

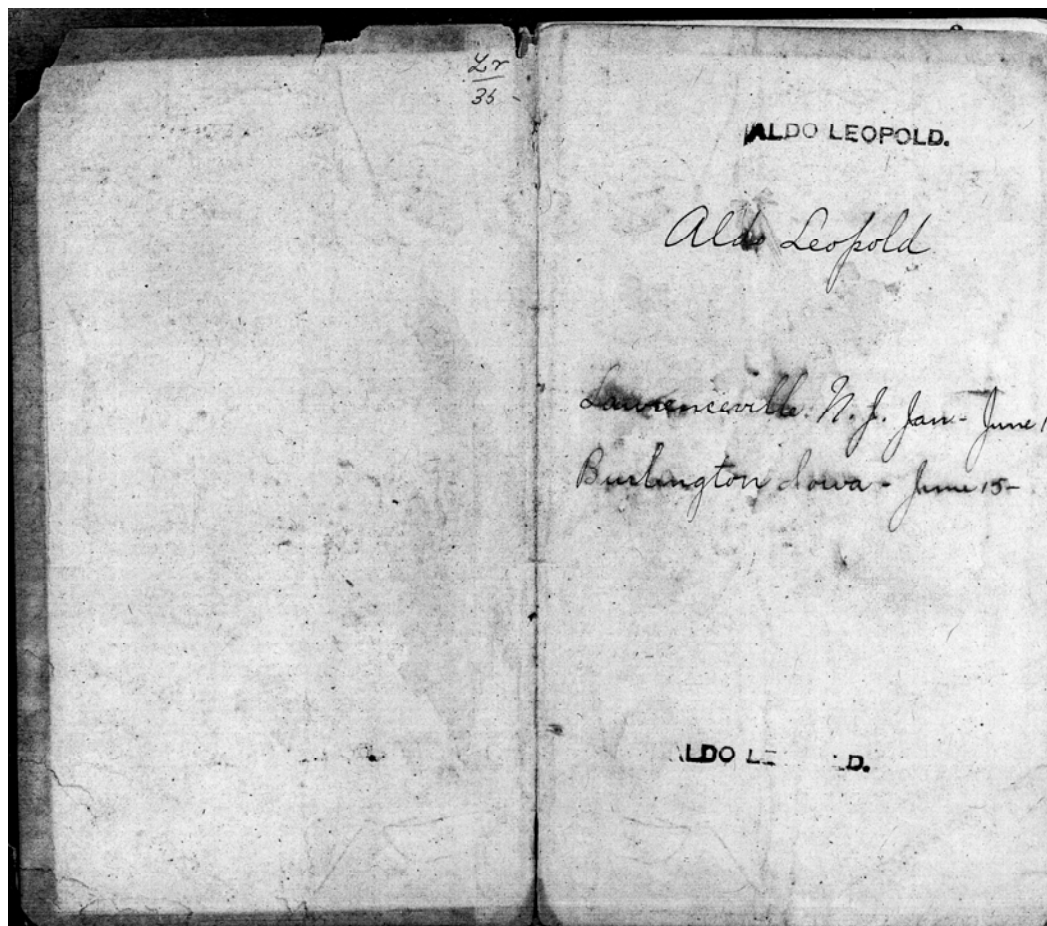
Chapter 3: Field Descriptions

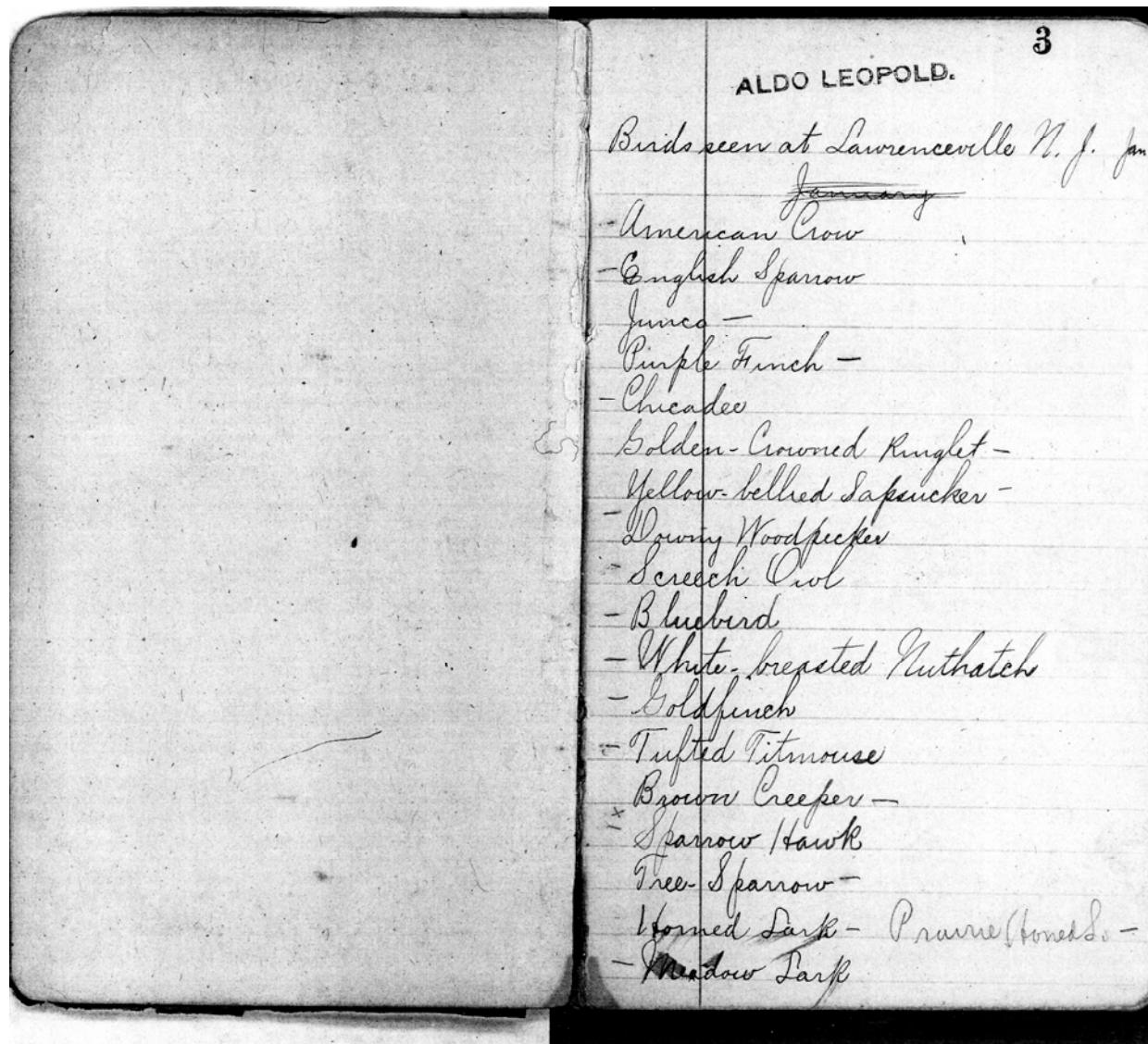
Leopold developed particularly strong descriptive skills as a result of years of practice. Presented first are notes from Leopold's field notebook begun at Lawrenceville in January 1904. The initial entry on page 19 is from January 7th, 1904, one day after arriving at Lawrenceville. In this entry, he simply writes down the bird species that he observed - in this case 18 species.

