BIRDS OF CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY.

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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WESTFIELD, N.Y.

—BY—

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In a paper of this character it is of course impossible to give any extended description of our various species of birds, or their habits, songs, plumage, migration, nests and eggs, or to more than touch upon the numerous other interesting branches of the subject. I shall endeavor to do little else than present a list of such birds as have actually come under my observation in the course of considerable rambling about the fields and forests of the central part of the county, during several years past. This will comprise just 150 species, which I think embraces all that are in any degree common in the locality mentioned. There are a number of other species whose occasional presence is probable and whose names could doubtless be safely added, but having as yet never actually met with them, I prefer to wait till I can speak of them authoritatively. This is offered only in the absence of more complete data.

Hylocichla mustelina, The Wood Thrush is a forest bird possessed of a beautiful song, of which much has been written, but it is not common in this region.

H. ustulata swainsoni, The Olive-backed Thrush is rare.

H. unalascae pallasi, The Hermit Thrush is common, and his clear flute-like voice is familiar to every one who has occasion to enter the cool shade of the forests in summer. It arrives in April.

Merula migratoria, The Robin is undoubtedly the most widely distributed and abundant of our birds. It makes its appearance in February or March, depending upon the weather.

Galeoscoptes Carolinensis, The Catbird is a near relative of the Mockingbird and also remarkable for great versatility of voice, is a common summer resident, coming in the latter part of April or first of May.

Harporhynchus rufus, The Brown Thrush or Thrasher occasionally resides with us during summer, but is by no means common.

Sialia sialis, The Bluebird, one of the earliest spring arrivals, is very common. It usually makes its appearance about the same time as the Robin. The Bluebird's eggs are blue, ordinarily, though I once discovered a nest containing pure white ones. This is sometimes the case.

Regulus calendula, The Ruby-crowned Kinglet and *R. satrapa*, The Golden-crowned Kinglet, among the smallest of our birds, slightly exceeding the Hummingbird in size, are with us during their migrations in April and October.

Parus atricapillus, The Black-capped Titmouse or Chickadee, though small in size, has the hardihood to stay with us during the entire year; and is frequently seen in the door-yard in cold weather. Common.

Sitta Carolinensis, The White-bellied Nuthatch is common, most so in winter. Its coat is ashy-blue, black and white. Its manner of alighting on trees resembles that of the woodpecker, though it as often stands head downward as the reverse.

S. canadensis, The Red-bellied Nuthatch is a rare migrant in spring and autumn.

Certhia familiaris rufa, The Brown Creeper, a migrant, is not common.

Troglodytes ædon, The House Wren, a well-known species, is common, arriving about the middle of April.

Anorthura troglodytes hyemalis, The Winter Wren is rare.

Telmatodytes palustris, The Long-billed Marsh Wren, is not common except in localities.

The family *Sylvicolidæ*, American warblers, is an unusually entertaining group, containing a large number of little birds about the size of a Wren or slightly larger and resembling one another closely in size, habits and song, but presenting a great variety of bright feathers. They are, with few exceptions, strictly forest birds. To this family belong the next eighteen species.

Mniotilta varia, The Black-and-white Creeper occurs usually as a migrant, though I have known it to nest here.

Parula Americana, The Blue Yellow-backed Warbler is rare. I have seen it only in spring.

Dendroica æstiva, The Yellow Warbler or Summer Yellow Bird, the best known of the family, frequently builds its nest in a lilac bush or shade tree of the door-yard, and but that it is a quiet, modest, little fellow might be familiar to everyone. It may be easily distinguished from the other Yellow Bird, the Thistle Bird or Goldfinch by its lacking the undulating flight and the black wings and crown of the latter, and by its activity and restlessness. Its under parts and the sides of

the head are rich yellow: the back and wings are olive-green. It arrives in spring about May 1.

D. caerulescens, The Black-throated Blue-Warbler is not uncommon as a transient visitor. It reaches this county early in May.

D. coronata, The Yellow-rump Warbler or Myrtle Bird is common as a migrant; and is the earliest warbler to arrive in spring and lingers latest in autumn.

