

LABRADOR CHICKADEE (*PENTHESTES HUDSONICUS*  
*NIGRICANS*) IN ITS RETURN FLIGHT FROM THE  
FALL MIGRATION OF 1916.

BY HORACE W. WRIGHT.

THE extraordinary southward migration of *Penthestes hudsonicus nigricans* into New England and still farther south in the fall of 1916 was described with some detail in the issue of 'The Auk' for April, 1917. Almost all the individuals which had been noted in the vicinity of Boston had passed on by the middle of January. Mr. H. L. Barrett, however, recorded four remaining birds in the conifers of the Arnold Arboretum in the months of February, March, and April, his latest observation of these birds having been on April 19. Presumably, therefore, these four birds became winter residents, remaining from a flock of twelve birds noted in December. Other March records of *P. hudsonicus*, which have been furnished me, are those of one bird heard at Ipswich by Dr. C. W. Townsend and Dr. A. A. Allen on March 11, which was so elusive that by their best endeavors they were unable to get a glimpse of it; and one bird taken at Providence, R. I., by Mr. Harry S. Hathaway on March 18. This bird was sent to Dr. Townsend for identification and proved to be *nigricans*.

Some few, but definite data of the return flight of '*hudsonicus*' were obtained in May, when other northern breeding birds were appearing, such as Crossbill, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and northern nesting warblers. On May 4, as I passed through the centre of Belmont, the characteristic calls of two brown-capped Chickadees answering one another were heard in conifers on private grounds bordering the village street. I was not able to obtain a view of these birds, but their presence in trees of the village indicated that they were migrating. Again, on May 14, when I was in the Fresh Pond Reservation in Cambridge, four brown-capped Chickadees were seen in the deciduous trees of that portion known as Kingsley Park, occasionally flying out over the pond, but returning successively to the trees and giving their characteristic calls. These birds were in comparatively open park lands entirely removed



from such haunts as '*hudsonicus*' lives in and were without question migrating. While I was not able to ascertain the subspecific type in either of these cases, the presumption is that it was *nigricans*, since that was the type present in the fall and winter, as ascertained by Dr. Townsend,<sup>1</sup> which appeared in some abundance and moved on southward to Long Island, Staten Island, and New Jersey.

Mr. H. H. Cleaves writes me that one of the four Staten Island Labrador Chickadees learned to eat from one of his cocoanut feeders before starting north, the other three birds having left early, some time in January or early February.

Other May records of '*hudsonicus*' furnished me were these: two birds seen by Mr. Harold S. King with three Black-capped Chickadees at Waverley on May 6 [Townsend]; two birds seen in the Arnold Arboretum by H. L. Barrett on May 13; one bird seen by Mr. Francis H. Allen on his place at West Roxbury on May 18; one heard at Woodstock, Vermont, by Mr. Richard M. Marble on May 14. Mr. Allen writes, "I followed it [*hudsonicus*] about for some time, getting plenty of views of it, but none where I could compare the crown with the back to determine the subspecies. I had heard the bird — or another of the same kind — a few days before, but had not seen it." And Mr. Marble informs me that the lunch-counter-feeding brown-capped Chickadee at Woodstock, mention of which was made in my paper on Labrador Chickadee in 'The Auk' for April, 1917, a typical *littoralis*, disappeared about the first of April. So the May bird observed by him was presumably a migrant.

Mr. H. Mousley of Hatley, Province of Quebec, through Dr. Townsend furnishes exact testimony as to the subspecific type of the migrant birds found there. Dr. Townsend received two Labrador Chickadees in the flesh from Mr. Mousley taken by the latter at Hatley on May 14. Later he received another specimen of *nigricans* taken at the same place by Mr. Mousley on May 16. Dr. Townsend writes me, "On May 21 Mr. Mousley took three more 'typical *nigricans*' which he sent to the Victoria Memorial Museum at Ottawa." And subsequently Dr. Townsend wrote me, "Mr. Mousley took another ♂ *nigricans* at Hatley on May 30."

