

THE BIRDS OF WISCONSIN

By L. KUMLIEN and N. HOLLISTER

with Revisions by A. W. Schorger

(Continued from last issue)

***Dendroica discolor* (Vieill.). Prairie Warbler.**

A rare straggler to Wisconsin. Dr. Hoy procured but one specimen at Racine, and Thure Kumlien but one at Lake Koshkonong. Unfortunately the dates of capture of both specimens are gone, but both were taken at a very early day, between 1845 and 1860. This species has been recorded from Wisconsin in migration reports by amateurs. One specimen sent us to verify such a record proved to be ***D. palmarum***. The Hoy and T. Kumlien specimens are probably the only actual records for the state.

[There are sight records for Milwaukee (**Pass. Pigeon** 2,1940:29; 9,1947:117; 10,1948:38); Plymouth (**Ibid.** 9,1947:117); Madison (**Ibid.** 9,1947:117); and Reedsburg (**Ibid.** 10,1948:122).]

***Seiurus aurocapillus* (Linn.). Oven-bird.**

A common bird throughout the summer, the oven-bird nests in suitable localities over the entire state. It arrives with the majority of the warblers the last of April, or very early in May and by June 1 has its oddly roofed nest completed and the eggs laid. During the breeding season the birds are shy and retiring, and the nest is not easily found, the birds retreating as one walks upon them, and by a long circle returning, unseen, to their home. Few sets can be found without one or more cowbirds' eggs. One set in the Kumlien collection contains three eggs of the oven-bird, and five of the cowbird.

***Seiurus noveboracensis* (Gmel.). Water-thrush.**

This form of the the water-thrush is a common migrant and regular summer resident. It breeds sparingly in the southern counties, and more commonly and regularly farther north. Grundtvig found it a common nesting bird in Outagamie County, and Mr. J. N. Clark writes that it sometimes nests in Dunn County. We are almost exactly on the "dividing line" between ***noveboracensis*** and ***notabilis***, but the former is by far the more abundant. They occur together in south-eastern Wisconsin during the migrations. Mr. Wm. Brewster has kindly examined our specimens and finds perfectly typical examples of both races.

[There are three Wisconsin specimens of ***S. n. noveboracensis*** in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, and twenty in the Milwaukee Public Museum. Three specimens in the collection of Milwaukee-Downer College were recently identified as this race by Dr. Herbert Friedmann.]

***Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis* (Ridgw.). Grinnell's Water-thrush.**

Regular migrant, even in the extreme southeastern part of the state. Specimens of this race were identified by Mr. Wm. Brewster among the water-thrushes sent for his inspection. It occurs at the same time, and in company with the preceding, and may possibly be the nesting form in the western part of the state. Unfortunately, we have no breeding birds from this district.

[The water-thrushes taken during the breeding season are supposedly of this race. Uncommon summer resident in the northern part of the state. This subspecies is so poorly defined that there is merit in Coues' refusal to accept it.]

***Seiurus motacilla* (Vieill.). Louisiana Water-thrush.**

The Louisiana water-thrush occasionally occurs in the spring in southern Wisconsin, and doubtless breeds, as this is the extreme northern part of its range. One specimen has been taken at Delavan, Walworth County, (May 18 1900. N. H.), and one in Milwaukee County (April 25, 1897—Copeland and Russel), besides four or five in all about Lake Koshkonong, during the past fifty years.

[A fairly common summer resident in the western part of the state and has been seen as far north as St. Croix Falls (**Pass. Pigeon** 9,1947:117). H. L. Stoddard (**Wilson Bull.** 34,1922:78) found it nesting in Sauk County. It has bred along the St. Croix River in Minnesota to Stillwater.]
***Oporornis formosa* (Wils.). Kentucky Warbler.**

We appear to be a little too far north for this exquisite species. In southern Wisconsin it is very rarely taken during the spring migrations, when an occasional individual seems to wander out of its usual range. Dr. Hoy took one specimen at Racine (May 10, 1851), and we have but six other records for the state for sixty years, all about Lake Koshkonong, in spring.

[A summer resident in southwestern Wisconsin where it is common in Grant County. The U. S. National Museum has a specimen, No. 71032, taken at Busseyville by Thure Kumlien on September 10, 1875. A. W. Schorger (**Auk** 44,1927:239) found two nests at Potosi on June 16 and 18, 1924, and one in the Mazomanie bottoms on June 11, 1927 (**Trans. Wis. Acad. Sci.** 26,1931:32). O. J. Gromme (**Pass. Pigeon** 3,1941:72) has reported the finding of three nests in the Wyalusing bottoms on June 11 and 13, 1941.]

