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Bulletin

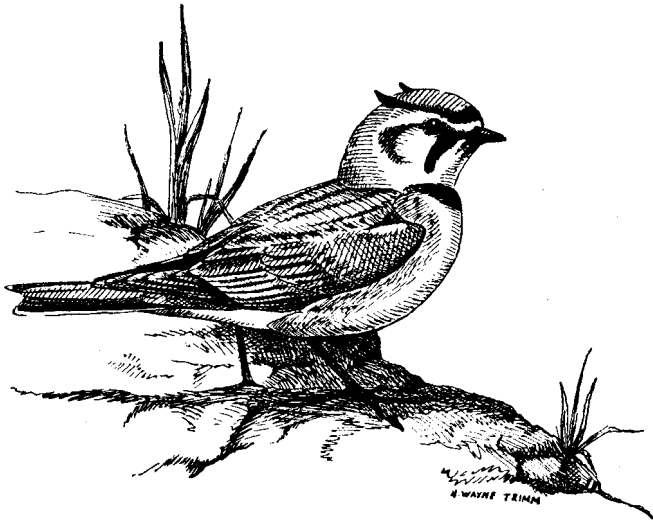
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The Bay-Breasted Warbler In Kansas

by Edna L. Ruth, Halstead, Kansas

N. S. Goss, History of Birds of Kansas, 1891, makes no mention of the Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea-Wilson*). W. W. Cooke, in Distribution of North American Warblers, U. S. Dept. of Agr., Bull. 18, 1904, states "The bird is not recorded in Kansas." A sight record by Sidney Hyde in the Topeka region was mentioned in The Season, Audubon Mag., p. 286, Sept-Oct., 1922. W. S. Long, Checklist of Kansas Birds, 1940, said the Bay-breasted was reported by P. W. Peabody at Blue Rapids, Kansas, but gave no date. He said further "No other report of this species has been made. Pending collection of a specimen, it is placed in the hypothetical list." A sight record for May 11, 1941 by Harold C. Hedges was published in The Season, July-August, 1941. A. L. Goodrich, Birds of Kansas, p. 278, 1946, merely mentions the Bay-breasted in a footnote, saying that the Bay-breasted Warbler was named as a Kansas bird without the support of a skin known to have been taken in Kansas. Theodore Downs, The Bay-breasted Warbler in Kansas, The Auk, 63: 597-8, Oct., 1946, gives as the first specimen a male taken May 14, 1943 by Paul Tiemeier near Lawrence. Not so pertinent, but still interesting because of the possibility of the area mentioned extending onto the Kansas side are the reports of two authors he quotes Long as citing: H. Harris, Birds of the Kansas City Region, 1919, and Spotswood, A Tabulated Summary of the Distribution of Warblers, Family of Compothlypidae, K. C. Museum Sci. Bull., May 1922. Both had mentioned occasional sight records in the Kansas City, Mo. area though no specimens were recorded as taken.

To summarize sight and specimen records of the Bay-breasted Warbler in Kansas, we find in order of sequence the following:

- May 11, 1941. Hedges, Harold C. Observed near Lake Quivera, Johnson County, Kansas.
- May 14, 1943. Tiemeier, Dr. Paul. A male taken in Douglas Co., 7½ miles S. W. of Lawrence. This specimen, a skin, male, is in the Museum of Natural History at K. U., No. 23260. Mr. Henry Hildebrand was with him on that occasion.
- May 18, 1947. Hedges, Harold C. One observed at Lake Quivera, Johnson County, Kansas. Dr. Henry Harford of Kansas City, Mo. also observed the bird.
- May 8, 1950. Graber, Richard and Jean in Trans. Kans. Acad. Sc. 54: 166, 1951. In Southwestern Kansas along the Cimarron 8 miles south of Richfield, one sight record; two others, a male and female, were collected. Specimens No. RRG 514 and RRG 515. They are in the Dr. George M. Sutton's Collection at the University of Oklahoma Museum of Zoology.
- May 13, 1951. Tordoff, H. B. One male collected a half mile east of Lake Quivera. The skin, No. KU 30309, is in the Natural History Museum at K. U. Another seen later by Harold C. Hedges.
- May 17, 1951. Chewning, Helen. One observed in a neighbor's yard in Lawrence, Kansas.
- May 2, 1952. Graber, Richard and Jean. Sight record, two individuals, one mile west of Rochester, Shawnee County—2 miles north of Topeka.
- May 9, 1952. Pantle, David. One individual seen in Central Park, Topeka, in evergreens.
- May 10, 1952. Kelley, Katharine and Baldwin Bird Club, with H. C. of Lawrence. Sight record, one individual.
- May 12, 1952. King, Ben. Shawnee, Johnson Co., Kans. Sight record. Also observed later by Harold C. Hedges.

