

RECORD

Best Spruce Head Island
Maine
1968

June 7

Arrived on the Island on May 25th. The birch and oak trees were in patchy early leaf. Birch catkins had already fallen but the oak flowers were still hanging like tangles from the ends of all the twigs.

The weather was cool with a north wind which blew icy gusts from the Bay of Maine and stifled most of the birds. The earliest and loudest arrivals were singing but other species were quiet.

Song Sparrows & White Throats and Blue-throated warblers green warblers and Paulina sang most persistently. In sheltered places in the older thickets Redstarts also were singing.

Found two song sparrows nests with eggs, one in north meadow and the other on the Clam Folly

A pair of Ospreys on Fish Hawk Point had taken over the large nest, which had been unoccupied for several years. There were 3 eggs in the nest thickly stained with chocolate brown. Many Eiders ducks were nesting along the shores of the Barren Islands and Great Spence Head. A few duckling families were already out on the water, but most of the ducks nests still held eggs. In two nest the eggs were hatching and the duck left in great agitation when I came upon her.

On the middle Chain Islands a colony of Common Terns had become established, at least about two dozen eggs nest containing one to three eggs. Four years ago I saw tern nest here, but I was told that the colony became established just

last year.

On May 27 I found a Pouch wren building a nest in aspen hidden on a dead spruce near the tripod on the top of the Head. And in the South Wood, where many balsam seedlings were replacing the trees that blew down several years ago I found the beginning of what looked like a Magpie's nest. The presumption that it was a Magpie's nest was strengthened by the presence of a female uttering her squawking distress note, or nesting note, which is diagnostic of nesting Magpies. Two days later nest was completed and was a typical Magpie's nest with the characteristic lining of black rootlets.

The next day I found another Magpie's nest in a small balsam, also only a foot or a half high, near the tripod. This nest was complete but

empt. The identification was based on its construction. Four days later it contained 4 eggs.

On May 28th I found a yellow warbler built a nest in a raspberry bush beside the boat house door.

The female was using the fibers from frayed rope on a stack of lobster pots. Several days later the bird began to lay and on June 7th the nest contained 5 eggs.

A second yellow warbler's nest containing 2 eggs was found in an elder bush near John's back door step.

During the last week in May and the first few days in June I identified the following common birds for Great Spine Wood Island.

1. a pair of bobolinks in the South Meadow.
2. a male Baltimore Oriole near the barn.

3. Swamp sparrow near garden
Swamp sparrow near the pond - driven away by a white-throat.

4. Chestnut-sided warbler near the garden

5. a pair of Wilson's warblers near the garden

6. a singing male Northern Water thrush in the elder swamp between the garden and the Big House. This bird has been singing in this location for 2 weeks.

It may be nesting. Another water thrush was heard singing near the pond, and a third behind the barn.

The commonest warblers on the island are:

Parula

Mocker

Black-throated Green

Yellow throat

Yellow warbler

Chimney Swift

Black & white
 Myrtle
 Less common residents
 or late migrant
 Black-burnian
 Wilson
 Chestnut-sided
 Northern water thrush
~~Redstart~~

June 8 Found two Baldpate nests.
 The first in an Alder notch
 15 feet high in swamp
 where the water thrush was
 singing. Female
 incubating.
 The second nest was behind
 the barn 8 feet high in
 an alder notch. 3 eggs.

Saw a female morning
 warbler in alder thicket
 by the garden. The bird
 had an indistinct eye
 ring like the female I
 photographed in Minnesota.
 It might have been a
 Connecticut, but this seemed
 unlikely in view of the

geographical location. That
 it was not a Warbiller was
 established by the absence of
 a yellow throat. The head
 and throat and eye breast
 were pale gray.

June 11 Other common birds on the
 Island that have been found
 nesting are
 Acadian Chickadee
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Swainson's (Olive-bodied) Thrush
 Veery.
 Robin
 Purple Finch
 Gold Finch
 Downy woodpecker
 Flicker
 Starling
 Bronzed Grackle
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Winter Wren
 Red-eyed Vireo

Yesterday located the nest of
 Acadian Chickadee in old nest cavity
 of Downy woodpecker 10 feet up in

dead birds. The birds attracted my attention by their characteristic squawking. As it developed I was standing in the woods 50 feet from the nest hole while for half an hour they fluttered about from branch to branch over me constantly uttering their plaintive protesting, dee, dee, like a whistled and muted imitation of their black-capped relatives. Finally they tired of their squawking complaint and flew to the nest cavity.