***Oporornis agilis* (Wils.). Connecticut Warbler.**

Not so rare a species as generally supposed. By one familiar with its haunts, song and habits, it can be found in some numbers during the latter part of May, the first week of June, and again during September. It is generally spoken of as more common in spring than fall, but we are unable to see any material difference, and if anything find more in autumn, as the young are less shy than the spring adults, and are consequently more often seen. Dr. Hoy considered it not uncommon at Racine, and shot a mated pair, about to begin nest building. In Jefferson County a pair was found, June 16, 1874 (L. K.), putting the finishing touches upon their nest. It was placed on the ground in a dense thicket of hazel, briars, etc. Though the nest was not touched they abandoned it, but bred in the same thicket; the nest, however, could never be found. Has been found in the dense tamarack swamps of Jefferson County in July, on several occasions, when it was, without question, nesting, and we have no doubt that a considerable number nest within the state. It is the very last warbler to pass northward in the spring. Many observers fail to find this species. Mr. Clark has not, as yet, taken it in Dunn County, and it was not found in the State by King, Grundtvig, or Willard.

[Common migrant and uncommon summer resident. A female in breeding condition was taken at Orienta, Bayfield County, on June 12,

1919 (H. H. T. Jackson, **Pass Pigeon** 5,1943:27). An adult and four young were collected on July 7, 1941, in Vilas County (O. J. Gromme, **Pass. Pigeon** 3,1941:71; **Auk** 59,1942:115). Three juveniles were seen in the same county July 25-26, 1942 (W. E. Scott, **Pass. Pigeon** 4,1942:85). F. Zirrer (**Pass. Pigeon** 4,1942:84; 5,1943:74) has stated that it breeds in Sawyer County.]

Oporornis philadelphia (Wils.). **Mourning Warbler.**

Migrant. Of very similar habits to the preceding, frequents much the same localities, and, according to our observations, in about the same numbers. It arrives somewhat earlier in spring than **agilis**. In some years it is almost common during the spring migration, for a few days, at Delavan and Lake Koshkonong. Reported by J. N. Clark from Dunn County, but not noted by King or Grundtvig. Dr. Hoy (Racine), and E. W. Nelson (northeastern Illinois), called it rare. By no means rare along Lake Michigan in migrations, especially in spring. Notwithstanding the general breeding range of the two species, as usually given in works of authority, we are of the opinion that this species never breeds in Wisconsin, although the **other does**, quite the opposite of the case, as usually given. We think any breeding record of this species for Wisconsin that may ever have been published, must surely refer to **agilis**. We cannot resist following Mr. Ridgway in including this species in the genus **Oporornis**, where it certainly appears to belong.

[Common summer resident in the northern half of the state and in some localities is the most abundant warbler. A. J. Schoenebeck (Birds of Oconto County, 1902:47) took a set of four eggs in 1894 and presented it to the Milwaukee Public Museum. Another nest with three eggs was found on June 10, 1897. Subsequently found breeding in the following counties: Bayfield (A. W. Schorger, **Auk** 42,1925:69); Washington and Sheboygan (O. J. Gromme, **Auk** 51,1934:37; 55, 1938:543); Oconto (C. A. Richter, **Pass. Pigeon** 1,1939:126; 8,1946:93, 128; 9,1947:136).]

Geothlypis trichas brachidactyla (Swains.). **Northern Yellow-throat.**

An abundant summer resident in all suitable localities, and especially numerous during the fall migrations, from the latter part of August until the middle of September. Mr. Wm. Brewster has examined our yellow-throats and writes us under date of July 31, 1902, as follows: "Despite the fact that Palmer calls the bird of the entire upper Mississippi Valley region, east of the 97th meridian, **trichas**, your specimens agree closely with his description of **brachidactyla**, and with my New England specimens of the same." Prof. Ridgway's views (1) seem to be the same as Mr. Brewster's, and our Wisconsin yellow-throat will, without doubt, stand as **brachidactyla**.

Icteria virens (Linn.). **Yellow-breasted Chat.**

In the southern part of the state the chat is a regular summer resident, and in favorable localities breeds rather commonly. It is almost invariably found in some large opening in the wood which has thickly grown up to hazel brush and dogwood, and it is in the latter that the nest is usually placed. The birds are, as a rule, exceptionally shy and retired, and would pass unnoticed by the average observer were it not for the occasional outbursts of their variable mimicry and song. Then by careful stalking one may perhaps be fortunate enough to obtain a glimpse of a

1. Birds N. and Mid. Am., Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, pt. II, pp. 655-665.

streak of yellow and green darting into the air, only to tumble over again into some thicket. When one has located the nest, however, all is different, and one has abundant opportunity to see and hear the birds, as they scold and fret, forgetting their wildness for the time, and coming within a few feet of the intruder. The least disturbance, even to barely touching the nest, is often enough to cause the birds to throw out the eggs, and desert the place, so shy and suspicious are they. The hottest and brightest June or July day is the best to find chats, as it is then that they are at their best in ventriloquist calls and song. Nesting begins early in June, and incubation is finished by the middle of the month. The nests are favorites with the cowbird and nearly always contain one or more of its eggs. The most northern record we have for this species in the state is at Stevens Point.