---

<sup>1</sup> Auk, vol. XXXIV, April, 1917, p. 160.



Mr. Mousley thus writes Dr. Townsend under date of May 28, 1917, "I have to-day heard from Ottawa that the three Labrador Chickadees have turned out to be one male and two females, so out of my six examples half are ♂'s and half ♀'s. I saw one more example on Sunday the 27th by "itself." This fact of sex equality in number leads Dr. Townsend to remark, "This would look as if the birds were paired and travelling together. I found the organs considerably enlarged."

The definite determination of the subspecific type of *hudsonicus*, taken at Hatley, P. Q., from the middle to the end of May, namely, as Labrador (*nigricans*), without variation, furnishes a fair basis for the presumption that the birds seen about Boston earlier in May, from the fourth to the eighteenth, were of the same subspecific type, and, appearing after an interval of absence, were individuals of the large fall migration of 1916 on their return flight north at the time of the migratory flight of other northern nesting birds. For such a succession of records of '*hudsonicus*' in May in this region, I think, has never been paralleled in the past. When *P. h. littoralis* has appeared, which has been quite infrequently, in the passing years, so far as records show, only a bird or two had been occasionally seen in the autumn until the migration of 1913, which was unprecedented.<sup>1</sup> Whether that was essentially a migration of *P. h. littoralis* or *nigricans* remains somewhat in doubt. Dr. Townsend has identified the bird taken by Mr. J. L. Peters at Harvard, Mass., on November 5, 1913, as a male of the *nigricans* type, and on the other hand one of the nine or more Belmont birds, taken on November 20, 1913, now in the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, at Cambridge, as a female of the *littoralis* type. It was assumed at the time my paper was written to be a flight of *P. h. littoralis*, for the type *P. h. nigricans* had not then been established. But Dr. Townsend has now rendered the service of determining that the migration of 1916 was essentially that of *P. h. nigricans*. Since there was no similar May migration in 1914, following the large fall migration of '*hudsonicus*' in 1913, the birds disappearing by January or early February, may it be a fair assumption that the birds of the 1913 migration were for the most part of the more

---

<sup>1</sup> Auk, vol. XXXI, April, 1914, p. 236.



southern type *littoralis*, Acadian, while the late returning northward birds of the present season from the fall migration of 1916, as being farther north residents, would naturally be the Labrador birds, the *nigricans* type?

---

## THE BIRDS OF WALLA WALLA AND COLUMBIA COUNTIES, SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON.<sup>1</sup>

BY LEE RAYMOND DICE.

THE first definite knowledge of the vertebrate fauna of southeastern Washington was secured by J. K. Townsend (1839) and Thomas Nuttall, who, accompanying a trading expedition across the continent, reached, on September 3, 1834, the Hudson's Bay Company's post of Fort Walla Walla, situated on the Columbia River at the present site of Wallula. They remained here only a few days when they proceeded down the river to Astoria. The following year Townsend returned to Fort Walla Walla and remained in that region from July 6 until September 3.

In 1857 the United States government established Fort Walla Walla as an army post at the present site of Walla Walla. This is more than fifty miles from the former Hudson's Bay Company's post of the same name, and the fauna and flora of the two regions are somewhat dissimilar. Some uncertainty in scientific literature has been caused by the confusion of these two places.

Capt. Chas. Bendire was stationed at Walla Walla for several years, being there at least from August, 1879, until some time in 1881.

Belding (1890) has published a considerable number of brief notes from Walla Walla on birds observed by a person variously quoted as Dr. Williams, J. W. Williams, and once as D. T. Williams. These references probably refer to the same individual. From the

---

<sup>1</sup> Contribution from the Zoölogical Laboratory, Kansas State Agricultural College, No. 16.



Wright, Horace Winslow. 1918. "Labrador Chickadee (*Penthestes hudsonicus nigricans*) in Its Return Flight from the Fall Migration of 1916." *The Auk* 35, 37–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072377>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54099>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072377>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/90334>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries

**Sponsored by**

Smithsonian

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.