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100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

The Auk 121(3):984, 2004

General Notes published in *The Auk* in 1904 (new series vol. 21, old series vol. 29) were almost entirely about species distributions, mostly in the United States and, to a lesser degree, Canada. Most were based on newly collected specimens. Several authors commented on the bitterly cold winter of 1903–1904, and it was a flight year for many northern species. For example, three notes were about the influx of Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*) into New England and Long Island, New York.

Three notes concerned Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*), a species that was still quite mysterious 100 years ago. Its nest had been discovered in Michigan during summer of 1902 (see Auk 120:1213), and Edward Arnold managed to collect both members of a pair, their nest, and four eggs in the same county on 15 June 1904. He stated that it was the first complete clutch of the species ever collected. Arthur Wayne (21:83–84) reported collecting a "very fat" young male in South Carolina on 29 October 1903, the latest date for collection of this species and only the third specimen taken in the United States during fall migration. A. H. Helme (21:291) reported the collection of a female during spring migration on Cumberland Island, Georgia, on 12 April 1902. Additionally, there were five notes each on new locations of Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) and Henslow's Sparrows (*Ammodramus henslowii*).

One gets the impression that it would be difficult for some species to occupy new areas or recolonize extirpated regions because of the collecting of rarely seen birds. For example, a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) collected in the District of Columbia in November of 1903 (21:79–80) was "of considerable interest to local ornithologists," because that species may not have been seen there for at least 45 years.

Francis Huntington Snow, the noted entomologist and ornithologist at the University of Kansas, published two notes concerning birds in Kansas. In 1903, he had published the fifth edition of *A Catalogue of the Birds of Kansas*, and both notes updated it. In the first note, he restored the Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) to the state, on the basis of a specimen collected in Wichita in 1896, and was "almost ready" to add Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) or "Chaparral Cock" to the state list. In a postscript to the note, he confirmed that roadrunners did occur in the state and also added Black-throated Green Warbler (*D. virens*), bringing the state list to 345 species and varieties. In the second note, Snow added Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) and reinstated White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*) based on specimens of each. The latter appeared in earlier additions but was removed from the 5th edition for lack of a specimen.

In a note on ornithological trivia, Francis Allen reported on a Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) collected in Ipswich, Massachusetts that had a 0.05-inch (13-mm) hind toe (21:79). Sanderlings have only three toes, which separates them from all other sandpipers. Allen stated that this must be a case of "reversion, as the ancestors of the Sanderling were doubtless four-toed sandpipers."

In another note entitled "The rapidity of the wing-beats in birds" (21:286), Jonathan Dwight Jr. discussed a "neglected phase of the problem of flight." He had been watching Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) following steamboats and noted that they averaged about 180 wing-beats a minute. Calling this an "almost untouched field," he ended his short note by observing, "The subject is a large one and I merely wish to stimulate interest in it, by thus lightly touching upon it."

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