[The statement (A. J. Schoenebeck, Birds of Oconto County, 1902:47) that it was a common summer resident in Oconto County is a printer's error. The original notes (**Pass. Pigeon** 1,1939:127) call it a very rare summer resident. C. A. Richter (**Pass. Pigeon** 1,1939:127) has never found it in Oconto County. This species has been reported recently as far north as Appleton (**Pass. Pigeon** 2,1940:82) and Green Bay (**Ibid.** 8,1946:93).] **Wilsonia mitrata** (Gmel.). **Hooded Warbler.**

Not an uncommon migrant along Lake Michigan in southern Wisconsin, and it undoubtedly breeds to the northward of Milwaukee. Much less common in the interior than along the lake shore. We have seen this species repeatedly at Two Rivers in July, but in Jefferson, Dane, and Rock counties only in the spring migration in May. We have also taken specimens at Milwaukee in the latter part of May.

[There are numerous recent sight records: Milwaukee (**Pass. Pigeon** 2,1940:29; 3,1941:45; 5,1943:91; 6,1944:43; 7,1945:92; 9,1947:53, 117); Madison (**Ibid.** 5,1943:46; 9,1947:151; Columbia County (**Ibid.** 9,1947:117); Appleton (**Ibid.** 9,1947:117).]

Wilsonia pusilla (Wils.). **Wilson's Warbler.**

A common migrant in southern Wisconsin, passing northward late, often as late as the first week of June. Undoubtedly a few nest in Wisconsin, even as far south as Jefferson County, although there is no actual record. Specimens have been taken near Jefferson, June 16. Young birds are often taken as early as the middle of August in the large tamarack swamps. Principally a frequenter of low lands, and willow thickets, often in tamarack swamps.

[There is no authentic breeding record.]

Wilsonia canadensis (Linn.). **Canadian Warbler.**

A common migrant during the latter part of May, and again in September. A few nest in central and northern Wisconsin, along the borders of hemlock swamps, but the great majority pass beyond our borders to summer. King mentions taking a fully fledged young bird near Worcester, July 19, 1876 (1), and a pair were seen feeding young, which were flying about, on July 12, 1882, in Door County, to the northward of Sturgeon Bay (L. K.). Nelson reports it as a rare summer resident in northern Illinois. Grundtvig found it the most abundant warbler in Outagamie County in 1882 and 1883, except **Dendroica maculosa**. All

other observers report it as common, except King, who calls it rare in central Wisconsin, where it has been noted by others as abundant for the past forty years. More plenty along the borders of swamps abounding in a thick growth of coniferous trees than in the hardwood.

[A rather common summer resident in northern Wisconsin but very few nests have been found. Henry Nehrling (*Our Native Birds of Song and Beauty*, 1,1893:270) discovered a nest in a tamarack swamp at Howard's Grove, Sheboygan County. No date is given. I have watched the adults carrying food on several occasions in the northern counties without locating the nest. C. A. Richter (*Pass. Pigeon* 8,1946:128) observed young being fed in a tamarack swamp in Oconto County on June 29, 1946.]

***Setophaga ruticilla* (Linn.). American Redstart.**

A summer resident. The redstart breeds abundantly in all deep, second-growth woods, though, as usual with many warblers, it prefers the vicinity of a lake, pond, or stream for its summer home. Nesting begins in May, and the family remain together the entire summer, a happy, beautiful, woodland-roving flock of parents and young.

[Gradually declining as a breeding bird in the southern part of the state.]

FAMILY MOTACILLIDAE: WAGTAILS

***Anthus pensilvanicus* (Lath.). American Pipit.**

A common migrant, but not always to be depended upon in any locality. On the prairies, dry marshes, and along the lake shore it is sometimes abundant, especially in September and October, and even to November 1. Specimens were taken from a flock near Lake Koshkonong, June 3, 1879, but as might be expected, showed no indications of breeding soon.

FAMILY TROGLODYTIDAE: WRENS, THRASHERS, ETC.

