

AN ORNITHOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

BY WILLIAM BREWSTER.

(Concluded from p. 112.)

63. *Vireo flavifrons*. YELLOW-THROATED VIREO.—This Vireo was not met with in either Buncombe or Yancy Counties, but a few were seen about Old Fort, and in Jackson and Macon Counties it was rather common, haunting open oak woodlands from the lower valleys (Franklin) to about 4000 feet (Highlands). The song was less rich and full than at the North, but otherwise similar.

64. *Vireo noveboracensis*. WHITE-EYED VIREO.—Found only in the lower valleys, where it occurred sparingly and at rather wide intervals in thickets bordering streams.

65. *Vireo olivaceus*. RED-EYED VIREO.—Common everywhere below 4000 feet, but nowhere as abundant as at the North. The song was normal, but the single specimen taken (at Sylva, May 30) differs from any that I have ever seen in lacking the usual ashy of the head and greenish suffusion over the back, the entire upper parts being nearly concolor and of a dull smoky brown. It is possible that a good series of specimens will prove these differences to be characteristic of birds from this region.

66. *Vireo gilvus*. WARBLING VIREO.—Found only at Old Fort and along the Swannanoa River near Asheville. It was common in both localities, but especially so in the red birches, sycamores, and maples overhanging the Swannanoa, where three or four were often heard singing in adjoining trees.

67. *Mniotilta varia*. BLACK-AND-WHITE CREEPER.—Very common in hardwood forests, ranging to at least 4500 feet (near Highlands). Song normal.

68. *Helminthophila chrysoptera*. GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER.—Common in Jackson and Macon Counties, ranging from 2000 to 4100 feet, and haunting open oak woodlands, and second growth on hillsides. In many such tracts it seemed to be the most abundant and characteristic species; in others, apparently similar in every way, it was nearly or quite wanting. The males sang in the tops of the tallest trees and were very shy; the song is precisely as at the North. I did not find the species in either Buncombe or Yancy Counties.

69. *Compothlypis americana*. BLUE YELLOW-BACKED WARBLER.—Irregularly distributed and common nowhere. I found a few at Old Fort (McDowell County), one on the banks of the French Broad near Asheville, one at Franklin, and several between Franklin and Highlands. All these were in hardwood timber, singing in the tops of the taller trees. I saw none at Highlands, although many of the trees there were hung with *Usnea* 'moss.' In the localities where my specimens were found there was neither *Usnea* nor *Tillandsia*.

70. *Dendroica æstiva*. YELLOW WARBLER.—Abundant everywhere below 2800 feet, especially in willows and sycamores along the banks of streams. Throughout the region its song was very different from that of our northern bird and bore a much closer resemblance to the song of the Nashville Warbler, for which, indeed, I at first mistook it.

71. *Dendroica cærulescens*. BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER.—I heard the first Black-throated Blue Warbler on the crest of the Cowee Mountains, but at the time supposed it to be a belated migrant. On the following day, however, others were met with at Cullasaja Falls, and along the road between that point and Highlands many were seen or heard. In the neighborhood of Highlands they were everywhere numerous, and in the extensive rhododendron swamps, literally swarming and evidently settled for the season, if not actually breeding. Mr. Boynton tells me that he regularly hears them singing in these swamps through June and July, but he has never found the nest. On the Black Mountains they were scarcely less numerous in belts of rhododendrons bordering streams at between 3200 and 4500 feet, but curiously enough none were seen above the latter elevation, although the balsam forests on the upper slopes of these mountains would seem to furnish congenial haunts.

72. *Dendroica pensylvanica*. CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER.—Generally distributed between 2000 and 4000 feet, but nowhere really numerous. Indeed, I rarely saw more than one or two in any single day. As in New England, they frequented wood edges and openings, especially such as were bordered by thickets of blackberry bushes or hazels. They were also found in rhododendrons. The song was perfectly normal.

73. *Dendroica blackburniæ*. BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.—In Jackson and Macon Counties this Warbler was abundant everywhere above 3000 feet, but I heard only one in Yancy County,—on the side of the Black Mountains at 3300 feet. On the crest of the Cowee Range, and about Highlands, they were among the commonest and most conspicuous woodland birds, frequenting old oak timber interspersed with hemlocks or bordering hemlock swamps. In these evergreens they were evidently breeding, or about to breed, for the males were in full song and paired, and I noticed that each had its particular hemlock which it guarded with jealous care, driving away all other small birds that came into or near it. The song here was peculiar, but still not sufficiently so as to be unrecognizable. Several males which I shot near Highlands differ from northern specimens in having the orange of the throat duller and paler.

