

wife noted brown spots on its breast. My impression was that the bird was small for a Barred Owl, a species with which I am very familiar. It was not large enough to consider the possibility of a Snowy Owl. Almost every night during the summer we heard Barred Owls hooting from this same patch of woods.

[The smaller size of this owl, together with the brown spots on its breast, make it likely that it was an albino Barn Owl rather than a Barred.—JRH, JFP]

## The Nesting Season Status of the Blue-winged Warbler in the Carolinas

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**NORTH CAROLINA**—The only published evidence that the Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) nests or nested in North Carolina was a vague statement in *Birds of North Carolina* (Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley, 1942) that Coues reported it as breeding in Buncombe County, presumably in the 1880s and 1890s. *Birds of North Carolina* (1959 edition) listed a June record for Mt. Mitchell in Yancey County but, of course, supplied no details. Despite fairly extensive field work in the mountains during this century, nothing has been published concerning the occurrence of the Blue-winged Warbler during the breeding season. However, on 14 June 1968 Mary Enloe recorded a Blue-winged Warbler on a Breeding Bird Survey route in northwestern Graham County (data courtesy of the Migratory Bird Populations Station in Laurel, Maryland). Also, Eloise Potter observed a non-singing Blue-winged on 11 July 1964 (see article below) near Fontana Village in northern Graham County. She believed the bird was on territory. Since the three counties in the southwestern corner of the state (Graham, Cherokee, and Clay) generally have been neglected by ornithologists and the species occurs sparingly in northern Georgia (*Georgia Birds*, 1958), I believed that the Blue-winged might be widespread in this part of North Carolina, yet occur nowhere else in the state in the summer.

On 20 June 1974 I surveyed roadside habitats from southwestern Clay County to western Cherokee County, looking and listening strictly for Blue-winged Warblers. Beginning at Warne in Clay County at 06:15, I proceeded into Cherokee County and through Ranger, Suit, Hiwassee Dam, Unaka, and ending at Murphy at 11:00. I recorded five Blue-wings, all singing, at four places in Cherokee County, but none in Clay County. One bird was a mile SE of Suit and two were 3 miles N of Suit. Another was 2 miles W of Unaka, and the last was 1 mile W of Unaka. Three of the males were seen by using a tape recording of the song to bring the birds within 30 feet of me.

Practically the whole route censused lies between 1,500 and 2,000 feet, and the five birds were found between 1,650 and 1,800 feet. All birds were in basically the same habitat—overgrown fields with scattered deciduous saplings from 3 to 15 feet high on fairly level to gently sloping ground. None were found where the saplings formed a thicket. In general, the birds sang from trees on the edge of the field, 10 to 25 feet up in the trees, and only occasionally sang from the saplings in the field.

I saw no evidence of nesting, but the males were obviously on territory and presumed to be nesting. Thus, at the present time, the Blue-winged Warbler can be called a summer resident in the western halves of Graham and Cherokee counties, even though actual evidence of nesting is lacking.

**SOUTH CAROLINA**—On 12 June 1974 I found a singing Blue-winged Warbler along Eighteenmile Creek approximately 3 miles ESE of Central, S.C., in extreme southern Pickens County (elevation, 750 feet). I heard the song twice before I got a 3-second glance at the bird about 40 feet high in a deciduous tree at the edge of a powerline clearing. About 30 seconds after I saw the bird, it flew across the clearing (a low and shrubby thicket) and

emitted an unusual jumble of notes and buzzes while it was in midair! The warbler landed in trees on the other side of the clearing and was lost from view.

On 13 June I returned to the area and heard the bird singing about 10 times from trees along the edge of the clearing; however, I was unable to locate the bird. On 15 June the bird was heard singing about four times but could not be seen. I made several other trips to the area later in June but neither saw nor heard the warbler.

This is the first breeding season record for the Blue-winged Warbler in South Carolina. Even though the bird was on territory, the record should not be considered a breeding range extension because it most likely was an unmated male at least 50 miles to the east and southeast of the normal nesting range.

## **A Blue-winged Warbler Seen in Summer Near Fontana Village, N.C.**

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The following report is submitted for publication at the suggestion of Harry E. LeGrand Jr., who recently completed an intensive study of wood warbler distribution in North Carolina. From 10 through 12 July 1964, I birded in the vicinity of Fontana Village, Graham County, N.C., while waiting for my husband to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail which passes across Fontana Dam. During these three days I hiked trails near the village (2,000 feet) and the dam (1,700 feet) and made one field trip the morning of 11 July without benefit of a trail. From a point on NC 28 about halfway between the village and the dam, I descended the gorge below the dam as far as seemed safe for me to proceed alone. Near the highway at the edge of a brushy clearing beneath power lines, I noted a male Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) and a male Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*). About the time I decided to retrace my route, I saw an Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) foraging beneath some laurels and rhododendrons growing near, but not immediately beside, a small stream. When I squeaked in an attempt to lure the Ovenbird closer to me, two brown birds emerged from a dense thicket to peer at me. One I readily identified as a Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*); and the other, after due consultation with my Peterson field guide, I determined to be a Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*). The birds were very tame, seeming to be more curious than afraid. Although the Swainson's and Worm-eating Warblers soon slipped again into the depths of the impenetrable thicket bordering the stream, the Ovenbird continued to forage without seeming to be aware of my presence. When I returned to the roadside, the Blue-winged and Black-throated Green Warblers were exactly where I had seen them earlier in the morning. My impression was that all these birds were on territory. Other wood warblers seen on my rambles around Fontana included the Black-and-white, Northern Parula, Yellow, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers and the American Redstart.

## **Comments on the Field Identification of Sharp-tailed Sparrows**

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LeGrand (*Chat*, 38:76) recently reported the occurrence of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*) in Anderson County, S.C. The subspecies identification was based upon field observations of two birds seen near Townville, 19 May 1974.

The A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds* (1957, 5th edition) lists the following races of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Eastern (*Ammospiza caudacuta caudacuta*), Acadian