

me in the yard with a 7 X 50 binocular in hand. The resident chickadees and titmice still were calling excitedly and chasing about the trees near the edge of the golf course. The object of their attention seemed to be a small bird hovering at the tip of a branch. The small size, generally greenish color, white around the eye, and hovering flight reminded me of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet; therefore, I followed the bird when it flew to a nearby oak. Here, in good light at a distance of no more than 30 feet, I saw a vireo completely new to me. The crown, cheek, and back were uniform light olive-green. The tail and wings were dark greenish, and wing bars were not at all distinct. The throat and breast were white; the under tail coverts and belly were yellow; and the sides appeared to be white. White spectacles outlined the dark eye. I watched the bird for several minutes as it crept about the branches, hovered at their tips, and twice remained motionless in full side view. At no time did I see any field mark that suggests the bird was anything other than a Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*).

Red-eyed, White-eyed, and Yellow-throated Vireos nest in or near my yard, so I am accustomed to seeing juveniles of these species. I am aware that young White-eyed Vireos have dark eyes; but the white spectacles immediately eliminate this possibility just as effectively as the vireo's heavy bill removed the kinglet from consideration.

Although there is no published record of this Western and Midwestern species from the Carolinas, the Bell's Vireo is known to occur east of the Appalachian Mountains. The first collected specimen for the New York City area was taken on 25 September 1970 by Paul Buckley and party (*American Birds*, 25:35). In Florida the species is known as a fall transient and winter visitor. Four Bell's Vireos were seen at Key Biscayne on 14 September 1968, and one was banded at Homestead on 5 November 1968 (*American Birds*, 23:39). One Bell's Vireo was reported from Fort Lauderdale on 26 December 1966, where one had been found twice previously in winter (*American Birds*, 21:411).

[The acceptance by the records committee of this carefully documented observation and its publication in *The Chat* will allow Bell's Vireo to be placed on the Hypothetical List for North Carolina. This species, very difficult to identify unless the observer is thoroughly familiar with the species, will require further documentation before being placed on the official North Carolina list. Observers are urged to obtain photographs or if possible to arrange for the legal collection of such birds for positive verification.—DEPT. ED.]

## The Advent of the Song Sparrow as a Breeding Species in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountain Province

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The Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)<sup>1</sup> has extended its breeding range into the southern Blue Ridge Mountain Province and adjacent piedmont within recent historical times. Formerly, the bird occurred only as a winter resident in the region, arriving in early October and departing by late April (J.S. Cairns, unpublished records). In the early 1900s, however, the species became established as a summer resident down the main crest of the southern Appalachian mountains and then began extending its range onto the piedmont plateau (Pearson et. al., 1919; Burleigh, 1958; Sykes, 1966). Previous analyses of this influx, however, have overlooked several early records.

In an unpublished manuscript, J.S. Cairns (1894) made the following observation regarding the Song Sparrow in Buncombe County:

"An abundant winter visitor and a rare summer bird. Found on Craggy Mtn May 20th & June 1st 1892 & 93."

Cairns' previous publications (1887, 1889, 1891) had listed the species as a winter

resident only. Subsequently, Cairns mentioned the bird in a letter to William Brewster, dated 11 March 1895:

"Have found Song Sparrows ... several times on Craggy in the month of June."

Cairns' death in June 1895 precluded any further observations from Buncombe County until Pearson found the species breeding there in 1902.

Farther south, Bradford Torrey (1898) discovered the species singing in "a dense swampy thicket" on the Highlands Plateau, Macon County, N.C., on 25 May 1896. Recognizing the significance of the record, Torrey remarked:

"So far as I am aware, no bird of this kind has ever before been reported in summer from a point so far south."

Except for a single report by Laurents at Cranberry in 1892, these observations are the only known summer records of the species from western North Carolina prior to 1902. Although only single birds were reported, the records by Laurents, Cairns, and Torrey suggest the rapid establishment of the Song Sparrow as a summer resident in widely scattered locales through the southern Blue Ridge in the 4-year period of 1892-1896. In contrast, the subsequent spread onto the piedmont appears to have been a much slower process, occurring after a sizeable breeding population had become established in the Blue Ridge.

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