

THE ORIGIN OF THE COMMON NAMES OF WISCONSIN BIRDS

By H. W. SCHAARS

(Continued from last issue)

340. (679) Mourning Warbler

L. Nelson Nichols writes, "There is really nothing about this bird to suggest mourning, except the cowl. The cowl is a beautiful bluish-slate set off by a black scarf on the breast. The bird is quiet and retiring in his manners, never showy, but rather cheerful and self-contained."

341. (681) Northern Maryland Yellow-throat

Edwards in his "Gleanings" states, "J. Petiver has given the figure of bird *Avis Marylandica gutture lutio*, for which reason I continue the name he has given it, 'Maryland Yellow-throat'." The underparts of the bird are distinctly yellow. There are four other species besides the "Northern".

342. (683) Yellow-breasted Chat

The name "Chat" refers to its chattering cries of which one bird writer says, "It laughs and cackles, whistles and mocks, part clown, largely a gossip and a meddler." The throat and breast are bright yellow.

343. (684) Hooded Warbler

The peculiar and conspicuous markings on the head have given this bird its name. There is a broad yellow mask over the forehead that is sharply set off by a solid black framework, forming a sort of cap or hood.

344. (685) Wilson's Warbler

Not only did Alexander Wilson give to many birds a name that has remained vernacular, various birds have been named in his honor; so this Warbler.

345. (686) Canada Warbler

This bird breeds from central Alberta and northern Quebec to central Minnesota and central New York; thus Canada is well represented in its breeding range. Prof. Eliot suggests the name "Neck-laced Warbler".

346. (687) American Redstart

Parkhurst explains the origin of this name, "The name is corrupted from 'redstert', meaning 'red tail', this portion of its plumage being doubly noticeable from the amount of reddish-yellow upon it, and from the bird's habit of keeping it partly spread as it moves from limb to limb." Europe has a Redstart, too, hence the attribute, "American".

347. (697) American Pipit

Walter B. Barrows in "Michigan Bird Life" writes, "When flushed they rise very quickly to a considerable height, mounting by great leaps with their powerful wings, and constantly uttering their sharp double-syllabled call which gives the bird its name 'Pipit'." "American" reminds us that England has the Meadow Pipit and the Tree Pipit.

348. (703) Eastern Mockingbird

The bird is well named; it is characterized by its habit of mocking or mimicking the notes of other birds or other sounds that it hears. The

Western Mockingbird is just a paler, larger, and more buffy edition of its eastern cousin.

349. (704) Catbird

This bird's cry of alarm does well mimick a cat.

350. (705) Brown Thrasher

There are two interpretations of the origin of the word "Thrasher". The one has it that the word is derived from "thrusher" or "thresher", an English dialect name for "thrush". The bird is often called the "brown thrush" because of its similarity to the Thrush. The other has it that the word refers to the bird's vigorous twitching about with his long tail, a movement suggesting the flail used in the primitive method of threshing grain. It might not be amiss to quote Herbert K. Job, who wrote humorously, "I used to wonder why the bird was called Thrasher. But after I received a real threshing from a pair of them, I thought I had some light on the subject."

351. (718) Carolina Wren

"Carolina" refers to the Carolinian Zone, designating an area including much of Eastern United States from Southern New England to Georgia and extending west to the 100th meridian. That is the breeding area of this Wren.

352. (719) Bewick's Wren

Named by Audubon for Thomas Bewick, English ornithologist, "the father of wood-engraving", who lived from 1753 to 1828.

353. (721) Eastern House Wren

Mabel Osgood Wright writes, "'Jenny' Wren has the proud distinction of having forced upon her entire species the popular name which was given her by the early English colonists in memory of the much milder mannered bird of the old country." "House", since its nesting site is usually a box erected by man about his house. "Eastern" in contrast to the Western House Wren.

354. (722) Eastern Winter Wren

For Wisconsin "Winter Wren" is a misnomer, since it is a migratory bird for this area. True, it appears early in spring and may linger till the middle of November, but it is not here in winter. A regional variety of our Wren is the Western Winter Wren.

355. (724) Short-billed Marsh Wren

As its name implies, its bill is shorter than that of its near relative, the Long-billed Marsh Wren, from whom it may also be distinguished by its striped head and upper back and by its lack of a white line over the eye. Its "marsh" may be a mere moist, grassy, or reedy meadow.

356. (725) Prairie Marsh Wren

Its "marsh" is really a deep, cozy marsh, near a slow-running stream or a dark, swampy pool, overgrown with rushes, reeds, cattails, where the nest of the bird is placed, woven with its slender, gently curved bill. It is at home on the Great Plains and prairie districts.