D. maculosa, The Black-and-yellow Warbler or Magnolia Warbler, a very beautiful member of this brilliant group, is with us in large numbers about the second week of May. I have seen the woods fairly alive with them while the other warblers seemed scarce in comparison. It passes the summer far to the northward, ordinarily, though last June I discovered a nest of this species containing three eggs—a rare privilege.

D. Pennsylvanica, The Chestnut-sided Warbler is a common resident and may be found during summer on the outskirts, rather than in the heart of the woods. Owing to its small size it is not conspicuous. Its song is pleasing though simple. It arrives early in May.

D. Blackburniae, The Blackburnian Warbler is considered the most beautiful of the warblers, and is common as a transient visitor in the early part of May. His plumage is a beautiful combination of orange and black. I once took a specimen on the 26th of June, which I consider strong evidence of an instance of its nesting here, an unusual occurrence in this latitude.

D. virens, The black-throated Green Warbler is common about the first or second week of May, and I am satisfied occasionally remains with us during the summer. As its name indicates, its plumage is mostly olive-green, except the sides of the head, which are yellow, and the throat and breast which are black

D. pinus, The Pine-creeping Warbler. I have taken but a single autumnal specimen, and owing to its imperfect plumage there may be a doubt as to its identity.

Seiurus Aurocapillus, The Golden-crowned "Thrush," or Oven Bird, though it is now classified with the warblers, differs consiberably from all the others of the family in appearance and habits. It is consiberably larger, has a more powerful voice, and spends a large portion of its time on the ground. It is colored olive-green, with a white speckled breast and yellowish crown. It receives the name of Oven-Bird from its peculiar nest, which is constructed on the ground and so carefully covered that it is very difficult to find. One that I found was located in the depths of the woods, near the centre of a smooth spot of ground, away from trees or logs to protect it, and was

observed only when the bird darted out almost beneath my feet. The nest was a model of bird architecture composed of leaves and and grasses and roofed with a matting of dead leaves resembling those that covered the ground, which concealed it completely. It was entered by a very narrow door-way. The song of this bird is peculiar and may be easily recognized; it consists of the repeated utterance of two notes, beginning very low and rapidly increasing in volume. A common denizen of the forests in summer, arriving in the latter part of April.

S. ~~noveboracensis~~ naevius, The Small-billed Water Thrush, or "Wagtail," is somewhat similar to the last species in appearance, except that it is somewhat darker in color. I have seen it only about streams in swamps, where it was found running along the muddy banks and tipping its body and tail after the peculiar manner of the sandpipers. From this habit it derives the name of "Wagtail." It is a transient visitor, not common.

Geothlypis Philadelphia, The Morning Warbler, is rare.

Oporornis agilis, The Connecticut Warbler. I have taken two or three late summer specimens that I have assigned to this species, though, owing to the fact that with this family in many cases the coloration of the feathers is the only distinguishing character, and that the autumnal plumage is very imperfect, there is room for error.

Myiodioctes mitratus, The Hooded Warbler is one of our most beautiful as well as the most common warblers. It is olive-green above, yellow beneath, tail marked with white; whole head and neck pure black, with a broad golden mask across the forehead and through the eyes, and as it faces you its head presents the appearance of being encased in a black hood. According to authorities the range of this species is limited and it is nowhere very common. Yet it reaches this latitude and with us is a summer resident by no means rare. It is an inhabitant of the depths of the woods, where it may be frequently seen and more often heard. According to my observations it sings much later in the season than other birds, being frequently heard after nearly all the other birds have become silent.

Myiodioctes pusillus, The Black-capped yellow Warbler, a migrant, is not common.

M. canadensis, The Canadian Fly-catching Warbler is a common migrant, and, I think, to some extent a resident. Most common in early May.

Setophaga ruticilla, The Red-start, whose feathers present a beautiful combination of black and orange, is a common inhabitant of our woods in summer.

The family *Vireonidæ*, or Greenlets, is composed of several quite remarkable birds of small size, which, though they are clad in plain colors, have pleasing songs. Their range is not limited to the woods and some of them may frequently be heard among the shade trees in town, though owing to their strictly confining themselves to the tree-tops, and their inconspicuous plumage they are seldom seen. They all reach this country early in May.

