THE OTTAWA NATURALIST

VOL. XXIV. OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER, 1907 No. 6

THE SPRING MIGRATION ON THE BRUCE PENINSULA.

BY A. B. KLUGH, KINGSTON, ONT.

It has appeared to me for some years that the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario, should be a migration route for the birds of the country lying north of Lake Huron. This year (1907) I spent from April 27th to June 21st at the base of the peninsula investigating the avifauna of that district. I made my headquarters at the village of Colpoy's Bay, three miles above Wiarton. From here I made frequent trips across the peninsula which is, at its base, some seven miles wide.

The east shore is fringed with limestone bluffs some 160 to 250 feet in height, while the west shore is low and sandy.

The avifauna is very similar all across the peninsula, the only difference being that along the Pike River, near the middle of the peninsula, there are marshes, and at Oliphant on the west side there is a huge sandy bog and in these localities the Maryland yellow-throat, swamp sparrow and alder flycatcher which do not reside on the east coast, breed.

Just below the village of Colpoy's Bay, between the limestone bluffs and the shore, is a bush some 1½ miles long by about 100 yards wide in most places, consisting largely of cedar (*T. occidentalis*), balsam (*A. balsamea*), white spruce (*P. alba*), paper birch (*B. papyrifera*) and balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*). Into this bush all the birds travelling up the east shore seemed to pitch. Above the village, between the bluffs and the shore, the bush consists mostly of paper birch with some poplar (*P. tremuloides*) and balsam poplar, and though this looked to be good "bird-country" birds were comparatively scarce here during migration.

When I arrived on April 27th, only the early migrants had yet arrived, *viz.*—robin, blue-bird, song sparrow, bronzed grackle, purple finch, red-winged blackbird, rusty blackbird, slate-colored junco, flicker, prairie horned lark, hermit thrush, white-throated sparrow, fox sparrow, and vesper sparrow.

On the night of April 29th and the morning of the 30th, a foot of snow fell. This drove a host of birds into our barnyard to seek for food. In the barnyard and in cedars about the house were some 200 juncos, 150 fox sparrows, 100 white-throats, 50 song sparrows, many robins, several bluebirds, tree sparrows and prairie horned larks and a hermit thrush. Many of the juncos were in the barn and some even in the woodshed.

The fox sparrows, white-throats and song sparrows kept up a regular chorus. I had never heard fox sparrows in full song before. Their song is a clear, rich, very sweet warble, usually delivered from a branch some 20 or more feet from the ground. For the first three days of May fox sparrows were abundant, and I saw the last on May 7th. From the large numbers seen it is evident that the Bruce Peninsula is a migration highway for this species.

The weather remained cold up until May 13th, and the birds dropped in very slowly as follows:—

May 2nd: Barn swallow, kingfisher and winter wren. May 3rd: Towhee and myrtle warbler. May 7th: Brown thrasher, yellow-bellied sapsucker, chipping sparrow and Savanna sparrow. May 9th: Tree swallow, pine warbler and palm warbler. May 10th: Black-throated green warbler. May 11th: Black- and- white warbler and ruby-crowned kinglet. None of the warblers were seen in any numbers and the myrtles were observed only in small flocks of three or four or as single birds and were usually flying over.

On May 13th it was evident that an immense bird-wave had come in during the night. Birds were everywhere and the bush below the village was full of them. They appeared to pitch into this bush during the night, travel up the bush and a fringe of cedars as far as the village and then back again until, about noon, they reached a stream about the middle of the bush. Here they drank and caught the insects which were apparently more abundant here than elsewhere. The new species which came in with this wave were the Nashville warbler, yellow warbler, Magnolia warbler, Blackburnian warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, ovenbird, Baltimore oriole and red-breasted nuthatch. With these were a host of myrtle, black-throated green and black-and-white warblers.

That night another large wave came in and next day I saw the woodcock, greater yellow-legs, lesser yellow-legs, white-crowned sparrow, kingbird, least flycatcher, bobolink, house wren, red-headed woodpecker, water-thrush, Wilson's thrush, catbird, crested flycatcher American pipit, blue-headed vireo, and ruby-throated humming bird. All these species which came in on these two waves were from one to three weeks late.

On May 15th, I saw the wood thrush, redstart, chimney swift and solitary sandpiper and on the 16th the Parula warbler, Cape May warbler, black-throated blue warbler and the Canadian warbler.

