

JOURNAL  
of the  
Tennessee Academy of Science

---

---

VOL. X

APRIL, 1935

NO. 2

---

---

THE BIRDS ON THE CAMPUS OF GEORGE  
PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS,  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE<sup>1</sup>

*(Continued from the October, 1934, Journal)*

JESSE M. SHAVER

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY, GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS

AND

COMPTON CROOK

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY, TENNESSEE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

SPRING TRANSIENTS

The birds that pass over the campus, occurring for from one day to several weeks, are called transients, and those transients that are found in the spring are called Spring Transients in this paper. This group includes by far the greatest number of species that are seen on the campus at any one time, as well as some of the most conspicuous birds. From mid-April to mid-May forms the period of greatest activity in the spring migration through Middle Tennessee. Warbler migration is then at its height, and many other brilliant species add to the wide variety of birds that may be seen and heard during this time.

It has been noted that during the general movement, prior to nesting time, there is considerable adjustment even among the species that are permanently resident in a region. Birds that have wintered in an area may move on farther north to nest, their places being taken by other individuals of the same species that have wintered farther south. Thus, while the species is resident, the individuals definitely may not be.

Further, even individuals which spend the year in a limited area undoubtedly move a great deal within that area. Some species that

---

<sup>1</sup>Field observations here recorded are the work of Professor Crook (the junior author). The senior author advised and guided the work, but took no actual part in the field work. The present form of the paper is in part the work of the senior author.

are transients on Peabody Campus are either Summer Residents or Permanent Residents in the Nashville region as a whole. The campus, with its limited series of habitats, may not provide suitable nesting places or sufficiently abundant food for certain species to nest and rear a brood, but it may serve as a temporary stopping and feeding place during the general spring movement.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker, for instance, is a common Permanent Resident of the hillside woods around Nashville. It seems never to have found a nesting site suitable to its needs on Peabody Campus. Whatever the reason, it does not nest, although the junior author suspects that it has nested in the past in the more extensively wooded area of the adjacent Vanderbilt Campus. However, the bird only occurs as a transient on Peabody Campus. The Tufted Titmouse has a similar status, as has the Meadowlark, although the sub-specific status of the last named probably varies with the season.

Many species arriving from the south to nest in the Nashville region pause for from a few days to more than a month on Peabody Campus. These birds are true Spring Transients from the standpoint of the campus, but not, of course, from the standpoint of the region as a whole.

The time of arrival and departure of Spring Transients is given in Table 1. Only the common names of the birds considered are given since these are now standardized and may be found with the corresponding technical names in the *Checklist of the American Ornithologists Union* (1931). The time of arrival and departure of migrants for the Nashville region is based mostly on the report of Monk.<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to recall again that no adequate collection of Middle Tennessee birds exists at present. Since no birds were collected in this study, subspecies have been determined arbitrarily on the basis of geographical distribution as given in the 1931 Checklist.

#### SUMMARY OF SPRING TRANSIENTS

A certain number of Nashville region Permanent Residents, Winter Transients, and Summer Residents were transient on the campus. However, the migrants formed the more conspicuous, as well as the greater number of campus Spring Transients. Of these the warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and thrushes formed the bulk. Warblers alone composed almost half of the entire group.

Arrival dates on the campus were as a rule well behind average arrival dates for the Nashville region. Only one species, the Eastern House Wren, appeared before its scheduled arrival in the region.

Departure dates, however, showed a somewhat different proportion. Thirteen species left the campus earlier than the Nashville region average dates for their departure, but ten species remained later, in

<sup>2</sup>Monk, Harry C. 1929. Bird Migration at Nashville. *Jour. Tenn. Acad. Sci.*, 4:65-77. This paper was based on the work of three observers and is several years old. It therefore does not represent present knowledge.

TABLE 1

*Spring Transients—Arrival and departure dates on the campus of George Peabody College for Teachers in 1932 compared with the earliest and latest dates for the Nashville region*

