

THE ORIOLE

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GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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THE MIGRATION AND ABUNDANCE OF WARBLERS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

By J. FRED DENTON

Since Murphey (1938, *Birds of the Middle Savannah River Valley, etc.*) gave few specific dates for the occurrence and migration of warblers in Richmond County, Georgia, and since I have had a special interest in this problem, I am prompted to present the following summary. It is based mainly on personal records and opinions made during the ten years that I have resided in the county though several pertinent records from Murphey's paper as well as several from the field notes of William Thomas and Clarence Belger are included. All records are of carefully identified birds and many, marked with an asterisk, are based on specimens. Some of these records have been reported before in short notes or in seasonal reports appearing in *The Oriole* or in *Audubon Field Notes*; they are repeated here for the sake of completeness.

Abbreviations used are as follows:

t v.—transient visitant s r.—summer resident
p r.—permanent resident w r.—winter resident

Black and White Warbler: *Mniotilta varia*. t v., common, Mar. 24, '45—May 15, '45 and July 30, '44—Nov. 30, '44; also occurs occasionally in winter and summer, may possibly breed. One seen Feb. 8, '51.

Prothonotary Warbler: *Protonotaria citrea*. s r., abundant, Mar. 29, '47—Sept. 8, '44.

Swainson's Warbler: *Limnethlypis swainsonii*. s r., Apr. 1, '50—Sept. 22, '44*. This warbler is probably as abundant in the Savannah River swamps just south of Augusta as anywhere in North America.

Worm-eating Warbler: *Helmitheros vermivorus*. t v., fairly common, Apr. 13, '49—May 2, '48 and Aug. 5, '45—Oct. 9, '43.

Golden-winged Warbler: *Vermivora crysoptera*. t v., rare in spring, Apr. 28 (Murphey); uncommon in fall, Aug. 22, '48—Sept. 16, '44.

Blue-winged Warbler: *Vermivora pinus*. t v., rare in spring, Apr. 24 and 28 (Murphey); uncommon in fall, Aug. 15, '46*—Sept. 26, '44.

Bachman's Warbler: *Vermivora bachmanii*. No record.

Tennessee Warbler: *Vermivora peregrina*. No record.

Nashville Warbler: *Vermivora ruficapilla*. No record.

Orange-crowned Warbler: *Vermivora celata*. w r., uncommon, Oct. 8, '44—Apr. 27 (Murphey).

Parula Warbler: *Parula americana*. s r., abundant, particularly where Spanish moss occurs; Mar. 11, '45—Oct. 23, '42*.

Yellow Warbler: *Dendroica petechia*. t v., common, and s r., breeding sparingly; Apr. 8, '43—Aug. 27, '46*.

Magnolia Warbler: *Dendroica magnolia*. t v., rare in spring, one record, May 14, '45; common in fall, Sept. 23, '44—Oct. 22, '44.

Cape May Warbler: *Dendroica tigrina*. t v., common in spring, Apr. 10, '43—May 2, '43; rare in fall, one record, Oct. 6, '44*.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: *Dendroica caerulescens*. t v., common; Apr. 3, '42—May 14, '45 and Aug. 16, '44*—Oct. 21, '44.

Myrtle Warbler: *Dendroica coronata*. w r., abundant, Oct. 7, '42.—May 14, '50.

Black-throated Green Warbler: *Dendroica virens*. t v., uncommon both in spring and fall; Mar. 31, '46—May 14, '45 and Sept. 28, '44*—Oct. 30, '48.

Cerulean Warbler: *Dendroica cerulea*. t v., no record in spring, uncommon but regular migrant in fall; Aug. 16, '47—Sept. 16, '44*.

Blackburnian Warbler: *Dendroica fusca*. t v., rare, no spring record, four fall records; Sept. 23 (Murphey), Sept. 23, '43, Oct. 7 (Murphey) and Oct. 7, '45*.

Yellow-throated Warbler: *Dendroica dominica*. s r., abundant, Feb. 20, '48—Nov. 28, '43; p r., scarce in winter, single birds seen Jan. 1 and Feb. 18, '50.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: *Dendroica pensylvanica*. t v., rare in spring, May 1, '45—May 14, '45; common in fall, Aug. 20, '44—Oct. 11, '44.

Bay-breasted Warbler: *Dendroica castanea*. t v., no spring records; rare in fall, Oct. 8, '44*—Oct. 24, 1908 (Murphey).

Black-poll Warbler: *Dendroica striata*. t v., abundant in spring, Apr. 26, '45—May 25, '43; rare in fall, Sept. 8, '45—Oct. 10, '42*.

Pine Warbler: *Dendroica pinus*. p r., abundant in suitable habitat.

Prairie Warbler: *Dendroica discolor*. s r., common, Apr. 3, '45—Oct. 12, '45.

Western Palm Warbler: *Dendroica p. palmarum*. w r., common, Sept. 11, '43—May 9, '42.

Yellow Palm Warbler: *Dendroica p. hypochrysea*. t v., and possible w r., uncommon, fall arrival uncertain, latest spring record, Apr. 16 (Murphey).

Oven-bird: *Seiurus aurocapillus*. t v., common, Apr. 10, '43—May 12, '45 and Aug. 11, '46—Oct. 22, '44.

Northern Water-thrush: *Seiurus noveboracensis*. t v., fairly common, Apr. 25, '43—May 16, '45 and Aug. 28, '44—Oct. 22, '44; one winter record, Mar. 2, '45*.

Louisiana Water-thrush: *Seiurus motacilla*. t v., common, and scarce s r., Mar. 11, '50—Aug. 31, '46.

Kentucky Warbler: *Oporornis formosus*. s r., fairly common, data incomplete, arrives around Apr. 20 and remains until Sept. 14, '46.

Connecticut Warbler: *Oporornis agilis*. No record.

Mourning Warbler: *Oporornis philadelphia*. No record.

Yellow-throat: *Geothlypis trichas*. p r., common in suitable habitat.

Yellow-breasted Chat: *Icteria virens*. s r., common, Apr. 9, '44—Sept. 3, '44.

Hooded Warbler: *Wilsonia citrina*. s r., abundant, Mar. 27, '43, '45 and '48—Oct. 10, '48.

Wilson's Warbler: *Wilsonia pusilla*. No record.

Canada Warbler: *Wilsonia canadensis*. t v., rare, five records; May 8, '25 (Murphey), May 7, '44, May 6, '45, May 19, '46 and Aug. 19, '44.

American Redstart: *Setophaga ruticilla*. t v., abundant, Apr. 13, '48 and '49—May 30, '52 and July 9, '49—Oct. 12, '45; may possibly breed.

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RECENT RANGE EXTENSIONS AND SUB-SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IN GEORGIA*

BY FREDERICK V. HEBARD

The warmer weather of recent years has caused many species to extend their ranges north. Examples known to us around Philadelphia are the Turkey Vulture, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher and Cardinal. At the same time, for reasons presently unknown, certain sea-birds such as the Cormorant, Eider Duck, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull have extended their ranges south. These range extensions are well known here in Philadelphia. What we do not know so well are the recent extraordinary southern invasions of a number of species of passerine birds. Fortunately, this invasion is being carefully observed and documented by Dr. Eugene P. Odum of the University of Georgia at Athens and his students.

As you all know Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi with three major geological zones, the Mountains of the North, the Piedmont extending to the Fall Line and the Coastal Plain. Five years ago Dr. Odum and Mr. Thomas D. Burleigh wrote an article in the *Auk* recounting the extension of the breeding range of the Robin from Rabun Bald in the mountains at the far northeastern corner of the State in 1908 to

*A talk before the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, November 15, 1951.

Waycross on the Coastal Plain within 50 miles of the Florida border in 1935. This species within the past ten years on the Florida border of Georgia has increased its winter stay by three weeks from April 2 to April 23. Odum and Burleigh in the same article documented the invasion as nesters in Georgia of the Chestnut-sided Warbler and the Song Sparrow. At the same time they predicted the invasion of Georgia as breeding birds of the Horned Lark, the House Wren and the Mountain Vireo. These have all now been found breeding in Georgia, the Vireo as far south as the Fall Line in the central part of the State. Since this species is partial to pines it would not be surprising if it were soon recorded breeding on the coastal plain.

In the meantime, Robert Norris was sent by Dr. Odum to southwest Georgia in 1947 and 1948 to record the summer distribution and populations of birds there. This he has done in an admirable work recently published by the Georgia Ornithological Society. Here he clearly shows how the polytypic species of southwest Georgia almost invariably have northern affinities and how many sub-species and full species are there at the southern limit of their ranges. In only three cases have I found species at the southern limit of their ranges more common in southeast than Norris has in southwest Georgia. These are the Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo and the Yellow-throated Warbler. These species migrate up from or through the West Indies or around the Gulf. Southwest Georgia is close to the coastal hiatus. Thus their scarcity there is not surprising. Let us review briefly the other species and sub-species found by Norris at or near the southern limit of their range and compare their status in southwest and southeast Georgia.

The Crested Flycatcher is represented by the northern form in southwest Georgia, by the southern form in southeast Georgia.

The Crow is represented in southwest Georgia by the Southern Crow; in southeast Georgia probably by the Florida Crow. I say probably because the point has not yet been determined. Dr. Oberholser believes the Florida Crow's range extends along the coast almost to Charleston, South Carolina.

The Carolina Chickadee nests in southwest, the Florida in southeast Georgia.

The Brown-headed Nuthatch, except for a single specimen, nests in southwest, the Gray-headed in southeast Georgia. Here we know the Okefenokee to be the dividing line as Brown-headeds have been taken just west of the swamp.

The Carolina Wren nests in southwest Georgia. The southeast Georgia form is clearly intermediate, but has been referred by Dr. Wetmore to the Florida Wren. Dr. Lowery has described this as a new race, but it has not yet been accepted by the A. O. U.

The Northern White-eyed Vireo occupies southwest Georgia; the Southern southeast Georgia.

The Parula of southwest Georgia has northern affinities but is referable to the southern form. The Parula of southeast Georgia is clearly the southern form.

The Eastern Yellow-throated Warbler occupies both southwest and southeast Georgia, but several late summer birds from southwest Georgia show white lines instead of yellow lines from the eye to the bill. Sprunt has recorded Sycamore Warblers (the western form) from Cumberland Island in April and Arnow took a fall migrant at St. Mary's.

The Northern Prairie Warbler nests in southwest Georgia and as far east and south as St. Simon's Island. The species is absent from Jekyll and Cumberland Islands and points just west in nesting season, but the Florida Prairie nests on Amelia Island and I have a spring specimen of the Florida Prairie from Coleraine where the species is often abundant both in spring and fall migration. I have a theory this form migrates up the Suwannee and down the St. Mary's. It has not been taken in Florida within 100 miles of Amelia Island on the east coast of Florida.

The Kentucky Warbler has only recently extended its nesting range to southwest Georgia and northwest Florida. In southeast Georgia it was first found in spring in 1951, both at St. Mary's and Coleraine.

The Yellow-throat of southwest Georgia is considered by Norris intermediate between *typhicola* and *ignota*. The Yellow-throat of southeast Georgia is clearly *ignota*.

The Red-wing of southwest Georgia is considered intermediate; that of southeast Georgia is clearly *mearnsi*.

The Florida Grackle occupies all of south Georgia, but those of southwest Georgia have certain intergrading characteristics.

The Eastern Cardinal nests in southwest Georgia; the Florida in southeast Georgia. But we do have a migrating population of Easterns in late January and February.

The Indigo Bunting has but recently nested in southwest Georgia. It has not yet been found nesting in southeast Georgia although we took a singing male about to moult July 17, 1951.

Norris found the Goldfinch nesting in southwest Georgia, the first record below the Fall Line. We have seen no signs of nesting.

The Towhees of southwest Georgia are intermediate; those of southeast Georgia clearly the White-eyed, although both the Red-eyed and Alabama are present in winter.

Bachman's Sparrow nests in southwest; the Pinewoods in southeast Georgia.

The Chipping Sparrow has but recently been found nesting in southwest Georgia. It occasionally sings in winter, but usually leaves southeast Georgia by early May.

The Field Sparrow has but recently been found nesting in southwest Georgia and northwest Florida. We first heard it singing in 1948 in southeast Georgia. It continued to do so for a month up to May 20, but its nest was not found. It sang again in 1949 but not since.

Obviously southwest Georgia birds have largely northern affinities—southeast Florida affinities. The reason is probably geological and quite

possibly is connected with the recession of the Okefenokee Sound. Anyhow, a bird taken west or northwest of the Okefenokee is likely to have northern affinities; a bird taken to the east or south, southern affinities. These results were clearly forecast by Howell in *Florida Bird Life* in his maps on the distribution of the sub-species of Crested Flycatchers, Crows, Chickadees, Cardinals, Towhees and Pine-woods Sparrows.

The interesting fact is that no species has as yet been recorded as extending its breeding range northward into either southeast or southwest Georgia, whereas a number seem recently to have extended their breeding range southward into southwest Georgia.

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GENERAL NOTES

MORE ABOUT THE BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER IN THE SAVANNAH AREA.—The first Georgia specimen of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) was collected September 29, 1951, and duly reported in *The Oriole* (see Tomkins, *Oriole*, 16:39, 1951). It is now possible to add a little more about the species, following the collection of two more within a hundred yards of the same spot. A female was flushed with five Greater Yellow-legs on September 18, 1952, and collected. This bird was adult, judging by the hardness of the skull, and had no great amount of fat on it. Perhaps it was the same bird seen there the day before at quite a distance. On September 20, 1952, a male was collected nearby. This was a fat bird. Both had very small gonads.

This species has long been searched for in South Carolina and Georgia. Sprunt and Chamberlain give it a place in *South Carolina Bird Life* (1949, p. 249) on the basis of a bird collected by Hoxie on May 5, 1884, and state that it has been taken in Currituck County, North Carolina (*Birds of North Carolina*, 1942, p. 154). Howell, in *Florida Bird Life* (1932, p. 246), records three specimens from Lake Jackson, Leon County, Florida, by H. L. Stoddard, September 12 and 13, 1926, and April 7, 1928 and two others seen on the last date.

My birds were all taken on an abandoned portion of the City Dump, some three miles east of Savannah. It seems obvious that there is some reason why three, perhaps four, single birds of a rare species have been found at the same small spot, and none in the nearby terrain that is quite similar.

As far as I can see, there are no reasonable habitat factors that are distinctive in this location. The presence of old tin cans, broken glass, tar, etc., are not reasonable habitat factors. Air photos of the terrain have been studied to see if there are any distinctive features that would attract migrating birds in flight, but without success.

The second bird taken had muddy legs, so must have been wading. The other two were resting quietly on dry ground. The only avian associates of distinctive local habitat seem to be the Stilt and White-rumped

Sandpipers, though these species have been seen in other places and the Buff-breast has not been seen flocking with them.

On the basis of the records from the neighboring states, the species should be looked for in April and May also.—IVAN R. TOMKINS, 1231 East 50th Street, Savannah, Georgia.

BLUE GEESE IN GLYNN COUNTY.—I spent the night of April 21, 1952, at the house of a friend on St. Simon Island, Georgia, next to the marsh separating that island from Sea Island. I rose the next morning before daybreak and had the great good fortune to observe 81 Blue Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) flying north about 5:30 A. M. I have had unverified reports for several years that Blue Geese were wintering in some numbers in St. Andrew's Sound just south of where the flock was observed.—FREDERICK V. HEBARD, 1500 Walnut Street Building, Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania.

NEWS AND COMMENTS

FALL MEETING, 1952.—The twenty-seventh semi-annual meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society was held at Indian Springs State Park on October 4 and 5, 1952. Registration, which began at 11:00 o'clock Saturday morning, showed 112 persons attending the meeting, 40 of whom were visitors. All sessions were held in the Elder Hotel.

The group convened at 2:00 o'clock Saturday afternoon for a paper session and business meeting. Papers presented were on the subject "Regional Bird Problems in Georgia." Ivan Tomkins discussed the Coast; Eugene Odum presented Herbert Stoddard's paper on the Coastal Plain; William Griffin presented the Piedmont region; and Fred Denton discussed the Mountains. Summary and discussion was led by Eugene Odum.

After a short recess the business meeting was called to order by President Harold Peters. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer's report showed the following: \$249.38 in the regular treasury; \$222.18 in the publication fund; and \$15.89 in *The Oriole* reprint fund.

The president announced that 34 new members had been gained during the year. He urged that we try to secure Garden Club and Bird Club memberships.

The Program and Places Committee reported considering Dade County, the most northwesterly county in the State, as the locality for the spring 1953 meeting and plan two days of field trips to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of Georgia birds in that region.

The Executive Committee recommended that the periodicals obtained through exchange with *The Oriole* be presented to the University of Georgia Library in Athens. Such an arrangement would provide a safer and more permanent disposition than we have at present.

J. Willard Colston was appointed as Librarian for the Society to replace Jimmy Major, who is no longer at Athens and is, therefore, unable to perform the duties of Librarian.

Fred Denton announced that Dr. Eugene Murphey had left 500 bird skins from his collection to the Augusta Museum. It had previously been reported that his entire collection would be left to the Charleston Museum.

Mrs. J. C. Oliver, Second Vice-President, gave the reports of the Regional Vice-Presidents. Among the activities reported were the following: regional field trips, lunar bird observations, Junior Audubon Clubs, work with Boy and Girl Scout groups and Garden Clubs, breeding bird census, conservation publicity, Mourning Dove counts and bird house contests.

Members and friends gathered for the banquet in the hotel dining room at 7:00 P. M. Harold Peters acted as toastmaster and introduced several special guests: Dr. Henry Good of Auburn, Alabama, who represented the Alabama Ornithological Society; Mrs. G. C. Potter of Charlotte, North Carolina, representing the Carolina Bird Club; and Morris Redman of the Indian Springs Park staff who told some of the history of the park.

The speaker of the evening was George Dorsey of Rome, Georgia. He recalled many of his experiences with Georgia birds and imitated their calls and songs in a most marvelous manner. Gordon Hight, also of Rome, told of Chimney Swift banding activities in Rome this fall and showed color slides of the banding operations.

Sunday morning field trips were held at various places in the vicinity, and a total of 69 species were recorded.

JOINT FIELD MEETING.—A joint field meeting of the Carolina Bird Club and the Georgia Ornithological Society will be held at Savannah on Saturday, January 17, 1953. Headquarters will be the General Oglethorpe Hotel, Wilmington Island, Savannah. Members are urged to write the hotel at once for reservations. Field trips begin at 6:30 A. M. and will last the entire day, with visits to various good areas along the Savannah River and the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. A dinner will be held in the evening at the Oglethorpe Hotel. Herman Coolidge, Regional Vice-President for the Savannah Region, is in charge of the meeting.

CHARLES NEAL

We regret to report the death of Charles Neal, husband of our First Vice-President, on September 30, 1952, at his home in Demorest. Mr. Neal had been in failing health for many months. Although not a member he was known by many among us and was always a friend to the Society. The Georgia Ornithological Society extends its sincere sympathy to the Neals in their loss.

In memory of her husband and because of his often expressed wish to help the G. O. S., Mrs. Neal has made a contribution of \$300.00 to the general treasury to aid in the publication of *The Oriole*. This generous gesture is received with our deepest appreciation.