Vireosylvia olivacea, The Red-eyed Vireo is the most common of the family. A summer resident.

V. gilva, The Warbling Vireo is also quite common and a resident.

Lanivireo flavifrons, The Yellow-throated Vireo is not very common as a migrant and still less so as a resident.

L. solitarius, The Blue-headed or Solitary Vireo is rare.

Vireo novaboracensis, The White-eyed Vireo is a rare resident.

Lanius borealis, The Great Northern Shrike, or Butcher-bird, is not uncommon in late fall and early spring and sometimes all winter.

Ampelis cedrorum, The Cedar-bird, Cherry-bird or Wax-wing, (which last name it derives from the red wax-like appendages with which certain feathers of the wing are tipped,) is a very beautiful bird. It is a common resident, though its habits are very erratic. It is more numerous some seasons than others, and arrives sometimes early in March and lingers often till winter has fairly set in.

Of the swallows we have a greater variety than would be supposed by persons unfamiliar with them, who fail to detect the difference of species. We have five, not including the Chimney "Swallow," which is no swallow, notwithstanding its name. The position in which each species builds its nest is peculiar and characteristic.

Progne subis, The purple Martin is not uncommon in certain localities, arriving from the South about the first of May. For its nest it prefers a bird-box.

Petrochelidon lunifrons, The Cliff or Eave Swallow is very common. The nest is always placed under the eaves of a barn or other building.

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Hirundo erythrogastra, The Barn Swallow is also very common. Its nest is always inside and usually attached to a beam or rafter of a barn or similar structure.

Tachycineta bicolor, The White-bellied Swallow is not common except locally. It nests in bird-boxes like the Martin.

Cotyle riparia, The Bank Swallow, Ground Swallow or Sand Martin is not uncommon. Its nest is placed in a hole several feet in length, excavated by the bird, in a bank of fresh earth, usually the bank of a creek. The swallows all arrive about the middle of April or a little later.

Pyranga rubra, The Scarlet Tanager, about the size of the bluebird, is perhaps our most brilliant forest bird. It is bright scarlet except the wings and tail, which are black. It arrives early in May and is a summer resident, but not very common.

The *Fringillidae*, or Finches, are a large and interesting family. They may be distinguished by their thick, strong bills. Nearly all of them are singers of greater or less ability, and many of them are among our most delightful vocalists. They are mostly birds of the field, rather than of the forest. As a rule they are plainly colored; yet there are marked exceptions. I have made the acquaintance of seventeen of them, as follows:

Carpodacus purpureus, The Purple Finch, or Linnet, has a very vigorously warbled song, which it sometimes pours forth almost unceasingly for hours. It is common, arriving from the South in March.

Astragalinus tristis, The American Goldfinch, Yellow-bird or Thistle-bird, though not much given to rendering it, has a beautful song. Even his most ordinary notes have a sweetness and apparent good nature that cannot fail to make him a favorite. It usually appears in April in small numbers, though there is little certainty about the time of its coming. It sometimes remains nearly all winter. Although an early arrival, it does not build its nest till several weeks later in the season than other birds. As the reason of this, it has been suggested, that they wait for the thistle seeds, which largely form the diet of the young birds.

Plectrophanes nivalis, The Snow Bunting, is a not very common winter visitor.

Passerculus sandwichensis Savanna, The Savanna Sparrow is a rarely noticed though not uncommon species. With several other plainly dressed little birds it is carelessly called "Ground Bird" by the inattentive observer.

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Poocætes gramineus, The Grass Finch, Bay-winged Bunting or Vesper bird is the little gray bird that is seen upon the fences or running along in the dust of a country road, and may be recognized by the lateral white tail feathers that are seen when it flies. Its song is remarkably clear and may be heard a long distance. It is common, arriving about the first of April.

Zonotrichia leucophrys, The White-crowned Sparrow, is common about the first of May and in October.

Z. albicollis, The White-throated Sparrow, like the White-crowned, is a large, strong bird, and is commonly seen in company with the latter during migrations.