May 19, 1952. Ruth, Edna L., A. K. R. and R. R., Halstead, Kans. at 302 West 2nd Street. Sight record.

So many sight records, particularly since 1950, bolstered by the four specimens taken (two at least of which are in the K. U. Museum of Natural History) have taken the Bay-breasted Warbler out of the hypothetical list. It can assuredly be called an occasional spring migrant in Kansas, bearing out Down's assertion that since the species is known from Eastern Texas and Eastern Nebraska, its migratory route was certain to pass over Eastern Kansas and as we now find, over the rest of the State. We do not seem to have a record of fall migrant Bay-breasted Warblers, possibly because the immature Bay-breasted are so similar in fall plumage to the fall Blackpoll Warbler, though Peterson states the Bay-breasted migrate very early as compared with the rather late fall Blackpoll Warblers.

The breeding range of the Bay-breasted Warbler is from Newfoundland to c. c. Alberta, south to New York and west to n. Minnesota. In the Jan.-Feb. 1942 Audubon Magazine R. T. Peterson in an article on a six year study of breeding birds on his 30 acres between Bath and Rockland half way down the coast of Maine, listed the Bay-breasted as one of four species which showed marked regression in numbers during that time, running 4-3-1-0-0-0. As this locality was somewhat south of their previous breeding range, he felt it reflected the varying pressure of the breeding population further north. The same condition obtained in the rest of the neighborhood with no noticeable environmental change.

As the Bay-breasted winters from Panama to Colombia, the migration route to and from the States, it seems, is trans-Gulf. George H. Lowery, Jr., *The Auk*, v. 63, 1946, re-established the trans-Gulf concept. Also that birds migrating north across the Gulf on a humid S. or S. E. wind are precipitated in numbers along the Gulf Coast only when a cold front from the N, often with thunderstorm activities, under-runs the Gulf air masses at the coast. Rockport, Texas, is one of the chief of these precipitation areas. Eleanor Anthony King, *Audubon Mag.*, July-Aug. 1947, wrote that when Connie Hagar reported Bay-breasted Warblers in considerable numbers, on certain days outnumbering all other warblers five to one, she had no idea that the species had previously been marked as rare on the Texas Coast. Just what bearing, if any, these precipitations on the Gulf Coast have on migrational occurrences further north is not as yet known.

In the Aug. 1952 Audubon Field Notes, the Bay-breasted had been found in unusual abundance in at least three areas, this spring, with another reporting one an uncommon spring migrant. Two reportedly unusually late dates; the latest, May 25, at Cove, Texas, was five days later than previously recorded in 18 years observation. Ludlow Griscom in his summarization of warblers, finds the Bay-breasted one of three species having the heaviest flight. No doubt others also would have read with interest of our flurry of Bay-breasted Warblers in Kansas this spring, but unfortunately this was not reported to Audubon Field Notes.

December 20-28
Christmas Count Dates:

Experiences of a Bird Bander's Wife

So much has been written on the subject of bird banding that I feel most anything that I might say would only be a dull repetition of the many facts that are now a matter of record. Bird banding as it is known today has been going on for over forty years and a total of nearly seven million birds have been banded in that time. The records show that a great many people are licensed to band birds all over the United States. What I want to tell you is what the records do not show—and that is how many unlicensed wives are banding birds for husbands that are too busy or too far away to do it for themselves? If these facts were available I am sure they would astound the average ornithologists and likewise the Department of the Interior. Getting a banding permit involves a great deal of red tape and they are not the easiest things in the world to secure. Having been through all the necessary channels to secure one for himself, the man of the house is usually not interested in going through all that rig-a-ma-rol twice just to make it legal for his wife to put a band on the tarsus of an innocent bird.

Regardless of the reasons, my small survey has shown that in every case of bird banding that has come to my attention, the assistant (heretofore referred to as the wife) operates the trap, and in the final analysis, places the metal strip around the leg of the bird. In order that others may fully understand the education and the problems of a bird bander's assistant, I have recorded my story.

