

General Field Notes

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Three Recent Sight Records of Bachman's Warbler

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Of the 37 known nests of Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*), 32 were found by Arthur T. Wayne (field notes and collection books, Charleston Museum) between 1906 and 1919 in I'On Swamp about 20 miles NE of Charleston, S.C. The species was observed there again from 1948 through 1953 (E.B. Chamberlain, *Chat* 22:73-74, 77). Three recent sight records indicate that it may still frequent the area.

John Lamey, of Toronto, Canada, visited Mayrant's Backwater in I'On Swamp on the morning of 19 March 1974. At the edge of a cypress swamp he "heard an unfamiliar buzzy, trilling song." Squeeking brought the bird into view and "almost immediately the singing stopped and I [Lamey] became aware of a small yellowish warbler moving rather deliberately in the cover just along the edge of the path at 8-10 feet up from the ground level. The black throat and cap combined with the yellow cheeks and face as well as yellow underparts told me I was dealing with a male Bachman's Warbler."

T.A. Beckett III and Stan Langston were playing recorded songs of various warblers at the end of Clayfield Road in the Francis Marion National Forest portion of I'On Swamp on 20 April 1975. Light intermittent showers were falling. "We had been getting an excellent response to the tape and had been at the site for perhaps an hour when I saw a bird hovering on the underside of a leaf trying to remove what appeared to be a small worm. When it succeeded it lit on the limb and I immediately saw that it was an adult male Bachman's Warbler—had 8 power binoculars."

Without naming the bird, Beckett pointed it out to Langston who also immediately identified it as Bachman's Warbler. Both Langston and Beckett were certain of the identification, and state they never felt or expressed any doubts about it. Beckett has had extensive field experience with Bachman's Warbler, perhaps more than any other living ornithologist.

Andrew Uterhart and his wife Marion were with me [Shuler] on I'On Swamp Road on 29 March 1976. I left them at the south bridge in order to check another area. When we met again, they told me that they had seen a Bachman's Warbler. Dr. Uterhart presented an account of the observation to the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Ornithological Society. It was forwarded to me by Burt L. Monroe Jr. in a letter dated 7 May 1976. The letter also vouched for Dr. Uterhart's ability.

The Uterharts were playing taped songs of several warblers, including Bachman's, when, "Suddenly I noticed a warbler appear high in a leafing tree on the West side of the road, and alight on an isolated cypress snag about 40 feet above me. With my 7x50 binoculars, I was able to observe the bird for about a minute. I noted the yellow undersides, the dark above, the black bib, yellow head and absence of wing-bars.

"Immediately I called Marion's attention to the bird's location. Her first remark, as she studied the warbler through binoculars, was 'It ought to be a hooded, but it lacks

a hood.' We could not distinguish complete crown or back details because of its height above us, but could clearly see face and chin areas in entirety. The warbler was silent and virtually motionless during this interval. Then it flew directly back to the foliage from whence it came, and we were able to confirm all the above details in passage. After comparing notes and consulting the two field guides, we concluded that we had without doubt seen an adult male Bachman's Warbler."

Some of the information in this note was taken from my unpublished manuscript "Bachman's Warbler and Its South Carolina Habitat." This was completed in April 1976 and is on file with the Charleston Museum. Accompanying it are the letters and documents quoted above. I thank Julian R. Harrison for telling me of John Lamey's observation and giving me his address.

[Assoc. Dept. Ed.—The individuals responsible for the Bachman's Warbler sightings described above are known as reliable and experienced observers. One of them, Beckett, has had extensive field experience with the species. In this editor's opinion, the details provided are convincing; however, independent verification of the sightings by other competent observers is lacking in all three instances. Therefore, the three records of Bachman's Warbler reported in this note must be treated with the caution due all sight records of rare birds. Publication of reports on additional sightings of the species in the I'On Swamp area is highly desirable.]

A New Look at the Type Locality of the Bachman's Warbler

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In his description of Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*), Audubon (1834) said of John Bachman's discovery, "The first obtained was found by him a few miles from Charleston, in South Carolina, in July 1833 while I was rambling over the crags of Labrador." This is the source for the type locality given in the AOU Check-list (1957). A letter from Bachman to Audubon dated 27 March 1833 and published by Ruthven Deane (1929), however, pinpoints the type locality and proves Audubon in error as to the date.

In that letter Bachman wrote of the bird he had just taken, "I was coming from Maj. Lees & near Parker's ferry heard a soft & pleasant note that was new to me." He shot the bird, but it lodged in the moss in the tree, and he continued toward Charleston. "Three miles further" he heard the song again and secured the bird. Mills' Atlas (1825) shows the name of the swamp there as Cawcaw Swamp, but the USGS Cottageville 15' quadrangle labels it Cardin Bridge Swamp, with Cawcaw Swamp contiguous and about a mile to the south. This places the type locality about 30 miles W of Charleston.

Parker's ferry of Bachman's day was located some 7 miles upstream from the point where US 17 crosses the Edisto River at Jacksonboro, and is not the same place as the Parker's Ferry on US 17, just east of Jacksonboro, S.C. The road Bachman used no longer crosses the river, but county road 317 follows the old route for much of its length in the area, and forms the boundary between Dorchester and Charleston counties. Thus, it is impossible to say in which of these two counties the type male was taken.

After discussing the discovery of the type female, Audubon (1834) wrote, "Shortly after, several were seen in the same neighbourhood. . . ." That Audubon meant the neighborhood of Parker's ferry is shown by Bachman's letter (Deane 1929). He also collected the types of Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) in the same vicinity (Audubon 1834) in the spring of 1832. Because the Edisto River at Parker's ferry marks