The Northern Water Thrush still sings from time to time. Nesting or incubation must be in progress.

A Canada warbler was singing and moving back & forth through the same area today.

The Redstart nest in the alder (No. 1) has been deserted. No bird was incubating and the nest was found to be empty.

At the base of a flicker hole, which I found several days ago, but out of which I could drive no bird, by tapping on

the tree, I found 6 flicker eggs, two cracked and four unbroken. I suspect this to be the work of shrikes, who have a habit of pre-empting or driving out flickers from their newly excavated holes.

June 12

Eider ducks gather off shore in the spring in groups of males and non-breeding females. They swim about the seaweed-covered rocks feeding on crustaceans and marine animals they find among the barnacles. When the breeding females have hatched their young they join the others in nursing groups of several females ~~and~~ with many ducklings, and occasionally male birds, which stay together in close flock. At times of danger or alarm the female with young swims out from the shore to deeper water with their ducks dragging them behind in a dense mass.

The ducklings then try to stay in contact with their mother or one another as they swim along. If a young bird is left behind by accident the mother duckling will bring it to her by a short cut across the water in which the young birds swim every means of propulsion at their disposal, both wing and feet. They seem suddenly to shrink the surface like miniature speed boats. At moments like this, the unmated female and male usually take to the wing flying off to a greater safe distance with a great splash and slipping of the water with wings and feet to gain speed and altitude.

When one walks along the shore on the trail behind the outermost trees, he will hear the ducks muzzling and quacking among the rocks

of the shore. They seem to be conversing about their affairs - the supply of food possibly and the bringing up of the ducklings. But they burst into louder sounds frequently in which calls like ooo ooo or who-who or choov, choov are common, interspersed with harsher notes and more guttural exclamations - arrow or arha or oovah or whoan. Every now and then a duck or drake will rise up in the water on his tail and flop his wings.

Found another Red-tail's nest near Looking Glass in an Alder crotch about 8' up.

Female was incubating and came off to feed and attend to the nest where she settled on her eggs.

Near by in a small opening in the Alder wood an out-crop I found a completed Alder flycatcher's nest in raspberry bushes. No eggs yet.

There seem to be fewer
Black-throated Green warblers
and more Ruby-crowned
kinglets this year. Maybe
there are fewer Redstarts too.
I wonder if getting DDT,
have caused this change
or the change in vegetation.
There seem also to be
fewer Parula warblers
which may be due to
a reduction in suitable
habitat. Many of the
usnea lichen-covered trees
have disappeared - the
lichen blown off or the
trees blown down. There
is still lichen, however, in
the taller trees and the
warblers may simply have
moved up among the
higher branches where they
are more difficult to reach.
but I don't know, I think.

Another cause for the
change in the populations
of the smaller birds could be
the increase in the

predator birds, such as starlings
and grackles. The starlings
are having a marked effect
on the fledglings or G.S.B.T.
by preempting the nesting
sites after they have been
excavated. I found a
Robin's nest in a woodpecker
cavity containing young.
The Robin made a great
otay which attracted
a Blue-winged white warbler, a
Redstart female and a Ruby-
crowned kinglet.

The Water-thrush still
sings at intervals. I do
not know whether this
indicates the ~~presence~~ existence of
an incubating female or
not. An unmated male?

June 17

Yesterday I found 2 Redstart
nest in high trees in swampy
areas. They were both about 8
to 10 feet high. The low nest
in an alder bush behind the
house had disappeared; I
suspect that this was the work.

gadder became gobbler
are constantly preening
there, and may nest too
in the open space.

I have observed a behavior
of female Redstart that
seems characteristic of
birds with eggs, and gives
one a clue to the whereabouts
of a nest or a way of finding
a nest.

Incubating Redstart female
leave their nests periodically
to feed, but they do not feed
the way non-incubating or unmated
female do. They instead
fly around very rapidly flitting
from branch to branch, spreading
their tail feathers and keeping
their wings partly open.
It is a quick jerky kind of
flight giving one the
impression of great agitation
and excitement. A female
Redstart behaving in this
manner is certainly an
incubating bird and if
she can be kept in sight

will be seen to go to her
nest, which she does ~~without~~
quite openly without hesitation.
All the time she is flying
about picking up insects on
the lower end back of trees
she utters a sharp chirp. It
is after this sound that
first attracts attention to
her. If she cannot be
followed to her nest directly
because of thick foliage,
the nest can be found by
noting the direction in
which she disappeared and
following it and examining
all the time carefully in the
neighborhood. If this procedure
does not lead to the discovery
of the nest, it may be found
by waiting for her next
preening expedition.