Some few days after we returned from our honeymoon (at which time I had my introduction to birds and the fine art of 'birding'), I received a phone call from my mother-in-law. In the course of the conversation, she mentioned the fact that there was some mail for her son at her house and it seems that there were a couple of small cards from Washington. When I inquired what possible communication he could have with Washington, she informed me that it was about his banding operations. Again I was ignorant. She seemed shocked to think that I did not know that the man I married 'worked' for the government as a bird bander. I too was shocked when further inquiry led me to know that he did not get paid for this and spent a great deal of his 'spare' time pursuing this wonderful pastime. Shortly after this experience, a hand operated trap was set up in the back yard and my formal education began. I wish now that I had kept a record of the hours spent in watching for victims to sneak under my trap in search of a tasty morsel, for I know as I look back on it that at least half of my daylight hours were spent in this way. At first I was quite fascinated with my new hobby and thought I was very important to Washington since I pulled the trigger that dropped the trap that caught the bird. Little did I know. At this stage of the game, the trap was operated only when 'the boss' was at home and could quickly gather the bird into the gathering cage, band it and release it. But it wasn't long until I tired of my job and was eager to learn more. So it was that I learned the art of gathering. Now, to most operators this is a simple task requiring little skill or time but not so for this would-be-assistant. Even in this little thing the birds were able to out smart me. They took advantage of me at every opportunity and so it was that I learned not to go out in the cold and snow without my coat thinking that I could quickly gather the bird and return to the warmth of the house none the worse. If I put on a coat, gloves, hat and boots, the bird would immediately fly into the gathering cage and crouch in anticipation of being picked up by a human hand, but if I made a dash for the trap without even drying the dish water from my hands, the bird would fly about the trap in a fit and dart in and out of the gathering cage a half dozen times before I could snare him. In the meantime, my hands would freeze and the wind would chill me from head to foot.

After some months, I mastered the art of gathering and it was finally agreed that I could operate the trap during the day when the 'chief' was at the office. The birds I caught were saved in cardboard boxes to be banded in the evening. It was during this stage of banding that I began to look upon myself as a potential scientist. This was a very sacred thought with me and I shared it with no one, but in my own eyes I became more scientific with every bird that I captured.

I believe, without a doubt, that this was the most interesting stage of my career. Keeping birds about the house in various containers can be a very educational experience. For instance, I learned that a woodpecker will not share a cardboard box with any other bird—not even another woodpecker. I also learned how quickly a woodpecker can peck a very large hole in a box. The art of re-capturing birds in the house I mastered unassisted, spurred on only by the fear of what the 'master' would say when he got home and found birds flitting about the house and the fact that I had just washed the kitchen curtains. My methods varied depending on the number of children there were in the house at the time of the escape and also on the number of birds that were loose at one time. Fortunately this number never exceeded three or four so that armed with a bottomless bird cage and a broom I could eventually exhaust the bird and pop the canary cage over him. If I did happen to be alone in the house (which was rarely) I was sometimes exhausted before the bird. Once I had fourteen children in the house and it was a snap to wear out the bird. I just stood in one end of the room armed with my faithful broom and let the children run back and forth. On several occasions I succeeded in chasing the bird so thoroughly that he hid among the pipes all night. He would not come down for further chasing and in the end I was forced to open the door and let him escape. I must confess that during this period of bird chasing I lost my scientific approach and my visions of becoming a really good scientist began to fade. It was during this period that I read the book "Wings At My Window" and I fell into moods of deep despair. Here was a woman, self taught in the art of bird banding, who caught most of her birds by hand merely by opening her window and offering a little food. Gentle beyond description, she had no difficulty enticing the birds into her living room, where, after banding, they were rewarded with a sunflower seed. Now, I knew that I could never be a success. I never caught more than ten birds in one day in all my career and these only with great difficulty. Furthermore, the author remarked that she never operated her traps on bad days but just let the birds feast. The only way I could entice them into my trap was to wait for really foul weather when my trap held the only morsel of food in the neighborhood. My only hope lay in the fact that I repeatedly told myself that this woman was the exception and not the rule. So my valiant struggle continued.

Shortly after this period of despondency, I persuaded my able husband that I should be taught to place the band on the bird myself. We were running out of boxes and I was losing weight running all over the house retrieving birds and so with much reluctance the banding lessons began. I was an eager pupil and after several successful attempts at banding under his critical eye, I was finally promoted to a full assistant. How proud I was. No more boxes—no more wild chases over the furniture.

Now, I had arrived—a real honest to goodness bird bander—a scientist in every sense of the word.

