and specific names to express the idea of likeness or unlikeness in living beings—to describe a form of life as distinguished from other forms—a cumbersome description in Latin was resorted to which carried with it but a vague impression of a distinct form of life, and gave no clue whatever to relationship. Catesby was a pre-Linnean describer of numerous North American birds, but while his descriptions are good, his cumbersome polynomial names, though interesting from a purely historical point of view, do not hold in the nomenclature of to-day.

Linnæus, the founder of the binomial system, and Gmelin, the compiler of a later edition of the "Systema Naturæ," in their efforts to name all known species in accordance with the new mode went over the works of their predecessors and furnished each bird there described and figured with a proper Latin binomial name, quoting only a few words of description in their "Systema," but giving a reference to the original work. So while we quote our names from Linnæus or Gmelin, we must still go back to the mustier volumes of Catesby, Edwards, Kalm, etc., to find out where the birds came from, and just what they were.

It has been a matter of some interest to me to trace the localities from which the original individual or type specimens of our common birds came from, and to discover how many of them were obtained by Philadelphia collectors.

When Linnæus published the tenth edition of his "Systema Naturæ," in 1758, in which he first adopted the binomial nomenclature, he was almost wholly dependent upon Catesby's "Carolina" for his knowledge of North American birds, and in this way the type locality of many of our familiar species is "Carolina;" Catesby not being very explicit as to definite localities. By the time the twelfth edition of Linnæus' "Systema" appeared in 1766, Geo. Edwards' "Gleanings" had been published, and herein are figured and described a number of birds sent to England by John and William Bartram, of Pennsylvania. John sent the "Ruffed Heathcock," while William sent, June, 1756, fourteen dried skins, mostly nondescripts with colored drawings of some and numerous notes on their habits. All these were undoubtedly obtained in the vicinity of Bartram's Garden, and were the type specimens of the following species described and figured by Edwards and duly named by Linnæus, Gmelin or Latham.

It will be noticed that many of our vernacular names for these birds originated with Edwards or were communicated to him by William Bartram:

SPOTTED SANDPIPER, *Actitis macularia* (Linn.). "Spotted Tringa" sent by William Bartram.

RUFFED GROUSE, *Bonasa umbellus* (Linn.). "Ruffed Heathcock or Grouse" sent from Pennsylvania by John Bartram to Peter Collinson on July 15, 1750.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, *Zonotrichia albicollis* (Gmel.). Received from William Bartram under the above name with a carefully-colored drawing.

WORM-EATING WARBLER, *Helmitheros vermivorus* (Gmel.). "The Worm-eater" from William Bartram.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER, *Helminthophila chrysoptera* (Linn.). "The Golden-winged Flycatcher" from William Bartram.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, *Helminthophila pinus* (Linn.). Thought by Edwards to be the Pine Creeper of Catesby. Our present vernacular name seems to have originated with Wilson.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, *Dendroica virens* (Gmel.). "The Black-throated Green Flycatcher" received from William Bartram.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER, *Dendroica pensylvanica* (Linn.). "The Red-throated Flycatcher" received from William Bartram.

MYRTLE WARBLER, *Dendroica coronata* (Linn.). "The Golden-crowned" Flycatcher received from William Bartram. The name *coronata* is evidently derived from Edwards' vernacular name.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER, *Dendroica maculosa* (Gmel.). "The Yellow-rumped Flycatcher," a bird in the first-year autumnal plumage received from William Bartram.

TIT LARK, *Anthus pensilvanicus* (Lath.). "The Lark of Pennsylvania" received from William Bartram. Latham was the first to found a binomial name upon this plate.

GNATCATCHER, *Polioptila coerulea* (Linn.). "The Little Blue-gray Flycatcher" received from William Bartram along with nests, the bird being then a regular breeder near Philadelphia.

RUBY-CROWNED KNIGHT, *Regulus calendula* (Linn.). Bartram sent both the "Ruby-crowned" and "Golden-crested Wrens" and Edwards figured both, but while he recognized the former as a new species, the latter was considered identical with the European species for many years.

