

# **The passenger pigeon. Volume VII, Number 3 July 1945**

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# *The* PASSENGER PIGEON

VOLUME VII

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NUMBER 3



RAVENS

SAM RUEGGER

A MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN BIRD STUDY

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# NEWS . . .

The clay-colored sparrow has recently been brought into the limelight by Mrs. R. P. Hussong, Eric Richter and others in Green Bay. Mrs. Hussong has been making this species an object of special study, writing about it in the local newspaper, and Eric has found a number of nests which he has been studying. Since most Wisconsin bird students have little more than a "speaking acquaintance" with this species because of its inconspicuous characteristics, future papers on the subject will be welcomed.

Since many of our members who were serving in the armed forces have now returned to their homes, it would be appreciated if anyone knowing of such cases would provide the editors with the new address change. We have been holding several subscriptions in this category instead of sending them overseas.

Since the officers of the society voted to carry a current list of new members in **THE PASSENGER PIGEON** as they are added, it is suggested by the editors that a full membership list of the society be printed in the last issue of this year to serve as a starting point. Although many organizations publish their annual membership lists at the close of each year (as we did also for several years), it may be found desirable now to publish the full list only periodically.

George Koehler, whose name we see in our bird notes section frequently, served as naturalist at Camp Tichora, the boy scout camp, this season. He was the youngest member on the staff, being only fifteen years old.

Mr. Gilbert H. Doane, librarian for the society, has returned from overseas. The society's library will soon be ready to serve members, but it could use many more books and magazines. Donations on the part of our members, either in the form of old or new volumes are invited. Mr. Doane's address is University of Wisconsin Library, Madison 6, Wisconsin.

Major George M. Sutton visited Truax Field, Madison, for a week in July. Many Madison ornithologists had the pleasure of meeting him. Associated with him were Lieutenant Verne Rockcastle and wife, of Rochester, New York, also ornithologists now at Truax Field.

Prof. George Wagner, honorary member of the society, having retired from his position in the University of Wisconsin, is now living in Palo Alto, California. He has written an article for this issue comparing the birdlife of that city with ours.

**The Milwaukee Bird Club.** This club was formed on May 28, 1937 by a group of twenty-eight bird study enthusiasts brought together by Murl Deusing. The purposes were to stimulate interest in birds and to promote the scientific study of bird life; to bring together bird students for the exchange of information; and to promote the conservation of birds and wildlife generally, and to support legislation favorable to wildlife. Membership in this society is restricted to men and to boys of high school age. Visitors who attend meetings during the year and show interest in the club are recommended for membership in June of each year by the membership committee. These must be chosen unanimously for admission by members present. The present enrollment is now sixty-three. Meetings are held at eight o'clock in the evening of the second Tuesday of each month except July and August. They are usually held in the Y. M. C. A. because of its central location. All men and boys of at least high school age who are interested are welcome to attend the meetings.

**The Kumlien Club.** This club had its beginning on the night of April 15, 1935 in the office of Professor Leopold. Those present were chiefly men associated with the University of Wisconsin. Purposes outlined in this meeting included the presentation of papers by members; reviews of the literature; discussion of ornithological topics in general; and recording of field records. Membership has been by election and persons chosen are usually those who have a sustained interest in birds, although the club is favorably inclined toward the allied sciences. Meetings are held once a month during the school year and all who are interested are welcome to attend.

Had Manske, a Stevens Point member and Boy Scout worker, has had printed a convenient booklet showing the spring arrival dates for birds in central Wisconsin. The birds are grouped chronologically under short periods of about four or five days each.

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ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER SEPT. 4, 1940, AT THE POST OFFICE OF MADISON, WISCONSIN, UNDER THE ACT OF MAR. 3, 1879.

# Nesting Ravens

By SAM RUEGGER



While doubling over a limb of about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, I was able to obtain the accompanying pictures of a raven's nest. This nest was one of two found by me in Sawyer County this season.

Built in a hemlock, the nest was placed from 30 to 35 feet above the ground where it was well concealed in the midst of a thick cluster of the trees. I would say that the nest was being used for about the third season, judging from the age of the sticks used in building. It was constructed strongly of sticks up to 12 and 15 inches in length by one-half inch in diameter, and measured overall about three feet each way. The deep depression was nicely lined with deer hair, a few pieces of burlap bag, and strips of bark.

On March 26, when I discovered the nest, incubation was in progress and the old bird was very shy, leaving the nest as soon as she heard me and staying away until I had gone. While photographing on April 21, the old birds came near for the first time and remained in flight overhead all the time I was there.

