



EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

12

THE ROADRUNNER

November 1944

I walked beneath him as he springs
From branch to branch on limber wings.
He draws me into stealing time
To follow where his small feet climb.

Daniel Smythe. "Warbler in the Mossed Oak"
From Nature Magazine, March, 1944

OCTOBER MEETING

The Bird Study Club held its October Meeting at Mrs. Slater's residence on Oct. 2, chiefly for the purpose of discussing problems connected with the Tom M. Kirksey Memorial. Sergeant and Mrs. George McClellan Bradt were enrolled as new members. Sgt. Bradt has donated a collection of his bird photographs to the memorial.

At the November meeting, plans will be made for the Christmas Bird Count. A program will be mailed to the members in advance.

The Club keenly regrets that Lieutenant A. E. Eynon has been ordered away from Fort Bliss. In the year that they spent in El Paso, Lieut. and Mrs. Eynon have appreciably modified our checklist of El Paso birds. An account of their trip to Ruidoso this summer, by Mrs. Eynon, appears in this issue of The Roadrunner.

Exigencies arising from the war situation, together with illness and death in the families of our members, have delayed the October issue of The Roadrunner. However, our subscribers may expect the customary three issues this year.

Taking a card from national politics, the club has re-elected its officers of last year. They are as follows: Mrs. Marguerite Wright, Chairman and Editor of our bulletin; Mrs. J. Owen Allen, Vice-President; and Mrs. Lena G. McBee, Secretary-Treasurer. The two last-named officers assist Mrs. Wright in editing the Roadrunner.

A list of discoveries and additions made since our last issue includes the following birds:

At Ruidoso, Red-faced Warbler and Golden-crowned Kinglet; also, nesting Evening and Black-headed Grosbeak and flocks of Crossbills, June 6.

In Memorial Park, Red-eyed Vireo, Sept. 11.

Painted Buntings were summering in Ascarate Park; a female Broad-tailed Hummer, in McKelligon's Canyon; and an Eastern Phoebe on the Bird Refuge.

Less uncommon, but still unusual, are these: Heronry on the Bird Preserve (Nests of Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron, Photographed by Sgt. Bradt., July 5).

Phainopepla and Orchard Oriole, summering in the Country Club area.

Several flocks of (migrating) Black-eared Nuthatches in Memorial Park in September; also a male Natalie's Sapsucker.

El Paso Birds in August

Most bird clubbers are absent from El Paso during August. So, a record of birds during that month has never been made. Though our ranks were considerably diminished, we decided to attempt such a record this year. And, while the results are far from complete, we feel that a beginning has been made.

The places visited are described below.

Ascarate lake, an artificial lake covering about two acres, is located about five miles east of El Paso. It affords a study of both water and desert species.

Randel's pool, at the northern end of the Mesilla Valley Bird Refuge, is a natural bosque with tamarack cotton wood and other trees growing in thick profusion.

McKelligon's Canyon, a city park extending into the eastern side of Mt. Franklin, is a typical desert area.

The upper Rio Grande Valley, adjacent to El Paso, is a combination of desert and irrigated farm land.

Memorial park, a wooded area within the city, is planted with types of evergreen and deciduous trees. *Commemorative of El Paso's dead in WWII*

Unusual observations are as follows: American egret-13, (prior to Aug. 11); black-bellied plover-2 (breeding plumage-Aug. 18); Forster's tern-1 (Aug. 27); Scott's oriole-2 (Aug. 22).

The following migrants are noted: Virginia rail-1 (Aug. 13); lesser yellow-legs-4 (Aug. 27 and 30); Wilson's phalarope-2 (Aug. 10); olive-sided flycatcher-1 (Aug. 10); violet-green swallow-1 (Aug. 2); bank swallow-350 (two flocks of about 150 or 200 observed on wire-probably same group-lone individual last seen on Aug. 27); mockingbird-23 (nervous, noisy group of 15 seen on Aug. 2. Last seen on Aug. 18th; 4 in flock); Macgillivray's warbler-2 (Aug. 17); Bullock's oriole-13 (mostly females-Aug. 2 and 4).

Late departure dates are as follows: Texas nighthawk-5 (Aug. 18); empidonax-1 (Aug. 27); Traill's flycatcher-1 (Aug. 4); yellow-throat-6 (Aug. 13); long-tailed chat-8 (Aug. 13).

Early arrivals are: pileolated warbler-20, (Aug. 18); yellow-headed blackbird-4, (Aug. 27); lark bunting-79 (Aug. 18); flock of 75 in flight, seen on rainy morning); western chipping sparrow-15 (Aug. 18).