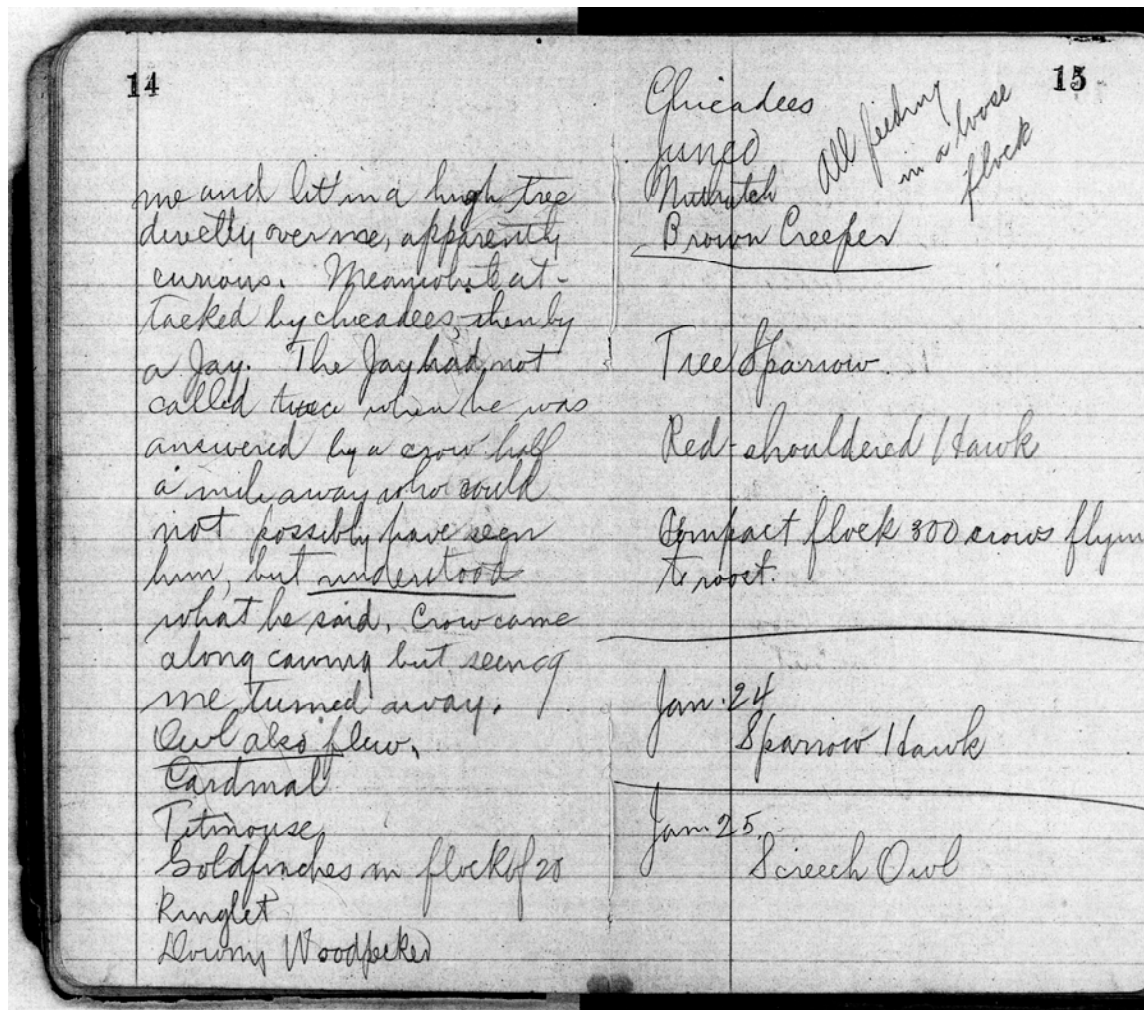
Upon returning from the field, Leopold often transcribed his notes into a more organized ornithological journal. Here he usually added quite a bit of detail to his field notes. From the first few pages of his 1903 journal (his first journal), he writes down extensive notes about his observations of nesting birds. He has noted in detail 20 different species making their nests and, when the nests are accessible, has managed to collect data on the number of eggs per nest and the survival of the young birds. A sample of this is provided on page 23. In a typical display of his analytical ability, his notes from July 15, 1903 on a Kingfisher's burrow nest go into considerable detail and include a sketch of the area of the nest (pages 21 and 22). He is surprised about the distance of this particular burrow from water and food, it being, "contrary to the usual custom, at least 200 yds. from a small creek, containing water-spiders at the most, not even tadpoles."