74. *Dendroica dominica*. YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER.—Met with only twice, near Old Fort, May 23, and at Sylva, May 30. At the former place one was heard singing; at the latter a pair were feeding full-fledged young. I shot the male and found, as I expected, that it was a typical *dominica*.

75. *Dendroica virens*. BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER.—Very curiously, this species was detected only on the Black Mountains, where it was confined to the balsam forests, above 5000 feet. It was one of the most abundant and characteristic birds here, and apparently settled for the summer. The song was perfectly normal.

76. *Dendroica discolor*. PRAIRIE WARBLER.—Met with only at Old Fort, where it was common in brush-grown pastures and tracts of young second-growth on hillsides.

77. *Seiurus auropellus*. OVENBIRD. — The open oak woodlands, so prevalent in this region, are in every way adapted to the requirements of the Ovenbird, and throughout them it is one of the commonest and most characteristic summer birds. I did not find it above 4500 feet.

78. *Seiurus motacilla*. LARGE-BILLED WATER-THRUSH.—Only four individuals met with, two in rhododendron swamps near Highlands, the others on the banks of the Tuckaseegee River, between East La Porte and Sylva, at an elevation of only 2150 feet. One of the Highlands specimens was found at fully 4500 feet.

79. *Geothlypis formosa*. KENTUCKY WARBLER.—Generally distributed in the valleys and over the mountain sides to about 3500 feet. It was usually found in open woodland about logs or fallen tops, but also occurred in the rhododendrons. In both situations it was an uncommon, inconspicuous species, oftener heard than seen.

80. *Geothlypis trichas*. MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT.—Rather common in the lower valleys, especially in thickets near streams or meadows. Not seen above 2100 feet.

81. *Icteria virens*. YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.—The Chat was abundant everywhere in the valleys and over the lower slopes of the mountains to at least 2200 feet.

82. *Sylvania mitrata*. HOODED WARBLER.—Found sparingly but very generally in rhododendron thickets along streams, ranging to at least 3800 feet. Song normal.

83. *Sylvania canadensis*. CANADA FLYCATCHER.—Abundant from about 3000 feet nearly, or quite, to the tops of the highest mountains. Over the lower portions of its range it frequented rhododendron thickets bordering streams, above 5000 feet, the balsam forests. As its vertical distribution extends downward below the upper limits of that of *S. mitrata* the two species probably come together in places, although I saw no instances of this. At Highlands, June 1, 1885, Mr. Boynton found a nest placed "in a grassy spring-bank," and "composed chiefly of old leaf-stems and small roots, lined with fine black roots which resemble hair." It contained four perfectly fresh eggs.

84. *Setophaga ruticilla*. AMERICAN REDSTART.—I saw only a very few Redstarts—certainly less than a dozen—all in the lower valleys, and the majority among alders along streams.

85. *Mimus polyglottos*. MOCKINGBIRD.—Confined to the lower valleys, where it is uncommon and very locally distributed. I found it most numerous about Asheville, where at least three or four pairs were seen.

86. *Galeoscoptes carolinensis*. CATBIRD.—One of the most numerous and evenly distributed birds of the region, occurring almost everywhere below 4000 feet.

87. *Harporhynchus rufus*. BROWN THRASHER.—Much less common than the preceding species, but still frequently met with, especially on

brushy hillsides in the lower valleys. I did not detect it anywhere above 3000 feet, but was told that it is occasionally seen at Highlands (4000 feet).

88. *Thryothorus ludovicianus*. CAROLINA WREN.—This species was common in the valleys, and sparingly distributed over higher ground to an elevation of at least 4000 feet. It was nowhere nearly as numerous, however, as in the coast region of South Carolina.

89. *Thryothorus bewickii*. BEWICK'S WREN.—Confined almost exclusively to the towns, where it was usually one of the most abundant and conspicuous birds. It is, in fact, the 'House Wren' of this region, and in some respects is even more familiar and confiding than this better known relative. At Asheville it was breeding in such numbers that nearly every shed or other out-building harbored a pair, the male of which sang through the greater part of the day from the ridgepole or gable end of the roof. The song is sweet and exquisitely tender—one of the sweetest and tenderest strains I know. It recalls that of the Song Sparrow, but is more prolonged, varied, and expressive. This species resembles other Wrens (especially *T. ludovicianus*) in habits and motions, creeping and hopping about under eaves of buildings, and along fences, entering every hole and crevice, and appearing and disappearing like a mouse. Its slender shape and long tail give it, however, a somewhat peculiar appearance—much like that of the *Poliophtila*. The tail is habitually carried above the line of the back, although its position and inclination are constantly changing. It is not moved in the usual jerky Wren-fashion, but rather slowly and deliberately. In a breezy situation it often seems quite beyond the bird's control, waving about with every passing puff of air.