Birds on this list that are ordinarily seen in August are as follows: pied-billed grebe-3; great blue heron-7; green heron-5; snowy egret-43; black crowned night heron-2; American bittern-1; New Mexican duck-34; gadwall-3; green-winged teal-2; turkey vulture-2; prairie falcon-2; sparrow hawk-13; Bob White-1; Gambel's quail-28; coot-41; killdeer-9; western solitary sandpiper-7; western willet-3; black-necked stilt-2; mourning dove-59; yellow-billed cuckoo, (California)-2; road runner-4; black-chinned hummingbird-27; broad-tailed hummingbird-18; rufous hummingbird-1; red-shafted flicker-17; cactus wood pecker-1; Arkansas kingbird-12; black phoebe-6; Say's phoebe-1; western wood pewee-8; rough-winged swallow-2; barn swallow-114; cliff swallow-48; white-necked raven-2; verdin-2; curve-billed thrasher-1; loggerhead-shrike-18; California Jay, (Woodhouse's)-1; yellow warbler-3; western meadowlark-10; common redwing-275; great-tailed grackle-12; tanager, (not wester)-1; blue grosbeak-27; English sparrow-(abundant); house finch-200; lark sparrow-44; desert sparrow-4.

Census takers included besides the compiler are:

Miss. Mary Belle Keefer, Miss. Lena McBee, Mrs. Marguerite Wright, Lieut. and Mrs. A. E. Eynon.

Compiled by Mrs. J. Owen Allen

(A list of the birds in this census has been submitted to the Audubon Society.)

RUIDOSO *

It was a warm June day as we set out by bus for Ruidoso. For seven months, with the exception of one trip to Carlsbad, I had scarcely been more than a few miles from El Paso and my wandering spirit was beginning to grow restless. This Ruidoso expedition was to be a big event. As we travelled along highway 54, I was thrilled by the broad expanse of desert with great stretches of yucca in full bloom. I could see some of the places where my husband had been on field problems; and we stopped at the little town of Oro Grande, which since has played such an important part in our lives, for my husband has now been stationed there about three months.

In spite of my early excitement, my enthusiasm began to wane as the desert heat grew more intense. Thus it was with no regret that we finally reached the wooded country around Mescalero. My senses again became alert and my heart beat faster as the cool air brushed my face and trees beamed down on us from all sides. It reminded me of home where trees had always played such an important part in my life. To be set down abruptly in an almost treeless desert country was one of the hardest things to which I had to accustom my self. Now we were to spend a brief period among the trees and seemingly away from the world and all its cares.

Our cabin stood right at the edge of the Rio Ruidoso. We were not long in learning what a great variety and number of birds the water attracted. One of our first delights was the discovery of a dipper feeding diligently within a few feet of the cabin. Here at this lovely woodland resort we were to make many discoveries, exciting to nature lovers on their first visit. To a person not interested in nature our stay would have been a dull one, but we found something to delight us at every turn. A large part of every day was spent out of doors. Sixteen birds entirely new, to us, were added to our list, and we became well acquainted with many that we had previously seen only a few times, in migration. Some of those that we enjoyed most were the evening grosbeak, band-tailed pigeon, Steller's jay, Mearn's quail, pinon jay, and red-faced warbler.**

The Mearn's quail we first saw on one of the most interesting trips during our stay at Ruidoso. One early morning, accompanied by Mrs. Lena McBee and a guide, we set out on horseback for Mt. Baldy (Sierra Blanca Peak), a round-trip of some twenty-four miles. Having been on a horse about an hour before in my life, you can well imagine my condition the next day, but the joys of the trip greatly outweighed all my discomfort. Horseback riding does not permit extensive birding, but we could hear numerous songs about us and catch a fleeting glimpse of some feathered creature as it darted off behind the leaves. One thing that stands out in my memory - perhaps most of all - is the change in flora as we gained altitude. From the juniper-fir country we passed through stretches of maple, aspen, oak, pink-flowering locust and finally pinon-pine and Engleman's spruce. Then came timberline, beyond which stretched acre after acre of grass. It was on one of these grassy slopes after we left timberline that we were introduced to the Mearn's quail. Instead of flushing as we approached, they ran a few feet and sat down perfectly still until we passed by. Their color was so nearly that of the dry grass that I doubt if we could have seen them had it not been for their first movements.