19 June
Photographed Magnolia warblers
at nest in sparse seedling. While
thus occupied I noticed a female
Redstart flitting from tree to tree
in the manner of an incubating
bird - excitedly and rapidly

picking insect from the
back & border of a group
of dead salmon fins. I guessed
that she had a nest nearby
in a clump of birches to
which she returned several
times and did not immediately
reappear. I examined the
each birch carefully but
could find no nests. After
returning to my photograph
I saw her appear again and
go through the same jerky
flight. As I watched from
where I was sitting she
flew up to a high crotch
in one of the birches which
by chance I could see through
a gap in the foliage. With
fingers I could see a nest.
The nest was not visible from
other directions or from
close to the tree because of the
foliage, which accounts for
my failure to discover it
during my search.

June 20

Most of the male Siskins
have disappeared from area

June 21

the shore and many females
are out with their ducklings
foraging among the rocks
at low tide

Found a Parula's nest in
a dead spruce about 15 feet to
6 feet. The first change in
position caused some brief
confusion to the birds, but
they quickly found it and
later looking seemed scarcely
to be noticed. They are
pale birds, very easy to
work with and photograph.

June 23

Found a Black-burnian warbler's
nest by walking the route
coming food to their young.
It was located 50 feet high
in a tall spruce halfway to
the end of a horizontal branch.
The young were about a week old
and a few days from fledging.
I looked the nest in the
afternoon, letting down the
nest branch only 2 feet in the
first step. Then greater distance.

on subsequent steps. Towards the end of the lowering I was able to bring the nest branch down as much as 6 feet or there. At no time were the birds confused by the lowering and fed their nest quickly after each change in position.

July 24 Took 50 pictures of Blue-burnian wabblers, many with the electric eye device for flight pictures.

July 7 Found a Redstart's nest built on a vertical branch of a fallen yucca. It contained 1 wabbling and 1 cowbird. The wabbling was precariously balanced on the back of the cowbird and would now have been pushed out of the nest had I not removed and destroyed the cowbird.

The adult Redstart was in summer plumage. The female like all other Redstart females gray with pale yellow sides and wing and tail patches.

The male was also gray on head and back but the yellow parts were a brighter yellow-orange and he had a more pronounced eye stripe than the female.

This was a case of a male Redstart breeding in juvenile, at least, pre-adult plumage.

This situation may explain the observation that females sing during the early breeding period and period of territory establishment.

These females may really be males in juvenile plumage.

East Africa

1 Sept. 1970

The weather cleared on the 31st left Nairobi with my new driver John Muthi at 8:30 Tuesday morning of the 2nd. It was cloudy when we started but by the time we reached Nairobi the sky was clear. We were headed for Nakuru to photograph the birds on Lake Nakuru.

The feeling of loneliness and desolation, which almost overwhelmed me, had quietly diminished. I still missed Steve and Pat very much. Every little thing they had participated in that I now did alone gave me twinges of nostalgia. The good weather, I am sure, had much to do with the improvement of my spirit. To be walking again was a great help even though it had only been a few days since we returned from Tsavo.

John and I arrived at the Stags Head Hotel in Nakuru by 10:30 in the morning. After

dashing in and ordering box lunch we drove down to the lake and I presented my letter from Philo authorizing free entry. The rest of the day passed photographing the birds, mostly flamingos. Towards evening the light became much better than it had been at noon - not so bright, but much more beautiful and dramatic. Pink clouds piled up across the lake against which the sunset pink birds stood out in relief. And the light on the still water was like reflections from glass. There was some rain and just before sunset the sun came out from behind the western clouds and gilded the thousands of flamingos.

2 Sept. 1970

After a 7:00 breakfast we returned to the lake. Few tourists, the day clear.

Feiler flamingos too. Many juvenile lesser flamingos but the adult were many less than yesterday. Also saw only a scattering of the greater birds. Even towards the end of the day they failed to congregate on the western shore of the lake as they had the day before when they flew over from the eastern side in flocks numbering hundreds of birds shortly before sunset. A contributing factor to this behavior yesterday may have been a thunderstorm with heavy rain that swept across the lake from the east. I have been told that at night the flamingos congregate on the west side of the lake where they come out on to the land to roost.

In any case relatively the cause of the congregation whether to roost or escape the rain, there were fewer birds today. The adults may have

gone off to another lake leaving the well grown young to care for themselves. Perhaps food scarcity has caused them to go and being more experienced than the birds of this year's generation knows where to go. Perhaps to Lake Hamington.