90. *Troglodytes hiemalis*. WINTER WREN.—This species was met with only on the Black Mountains, where it was abundant throughout the balsams, from 5000 to 6000 feet, filling these lonely forests with its exquisite melody at all times of the day. The song here seemed to me even finer than at the North. Once or twice I caught a glimpse of one of the singers perched on some low stump or moss-grown rock, but to my disappointment I failed to secure a specimen.

91. *Certhia familiaris americana*. BROWN CREEPER.—Common about Highlands, and abundant in the 'balsams' on the Black Mountains, but not seen in either locality below 4000 feet. At Highlands they frequented hemlocks in the 'laurel' swamps, and girdled stumps bordering clearings. The female of a pair-shot May 29 was incubating. The males were in full song everywhere, and their notes seemed to me identical with those of the northern bird. My specimens are rather browner than spring examples from New England, but in other respects similar. Mr. Boynton has taken the nest at Highlands. It was built in the usual way, behind a scale of loose bark.

92. *Sitta carolinensis*. WHITE-BELLIED NUTHATCH.—Only four seen, one at Franklin in the trees shading the main street of the village, the other three at Highlands in oak woodland.

93. *Sitta canadensis*. RED-BELLIED NUTHATCH.—In the balsams of the Black Mountains, from about 5000 feet to the top of the main ridge (6000 feet), this Nuthatch was more abundant than I have ever seen it elsewhere. Whenever I stopped to listen or look around its whining, nasal

call was sure to be one of the first sounds that came to my ears, and often three or four different birds would be heard at once. They were usually invisible—high in the tops of the matted evergreens, but I occasionally caught sight of one hanging head downward at the end of a branch, or winding up the main stem of the tree. A pair had a nest in a short dead prong near the top of a yellow birch which grew near the bridle path. I was unable to examine it, but it must have contained young, for both parent birds repeatedly entered the hole bearing food in their bills. A male shot on this mountain is indistinguishable from New England specimens.

Near Highlands, at an elevation of about 4000 feet, I found a single pair of these Nuthatches in an extensive 'laurel swamp,' shaded by giant hemlocks. They were undoubtedly breeding, although I did not succeed in finding the nest.

94. *Parus bicolor*. TUFTED TITMOUSE.—Generally distributed from the valleys to the upper edges of the hardwood forests on the mountain sides, but nowhere common.

95. *Parus atricapillus*. BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE.—This northern species, which, if I am not mistaken, has never been previously found south of Virginia, proved to be not uncommon in the 'balsam' belt of the Black Mountains. Its notes and habits here were precisely the same as at the North, and very different from those of *P. carolinensis*, with which it mingled along the lower borders of its range. Like most of the birds inhabiting these mountains, it was exceedingly shy, so much so indeed that I had the greatest difficulty in getting specimens. These represent two pairs, of which both females were incubating. All four differ from northern examples in being smaller, with much slenderer, more acute bills, and generally deeper, browner tints, especially on the back and sides, which are nearly as richly colored as in autumnal specimens from New England. These characteristics, if constant, should perhaps entitle the North Carolina form to subspecific recognition.

96. *Parus carolinensis*. CAROLINA CHICKADEE.—Common, and very generally distributed, ranging from the lowlands to at least 5000 feet, and probably still higher. On the Black Mountains I found it breeding sparingly along the lower edge of the balsam belt, and thus actually mingling with *P. atricapillus*. In one place a male of each species was singing in the same tree, the low plaintive *tswee-dee—tswee-dee* of the *P. carolinensis*, contrasting sharply with the ringing *te-derry* of its more northern cousin. The fact that the two occur here together and that each preserves its characteristic notes and habits, should forever settle all doubts as to their specific distinctness.

A nest found June 2 at the foot of these mountains was in a shallow cavity in the end of a fence rail by the roadside. It contained six young, fully fledged and apparently large enough to fly. They made a pretty picture—the circle of black and white heads peering out curiously at the entrance.

97. *Regulus satrapa*. GOLDEN-CRESTED KINGLET.—Throughout the sombre balsam forest on the upper slopes and ridges of the Black Moun-

tains this Kinglet was one of the most numerous and characteristic birds. The males were in full song at the time of my visit (June 1, 2), but as they kept well up in the tree-tops it was next to impossible to get a sight at one. Indeed, the single specimen which I shot cost more than an hour's persistent labor. This specimen seems to be identical with northern birds. The song, also, was quite normal.