Just about timberline blue iris bloomed gayly amidst the brown grass; but as we neared the top plants showed less and less development until nothing but dry grass could be seen. Above us an occasional snow patch lay in a sheltered corner. As we stood, half in delight of our achievement, half in awe of the vastness and magnificence of the mountains, two wild horses dashed across an adjacent slope. All my life I had read of wild horses, but never before had I seen one. Nor was I disappointed as these two proud beauties raced across the mountain side. Not to be outdone them, a golden eagle soared gracefully off to our right, finally disappearing around the mountain. Vesper sparrows also seemed to have taken a liking to the grassy slopes, for they continually flushed from our path. The presence of violet-green swallows upon these treeless wastes astonished us no end. We finally decided that they had merely come up there to feed. Despite our longing to stay and explore further the wonders of the mountain, we regretfully turned our horses homeward, for the sinking sun told us that unless we hurried it would be dark before we reached our cabin. This had been one of the most memorable days of my life.

The remainder of our stay in Ruidoso was spent in making short trips each day. On several occasions we hiked to the Indian reservation. It was on one of these expeditions up the South Fork of the Ruidoso that we saw the red-faced warbler. In an attempt to locate a golden-crowned kinglet which we felt certain was making the noise above us, we found ourselves looking directly at a red-faced warbler. Not only was this a new bird to us, but as nearly as we knew, it had never before been seen in Ruidoso. How grateful we were to the little kinglet which led us to it! Another find that same day was a dipper's nest containing two well grown young. This nest, like the one we found later was built beneath a waterfall in such a manner that the adult birds had to pass through the spray in order to reach the nest. We sat for some time watching the tireless parents collect dragon fly nymphs and, ignoring our presence, fly back and forth feeding the eager, noisy young.

One of the most colorful sights during our whole visit was a pasture along the Alto road that was literally orange with a mass of Indian paintbrush blooms. To add to their beauty, countless broad-tailed humming birds darted from one flower to another in search of food. Never in my life have I seen so many hummers at one time. The air was a-hum with their rapid wing beats and as we stood there waiting for dusk to fall, the little feathered creatures one by one darted off toward the woods to seek shelter during the approaching night.

Our last evening there was spent on a hilltop near the cabin watching the light slowly fade from the west while nighthawks zoomed about us in pursuit of insects. It had been a beautiful vacation. Though time may fade the pictures we saw, nothing can blot from our memories the peace we felt as together we communed with nature.

*(Editor's note) Ruidoso, an Indian name meaning Noisy Water, lies within the Lincoln National Forest. It is situated in the Sierra Blancas, or White Mountains, a continuation of the Sacramento Mountains, in Lincoln County, New Mexico, some 135 miles northeast of El Paso. The highway passes through three life zones; Ruidoso (alt., 6,500 ft.) is in the Transition zone. "Old Baldy", (Sierra Blanca Peak) has an altitude of 12,000 ft.

**There is no previously known record of the red-faced warbler east of the Rio Grande. The late Tom Miller Kirksey took two specimens in the Black Mountains near Silver City, New Mexico.

Birds observed in the Ruidoso area, June 6 through June 16, 1944:
 Census: turkey vulture, sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, golden eagle, desert sparrow hawk, Mearn's quail, spotted sandpiper, band-tailed pigeon, western mourning dove, road runner, western nighthawk, broad-tailed hummingbird, red-shafted flicker, Mearn's woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, Arkansas kingbird, Cassin's kingbird, Say's phoebe, western flycatcher, western wood peewee, purple martin, violet green swallow, rough-winged swallow, long-crested jay, pinon jay, American raven, mountain chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, dipper, pygmy nuthatch, western house wren, western robin, hermit thrush, western bluebird, mountain bluebird, golden-crowned kinglet, plumbeous vireo, warbling vireo, Virginia's warbler, orange-crowned warbler, Grace's warbler, Audubon's warbler, red-faced warbler, Macgillivray's warbler, Brewer's blackbird, eastern cowbird, western tanager, hepatic tanager, black-headed grosbeak, evening grosbeak, English sparrow, house finch, pine siskin, Arkansas goldfinch, red crossbill, green-tailed towhee, spotted towhee, vesper sparrow, lark sparrow, red-backed junco, chipping sparrow.

In addition to the above list other observers report the following: belted kingfisher; red-naped Sapsucker; killdeer; olive-sided flycatcher; Arkansas Kingbird; western crow; yellow warbler; townsend's warbler; long-tailed chat; great-tailed grackle; gray-necked junco; white crowned sparrow.