

# AVIAN ARCHIVES

by Charles "Ted" Black

## The Brendel Early Peoria Bird Lists

The contributions of Frederick Brendel to early Illinois bird history have long been ignored. I here discuss his three early Peoria bird lists and indicate why they have so long been overlooked. It is my purpose to correct this omission and give Brendel the credit he deserves.

## Background

The only reference to Brendel in Illinois bird annals is that of Robert Ridgway, who lists in the bibliography of his "The Ornithology of Illinois" 1889: "Brendel, F. — Vogel der Umgegend Peorias in Illinois. Giebel's Zetisch. Fur Naturw., 1857, 420. (Not seen by me.)." Apparently this article in an obscure German language journal was not available to him, and has not been pursued by others. I found it in the University of Illinois (Champaign/Urbana) library, copied, and translated it. The translated title is "Birds of the Vicinity of Peoria in Illinois." Brendel also reported a few Peoria birds in another article in this journal in 1859.

Also ignored are Brendel's bird lists in two old Peoria Histories (1870, 1880), which I also examined in the University of Illinois library. Bird accounts in these old county histories are typically ignored as they are short and popularly written, often with vernacular names. Most

such bird lists hardly qualify as credible scientific accounts. In contrast, Brendel's lists are substantially complete with scientific and near-standard names.

I have filed copies of the above translation and the lists in the Peoria Histories with the Illinois State Museum.

## Frederick Brendel

Brendel was born in what is now Germany in 1820. There he received his medical training and developed an interest in botany. Following the political revolution of 1848, he came to the United States in 1850. In 1852, he settled in Peoria where he lived until his death in 1912. He is best known as one of Illinois' prominent early botanists, yet he also recorded much early Peoria bird history. His 1857 list is contemporary with those of Kennicott for Cook County (1854) and Pratten for Wayne and Edwards Counties (1855), and with Holder's list of Illinois birds (1861). Brendel's 1870 and 1880 lists are contemporary with that of Nelson for northeastern Illinois (1876). Brendel ranks with such early physician-naturalists as Phil R. Hoy of Racine, Wisconsin, who contributed to early knowledge of birds of the Chicago region, and Jared B. Kirtland of Cleveland, Ohio, for whom the Kirtland's Warbler was named. Brendel was quite the versatile classic naturalist of his day!

## The 1857 List

Brendel's 1857 article consists of a short introduction and a list of scientific bird family and species names (no common names), with comments for several species. The text is very short:

"Following is a list for you of the birds that I have observed until now in the area around Peoria. In addition I am adding some special investigations, but I intend to complete them and communicate them to you in the future."

The sequence of birds in the list and most of the scientific names follow the taxonomy of his time and differ from current terminology. This challenged my identifying many birds in the list. Determining identity often involved considerable research in taxonomic literature. Fortunately, many others bore current names.

This list totals 81 species - 34 waterfowl and marsh birds, 14 raptors and game birds, but only 33

other birds. It is apparently a preliminary list for it lacks many small birds such as warblers and vireos. Remarkably, for 26 species he gives measurements of total length, wingspread, and standard wing length, which I found useful in confirming some of his identifications.

As expected he lists species long gone from Peoria - Passenger Pigeon, Wild Turkey, Greater Prairie-chicken, Sandhill Crane, and Trumpeter Swan. He also lists a few others not to be expected readily today, Snowy Egret, White-fronted Goose, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Snowy Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, and Northern Shrike (identification confirmed by measurements).

He made some interesting comments. For the Turkey Vulture, he said that it is found "in the southern part of the state, much more widespread than here." He also stated that the Cooper's Hawk frequently follows the Passenger Pigeon. There is evidently an error when he states that the Red-shouldered Hawk