

## Bird Life about Samar, Southern Clinton Co., Pa.

BY THOMAS D. BURLEIGH, PITTSBURGH, PA.

FOR seven weeks during the summer of 1916, from the 23rd of June to the 12th of August, I was in the Pennsylvania State College Forestry Camp some four miles from Samar, Pa. and in that time I was able to make a fairly thorough study of the bird-life of that region. It is true that necessary work kept me busy five days out of the week, from early morning until evening, but the work was entirely out of doors and when a nest was found or an unusual bird seen, there was no objection to my stopping a few minutes to make desired observations. Added to that there were Sundays and Saturday afternoons, with an occasional Wednesday afternoon, so in all, the region was well covered.

The character of a country always decides its bird-life, so a few words of the general topography of the area worked will not come amiss. The town of Samar is a small country town of some two hundred inhabitants, and is ten miles from the nearest large town, Lock Haven. It lies in a large open valley which runs roughly east and west. To the south, hardly a quarter of a mile distant, begin the first ridges of a range of the Appalachians. These have the even, almost unbroken sky-line that is so characteristic of the mountains of central Pennsylvania, an occasional gap coming as a relief in a topography that boasts of no high peaks or out-thrusting cliffs. A quarter of a mile from the town Fishing Creek comes out of a narrow gap in the mountains which connects the Samar Valley with Sugar Valley five miles away. This gap is known locally as the "Narrows" and is well named. Fishing Creek is a famous trout stream; it is large, at most points thirty to fifty feet across, and is always well stocked. Flowing into it, along the length of the "Narrows," are occasional smaller creeks, usually from steep, wooded

ravines that at some places can be called valleys. In one of these, known as Cherry Run, our camp was located, and from it there was easy access to the varied country surrounding it.

In the woods, evergreens, occurring scattered or in small stands, were frequently come across, and consisted of hemlock, white pine, pitch pine, table-mountain pine and scrub pine. The hardwoods which predominated, varied, the main species being the white oak, red oak, chestnut oak, chestnut, yellow poplar, sweet birch, yellow birch, paper birch, large-toothed aspen and sassafras. In the open valleys there were occasional wood-lots in which were white oak, red oak, white pine and hemlock, with other species in smaller numbers.

Bird-life was interesting because of its varied nature and because of unusual conditions in respect to some species. Wood Pewees were conspicuous by their scarcity. In seven weeks I saw but one bird, and that one was in an orchard and not in the woods. Catbirds were far from plentiful. Towhees were found only on the high ridges, and no Juncos were seen, although the Blue-headed Vireos, Hermit Thrushes and the more northern Warblers (Canadian, Blackburnian, Magnolia, etc.) were plentiful.

In the notes that follow, I have taken up only the birds that seemed to me of some interest, and have not attempted a complete list of the species recorded. This I have considered unnecessary, as the mere mention of such birds as the Field Sparrow, Nighthawk, etc. being seen can be of no value.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER—*Helodromas solitarius solitarius*. One bird was seen Aug. 9, about a small pond, the first for the fall migration.

UPLAND PLOVER—*Bartramia longicauda*. A rare summer resident. On July 3, while walking along a road that passed through large open fields, one of these birds suddenly appeared and showed great alarm over my presence, circling overhead, uttering its sputtering alarm note and frequently alighting on a fence-post actually within twenty-five feet of me. It undoubtedly had young nearby, but although an attempt was made to find them, the search proved unsuccessful.

WILD TURKEY—*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*. Plentiful in the

deep woods. They were frequently seen by different members of our party and I myself, on July 5, came across a large hen with ten or so half-grown young. I had been following an old woods-road and on turning a sharp bend saw them feeding a short distance ahead of me. They did not at first notice me and came toward me for several feet, giving me a fine view of them before they suddenly disappeared into the underbrush. The young were about the size of a full-grown chicken, and could fly fairly well.

PILEATED WOODPECKER—*Phloeotomus pileatus pileatus*. Said to be found here in small numbers, although I saw no birds myself. Conditions were well suited for them and I realized that they were undoubtedly around by the large holes that they had dug in the trees when after insects. One that I noticed was in the trunk of a living white-pine and was actually a foot in length, four inches wide and six inches deep. The bird that did that must have been unusually hungry or found the grubs unusually tempting.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER—*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. A scarce summer resident in the open valleys. A nest found July 14th, held five slightly incubated eggs and was twenty feet from the ground in a dead limb in the top of a large apple-tree at the edge of an orchard. This is as late a date as I have ever found the birds nesting.

WHIP-POOR-WILL—*Antrostomus vociferus vociferus*. An abundant summer resident. On July 3rd, while tramping through the woods, one of these birds flushed from under my feet and a short search revealed one young bird, half grown. Its light brown plumage blended perfectly with the dead leaves and if I looked away a minute, it required a close glance to pick it out again. The adult bird showed great alarm over my presence and continually fluttered about near-by, attempting to attract my attention. Twice it alit crosswise on a small limb, an unusual action for one of this family.

CHIMNEY SWIFT—*Chaetura pelagica*. Abundant about the scattered farms and in the town. A nest found July 13th, ten feet down in the chimney of an unused house, held five well-grown young.