***Mimus polyglottos* (Linn.). Mockingbird.**

A rare summer visitant. Many of the records of the mockingbird in Wisconsin are very doubtful, as they are mostly of birds "seen" only, and with a bird of this kind such records are always open to question, as observers not familiar with the species are very likely to make serious mistakes in their anxiety to add a new species to their local list. There is also the regular possibility of its being an escaped cage bird. We have positive records of its nesting on the old Kumlien homestead, in Jefferson County, however, in June, 1879 and 1880, and of one specimen captured in Milwaukee County in August, 1882 (L. K.). Hoy reported specimens seen July 16, 1851, between Racine and Kenosha, and July 26, 1846, near the southern state line. Later (1885), Hoy wrote that mockingbirds nested freely near Racine previous to 1856, that he obtained three nests and knew of several others that he did not molest, but that none had been seen for fifteen or twenty years. In the *Bulletin of the Wisconsin Natural History Society* for January, 1900, Mr. W. J. Bennetts records one seen by himself June 29, 1894, near Milwaukee, in the same locality where Mr. John W. Dunlop had reported a pair nesting a few years ago, and also states that Mr. Robert O. Wavvig has a nest and eggs, taken in 1897, just

west of Milwaukee, from a sheltered grove where he has seen the birds for the past few summers.

[Numerous recent records, especially for winter. Most of the winter records are probably young birds which move north in summer and make no attempt to return. One was found in Green Bay on April 21, 1945 (Mrs. R. P. Hussong, **Pass. Pigeon** 7,1945:122). An immature bird was collected on Outer Island, Lake Superior, on September 9, 1919 (H. H. T. Jackson, **Pass. Pigeon** 4,1942:93).]

Galeoscoptes carolinensis (Linn.). **Catbird.**

A common summer resident over the greater part of the state. Arrives from the south about the first of May, and very soon commences nest building. A common species about dwellings and towns, unlike the thrasher, adapting itself to civilization and the vast changes which follow in its wake.

Toxostoma rufum (Linn.). **Brown Thrasher.**

Formerly an abundant summer resident. The brown thrasher seems to have greatly diminished in numbers during the past fifteen years, until now it is scarcely common in many localities, and really rare in some, where it once bred in good numbers. That such a magnificent bird, with so fine a voice should grow less in numbers at such a rate is a great pity, and the species should be carefully guarded and protected in every way possible here in its summer home. In some parts of the state it is still fairly common.

Thryothorus ludovicianus (Lath.). **Carolina Wren.**

A rare straggler to Wisconsin. We have never met the species in the state, and its presence must be considered as merely accidental. One specimen was preserved by Thure Kumlien, which was taken in the summer of 1878 near Janesville. It is recorded by Dr. Hoy, a single bird, from Racine, July 5, 1852. One other specimen at least was taken by Hoy of which we have personal recollection, but the record cannot be found. A single specimen secured at Milwaukee in the summer of 1881, was seen at the shop of a taxidermist in that city.

[P. R. Hoy (**Proc. Wis. Nat. Hist. Soc.** March, 1885, p. 6) collected a female and one young at the Racine River in June, 1847. Within recent years there have been numerous sight and some breeding records. This wren has been reported as far north as Green Bay (**Pass. Pigeon** 1,1939:89; 8,1946:92) and St. Croix Falls (**Pass. Pigeon** 2,1940:137).]

Troglodytes aedon (Vieill.). **House Wren.**

A common migrant in eastern Wisconsin in almost equal numbers with the next. It breeds sparingly anywhere from the southern border northward. It arrives the last week of April and is common until the middle of May, when all but a few pass northward. It nests late in June, in towns and villages as well as in the more retired woods. Mr. Brewster has examined our series of house wrens, and pronounces nearly half to be typical **aedon**.

[Under the revision by H. C. Oberholser (**Ohio J. Sci.** 34,1934:86-96) the Ohio house wren (**Troglodytes aedon baldwini**) supplants **T. a. aedon**. A specimen in the collection of Milwaukee-Downer College was identified as **T. a. baldwini** by T. D. Burleigh (M. E. Pinney and J. F. MacNaughton, **Trans. Wis. Acad. Sci.** 30,1937:94).]

Troglodytes aedon aztecus (Baird). **Western House Wren.**

In a series of house wrens from southern and eastern Wisconsin, Mr. Wm. Brewster finds typical examples of both forms, *aedon* and *aztecus*, the latter slightly predominating in numbers. These specimens were nearly all taken during the spring migrations of various years, and give no clew to the distribution of the two forms during the breeding season. The *aztecus* averaged a little later, but both were sometimes taken on the same day. As the house wrens do not nest until June, as a rule, and this series was mostly made in late April and May, no actual breeding birds at present being available, we are unable to state whether this form nests within the state or not. Mr. Clark finds it a common migrant in Dunn County, and notes that it may occasionally nest, as he has seen it in mid-summer. Possibly these birds, nesting in that portion of the state, are *aztecus*, but actual breeding birds must be had before the summer range of the two forms in the state can be definitely known.