NAME OF BIRD	Peabody Campus	Nashville Region
	Arrival—Departure	Arrival—Departure
Tufted Titmouse.....	Jan. 6—May 10	Permanent Resident
Southern Meadowlark.....	Feb. 19—May 8	Permanent Resident
Eastern House Wren.....	Mar. 23—May 2	Apr. 1, '22—Apr. 30, '22
Eastern Phoebe.....	Mar. 26—Apr. 3	Feb. 24, '23—Summer R.
Brown Creeper.....	Apr. 1—Apr. 2	Winter V.—Apr. 22, '23
Myrtle Warbler.....	Apr. 1—May 11	Winter V.—May 19, '16
Eastern Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	Apr. 2—May 5	Mar. 4, '16—May 14, '21
Eastern Red-winged Blackbird.....	Apr. 2—May 11	Feb. 13, '22—Summer R.
Eastern Hermit Thrush.....	Apr. 3—Apr. 16	Winter V.—Apr. 27, '16
Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	Apr. 8—May 19	Permanent Resident
Black and White Warbler.....	Apr. 17—May 25	Mar. 18, '22—Summer R.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.....	Apr. 18—May 4	Mar. 12, '23—Summer R.
Western Palm Warbler.....	Apr. 19—May 10	Apr. 8, '22—May 17, '24
Eastern Cowbird.....	Apr. 19—May 6	Permanent Resident
Scarlet Tanager.....	Apr. 19—May 6	Apr. 16, '22—May 27, '17
Purple Martin.....	Apr. 21—Apr. 24	Mar. 17, '21—Summer R.
Olive-backed Thrush.....	Apr. 26—May 28	Apr. 16, '21—May 29, '27
Black-throated Green Warbler.....	Apr. 27—May 10	Mar. 20, '21—May 29, '19
Yellow-breasted Chat.....	Apr. 27—May 5	Apr. 16, '22—Summer R.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	Apr. 27—May 13	Apr. 18, '21—May 19, '20
Ovenbird.....	Apr. 28—May 23	Apr. 13, '18—May 26, '17
Tennessee Warbler.....	Apr. 29—May 12	Apr. 21, '16—May 25, '17
Blackpoll Warbler.....	Apr. 29—May 23	Apr. 18, '24—June 1, '17
Gray-cheeked Thrush.....	Apr. 30—May 31	Apr. 8, '21—May 30, '17
Eastern Kingbird.....	May 2—May 14	Apr. 13, '19—Summer R.
Bay-breasted Warbler.....	May 5—May 10	Apr. 19, '24—May 24, '20
Magnolia Warbler.....	May 6—May 29	Apr. 18, '20—May 22, '24
Veery.....	May 7—May 29	Apr. 24, '21—May 18, '19
American Redstart.....	May 7—May 15	Apr. 12, '19—Summer R.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird.....	May 8—May 8	Apr. 14, '23—Summer R.
Blue-winged Warbler.....	May 9—May 9	Apr. 7, '21—Summer R.
Blackburnian Warbler.....	May 9—May 10	Apr. 7, '18—May 18, '16
Chestnut-sided Warbler.....	May 9—May 12	Apr. 22, '20—May 19, '19
Least Flycatcher*.....	May 10—May 17	No data
Yellow-throated Vireo.....	May 11—May 13	Apr. 6, '22—Summer R.
Eastern Warbling Vireo.....	May 12—May 15	Apr. 5, '21—Summer R.
Lincoln Sparrow.....	May 12—May 18	Apr. 16, '22—May 21, '21
Mountain Vireo†.....	May 16—May 17	Apr. 19, '16—May 16, '26
Short-billed Marsh Wren.....	May 17—May 18	No data
Wilson's Warbler.....	May 17—May 21	May 5, '17—May 21, '23
Canada Warbler.....	May 21—May 23	Apr. 28, '21—May 22, '17

\*Since this group of flycatchers are very difficult to separate in the field, the junior author is not positive of this identification.

†There is a possibility that this might have been the other subspecies—the Blue-headed Vireo.

several instances later than they have been recorded before in this region.

It is interesting to point out the occurrence of two birds in this

group which, according to their usual habits, would scarcely be suspected of migrating through a closely settled area, or to spend several days in even so well appointed an oasis as the campus provides. Yet further observation might prove that each is a consistent Spring Transient on the campus.



Fig. 1. Ice-covered shrubbery along the road by Social-Religious Building, March 20, 1934. Such masses of shrubs are frequented by Cardinals, Mockingbirds, and latter by Brown Thrashers and Catbirds.

The first of these, Lincoln's Sparrow, was recorded by the junior author on May 15, 1932, in the same small patch of cover where he had previously seen it on April 26, 1931. These apparently are the only records for the campus, but the bird might easily have been overlooked for years among the White-throated Sparrows with which it

associated. The disparity in time of arrival for the two years indicates how incomplete is the picture given by observations for only one year. The 1931 date is much more nearly in accord with the arrival date for the Nashville region, while the 1932 record is late for the Nashville region.



Fig. 2. An ice-covered privet hedge along the road back of the Home Economics Building, March 20, 1934. The berries are a great source of winter food for the Mockingbird. Later Chipping Sparrows, Mockingbirds, Cardinals, Brown Thrashers, and Catbirds use the hedge for nesting sites.

The Short-billed Marsh Wren seen on May 17 and May 18 gives the campus its only records. Nashville region records of the bird in migration, either in spring or in fall, are too few to allow any conclusions to be drawn. The bird seen was very shy and retiring and

hard to flush from the row of iris where it had established itself, suggesting that it, too, may have been overlooked in years past.

One other bird identified with the Spring Transients should be mentioned especially. Four records of the Least Flycatcher were made. The identity of this small flycatcher was not verified by the only method that would have been conclusive, that of taking a specimen and comparing it with a series of skins in a collection. Yet the authors feel that there is little doubt that the identification is correct. They realize that there are few field workers who separate certain of the several members of the genus *Empidonax* in the field, when the birds are silent. However, the junior author had unusual opportunity to study these birds, and his identification was checked by the senior author. The records are therefore included in this study.

The case of the Eastern Warbling Vireo should also be mentioned here. This bird should actually be listed as a Summer Resident, since it was present and nested for a number of year prior to 1932. However, on the basis of 1932 occurrence, it must be classed as a transient. In 1933 it returned to nest, successfully rearing a brood.

*(To be continued)*