No name has so thoroughly impressed itself on American Ornithology as that of Alexander Wilson. His work was, in the main, carried on in the neighborhood of Philadelphia and many of his "types" were secured in this vicinity. Of all the species, the types of which were secured in eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, not less than twenty-three have Wilson's name affixed to them, and several more are closely identified with him.

Wilson very generally speaks of the locality where he secured a new bird and when such a definite statement is not made we are justified in regarding the vicinity of Philadelphia as *locus avis novæ*.

The following list includes those species that were described from Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey by Wilson or his friend George Ord, who edited the last volumes of Wilson's Ornithology, and later editions of the work :

BONAPARTE'S GULL, *Larus philadelphia* (Ord.). This species

was first described in Guthrie's Geography under the name Banded-tail Tern, *Sterna philadelphia*. It was evidently captured in this vicinity, as the specific name would indicate.

RING-BILLED GULL, *Larus delawarensis* (Ord). Described as the Toothed-bill Gull by Ord in Guthrie's Geography. In a foot-note he adds: "This is a beautiful Gull, and was discovered on the Delaware below Philadelphia."

CANVAS-BACK DUCK, *Aythya vallisneria* (Wils.). This duck is first described by Wilson as a distinct species under the name *Anas valisineria*.* With a reference to a Peale's Museum specimen, a lengthy description of the bird and its habits follows: American Ornithology, vol. viii, p. 103. The type may have come from the near-by Chesapeake, but I have included it in this list, for Wilson speaks of a pair which he bought in the Philadelphia market which had been shot at Egg Harbor, N. J.

RUDDY DUCK, *Erismatura rubida* (Wils.). "This very rare Duck was shot some years ago on the river Delaware, and appears to be an entire new species. The specimen here figured, with the female that accompanies it, and which was killed in the same river, are the only individuals of their kind I have met with. They are both preserved in the superb museum of my much-respected friend, Mr. Peale of this city." American Ornithology, vol. viii, p. 128.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW, *Numenius longirostris* (Wils.). This bird is first clearly distinguished by Wilson as a distinct species from the European Curlew. "The Curlews appear in the salt marshes of New Jersey about the middle of May on their way to the north, and in September on their return from their breeding places." American Ornithology, vol. viii, p. 23.

WILSON'S SNIPE, *Gallinago delicata* (Ord). Wilson did not clearly distinguish this bird as a distinct species from the common Snipe of Europe. He speaks of its arrival in Pennsylvania and its frequenting the low grounds along the Delaware and Schuylkill. Ord recognized it as a distinct species from the

* As Dr. Trotter points out, Wilson consistently misspells this word, and if we are to follow original spellings to the extent of "*pensilvanica*" and "*hiemalis*," it would seem that we must follow the habit of the duck and swallow our *valisineria* even though it be with less of a relish than he experiences.—W. S.

European Snipe, as is attested in vol. ix of the American Ornithology, 1825 edition. The original description given by Wilson was undoubtedly taken from a bird shot in this vicinity.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER, *Helodromas solitarius* (Wils.). "This new species inhabits the watery solitudes of our highest mountains during the summer, from Kentucky to New York; * * * * At the approach of cold weather it descends to the muddy shores of our large rivers, * * * * I have made long and close search for the nest of this bird without success. They regularly breed on Pocono Mountain, between Easton and Wilkes-Barre, in Pennsylvania, arriving there early in May, and departing in September." American Ornithology, vol. vii, p. 53, Peale's Museum, No. 7763.

PIPING PLOVER, *Ægialitis meloda* (Ord). This species was described by Wilson in vol. v, American Ornithology, p. 30, under the name of Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*, confusing it with another species and regarding it as a different plumage phase. He records the bird from "Summer's" Beach, at the mouth of Great Egg Harbour, N. J.

In vol. vii, p. 65, under the account of the Ring Plover, Wilson refers to the mistake in confusing the two. He further says: "The present species, or true Ring Plover, and also the former (referring to the Piping Plover described and figured in vol. v as above quoted), both arrive on the seacoast of New Jersey late in April." Ord named the bird in the reprint of Vol. VII, 1824.