Spizella Montana, The Tree Sparrow may be frequently seen in the early and latter parts of winter.

S. domestica, The Chipping Sparrow, a well known visitor of the door step arrives early in April and is a common resident.

S. pusilla, The Field Sparrow in appearance is scarcely distinguishable from the last species, though it differs widely in habits and song. A common resident, reaching this locality early in May.

Junco hyemalis, The Snowbird, is white beneath, upper parts including breast dark slate color, and has several white tail feathers. It is a summer resident, though most common early and late in winter.

Melospiza fasciata, The Song Sparrow, perhaps better known by the humbler appelation of "Ground Bird," has nothing very attractive in its appearance, yet is not without fame as a musician. Its song is first heard about the middle of March, and next after those of the Robin and Bluebird. One of our most common birds.

Passerella iliaca, The Fox-colored Sparrow is a rather rare migrant.

Pipilo erythrophthalmus, The Chewink or Fowler is a quite common summer resident, making its appearance about the second week of May.

Zamelodia ludoviciana, The Rose-breasted Grosbeak is a very handsome bird, dressed in black and white, with a rose-red breast; slightly smaller than the robin. It is a fine singer. Its song bears some resemblance to the Robin's, and might possibly be mistaken for it, though the Grosbeak's is much the richer. It is not an uncommon inhabitant of our woods and groves, and it sometimes visits the shade trees of the villages. It is first seen about the second week of May.

Passerina cyanea, The Indigo Bird or Bunting, is found on the outskirts of the woods and among the bushes of the pasture lands. It need not be confounded with the bluebird, for it is not larger than

the Goldfinch and nearly its entire plumage is dark blue. It arrives about the second week of May and is common.

Passer domesticus, The English Sparrow, is one of the very few European species that have been successfully introduced into this country. Indeed, it is now thought that this enterprising little foreigner has attained more than his share of success, and like the Chinaman he is no longer a welcome citizen. I am unable to say when this bird first took up its residence in Chautauqua county. It was first seen in Sinclairville in 1879. It is hardly necessary to say that the Sparrow is a perennial resident and very abundant.

We have eight members of the Starling family:

Dolichonyx oryzivorus, The Bobolink appears about the first week of May and is common. His dress of black and white is exchanged about the first of August for one of yellowish brown, after which the noisy, good natured Bobolink becomes a silent, restless Reedbird or Ricebird, and his best friend scarcely knows him.

Molothrus ater, The Cowbird, so named from its seeking the society of cattle, is not uncommon. It is about the size of the Bluebird, its body dusky and head glossy brown. It never builds a nest, but is noted for the scandalous practice of depositing its eggs in the nests of other birds.

Agelaius phoeniceus, The Red-winged Black-bird, is a common resident, appearing about the middle of March.

Sturnella magna, The Meadow Lark is a common resident during summer, and is occasionally seen in mid-winter.

Icterus spurius, The Orchard Oriole is rare.

I. galbula, The Baltimore Oriole, attired in orange and black, is a very noticeable bird. Its voice is loud and piping, and its song varies with the season. It is remarkable for architectural skill, building a very ingenious pensile nest. It is common in summer, coming early in May.

Scolecophagus ferrugineus, The Rusty Blackbird, is a migrant, with us about the first of April.

Quiscalus purpureus, The Purple Grakle or Crow Blackbird, is a common resident, arriving in March,

Corvus frugivorus, The Crow is common, during summer and remains with us during mild winters.

Cyanocitta cristata, The Blue Jay is common in localities throughout the year.

Eremophila alpestris, The Shore Lark is occasionally found at all seasons, but is not common.

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Tyrannus Carolinensis, The Kingbird, arrives about the first of May, and is common during summer.

Myiarchus crinitus, The Great Crested Flycatcher, is a not very common resident.

Sayornis fuscus, The Phoebe Bird appears early in April, and is a common resident.

Contopus virens. The Wood Pewee, is a common summer resident, reaching this country in April.

Empidonax acadicus, The Acadian Fly catcher is rare.

