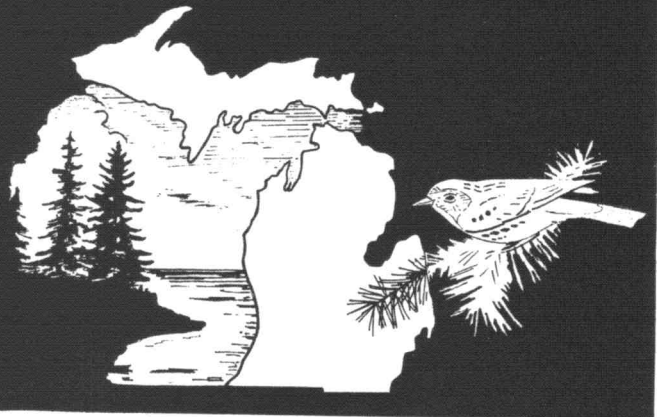


The MICHIGAN AUDUBON Newsletter



Volume 22 Number 4

Published by The Michigan Audubon Society

July-August, 1974

Who Started All This? Some Pioneers of Ornithology

Who were the men who first recorded their studies of the bird life of Michigan? Whose notes and writings constitute the earliest information we have about the avian life of these two peninsulas? From late 19th century authors, including particularly Thomas L. Hankinson (Michigan Agricultural College), we learn about some of them.

Probably the earliest serious statement about Michigan's birds was made by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the U.S. Indian agent who made his headquarters at Sault Ste. Marie. (This was the gifted geologist whose notes on Indian life prompted Henry W. Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha.") Records show that he lectured in Detroit in 1834 on "The Birds of the Upper Peninsula", and that he wrote an article on the Evening Grosbeak, "A Supposed New Bird."

The first important work was a list of 164 species known in the state, published by Dr. A. Sager in 1839. It probably contained all known species for Michigan. Rev. Charles Fox, in 1853, published the second list for the entire state, 212 species. Dr. Manly Miles (1826-1898), who completed his career at Michigan Agricultural College (now MSU), and whose name is still commemorated at that school, published in 1861 a list of 203 species.

INSTRUCTING THE PUBLIC

In 1869, D. Darwin Hughes, in the Marshall Democrat Expounder, published his "Birds of Calhoun County", listing 179 species. Beginning in 1870 he wrote a series in the Detroit Free Press, describing common birds. Hankinson evaluated Hughes thus: "Hughes' writings were a pleasant combination of the poetic and scientific nature. They not only gave valuable notes to the student of birds, but they were also of interest to the general reader. They were therefore widely read, and the interest therefrom was disseminated to many minds. For this reason and because Hughes was the first one to introduce our birds to the people of Michigan, we may well consider him the founder of the ornithology of our state."

Hughes was an attorney who practiced in Calhoun County. He recorded his personal observations there from 1867 to 1871, then, in 1872, moved to Grand Rapids, where he continued his observations.

According to Hankinson, the significant pioneering in ornithology in Michigan was done by six men—Dr. Morris Gibbs of Kalamazoo, Adolphe Covert of the University of Michigan, Maj. A. H. Boies of Hudson, W. H. Collins of Detroit, Charles Gunn of

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K. W. Census Disappointing

Results of the 1974 census of the Kirtland's Warbler were disappointing, according to the preliminary report of the annual count. Following two years of increase in numbers, the number of singing males recorded in 1974 dropped 23% over the number tallied the previous year.

The committee in charge of the Kirtland's Warbler Project will meet in early September to finalize the report, and to evaluate its findings. No final statements will be issued until after the session.

The Jack Pine Warbler (as it also called) is known to nest only in Michigan, only in jackpines of a certain height and density, and only in a few counties of the northern Lower Peninsula. When the 1971 census showed a 60% drop in ten years, a major effort was instituted to save and restore the numbers of this bird. This is a cooperative effort of the Federal and State governments, the Michigan Audubon Society and some of its chapters, and others. Habitat management, cowbird control, and educational programs for the public have been among its activities.

In 1961, 502 male warblers were found in 86 square sections of ten counties. Ten years later, in 1971, ornithologists were startled when only 201

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