WILSON'S PLOVER, *Ægialitis wilsonia* (Ord). "Of this neat and prettily-marked species I can find no account, and have concluded that it has hitherto escaped the eye of the naturalist. The bird of which the figure in the plate is a correct resemblance was shot the 13th of May, 1813 on the shore of Cape Island, New Jersey, by my ever-regretted friend, and I have honored it with his name." Ord in vol. ix, American Ornithology, p. 77.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER, *Ægialitis semipalmata* (Bp.). Wilson figures and describes the Ringed Plover in vol. vii of the American Ornithology as previously noted under the specific name *hiaticula* which is that of the European form. Bonaparte first recognized it as a distinct species and so records the fact in the

Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, vol. v, p. 98, giving it the name *semipalmata*.

KING RAIL, *Rallus elegans* (Aud.). Wilson figures this species under the description of the Clapper Rail, *R. crepitans*. Audubon recognized the error, and names the bird as distinct in a most patronizing paragraph. Wilson evidently confused the two as one and the same species, saying, "Though occasionally found along the swampy shores and tide waters of our large rivers, its principal residence is in the salt marshes."

Audubon refers to the bird as breeding in the salt meadows along the Delaware and Schuylkill, where Wilson most likely obtained the specimen from which he made his drawing, probably the Peale's Museum specimen which he quotes. American Ornithology, vol. vii, p. 112, plate 62.

GOSHAWK, *Astur atricapillus* (Wils.). The specimen figured and described was "shot within a few miles of Philadelphia." American Ornithology, vi, p. 80.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, *Accipiter velox* (Wils.). Wilson says, "This Hawk was shot on the banks of the Schuylkill near Mr. Bartram's. Its singularity of flight surprised me long before I succeeded in procuring it." American Ornithology, v, p. 116. Under the name of *Falco pennsylvanicus*, or Slate-colored Hawk, he described "a beautiful specimen shot in the neighborhood of Philadelphia." American Ornithology, vi, p. 13. This, as he suspected, proved to be the adult plumage of the former.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK, *Buteo platypterus* (Viell.). Referring to plate 54, vol. vi, of the American Ornithology, Wilson speaks of this Hawk as a *new species*, "shot on the 6th of May in Mr. Bartram's woods, near the Schuylkill, and was afterwards presented to Mr. Peale, in whose collection it now remains."

Another was seen the next day sailing about over the same woods, but was driven off by a Kingbird, much to the ornithologist's regret. The specimen secured was a male, and is now in the collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Wilson named the Broadwing *Falco pennsylvanicus*, a name that he had already bestowed upon the adult Sharp-shinned Hawk. In his reprint of Wilson's work Ord substitutes the specific name *latissimus*, while Vieillot, a French ornithologist, proposed *platypterus*. The latter has priority.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO, *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (Wils.). This species was first described by Wilson, vol. iv, p. 16, as a distinct species, and though he does not mention any locality, it is highly probable that the type specimen was obtained near Philadelphia. He refers also to a Peale's Museum specimen.

Vol. iv of the American Ornithology was issued in 1811. The preface to this volume contains a very interesting account of the different species of birds found nesting in Bartram's Garden, and also notes on the arrivals of certain species.

WHIP-POOR-WILL, *Antrostomus vociferus* (Wils.). "Though this noted bird has been so frequently mentioned by name, and its manners taken notice of by almost every naturalist who has written on our birds, yet personally it has never yet been described by any writer with whose works I am acquainted. Extraordinary as this may seem, it is nevertheless true; and in proof I offer the following facts." American Ornithology, vol. v, p. 78.

FISH CROW, *Corvus ossifragus* (Wils.). In his description Wilson says that a pair bred in a piece of tall woods near Mr. Beasley's at Great Egg Harbor. "The male of this nest furnished me with the figure in the plate." American Ornithology, v, p. 27.

PINE SISKIN, *Spinus pinus* (Wils.). American Ornithology, vol. ii, p. 133. The type undoubtedly from this locality. Wilson speaks of it as visiting us in November, and of the large flocks that frequented the gardens of Bush Hill in the neighborhood of Philadelphia. He makes no mention of having observed it elsewhere.