E. minimus, The Least Flycatcher or Chebec is common during summer, arriving about the first of May.

Trochilus colubris, The Ruby-throated Hummingbird, is first seen about the second week of May and is common in summer.

Chaetura pelasgica, The Chimney Swift, or Swallow, appears in the latter part of April, and is common till October. It is tireless on the wing and never alights except in chimneys or other dark recesses and in such its nest is placed.

Caprimulgus vociferous, The Whip-poor-will is rare.

Chordeiles Popetue, The Nighthawk, comes from the south in May and is not uncommon during summer. They may be seen in large numbers about the first of September.

The Woodpeckers form a strongly marked group, all bearing a resemblance to each other in appearance and habits. Their plumage as a rule presents bright colors; their voices are harsh and unmusical. The nests are always placed in holes excavated by the birds in trees. We have at least eight species.

Picus villosus, The Hairy Woodpecker, is with us throughout the year; not uncommon.

P. pubescens, The Downy Woodpecker, is almost exactly like the last, except in size, being smaller; and is also more or less common during the entire year, though perhaps more noticeable in winter.

P. arcticus, The Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker is a rare winter visitor. I took my first and only specimen on the 29th day of last December.

Sphyrapicus varius, The Yellow-bellied Woodpecker is a regular spring and autumn visitor, to be found in April and October.

Hylotomus pileatus, The Pileated Woodpecker, or Log Cock, is the largest of the family, nearly equaling the crow in size, is always to be found in spring and fall, and sometimes spends the summer in this region.

Centurus Carolinus, The Yellow-bellied Woodpecker, is a not common migrant.

Melanerpes erythrocephalus, The Red-headed Woodpecker, a very beautiful and common species, is to be found throughout the year.

Colaptes auratus, The Golden-Wing Woodpecker, Flicker, Yellowhammer or High-hole, is probably the handsomest and most abundant of the tribe. It is a summer resident only, arriving early in April.

Ceryle alcyon, The Belted Kingfisher is common about lakes and water courses. It is most numerous in summer but is frequently seen in the severest winter weather.

Coccyzus erythrophthalmus, The Black-billed Cuckoo comes from the south about the middle of May, and is quite common during summer.

Strix nebulosa, The barred Owl is not very common.

Scops asio, The Screech Owl, is not uncommon.

Bubo Virginianus, The Great Horned Owl is not very common.

Nyctea scandiaca, The Snowy Owl is seen only occasionally in winter.

Falco peregrinus naevius, The Peregrine Falcon or Duck Hawk, is rare.

Aesalon columbarius, The Pigeon Hawk, is rare.

Tinnunculus sparverius, The Sparrow Hawk is common in certain localities during summer. It seems to have a preference for particular fields or nesting places and resides there regularly every season for years. This beautiful little hawk is the smallest of the family, and the only one whose plumage is at all gaudy.

Circus Hudsonius, The Marsh Hawk, or Harrier, is a rare summer resident.

Accipiter cooperi, The Cooper's Hawk is not common.

A. fuscus, The Sharp-shinned Hawk, is not uncommon.

Buteo borealis, The Red-tailed Hawk, or Hen Hawk, with the next species, is a very powerful bird. It is not rare as a resident during summer.

B. lineatus, The Red-shouldered Hawk, resembles the preceding species in size and habits, and is also quite common.

B. Pennsylvanicus, The Broad-winged Hawk is rare.

Haliaetus, leucocephalus, The Bald Eagle or Gray Eagle is not uncommon about Chautauqua lake during its migrations.

Ectopistes migratoria, The Passenger Pigeon, was formerly very numerous in this region, but is now not common.

Zenaidura Carolinensis, The Mourning Dove or Turtle Dove is frequently a summer resident in certain localities.

Bonasa umbellus, The Ruffled Grouse or Partridge is not migratory and is more or less common throughout the county.

I have not been able to make extensive investigations concerning the wading birds, but will mention such as I have met with.

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Ardea herodias, The Great Blue Heron, is not uncommon. It arrives about the first of April and remains sometimes till December. By many persons it is mistaken for the sandhill crane, which it much resembles in appearance. I have never seen the crane.