His 1904 ornithological journal from Lawrenceville includes notes on the arrival of 87 migratory species, and at least 50 "permanent residents" - birds who remain in an area year round. He compiles a phenological chart of migratory bird arrival and departure dates that looks remarkably similar to his phenology chart 40 years later compiled at his farm property (see page 29). He also continues to write essay-type descriptions of particular topics, such as "Notes on a Kingfisher's burrow." The letter in this section, similar to the topical discussions in his journals, not only recounts his adventures in the field but also provides species descriptions. A close comparison of his field notebook and journals to his letters reveal how he elaborated on a simple observation in the field when writing a letter. A comparison of his letter on page 24 to his journal entry on page 28 - both depicting the same hike - illustrates this point. Many of the species noted in his January 7th field notebook such as Tufted Titmice, Purple Finches, and Screech Owls were included and described in more detail in his January 9th letter on page 7.

Inside cover of 1904 field notebook







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July 15, 1903.

Notes on a Kingfisher's burrow.

Page 15

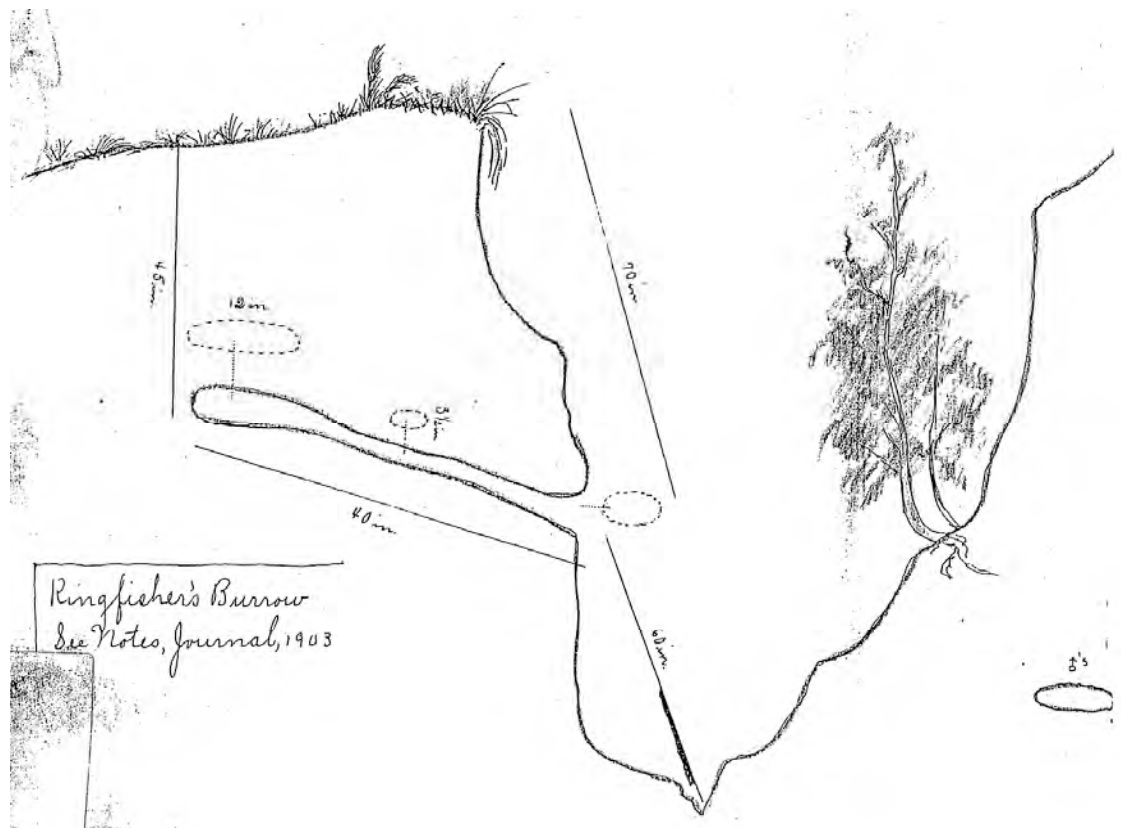
Nest complete May 5.

Young out of nest July 3.

The burrow was, in a clay bank of a gully, and, contrary to the usual custom, at least 200 yds. from a small creek, containing water-spid-ers at the most, not even tadpoles. The place was well selected, and the entrance half concealed by a bend in the bank. The home consisted of 3 burrows. 1 One had struck roots and was apparently unused. 2 The ♂'s burrow, opposite the nest entrance, in which the ♂ roosted, during incubation only, there being a nest of the Rough Winged Swallow in it, which contained 4 eggs, at the time the young left the nest. 3 The main burrow, (see map) was on the west side of the gully. It sloped perceptibly upward, and was widened at the end to form the nest. The whole was clean and well worn, and the bottom of the nest contained a few scales of small fishes.