357. (726) Brown Creeper

A bird whose general color is sepia-brown, who, alighting near the base of a tree, creeps spirally upward, examining the crevices in the bark for minute insects and insects' eggs.

358. (727) White-breasted Nuthatch

It is well-known that these birds feed on nuts, such as acorns, beech-nuts, chestnuts. They also have the habit of wedging these nuts into a crevice that will hold them securely and then using their strong bill as a hatchet to "hatch" open the nuts. The underparts of the bird are plain white.

359. (728) Red-breasted Nuthatch

This bird is distinguished from its larger relative in having the white throat gradually deepening downward to a tawny-buff or reddish brown.

360. (731) Tufted Titmouse

"Tit" is something small. Norwegians call a little bird *tita*. The second part of the word is akin to the German word *Meise*, a chickadee-like bird. The English form has been influenced by the unrelated word "Mouse." "Tufted," its head has a conspicuous gray crest of top-knot.

361. (735) Black-capped Chickadee

The first choice of this name is found in the writings of Audubon. The bird calls its name rather accurately, repeating the final syllable several times. A black cap adorns the head.

362. (740) Hudsonian Chickadee

It is found in northern North America, breeding from Alaska and the tree-limit in central Mackenzie and central Keewatin south to southern British Columbia, central Alberta, northern Manitoba, and central Ontario. This area would well encircle the Hudson Bay Country.

363. (748) Eastern Golden-crowned Kinglet

"Kinglet" suggests a "petty king," in recognition of the crown both species wear. Within a V-shaped mark of black, inclosing a narrower one of yellow, is a large patch of bright orange on the crown of the male, "Golden-crowned." The female has the orange-crown patch replaced by canary yellow. The Western Golden-crowned Kinglet has shorter wings and tail, and a more slender bill.

364. (749) Eastern Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Only the male "Ruby-crowned" wears the red-crown patch, a wedge-shaped patch a clear vermilion-red. Its western relative is the Sitka Ruby-crowned.

365. (751) Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

A bluish-gray is the general color of this bird, who, as its name implies, is insectivorous in its feeding habits, not only relishing gnats, but also "locusts, joint-worms, flies, caddice flies, ants, other *hymenoptera*, wood-boring beetles, weevils, and spiders," as Forbush advises.

366. (754) Townsend's Solitaire

This bird avoids civilization and makes his main habitation in the inaccessible mountain gorges of the West, a bird typical of the high mountain solitudes, well named "Solitaire." It was named for John K. Townsend, an American ornithologist.

367. (755) Wood Thrush

"Thrush" is an old English word used at the end of the 13th century by Walter de Bibbesworth for the "Song Thrush" (*Turdus musicus*).

"Wood" refers to the deep woods which are the natural and generally preferred abiding place of this Thrush. But the bird frequently has his home near human habitation.

368. (756) Veery

The note of this Thrush has been interpreted as "veero, veery, veery, veery," which has earned for it its name.

369. (756a) Willow Thrush

This is a form of the Veery. It is an inhabitant of low, damp woodlands, preferring the thickets of poplar, willow, and alder, bordering streams and lakes.

370. (757) Gray-checked Thrush

As its name indicates it is gray-checked, not buffy-checked like the Olive-backed Thrush.

371. (758) Olive-backed Thrush

Above there is a uniform grayish-olive brown.

372. (759) Eastern Hermit Thrush

This bird seems to be trying to elude notice, is modest and retiring in its manners, thus seems appropriately named, the "Hermit." There are five western species of the Hermit Thrush.

373. (761) Eastern Robin

In the *Nomina Avium*, an English vocabulary of the 15th century, the name appears "robynet redbreast," literally interpreted "little robin redbreast." It was a name of endearment to Old World bird lovers. Our American robin was known to early colonists as "Fieldfare," so termed by Mark Catesby (1679-1749), who in his "History of Carolina" was the first to give any substantial account of American birds. William Bartram speaks of it as "Fieldfare" or "Robin Redbreast." Kalm mentions it only under the latter name. Two variant forms of the Eastern Robin are the Southern Robin and the Western Robin.

374. (763) Varied Thrush*

One meaning of "varied" is to be marked conspicuously or contrastingly with several colors. This contrast is evident in the colors of the underparts of the Varied Thrush; the bright rusty brown is conspicuously crossed by a blackish necklace.

375. (763a) Northern Varied Thrush*

Most bird authors omit reference to this bird. Though one may conjecture why "Northern," nothing definite was ascertained.

376. (766) Eastern Bluebird

A bird whose upperparts are uniform bright blue. Pennant called it "Blue-backed Redbreast." The Western Bluebird strongly resembles its eastern cousin. Only a trained eye will distinguish the two.

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