Name withheld by request

State Notes

Notes from St. Marys

I was out birding on September 1 and 3 and saw 55 species the first day and 60 species the second. Some of my better finds were American Egret, Wood Duck; Common, Forster's, Least and Black Tern; Semipalmated, Golden and Upland Plover; Avocet, Dowitcher; Spotted, Solitary, Pectoral and Baird's Sandpiper. I added two life birds,—the Avocets and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. There were 40 or 50 of the Golden Plovers in an alfalfa field. I was surprised to see so many terns at one time,—not singles but in flocks. Some were resting on sandbars, others were perched on logs.

The Wood Ducks which I saw frequently last spring evidently did not nest here as I found no signs of them during the summer. So far this fall, I have seen them three times.—Tom Hatrel, S. J., St. Marys.

Notes from Halstead

Have you ever birded from a boat on a friendly little river with the trees often festooned with wild grape vines leaning out over the stream? We have a little rowboat and have seen warblers from the boat. Aug. 22-25: Black and White, Yellow, Northern Yellowthroat, Black-throated Green, Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's, Nashville, Canada and Chat, also we added the Blackheaded and Blue Grosbeaks.

The Misses Elizabeth and Mabel Alice Taylor, living about 4 miles east of Halstead, report having a Screech Owl come down to the yard bird bath to drink at night.—Edna Ruth, Halstead.

Notes from Mound City

About the middle of June while we were fishing on the Marais des Cygnes by boat we discovered at least four pairs of Redstarts. The males were singing, and to be here this late they had to be nesting. There seemed to be quite a little colony of them along the banks of the river. If Redstarts ever nested in Linn county before, we never knew of it.

We also had a Parula Warbler along the creek by our cabin as late as June 10, but about a week after that I became critically ill and was unable to check on his activities. Their presence that late indicated they were interested in becoming summer residents.

On August 17 we observed an Olive-sided Flycatcher perched in the top of a dead tree.—Eunice Dingus, Mound City.

Notes from Enterprise

I would like to report the unusual behavior of a Red-headed Woodpecker that I observed some time ago. Just west of Enterprise at approximately 6:25 P. M. on the evening of July 18 a Red-headed Woodpecker was observed to repeatedly fly from a drift in the middle of the Smoky Hill River to capture mayflies in flight. This unusual behavior lasted for 12 minutes during which time about 20 mayflies were eaten. The woodpecker was quite adept at capturing the mayflies and seldom missed on the first attempt to do so.—Oliver J. Gaswint, Enterprise.

Notes from Topeka

There is not much in the way of unusual records in this area. We have enjoyed a nice run of sandpipers with some early duck arrivals. I picked up a Lesser Scaup at Shawnee early this month (September). Also saw Mallard, both Teal, Shoveller and Pintail.

We went to Colorado for a fishing trip in August—caught one trout and added 28 birds to my list—don't know how that fish got into the picture. I found only the Lark Bunting as a new one for Kansas, but saw White-necked Ravens just over the Colorado line from Kanarodo. I thought this was a little north for the species so checked this with Dr. A. M. Bailey of Denver and my observation proved not too unusual for these birds range as far as Limon.—L. B. Carson, Topeka.

General Notes

The Fall Meeting to be at Baldwin.—Tentative plans have been made to hold the Fall Meeting and field trip on Sunday, October 26. The Baldwin Bird Club will sponsor the meeting by furnishing midmorning coffee and donuts and arranging for the meeting place. Lunch can be held in the Science Hall on the Baker campus. The committee decided that it would be best if individuals or parties bring their own noon lunches. A local cafe will prepare box lunches for any persons wishing them.

Nocturnal bird counts at Lawrence.—Lawrence had two moon-watching stations in operation during the night of September 2-3.

Dr. Harrison B. Tordoff, and associates, manned a station all night from the observatory on the roof of the Mineral Resources Building, University of Kansas campus (elevation 1057 feet). Number of birds seen was constant during the first part of the night but diminished during the last part.

A second station was operated up until midnight by Bert and Helen Chewing and Harold W. Sherman. It was located 200 yards south of the observatory (elevation 965 feet). Birds were observed every four or five minutes. A flock of what appeared to be ducks, 10 individuals, crossed the moon at 8:30 p. m. Chewnings recommend a lawn chair to support the head, lots of clothes and blankets to keep warm.

Nocturnal bird counts at Baldwin.—Members of the Baldwin Bird Club participated in the nation-wide nocturnal bird migration project the first week in September. The night of September 2, the telescopic count of the birds seen crossing the moon ran from 7 p. m. until 2:30 a. m., during which time 172 birds were recorded.

On the other five nights, observations were taken only in the early evening, with the highest count—138 birds in 2½ hours—coming on September 1, just after a rain and cold front had passed. The counts on the last three nights with warm weather and a south wind, were not as high as on August 31, when the weather was about as warm but with a north wind.

Information compiled during the week has been sent to Louisiana State University where George H. Lowery Jr. and Robert J. Newman are compiling reports from 150 stations from Hudson's Bay to Puerto Rico. After processing the data, they will notify the Baldwin group of the results in terms of maximum density and average hourly flight density.

Seven contributing members.—Only seven persons are in the status of contributing members to our organization. While this boost in our budget is a help it still is not enough to keep the society on a sustaining basis. We hope that more members will join the contributing class the first of January. All donations regardless of size are welcome.

Research and Conservation Committees.—H. T. Gier and Harold Hedges have been appointed as chairmen of Conservation and Research respectively. These men are to select their committee members from the membership.

New check list for Kansas.—William Eastman, Jr. and L. D. Wooster are preparing a check list of the more common birds of the State. Their list is to be printed in pocket size convenient for field use.

An attempt to climb Audubon Mountain.—The May-June, 1951 issue of the Audubon Magazine said Audubon Mountain in Colorado was "easy to reach, easy to climb" and with a well-marked route "that is foolproof even in moderate fog." But it neglected to say where to start and that proved the un-foolproof part of our attempt to scale it.

We got to Brainard Lake at the foot of the mountain July 5, before Camp Audubon (for young girls) was open. We could find no starting point, so asked a fisherman. After traveling an hour as he directed, we asked another fisherman, who told us to undo all we had done and begin a half-mile farther back along the lake.

There we found a trail and after following it for two more hours we came to a sign saying it went somewhere 20 miles away. After retracing that, we tried our own starting point and found the right trail. The place to start is at the sign on the lake road that points to "Buchanan Pass 9 miles, St. Vrain Glacier Trail 6." When that trail divides, take the trail toward Buchanan Pass, not to a couple of lakes. An hour or so later you'll be at timberline and can see the cairn-marked route that is "foolproof."

We saw few birds as far as we went, but farther up there are supposed to be Ptarmigans, Pipits and Rosy Finches. We got there too late and too tired to find out.—Amelia Betts and Katharine Kelley, Baldwin.

Breeding of the Swainson's Hawk in Eastern Kansas

by Richard R. Graber

In several Bulletins of the Kansas Ornithological Society, I have seen references to the extension of breeding range in Kansas of certain species, notably the Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) eastward, and Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) northward. Whether these birds are permanently extending their breeding ranges or not, they certainly seem to be more common in northeastern Kansas (Shawnee County) than they were a few years ago. Having been away from eastern Kansas the past 3 years these population changes are quite apparent to me.

In regard to this same phenomenon, I was surprised to see Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) in Shawnee County on several June dates. I had believed that the species occurred in eastern Kansas only as a migrant. With no idea as to exact limits, I considered it to be a breeding bird of western Kansas. W. S. Long (1940:439) stated that the species was a common summer resident in the west.

On June 14, 1952, 10 miles southwest of Topeka, I saw a Swainson's Hawk circling low over a small area of pasture and cultivated field. The bird began screaming as I observed it and was quickly joined by another adult. Since there were but a few small trees in the area, it did not take long to find the cause of their concern, 3 white, downy young in a stick nest, in a small (15') elm (*Ulmus sp.*). I revisited the nest at intervals of several days, but did not climb to the nest again until July 9, at which time there were only 2 well feathered young (tails only about one-half full length). Possibly the third brood member did not survive the extreme heat of the preceding weeks, as the nest was not very well shaded. I banded the two young, and they did not leave the nest while I was present. At my next visit on July 20, the nest was empty, but the presence of both adults flying overhead and screaming as they had on every previous visit, attested to the fact that at least one of the fledglings was nearby.

There may be other breeding records for the Swainson's Hawk in eastern Kansas, and if so it would seem worthwhile that they be published, in order that we gain a clearer idea of the distribution of this species in the State. These species which now seem to be extending their ranges testify that bird populations are not static, that studies on the birds of a region are never complete. We cannot merely assume that such species are extending their ranges permanently, since there are several possible explanations for apparent population changes. They may for instance, be cyclic in nature, or the chance result of several successive, successful breeding seasons for the species. The importance of careful observations on these species every year must then be obvious.

Literature Cited

Long, W. S., 1940, Check-List of Kansas Birds. Trans. Kans. Acad. Sci., vol. 43.