PHOEBE—*Sayornis phoebe*. Found everywhere. July 2nd, I looked under three bridges that crossed small streams near our camp, and under each found a nest, on or against a beam within a few feet of the water. Each nest held four eggs, varying in incubation. Three days later, on the 5th, I found another nest with five incubated eggs, against a beam in the roof of the overshoot of a barn.

GOLDFINCH—*Astragalinus tristis tristis*. Rather plentiful in the open country. Six nests were found, all varying considerably in respect to situation as the following data will show. Aug. 2nd,—Five slightly incubated eggs, ten feet from the ground in the top of an osage-orange tree at the side of the road. Aug. 4th,—Five slightly incubated eggs, fifteen feet from the ground in the top of a small apple tree in an orchard. Four slightly incubated eggs, six feet from the ground in a small white elm at the side of a road. Aug. 9,—Three incubated eggs, fifteen feet from the ground at the outer end of a limb of a large sugar maple at the side of a road. Five slightly incubated eggs, ten feet from the ground in a small white elm in a thicket at the edge of a field. Aug. 10, six incubated eggs, thirty feet from the ground in the top of a large yellow birch at the side of a road.

ENGLISH SPARROW—*Passer domesticus*. As would be expected, these birds were far from scarce about the town and around the farms and were surely holding up very well their reputation for destructiveness. July 13th, five half-grown young were found in a Cliff Swallow's nest, and July 26th, three fresh eggs were found in a Barn Swallow's nest. Both of these nests were characterized by unsightly appearance, due to the loose grasses and feathers that had been later added.

CHIPPING SPARROW—*Spizella passerina passerina*. Common about the town and about the scattered farms in the open valleys. Two nests were found. One, June 26th, held three incubated eggs and was eight feet from the ground in a horizontal crotch on the outer end of a limb of a large white oak. The other, found July 2nd, held four slightly incubated eggs and was twenty-five feet from the ground near the top of a pear tree in an orchard.

SONG SPARROW—*Melospiza melodia melodia*. Abundant. Three nests were found, one of which was of interest because of its somewhat unusual situation. We were out July 5th, running a survey line, and as one of the party cut into a young white pine to blaze it, one of these birds fluttered out from the top and disappeared into the underbrush. A close look showed me the nest, fully ten feet from the ground, and well concealed. It held three incubated eggs.

BARN SWALLOW—*Hirundo erythrogastra*. A common summer resident. A late nest was found July 27th, holding at that date four incubated eggs.

CLIFF SWALLOW—*Petrochelidon lunifrons lunifrons*. A few were noticed about all the barns, nesting in the overshoot. A late nest examined July 23rd, was found to hold three slightly incubated eggs.

CEDAR WAXWING—*Bombycilla cedrorum*. Common in the open country. A nest found July 5th, held five slightly incubated eggs and was fully forty feet from the ground in the top of a large black willow at the side of a road. This is the highest that I have ever known the birds to nest. Another that held five incubated eggs, July 16th, was ten feet from the ground at the outer end of a limb of a large hemlock, very well concealed by a large grape vine that covered the tree.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO—*Lanivireo solitarius solitarius*. A plentiful summer resident. A late nest found Aug. 8th, held four well-fledged young and was ten feet from the ground in the top of a small table-mountain pine (*Pinus pungens*), at the edge of an open spot in the woods. The situation seemed unusual to me in that the nest was suspended from two small limbs close to the main trunk and not from the fork of one branch. The adult birds were rather timid, and very suspicious, beginning to scold when anyone was within one hundred feet of the nest.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER—*Dendroica caerulescens caerulescens*. Common deep in the woods. A nest found July 3rd, held one fresh egg, and was half a foot from the ground in a small laurel bush. It was composed of grasses and strips of bark, lined with black rootlets and the white hair of some animal. No birds were observed anywhere near it.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER—*Dendroica virens*. Abundant wherever hemlocks or white pines occurred. An unusually late nest was found Aug. 2nd, holding at the time three well incubated eggs. It was fifteen feet from the ground at the outer end of a limb of a large white pine, and was composed of small twigs, strips of bark, rope fibre, grasses and spiders' egg-cases, lined with fine grasses and cow hair.

CATBIRD—*Dumetella carolinensis*. A scarce summer resident. The reason for the lack of abundance of these birds I was unable to determine, for there were many places evidently well suited to their needs. One nest found July 31st, held three half-grown young, and was five feet from the ground in a rhododendron bush at the edge of a thicket in a slightly open spot in the woods. This nest was interesting to me in that it showed where these birds were probably found before the country was cleared of the large forests that existed at one time.

HOUSE WREN—*Troglodytes aëdon aëdon*. A fairly plentiful summer resident in the open valleys. A nest found Aug. 6th, held four incubated eggs, and was eight feet from the ground in a limb of a large dead apple tree in an orchard. This is my latest breeding date for this species.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH—*Sitta canadensis*. On July 22nd, one of these birds was seen feeding in the top of a large white pine halfway up the side of a mountain. This was a little early for it to be a fall migrant, so this species undoubtedly breeds here.

BLUEBIRD—*Sialia sialis sialis*. A common summer resident. On July 14th, a nest was found with five slightly incubated eggs, six feet from the ground in a cavity in the trunk of a large pear tree, at the edge of a field.