98. *Poliptila cærulea*. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.—Seen only along the road between Webster and Franklin, and on the outskirts of the latter town, where it was common throughout an extensive tract of post-oak scrub.

99. *Turdus mustelinus*. WOOD THRUSH.—Abundant, and generally distributed, ranging from the lowest valleys to at least 4500 feet, on the mountain sides, and breeding everywhere, but most numerous in thickets of rhododendrons near streams. Two nests, each containing four fresh eggs, were found at Highlands; one, May 27, in a cornel (*Cornus florida*); the other, May 28, in a rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*).

100. *Turdus fuscescens*. WILSON'S THRUSH.—Abundant over the elevated plateau about Highlands, and scarcely less numerous on the Black Mountains, ranging in both localities from about 3500 to 5000 feet. Like the Wood Thrush this species haunted, by preference, rhododendron thickets along streams, and in many of these tangled retreats it was far more numerous than I have ever seen it at the North. Its call-notes were louder, sharper, and more penetrating than those of our New England bird. The song, also, was clearer, more varied, and altogether finer.

On the Black Mountains Wilson's Thrushes abounded in the dense evergreen forest of spruces and balsams at, and for a little distance above, 5000 feet. Two specimens which I shot here are somewhat larger than New England examples, and decidedly browner. Mr. Boynton has repeatedly found the nest of this species at Highlands, usually in the top of a fallen tree, sometimes on a mound surrounded by water or springy ground.

101. *Merula migratoria*. AMERICAN ROBIN.—Irregularly but very generally distributed over the region from the lowest valleys nearly, if not quite, to the summits of the highest mountains. In the low country it was seen only in or near towns, where it had all the familiar habits of our northern bird; but on the sides and tops of the mountains it occurred miles away from any house or clearing, and in the wildest possible places. It was most numerous at Highlands, and on the Black Mountains, between 4000 and 5800 feet. Throughout the entire mountain region its song and habits seemed to be perfectly normal. A female shot May 27 was laying. This and another specimen (male, May 28) are smaller than northern examples and the throat in both is nearly immaculate.

102. *Sialia sialis*. BLUEBIRD.—Common, ranging up to about 4000 feet. Although often seen in the wilder portions of this region, it evidently preferred the neighborhood of towns and houses, where, unmolested by the quarrelsome House Sparrow, it bred in boxes put up for its reception and showed all that charming familiarity and confidence which once characterized our New England Bluebird.

Species of whose occurrence during autumn or winter I obtained satisfactory proof.

1. **Podilymbus podiceps.** PIED-BILLED GREBE.—At Highlands I examined the skin of one of these Grebes which had been shot the preceding autumn in a mill-pond near the town.

2. **Branta canadensis.** CANADA GOOSE.—Often seen in small numbers during the spring and autumn migrations.

3. **Porzana carolina.** CAROLINA RAIL.—Of irregular occurrence near Asheville in early autumn. One gentleman assured me that during a heavy easterly storm in September, 1883, he bagged twenty specimens in the meadows along the French Broad River.

4. **Gallinago delicata.** WILSON'S SNIPE.—This well-known game bird visits the meadows about Asheville in sufficient numbers to afford fairly good shooting. It occurs only during the spring and autumn migrations.

5. **Ardea herodias.** GREAT BLUE HERON.—Seen occasionally along the French Broad River.

6. **Ectopistes migratorius.** WILD PIGEON.—Said to occur in numbers in autumn and winter, especially when beech mast is abundant.

7. **Accipiter velox.** SHARP-SHINNED HAWK.—At Highlands I was shown the wings and tails of several specimens shot the preceding autumn.

8. **Falco sparverius.** SPARROW HAWK.—I include this Hawk on precisely the same evidence as the Sharp-shin, viz., that of the examination of some wings and tails in the possession of a gentleman at Highlands. The species probably breeds also, but of this I have no proof.

9. **Buteo borealis.** RED-TAILED HAWK.—An adult female, very large and pale, shot by Mr. Boynton at Highlands, February 8, 1886, reaches me just in time for mention in this connection. With it Mr. Boynton also sends:

10. **Melanerpes carolinus.**—RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.—A male shot at Highlands (4000 ft.) Feb. 6, 1886.

11. **Scolecophagus carolinus.** RUSTY GRACKLE.—One taken at Highlands, January 23, 1886. "It has been about the town all winter in company with a flock of Meadow-larks."

A LIST OF THE BIRDS OBTAINED IN VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.

BY BARTON W. EVERMANN.

(Concluded from p. 94.)

101. ***Phalænoptilus nuttali.** (418.) POOR-WILL.—Summer resident; not common. During two years I secured but one specimen.