Butorides virescens, The Green Heron, is common about Chautauqua Lake during summer.

Botaurus lentiginosus, The American Bittern, is not very common. I have met with it most frequently in Spring and fall.

Squatarola helvetica, The Black-bellied Plover, is rare.

Charadrius dominicus, The Golden plover is rarely seen in the central part of the County.

Oxyechus vociferous, The Kill-deer Plover, a very handsome bird, is common in localities, during summer. It reaches this latitude usually in April.

Philohela minor, The Woodcock, a well known favorite of the sportsmen, is not uncommon. It is, however, more numerous some seasons than others.

Gallinago media wilsoni, The Wilson's Snipe also stands high in the estimation of the sportsmen, and is more or less common in April and October.

Totanus melanoleucus, The Greater Yellow-legs, is rare.

T. Flavipes, The Yellow-legs is not common.

Rhyacophilus solitarius, The Solitary Sandpiper is rare.

Tringoides macularius, The Spotted Sandpiper, known as "Tip-up," "Teeter-tail," etc., is common about all water-courses, appearing in April.

Rallus Virginianus, The Virginia Rail is frequently seen in early fall.

Porzana Carolina, The Sora Rail occurs like the last, though perhaps more numerously.

Fulica Americana, The Coot is not very common.

The swimmers, with one or two exceptions, are to be found in this region only during their migrations in spring and autumn. Then they are more or less common on all our lakes and streams. It is difficult to ascertain correctly the relative abundance of the different species. I will give simply the result of my experience.

Olor Americanus, The American Swan, is rare.

Bernicla canadensis, The Canada Goose is not uncommon.

Anas Boschas, The Mallard is quite common. I have sometimes seen it in winter.

Anas Obscura, The Dusky, or Black Duck, is also quite common and is frequently seen throughout the winter, wherever there is open water to be found.

Dafila acuta, The Pintail is not very common.

Mareca penelope, The Widgeon is not uncommon.

Querquedula discors, The Blue-winged Teal is quite common.

Nettion carolinensis, The Green-winged Teal is not uncommon.

Aix sponsa, The Wood Duck, a very beautiful bird, is quite common in spring and fall and to some extent throughout the summer.

Fulix marila, The Scaup Duck, or Bluebill, is not uncommon.

F. affinis, The Little Black-head, or Little Bluebill, is not very common.

Aethyia Americana, The Red-head is common.

Clangula glaucium Americana, The Golden-eye or Whistler, is common.

C. Albeola, The Butter-ball, or Buffle head, is common.

Harelda glacialis, The Long Tailed Duck, Old Squaw or Coween, is not very common.

Melanetta fusca, The Velvet Scoter, is not very common.

Erismatura rubida, The Ruddy Duck, is not uncommon

Mergus merganser Americanus, The Merganser or Shell-drake, is quite common during winter about streams where the current keeps the water from freezing.

Lophodytes cucullatus, The Hooded Merganser, is common.

Larus marinus, The Great Black-backed Gull, is rare. I have seen it only on Lake Erie.

L. argentatus, The Herring Gull, is not uncommon.

L. Philadelphia, The Bonaparte's Gull, is the smallest and most common gull.

Podilymbus podiceps, The Thick-billed Grebe, or dipper, is common.

Colymbus torquatus, The Loon, is not very common.

With the encroachments of civilizations upon the forests, doubtless some species of birds have diminished in numbers, and some disappeared altogether, while many others have increased in abundance. This is a very interesting subject for investigation, but owing to the want of an accurate knowledge of the birds by the average observer,—the same with the early settlers as at the present day—it is difficult, in many cases, to obtain reliable data. An acquaintance with the influences which govern the distribution of the birds is, perhaps, more useful in solving these problems.

However, I am reliably informed that the Quail, (*Ortyx Virginanus*,) was formerly to be found in this county and was not entirely extinct until a quite recent date. The Wild ~~Field~~ Turkey, (*Meleagris gallopavo Americana*,) was also occasionally met with by the early inhabitants, but I am inclined to think was never very common.