The ♂'s burrow was 2 inches wider, although of the same height, as the main burrow. The bend was widened only to 6 inches. It was situated 2 1/2 yds from opposite the main burrow.

From 1903 nature journal



Birds Nesting.

Feb. 10.

English Sparrow

Probably merely building

Eggs: 4 on April 1.

Young: flying May 3.

Another nest, 7 eggs May 19.

Young beginning to flock, late May. Full grown

March 25

Robin Mch. 4 -

Probably merely building

Eggs: 5 complete April 15.

Young: one brood out of nest May 4.

One brood still in nest May 9.

Young flying, May 11, full grown, independent, late May.

April 4

Crow

Eggs: 4 complete in one Apl. 4, 2 in other.

Young: Young out of nest, May 9.

March 13, 1904.
Kennedy House

Dear Papa:

Today is the first Sunday in quarantine. It has been a fine day, except that the wind is rather cold. We were allowed to take walks all morning. I also went out before breakfast. In crossing the bridge which leads over small stream supplying the school pond, I was agreeably surprised by finding a Phoebe in a tree on the bank. I spent a long time watching him, and while still standing there, a small flock of Rusty Blackbirds came flying along from the pond and lit near me on a tree. This made two new migrants in an hours walk, needless to say I was much pleased. It is a rare treat to hear the Song Sparrow chorus on a sunny morning. They are here in great numbers and sing a great deal early in the day. Juncos are beginning to sing, and occasionally a Tree Sparrow also. The latter are beginning to diminish in number with the warm weather, but may be still seen in large flocks.

After breakfast I put on my old clothes again and took an extensive walk, going south and following the creek to Big Woods which I had not visited for some time. On the way I flushed a Turtledove from a cornfield. This made three new migrants for today.

I followed a long strip of timber which ends near the canal, stopping at a low place to look for Woodcock. Saw no sign, but found another Phoebe and several more Rusty Blackbirds, who were in company with some Grackles. Also came upon some blooming Skunk Cabbage. The blossom is a peculiar affair, being a sort of knob enclosed in a single leaf-like petal of fleshy consistence. The whole has an odor of carrion to attract early flies. I have seen no flies as yet, but the coming of the Phoebes indicates it is time for them.

[sketch of the skunk cabbage flower - actual sketch is included on page 13]

The Skunk Cabbage grows only in bogs and blooms very early. It is not found at home as far as I know. I passed up the creek without seeing anything of note except a large Red-tailed Hawk. Arriving at the Big Woods I explored them rather carefully being in hopes of seeing a Hermit Thrush but found nothing. By the way I might say to Carl Jr. (the Hermits will be found in Ransoms not later than the last of the month, while on the bottoms they appear several days earlier) that he will no doubt be misled, as I was, by the description of the Hermit Thrush in books. They are in the West not always bright cinnamon red on the back, but greenish olive as a rule. The reason is that they migrate, for some unknown reason, later in the West than in the East, although they are said to winter in southern Illinois, and by that time they have [moulted] into their olive feathers. I hope to hear often from Carl about his observations. It will be valuable for him to note carefully the dates of the up and disappearance of the Evening Grosbeaks. It is a chance of a lifetime.

I have a postal from the express office saying that a package is there for me, no doubt my Botanical Supplies. I will get it tomorrow. This sounds strange for a quarantine but there is a man outside whose duty it is to go on errands for the house.

It is strangely out of place not to go to Church here on Sunday. Mr. Robinson will probably give a short sermon at singing tonight.

By the way, I have reported the loss of my glasses to him, after asking everyone in the house. He says he is glad I told, and that such reporting is not considered tale-telling by most of the fellows.

The customary Bible Lesson is to be conducted tomorrow morning by Mr. Robinson, so I will not lose much in my grade on that subject at least.

I hope Mama is having a rest from her many cares of the past weeks. Hoping you are all well, I am,

Your Aldo