[This is the common form throughout most of the state.]

Olbiorchilus hiemalis (Vieill.). **Winter Wren.**

The little winter wren is a common migrant throughout the state, in early spring and late fall. It unquestionably nests in northern Wisconsin. King (1) found it common in summer in the northern parts of the state, and Dr. Hoy states that it nests on the shores of Lake Superior. Grundtvig thinks that a pair nested in Outagamie County in 1883 (2). Parents were seen feeding young just able to fly, near L'Anse, in the upper peninsula of Michigan, in July, 1879 (L. K.).

[The eastern winter wren (*Nannus hiemalis hiemalis*) occurs in Wisconsin. Nesting data are few. Three singing males were observed through June and July, 1946, at Devil's Lake, Sauk County (*Pass. Pigeon* 8,1946:127). Adults with four young were seen on July 20, 1947, at Camp Long Lake, Fond du Lac County (P. Mallow, *Ibid.* 9,1947:136).]

Thryomanes bewicki bewicki (Aud.). **Bewick's Wren.**

This wren was added to the state list by H. L. Stoddard (*Wilson Bull.* 34,1922:78) who found three pairs near Prairie du Sac in the spring of 1921. A nest with one egg was found in Sauk County on June 15, 1922, by Warner Taylor (*Auk* 39,1922:575). There are numerous subsequent sight and breeding records. J. J. Hickey (*Pass. Pigeon* 5,1943:3) observed two birds at La Crosse in June, 1942. The presence of this species as far north as Shell Lake, Washburn County (*Ibid.* 3,1941:45) requires confirmation.]

Cistothorus stellaris (Licht.). **Short-billed Marsh Wren.**

A common summer resident in many parts of the state, especially in localities where there are still wild meadows and dry marshes. In other parts, where there are not suitable nesting grounds for the species, it appears to be rare. In Dunn County, Mr. Clark states, it is not nearly as common as formerly, but still nests in most favorite meadows. On Turtle Creek marsh, between Delavan and Whitewater, it is almost abundant, and in late afternoon, if one remains quiet and well hidden, several pairs may be heard singing nearby. At the first move, however, they drop into

1. *Geol. of Wis.*, 1873-79, I, p. 491.

2. *Trans. Wis. Acad. of Sci. Arts and Letters* X, p. 153.

the grass with an angry scold, but soon appear again, often on the opposite side, chattering as only wrens can. Although so plenty on this particular marsh the entire summer, it is seldom seen in any of the surrounding country.

Cistothorus palustris (Wils.). Long-billed Marsh Wren.

An abundant summer resident over nearly the entire state, breeding in great numbers about all suitable marshes. The long-bill prefers much wetter localities than the last, and the two species are seldom found in close proximity to one another.

[The prairie marsh wren (*Telmatodytes palustris dissaeptus*) is the form found in the state.]

(Continued in next issue)

The Students Page . . .

Conducted by MRS. C. R. DECKER, JR.

Our Nature Club meets after school on Wednesdays. We like to go to the lake shore to see water birds, and we like to go to the country. We usually go birding, but we hope to study other things too. We are planning to carve and paint some of the birds we see. This is good work for rainy days.

One afternoon we drove out to a farm because we wanted to see some barn owls which lived in an old silo. The farmer said that the owls were not there because he had put new feed into the silo. He liked the owls because they ate mice, and the owls liked his barn and came back every year to raise their family there. We hope to see them next year.

Out in the field beside the pasture was a marsh with a pool of clear water, reeds, and humpy marsh ground. There were little hills, and we made too much noise and scared a blue heron. It was hidden until it flew away. Crows were cawing and flying in the woods nearby, and we thought that with all the noise and excitement we had scared everything. We walked to the center of the marsh on a narrow path. Suddenly as if out of nowhere a bird flew right at my feet. I could see its stripes, and orange tail. The boys all saw its long bill, and we all noticed the way it flew like a fourth of July rocket. It zigged and zagged. It was a Wilson's snipe. The boys all got a chance to see more snipe in other parts of the marsh. We had three pair of binoculars, and we had to pass them around quickly, but sometimes the snipes were so close that we could see them easily.

We found some plants which interested us, too. One was a circle of fuzzy leaves. It was called mullen and grows in worn out fields or stony pastures.

Doug James, Sixth Grade
Country Day School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin