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## Kentucky Warbler (Vol. 13, no. 4)

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# The Kentucky Warbler

Volume XIII.

FALL, 1937

No. 4

## FALL MEETING OF THE K. O. S.

"ON THIS CORNER STOOD THE GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORE OF JOHN JAMES AUDUBON—1810-1820."

Thus reads the memorial tablet marking the location of John James Audubon's store in Henderson, Kentucky.

Past yellow banks and red banks the Ohio winds through the "Penny-rile," curving a gentle course. On the Kentucky side the river flows by noble wooded, beautifully colored, autumn hills. The chirps and actions of migrating birds, the gentle falling leaves, the faintly audible odor of the fragrant, pungent "pennyroyal," lend a peaceful note to a lovely setting. The river curves where it is viewed from the site of the Audubon Mill Park. Here is the "corner" where the members of the Kentucky Ornithological Society will stand and pay silent tribute to the memory of the man from whose "store" of ornithological knowledge many of us received the "merchandise" necessary to sustain our enthusiasm and to urge us to carry on.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES

— A SKETCH —

By Dorothy Madden Hobson, Louisville, Ky.

August the twenty-second of this year marked the tenth anniversary of the passing of one of the greatest artists of bird-life—Louis Agassiz Fuertes, who was accidentally killed in crossing a railroad at Unadilla, N. Y. This untimely passing occurred while Fuertes was on his way to his home in Ithaca, N. Y., after he and Mrs. Fuertes had spent the preceding weekend with the Chapmans in the Catskills.

Of him Dr. Frank Chapman wrote: "His death at the age of fifty-four years, in his physical prime and when his art was approaching its finest expression, was an irreparable loss to ornithology and an overwhelming catastrophe to his friends. To me life has never been the same. Twenty-six years had passed since Fuertes and I had made our first trip together. The trials of camp life and the inconveniences of travel in remote places are too often beyond the endurance of fair-weather travelers, but with Fuertes they merely supplied the acid test that proved the pure gold of his nature. His clear-eyed, sunny temperament, his resourcefulness and generosity, his simplicity and genuineness, his spontaneous humor and originality of expression made him the ideal companion in

camp and out. One never tired of being with Fuertes. The end of each expedition found us planning another."

Fuertes' works were first brought to the attention of ornithologists in 1895 when Coues exhibited the work of his protege at the A. O. U. meeting in Washington, D. C. The following year when he was a junior at Cornell where his father was a professor, Fuertes, himself, appeared at the meeting of the A. O. U. and another group of his drawings was exhibited. They were the sensation of the meeting. He was at that time already illustrating **Citizen Bird** for Dr. Coues and Mabel Osgood Wright.

Beginning with **Birding on a Bronco** in 1896, the books he illustrated include **Citizen Bird**, **Birdcraft**, **Handbook of Birds of the Western United States**, **Coues Key Handbook of Birds of the Eastern United States**, **Upland Game Birds**, **Waterfowl**, **Birds of New York**, the **Burgess Bird Book** and the **Birds of Massachusetts**.

Although he is gone, much remains in Ithaca, N. Y., to remind one of the great artist who lived there. Many friends he had and about town it is said that he was always the best-loved member of the University community. These friends all have words of praise and admiration for the man. Two or three years ago, when a young Cornell professor, who had been reared in Ithaca, was visiting us in Louisville I asked him if he had known Fuertes, the bird artist. His face brightened and he half questioned, half exclaimed, "Uncle Louie?!" Fuertes, who had loved children and who had always maintained a keen interest in the Boy Scout organization had been his beloved scoutmaster. The bird sanctuary at the head of Lake Cayuga in Ithaca is a memorial to the artist-naturalist and is called the Fuertes Bird Sanctuary. It was dedicated on Memorial Day in 1933 while we were in Ithaca. The ornithology library also is named in his honor, being called the Fuertes Room. A collection of original Fuertes paintings decorates the walls, while the falcons the artist used as models are also on exhibition.

To me, one of the high points of last summer, which was spent in Ithaca, N. Y., was a visit to the Fuertes home there where his charming widow continues to reside. The cheerful fire burning in the fire-place, the old mahogany furniture, the books and pictures and gracious Mrs. Fuertes, herself, created an atmosphere long to be remembered. The numerous pictures on the walls claimed our attention at once; each picture was closely examined and admired while Mrs. Fuertes made interesting comments concerning it. The loveliest of all that of a flight of geese, hung over the mantle. Her husband saw this scene from the window of their home, "but, artist-like," she commented, "he didn't have the right kind of paper when he needed it, so he had to use two sheets of paper in order to have the size he desired." She added that many people had seen and admired that picture and had asked for it. It was a favorite of both Mr. and Mrs. Fuertes and they did not wish to part with it, so attention was always called by them to the seam in the center and they would exclaim, "You wouldn't want that!" Instead, Fuertes would make a copy on a single sheet of paper, but never did he succeed in duplicating the charm of the original.

On the wall to the right of the fire-place was a lovely painting of moths—this, too, was the work of Fuertes. A painting by Abott Thayer's daughter was admired. Her distinguished father, an artist-naturalist, the discoverer of "counter-shading" was a friend and teacher of Fuertes. The latter always gave Thayer credit for the technique he developed.

Mrs. Fuertes called our attention to a lovely flower painting suggestive of Japanese composition. A Japanese artist and admirer of her husband, but unknown to the latter, called upon him one day, but Fuertes was not at home. The caller left this painting as a gift to the "great Fuertes"

and asked to have his respects paid to the artist. Fuertes was delighted with the gift.

Clever Christmas cards Major Allen Brooks had sent Mrs. Fuertes were shown to us. At the time of his passing, Fuertes was working on the illustrations for Forbush's **Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States**. To complete this unfinished work, Mrs. Fuertes procured the service of Brooks.

Mrs. Fuertes unwrapped a huge package which contained a great number of sketches by her husband. They had recently been on exhibition at Goodspeed's in Boston. How carefully and almost reverently we handled those precious sketches! Many of them were recognized as those used to illustrate various bird books with which most of us are familiar. As we admired and studied these works of art she told us interesting bits about her famous husband. She said that unlike Mrs. Frank Chapman, who frequently accompanied her husband on expeditions, she remained at home "caring for the babies" while Fuertes went on the bird trips which took him to the Bering Sea, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, California, Nevada, Texas, Minnesota, Florida, the Bahamas, Yucatan, Mexico, Columbia and last of all Abyssinia. The wife of the artist never knew what to expect next. One night she arose to heat the baby's milk and to her consternation found and heard a Loon in the bath tub where her husband had placed it for an experimental purpose. She told of the enigmatic telegram heralding his arrival from an expedition, "Bombay and I will arrive" at such and such a time; **Bombay** proved to be a parrot—a male parrot Fuertes **thought** but to his surprise Bombay laid an egg on Feb. 22, whereupon the artist remarked, "Bombay cannot tell a lie." Mrs. Fuertes told about the suitcase prank played upon him by Dr. Chapman. The latter in his book **Autobiography of a Bird Lover** also relates the joke. It seemed that as Dr. Chapman and Fuertes boarded a train for Vera Cruz, Mexico, the former saw an old negress carrying a suitcase similar to the one Fuertes had packed to take on the trip. "See here, Louis," I said, "that woman has your suitcase." (Fuertes forgot for the moment that Chapman had persuaded him to leave that piece of baggage behind) "'So she has,' he answered, and with a 'That's mine, Auntie,' proceeded to dispossess her. Result, vociferous indignation on her part, realization and chagrin on Louis, unconcealed joy on mine."

As we were preparing to leave, our hostess asked if we would like to see Fuertes's studio which was apart from the house; but to my disappointment the key could not be found. George Sutton, who uses the studio when he is in town, had misplaced the key before leaving for the Adirondacks.

As a result of this memorable visit I came away from Ithaca with an original sketch by Louis Agassiz Fuertes—a beautiful head of the Wilson's Snipe, which was originally used to illustrate Florence Merriam Bailey's **Birds of the Western United States**.

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#### "SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND"

By Leonard C. Brecher, Louisville, Ky.

On quite a number of occasions I have been asked, "What do you see in looking at the birds all the time?" or "Why do you tramp the fields every time you get a chance, in preference to doing more useful, or more worthwhile things?" Well, the answer to those questions is that the same urge that possesses the explorer, the pioneer, or the laboratory research

worker is dominant here. In addition, there is the pleasure of meeting old friends as they return season after season, as well as the added satisfaction of greeting one that hasn't been seen for several years, or the thrill of meeting a distinguished stranger.

Many of these strangers with whom we would become acquainted are in our vicinity, available for an interview, if we are only there at the right time and place to greet them. Some of them are rather bold, and obligingly cross our paths, but others, of a more retiring nature, elude us and require the perseverance of a reporter to corner them. And so it is that I, along with countless others, go looking, greeting old companions, searching for an old acquaintance, awaiting a noted personage to add to my list of friends.

At the Falls of the Ohio, we of Louisville have a unique opportunity. These are no ordinary falls, in the usual sense of the word, but the bare exposed fossilized rock of the river bed. In the fall of the year, when the flow of the water is low, so that most of it is impounded behind the dam, there is an area several blocks wide and a mile long, filled with "pot holes," crevices, and flat rock, either dry or covered with shallow water. Here the shore birds gather to feed in fluctuating numbers—a veritable paradise for them and for the bird lover too.

On August 21, when the water was low enough to get out on this table land, a group of us found 5 Black Terns, 2 Caspian Terns, between 30 and 40 Killdeer Plover, about 6 Semi palmated Plover, 18 Semi palmated Sandpipers, 14 Least Sandpipers, 1 spotted Sandpiper, 2 Pectoral Sandpipers, 8 Lesser Yellowlegs, and 12 Green Herons. These were regular visitors or permanent residents, but the noted s'ranggers were also found. We had a beautiful view of 5 Snowy Egrets, resplendent in the sunlight. Their yellow feet showed clearly as they lifted their black legs out of the water. Then we had several very close views of a Willet. After we approached to within twenty feet it took wing, and a half hour later, while we were protected by a group of willows, it glided back, about 50 feet away. After trailing it, we noticed that it limped slightly, evidently having been hurt at some time. And to complete the afternoon's surprises, 2 Dowitchers were seen.

On another occasion almost a month later, on the 18th of September, we found a Golden Plover, 9 Killdeer Plover, 7 Spotted Sandpipers, 7 Sanderlings, 14 Pectoral Sandpipers, 2 Dowitchers, 6 Blue-wing Teal, 3 Black-crowned Night Herons, and an Osprey. Due to the fact that the water was rather high this day (as it had been more often this season than others), we couldn't get close enough to identify positively many smaller Sandpipers, Yellowlegs, and others. The high spot of this trip was watching the Osprey. It came from downstream, 'till almost opposite us, then it circled, swooped to the water near the Indiana shore, rose, circled and then, when directly over the middle of the stream, plunged abruptly into the water. It completely disappeared from sight and after a few seconds it emerged with a gleaming fish in its talons. It then headed for the Indiana shore where we thought it would perch. Instead, it rose higher and headed downstream and inland until it was lost to view in the clear blue sky. To us the amazing thing was the distance it flew before it found a suitable place to eat its meal.

However, bird life is not limited to the Falls of the Ohio, and just as many interesting finds can be made up the river, in the ponds, and even the hills. At various times in the first three weeks of September, I have seen Common Terns, American Egrets, Little Blue Herons (mostly the young with their white plumage), and Great Blue Herons.

On the 21st we saw a Duck Hawk, which is a very early record for this vicinity, but we had a very good view of him as he perched on a dead

tree on Goose Island. He was facing toward us and his large yellow feet and the black mustache-marks stood out clearly in the early morning sun.

On Sept. 19th I was out in the Oldham County hills, looking for warblers. I had turned my glasses on many of these yellowish creatures, now and then identifying a Redstart, a Black-throated Green, or a Chestnut-sided. For the most part they were too indistinctly marked for me to positive'y name them, but "Seek and Ye Shall Find." I was seated on a log watching a Flycatcher on a small dead tree about 30 feet away. Suddenly a small bird with a black throat flew to one of the dead branches. "Ch'ckadee," I murmured to myself as I swung my glasses to check. "What's this? A yellow head? Seems like I've got something here! It can't be a Black-throated Green—too clean and white and no wing bars. Wait, that's a yellowish patch on the wings—Boy, I remember that picture in Reed. The Golden Winged." Seek and ye shall find—only I've been seeking that one almost twenty years!

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#### NESTING OF THE WORM-EATING WARBLER IN HOPKINS COUNTY, KENTUCKY

On May 11th, 1935, while a small group of persons, myself included, were hiking in the woods near the Robert Schmetzer farm, about ten miles from Madisonville, one of the party, Charles Mangum, chanced to flush a small bird from its nest on the ground. He called to me and I found the nest to be that of the Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*). The nest was a neat little structure, built among leaves, and contained three white eggs, speckled with brown. Later, the nest, eggs and bird were collected, and these are now in the collection of Mr. Brasher C. Bacon, of Madisonville, Ky. This is, so far as I have any knowledge, one of the first established records on the nesting of the Worm-eating Warbler in the State of Kentucky.

—JAMES WILLIAM HANCOCK,  
Madisonville, Ky.

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#### RECENT RECORDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

A trip to Tunnel Mill Scout Camp, four miles east of Charlestown, Ind., on June 26, was made unusually interesting by the accidental discovery of a bird rarely seen in this neighborhood. Although the sun shone brightly there were in the distance dark clouds and an unmistakable thunderstorm. As I watched this distant storm from a hill top, I stopped to observe a few soaring Turkey Vultures through my glasses. Within the field of view there was another bird which had not been visible to the naked eye. Obviously different from the Vultures, with a tail comparatively long and narrow and the wings recurved somewhat from back to front, this bird soared higher and faster and with far greater ease and grace than the Turkey Vultures. It resorted to flapping only twice and then for only a few strokes each time, but I could see that its wing stroke was more rapid than that of a vulture. Once it glided to a height low enough so that its partly light, partly dark underparts could easily be seen. Its wing spread was two-thirds that of a Turkey Vulture. I watched it for fully five minutes before it went out of sight.

The bird was undoubtedly a Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia Misisippiensis*), and I remembered two other occasions when Mississippi Kites had been

discovered in a similar manner while in Bernheim Forest. Once, while I was observing a Cooper's Hawk through glasses, the Kite came into the field of view, far above and beyond the Hawk. Several hours later I saw the Kite skim across a wide gap in the trees just over the tree tops. On the second occasion, while watching Turkey Vultures in flight, I discovered a Kite soaring in the field of view, though it had not been noticed with the naked eye.

In this connection it may be interesting to note Alexander Wilson's observations concerning the Mississippi Kite:\*

"In my preambulations I frequently remarked this hawk sailing about in easy circles, and at a considerable height in the air, generally in company with the turkey buzzards, whose manner of flight it so exactly imitates as to seem the same species, only in miniature, or seen at a more immense height. Why these two birds, whose food and manners, in other respects, are so different, should so frequently associate together in air, I am at a loss to comprehend. We cannot for a moment suppose them mutually deceived by the similarity of each other's flight: the keenness of their vision forbids all suspicion of this kind. They may perhaps be engaged, at such times, in mere amusement, as they are observed to soar to great heights previous to a storm; or, what is more probable, they may both be in pursuit of their respective food. One, that he may reconnoitre a vast extent of surface below, and trace the tainted atmosphere to his favourite carrion; the other in search of those large beetles, or coleopterous insects, that are known often to wing the higher regions of the air; and which, in three individuals of this species of hawk which I examined by dissection, were the only substances found in their stomachs. For several miles, as I passed near Bayo Manchak, the trees were swarming with a kind of cicada, or locust, that made a deafening noise; and here I observed numbers of the hawk now before us sweeping about among the trees like swallows, evidently in pursuit of these locusts."

Though Wilson wondered at this association, our knowledge of aeronautics today teaches that in order to continue soaring, birds must remain in the field of rising air currents. Incidentally, such air currents exist to the front and to the side of an approaching storm. Since these currents are often local, soaring birds will frequent the same current and will therefore be seen together. As the location of air currents changes, the birds fly together as the current moves.

Wilson's writing also confirms my observation of the Kite skimming the tree tops, probably in pursuit of insects, even as they were seen a century and a quarter ago.

—FLOYD S. CARPENTER,  
Louisville, Ky.

\**American Ornithology* . . . by Alexander Wilson.

Edinburgh, 1831. Vol. I, P. 72-73.

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#### IMPORTANT NOTICE

On many occasions, we have called the attention of members of the K. O. S. to the request we have been making for back numbers of the Warbler. The wanted numbers are Vol. I, No. 4; Vol. IV, No. 3; Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 4. Anyone having these copies for sale, or who can give us information as to where they can be secured, are urgently requested to contact the Secretary, Miss Evelyn J. Schneider, of 2207 Alta Ave., Louisville, Ky., or to communicate directly with Mr. George Seth Guion, 1701 American Bank Building, New Orleans, La.

### LEON O. PINDAR CHAPTER ORGANIZED AT MADISONVILLE

At an enthusiastic meeting held at the Spring Lake Club, September 23, a bird and nature club was organized for the purpose of cooperating with the Kentucky Ornithological Society in the study and conservation of bird life, to engage in the study of nature in all its phases, and to encourage conservation of the natural resources of Kentucky.

Brasher C. Bacon, president, and one of the three founders of the Kentucky Ornithological Society, outlined the purpose of the meeting, including plans for a year's program of group activities which included Spring and Fall field days, overnight and weekend camping and weekly meetings at Spring Lake Refuge which will be maintained as headquarters.

The organization is to be known as the "Leon O. Pindar Bird and Nature Club," named for the late Dr. Leon O. Pindar, veteran ornithologist and one of the founders of the Kentucky Ornithological Society. The organization is an extra curricular activity of the Madisonville High School and under the direct supervision of Mr. Bacon. The faculty, composed of outstanding authorities on nature study and the out-of-doors were introduced to the club by Mr. Bacon and included: Mr. J. E. Threlkeld, club activities; Raymond J. Fleetwood, ornithology; Sherwood C. Nichols, forestry; James K. Harrison, woodcraft and camping; S. Jamerson Jones, Biological Survey Activities, and Miss Marguerite Winstead, girls camping activities. Adult and Student groups will be maintained.

The following officers were elected: Raymond J. Fleetwood, president; Robert J. Wilson, vice-president; Miss Thelma Gentry, secretary-treasurer; Miss Florence Tomblinson, James Kelley and Henry J. Tudor, councilors, and Jas. W. Hancock, curator.

MISS THELMA GENTRY, Secretary,  
Leon O. Pindar Bird and Nature Club.

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### JOHN JAMES AUDUBON CHAPTER ORGANIZED AT HENDERSON

A chapter of the Kentucky Ornithological Society was organized at Henderson, October 16th. The organization is to be known as the John James Audubon Chapter, named for the well known artist and ornithologist who lived in Henderson, from 1810 to 1820, and to whose memory the Audubon Memorial Park is dedicated.

Mr. Brasher C. Bacon, president of the society, assisted in the organization, outlining the purpose of the meeting, which also included out-of-door programs for the coming year.

The Audubon Chapter is very fortunate in the fact that it will have the Audubon Park and Museum for its studies. The local chapter will cooperate with the Kentucky Ornithological Society in the study of the bird life of Henderson County. It will function with the community of Henderson in promoting interest in John James Audubon and the Audubon Memorial Park.

Spring and Fall field days, weekly meetings, and field trips are planned to points of interest, all phases of nature will be included in the programs.

The following officers were elected: Mr. Virgil D. King, president; Mr. Fred T. Boone, vice-president; Miss Kathryn Gibson, secretary-treasurer; Miss Susan Starling Towles, Miss Maud Musgrave, Mr. David Clark, Mr. Oscar Letcher were elected councilors of the club.

MISS KATHRYN GIBSON, Secretary,  
John James Audubon Chapter.



## SWAINSON WARBLER IN BULLITT COUNTY

A trip to Bernheim Forest on June 27 brought another interesting discovery. Down along Wilson Creek, where a small branch enters, I came to a pool of water with much rank undergrowth; bulrushes abounded, and trees and weeds grew in profusion along the sides. There were many small birds in the trees, but one in particular attracted my attention as being very unusual. I thought immediately that it looked like a Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis Swainsoni*), but on account of its rarity began looking for the marks of the Worm-eating Warbler.

With me was Theo White, not an accomplished bird student, but a man with singularly accurate observation and keen hearing. I asked him to note carefully all the markings of this bird. For at least five minutes it stayed within thirty to a hundred feet of us and sang frequently its loud, clear, cheerful song, unusually loud for a warbler. Theo confirmed my observation that the top of the head was a solid color, that there was a dark streak through the eye and a light stripe above it; the underparts were whitish and unstreaked. I read to Theo from Peterson and Reed, without giving the names of the birds, the descriptions of all those with which the Swainson's Warbler might be confused; in each case he chose the description of the same bird as fitting our loud little songster. On showing him pictures, with the names covered, he again chose the same bird. In each case it was the Swainson's Warbler. The habitat and the nature of the song checked with the description in Reed and in the Handbook of the Warblers of North America. Since it sang so vigorously and continuously on this late June day, I conjectured that it was possibly a male singing in the region of its nest. Although we looked carefully, however, we discovered no nest.

I had never before seen a Swainson's Warbler in life. Only the skins in the C. W. Beckham Collection.

—FLOYD S. CARPENTER,  
Louisville, Ky.

## THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April, 1923

President.....Mr. Brasher C. Bacon, Madisonville, Ky.  
Vice-President.....Dr. Gordon Wilson, Bowling Green, Ky.  
Secretary-Treasurer—Miss Evelyn Schneider, 2207 Alta Ave., Louisville, Ky.

Meets annually in Louisville during the week of the Kentucky Education Association; in the fall at some town or park in the state.

Annual membership dues in the Kentucky Ornithological Society, \$1.00.

Address correspondence about the WARBLER to Burt L. Monroe, 207 No. Birchwood Ave., Louisville, Ky. Send dues to the Secretary-Treasurer.