CHIPPING SPARROW, *Spizella socialis* (Wils.). American Ornithology, vol. ii, p. 127. The type undoubtedly from this vicinity. Bartram calls it "*Passer domesticus*, the little House Sparrow or Chipping-bird." The bird was so common that Wilson, though its first biographer and namer, makes no mention of it as a novelty.

FIELD SPARROW, *Spizella pusilla* (Wils.). First described by Wilson in vol. ii, p. 121, American Ornithology, though listed by Bartram as *Passer agrestis*. Evidently the type was obtained in this vicinity. Wilson speaks of it as generally migratory in Pennsylvania, and further adds that "it has no song;

but a kind of chirping not much different from the chirpings of a cricket." This is a curious statement, for to me in its plaintive song there is all of the charm and sweetness of the budding borders of April woods. John Burroughs' name of Bush Sparrow seems quite as applicable to this species as Wilson's name of Field Sparrow.

SONG SPARROW, *Melospiza cinerea melodia* (Wils.). No definite locality is given, it being such a common species that Wilson could not be sure that it was not already described.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, *Coturniculus savanarrum passerinus* (Wils.). This species he found at Staten Island and along the seacoast of New Jersey, but is not explicit as to the type locality.

SAVANNA SPARROW, *Passerculus sandw. savanna* (Wils.) is described at length in vol. iii, American Ornithology, the figure being that of the female. From Wilson's account it was evidently named by him after the city of Savannah, and the name is so spelled. He speaks of having first discovered it there, and later having found it abundant near Great Egg Harbor, N. J., where he evidently obtained the Ipswich, or as he supposed, the male Savanna Sparrow.* While not the type, Wilson's specimen was evidently the first obtained.

SEASIDE SPARROW, *Anmodramus maritimus* (Wils.). In vol. iv, plate 34, American Ornithology, Wilson figures this bird and says, "Of this bird I can find no description. It inhabits the low, rush-covered islands along our Atlantic coast, where I first found it." It is altogether likely that he first met with this sparrow on the New Jersey marshes, possibly in the vicinity of Great Egg Harbor, where he did much collecting and where the bird is common.

SOLITARY VIREO, *Vireo solitarius* (Wils.). Under the name of Solitary Flycatcher, *Muscicopa solitaria*, Wilson describes this bird in vol. ii, American Ornithology, p. 143, and says, "The one from which the figure in the plate was taken was shot in Mr. Bartram's woods near Philadelphia, among the branches of a dogwood, in the month of October."

CERULEAN WARBLER, *Dendroica caerulea* (Wils.). The type undoubtedly from this neighborhood. In vol. ii, American Orni-

* Cf. Stone, *Osprey*.

thology, p. 141, Wilson says, "This delicate little species is now, for the first time, introduced to public notice. Except my friend Mr. Peale, I know of no other naturalist who seems to have hitherto known of its existence." He further adds, "It is one of our scarce birds in Pennsylvania, and its nest has hitherto eluded my search. I have never observed it after the 20th of August."

BAY-BREADED WARBLER, *Dendroica castanea* (Wils.). This species was listed by Bartram under the name of *Parus peregrinus*, the Little Chocolate-breasted Titmouse. Wilson first described it as *Sylvia castanea*, giving to it its present English name. He speaks of it as a very rare species, passing through Pennsylvania about the beginning of May. The type was evidently obtained in this vicinity. American Ornithology, vol. ii, p. 97.

MOURNING WARBLER, *Geothlypis philadelphia* (Wils.). In vol. ii, page 101 of the American Ornithology, Wilson says, "I have the honor of introducing to the notice of naturalists and others a very modest and neat little species which has hitherto eluded their research. I must also add, with regret, that it is the only one of its kind I have yet met with. The bird from which the figure in the plate was taken was shot in the early part of June, on the border of a marsh, within a few miles of Philadelphia."

LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN, *Telmatodytes palustris* (Wils.). Under the name *Certhia palustris*, Wilson describes this little bird in vol. ii, p. 58 of the American Ornithology. He speaks of its arrival in Pennsylvania and also of its curious song heard "on the reedy borders of the Schuylkill or Delaware in the month of June."

WILSON'S THRUSH, *Hylocichla fuscescens* (Steph.). Wilson first clearly distinguished this species from the Wood and Hermit Thrushes, but unfortunately selected a name, *Turdus mustelinus*, which had already been bestowed upon the Wood Thrush by Gmelin. Bonaparte renamed Wilson's bird *T. wilsoni*, and Stephens, *T. fuscescens*, the latter having priority.

SMALL-HEADED FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa minuta* (Wils.). This species, not since detected and the basis of Audubon's attack on Wilson and Ord's countercharge, is stated by the latter to have been secured by Wilson near Philadelphia.

Besides the foregoing, Wilson described a number of supposed novelties from the neighborhood of Philadelphia, such as the Bartramian Sandpiper, Black Hawk, Nighthawk, Crossbill, Swamp Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos, Cape May Warbler and Water Thrush; and while Philadelphia remains the type locality for the names he proposed, these have become mere synonyms of names proposed by others a few years earlier in works to which Wilson had not access. Many of his vernacular names, however, such as Cape May Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, etc., still persist.

Of the discovery of the former, he says "obtained in a maple swamp in Cape May Co., not far from the coast, by Mr. George Ord." The earlier specimen figured by Edwards and named by Gmelin came on to a vessel at sea "ten leagues off the Florida coast," a much less satisfactory type locality! Of the Bartramian Sandpiper, he says: "This bird being, as far as I can discover, a new species, undescribed by any former author, I have honored it with the name of my very worthy friend, near whose botanic gardens, on the banks of the river Schuylkill, I first found it."

A number of other names proposed by Wilson were for birds that he well knew had been described before, but not realizing the force of the rule of priority, he felt at liberty to rename any species whose earlier appellations did not suit his taste. Generally, however, Wilson took these names from Bartram's manuscript or from his "Travels" in an attempt to force into use the names proposed by his friend and counsellor, who was undoubtedly the first to discover a large number of our birds, but who unfortunately published no descriptions of them, even though he coined names for them.

Bonaparte apparently named but one new species from our district, namely, the

STILT SANDPIPER, *Micropalma himantopus* (Bonap.). In a paper read Nov. 6, 1826, before the New York Lyceum, and published in the "Annals" of that society, vol. ii, p. 157, he says: "This new species I shot from a flock at Long Branch, N. J., in the middle of July." This clearly gives the bird a title to a place as a type species from this region. I have heard this species called Bonaparte Snipe on Long Island.

BARRED OWL, *Syrnium varium* (Barton) obviously from Philadelphia. Barton, in his curious "Fragments of Natural History," names it as new.

Wilson had so thoroughly scoured Pennsylvania that but little was left for Audubon to discover in this neighborhood, and we find most of his novelties described from the south or west. There are, however, the following:

PINE WARBLER, *Dendroica vigorsii* (Aud.). This is the *Sylvia vigorsii* of Audubon obtained on the Perkiomen Creek. The bird was known before, but none of the older names are available.

TRUDEAU'S TERN, *Sterna trudeaui* (Aud.). Obtained at Great Egg Harbor, N. J. A pure straggler from the south.

CUVIER'S KINGLET, *Regulus cuvieri* (Aud.). Fatland Ford, Schuylkill River, June 8, 1812. This unique bird was not preserved, and the like of it no one else ever saw.

TOWNSEND'S BUNTING, *Emberiza townsendii* (Aud.). New Garden, Chester Co., Pa. A probable hybrid. The unique type is still preserved in the National Museum.

Since the time of Audubon but three new birds have been discovered in eastern Pennsylvania. These are as follows:

PHILADELPHIA VIREO, *Vireo philadelphicus* (Cassin). Type secured by John Cassin, September, 1842, in Bingham's Woods, where Horticultural Hall now stands in West Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. See Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, v, Feb., 1851.

LEAST FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax minimus* (Baird).

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax flaviventris* (Baird).

Both obtained at Carlisle, Pa., by Wm. M. and Spencer F. Baird, and described by them in the Proceedings of the Philadelphia Academy, July, 1843.