On May 17th the scarlet tanager, and bay-breasted warbler came in, on the 18th, the grey-cheeked thrush, on the 23rd, the

olive-backed thrush, on the 27th, the cedar wax-wing, and on the 29th, the olive-sided flycatcher.

On the first of June the migration was still in full swing, and on that date male black-poll warblers were common, on the 3rd I saw the red-eyed vireo and the Philadelphia vireo, and on the 6th, the Tennessee warbler, Wilson's warbler, indigo bunting and nighthawk. The migration came to an end on June 8th.

Species which were more abundant than I have found them elsewhere in spring were the black-poll warbler, bay-breasted warbler, Blackburnian warbler, red-breasted nuthatch, white-crowned sparrow and olive-backed thrush. On five days in May these last-mentioned birds were very common and I took several, while I only secured one grey-cheeked thrush.

This spring I took three Cape May warblers. This bird, which was regarded some years ago as very rare, is undoubtedly becoming commoner. I saw seven Philadelphia vireos, more than I have ever observed before during a migration.

Other interesting things taken were an adult male American redstart with the base of the tail-feathers pale yellow as in the immature male, instead of orange as they should be in the adult male; a male indigo bunting with the back still mostly brown, and a female purple finch, with some pink feathers on the throat, which was singing when taken.

All warblers were doing far more feeding on the ground and "fly-catching" this year than usual. It is probable that this was caused by the scarcity of insects this spring, the birds having consequently to work far harder than usual for their living.

In previous years I have heard the flight-song of the oven-bird only occasionally, and then usually in the evening. This spring I heard it some eighty times and at all times of the day. Once I saw an oven-bird describe an arc out over the waters of the bay while singing this exquisite song. I saw flocks of pine siskins on May 22nd and 30th and on June 2nd, 5th, 7th and 18th. The flock seen on June 2nd contained about 150 birds. This is unusually late for these birds to be in flocks, as they are as a rule breeding before this.

In the cedars about the house lived a song sparrow which sang once nearly every night between eleven and two o'clock, and a chipping sparrow which sometimes sang about the same time.

Some of the results of my work this spring which will be of use to us in making out the movements and distribution of birds in the Great Lake region are:—

(1) The Bruce Peninsula is a migration route for land birds.

(2) At the base at least, the wave of migration extends clear across the peninsula.

(3) Ducks and other waterfowl cross the peninsula at the base from east to west in the spring.

(4) The base of the Bruce Peninsula has its fauna tinged with Carolinian tendencies as shown by the common breeding of the towhee and wood thrush.

A NEW MOUSE FOR CANADA.

While spending a few days at Point Pelee at the end of May, 1907, I had some traps out and succeeded in taking a few specimens of *Peromyscus Bairdi*, a mouse which appears to be hitherto unrecorded for Canada. Peromyscus is the deer mouse genus and this little fellow bears considerable resemblance to the common deer mouse of the woods, in being brownish red above and white beneath, but the brown is darker and not so reddish, and the greatest differences are in the length of ears, tail and hind feet, all of which are smaller in this species than in the common one (*Peromyscus americanus*).

The measurements of these mice do not accord exactly with those given by Dr. Elliott in "Mammals of North America." In that work *P. Michiganensis* (synonym of *P. Bairdi*) is stated to measure 165 mm.; tail vertebrae, 67; hind foot, 20.5; whereas my three fully adult specimens average, 139; 49; 16.5, and a specimen from Niles, Michigan, measures 136, 55, 18.

The habitat of this mouse, so far as hereto known, is from Michigan to Minnesota and south. Its habitat on Pt. Pelee is peculiar. On the centre and the east side of the point I found nothing but *P. americanus* while Baird's mouse was strictly confined to the sandy beach on the west side, living among the logs and other miscellaneous lumber such as are found on every beach where they have been left by high water.

I took one specimen at the edge of the red cedar thicket, but the others were taken out on open beach beside the logs. The inhabitants spoke of finding them frequently when taking wood from the beach. The common deer mouse is found in the wooded parts of the point and its range overlaps that of Baird's mouse at the edge of the wooded area, but the line of demarcation is drawn with surprising distinctness. One of the specimens taken this year has been sent to the Museum of the Geological Survey.

W. E. SAUNDERS.