Although but four days elapsed between the dates of first and last hatching, one could easily see the difference in ages, the first one born appearing to be about three times as large as the last.

Winter Ranger Station, Winter, Wisconsin, June 9, 1945.

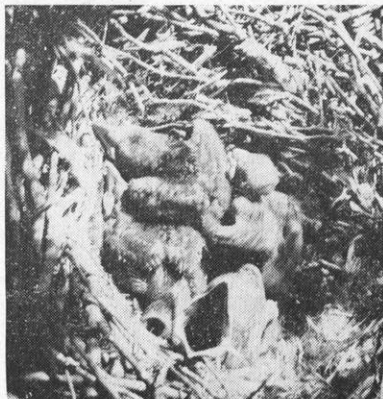


**APRIL 7**—THE FIRST EGG HAS JUST BEEN PIPPED



**APRIL 11**—FIVE NEWLY HATCHED WITH LAST EGG PIPPED





**APRIL 21**—FOUR NESTLINGS.  
TWO HAD DISAPPEARED DURING  
THE PREVIOUS TEN DAYS

**APRIL 27**—ABOUT HALF GROWN



**MAY 3**—NEARLY FULLY  
FEATHERED (SEE COVER)

**MAY 14**—BUT TWO REMAINED





MAY 14—ABOUT THE SIZE OF CROWS, WILL BE LEAVING AT ANY TIME

## *The Raven*

By FRANCIS ZIRRER

Early in the spring, during the month of April, while northern Wisconsin woods usually are buried still under many patches, deep banks, and heavy drifts of hard compact snow, a solitary rambler, walking among gnarled trunks of maple and yellow birch; great, straight columns of basswood, red oak and white ash; and slender, lithe boles of hickory and ironwood (interspersed here and there singly and with groups of evergreens with an occasional white pine towering above all others); is startled occasionally by a loud swish resembling a sudden gust of wind rushing among the tree tops. Upon looking up, he is perhaps surprised to see a big black bird sailing with slow, deliberate wing beats above his

head, usually not more than 30 to 40 feet above the ground. Before he has recovered from his surprise, however, or realized its cause, the bird had vanished.

A good part of the folklore and superstition concerning ravens among the people of the northern hemisphere is undoubtedly due to this silent, unexpectedly sudden appearance. Right to this very moment the woods had appeared quiet and deserted. Here and there one has seen or heard perhaps a solitary woodpecker, a nuthatch, a small flock of chickadees, a few early juncos or fox sparrows, the latter scratching industriously among the drab, flat pressed old leaves. Suddenly, the otherwise deathly silence is broken by the appearance of a great black bird coming apparently from nowhere and vanishing before one finds time to think it over.

Seeing a pair of these great birds circling slowly, deliberately, without the slightest show of fear—their heavy, large beaks pointing straight downward—for a minute or longer only from 30 to 40 feet above one's head, is an occasion and feeling not easily or soon forgotten. Experiencing this sensation upon numerous occasions, one can understand and visualize the influence of these birds on the superstitious minds of primitive people.

Circling in this manner above one's head, these birds are very persistent in reconnoitering and watching a lonely Rambler within their domain, which usually has a diameter of about ten miles. In more open, lonely localities, away from human habitation, one may lead them by walking slowly in almost any direction, often a distance of several hundred yards. This may happen occasionally at any time of the year, but is most likely during April and May, before the young leave the nest and while the old pair is seen together.

Like many other large birds, especially birds of prey, ravens apparently recognize the gun and the meaning of it. They will, as a rule, not appear within the gun range of a man carrying one. I have observed this upon several occasions.

There is no more impressive sight in the northern Wisconsin woods than a flock of ravens flying with slow, steady, regular wing beats just above the tree tops, perhaps their most common height of flying. The sound made by the swish of the wings resembles an approaching storm and may be heard on a quiet, calm day long before the birds come in sight—to my mind the grandest spectacle of northern Wisconsin woodlands. Such flocks are composed usually of five or six, sometimes of eight, nine, or ten birds, but the largest flock seen by the writer contained twelve birds. According to my observations large flocks, composed of more than one family, are seen during the autumn months only. Before the first snowfall the flocks disperse and disappear from the neighborhood.

Where all these ravens stay in winter I am unable to say, but they most certainly do not remain in the locality where they were hatched. In connection with this question I may mention that on the 14th of March, 1944, I saw a flock of nine ravens passing from south-easterly into the north-westerly direction, at a time when our local resident ravens begin to incubate or are incubating already. Seeing these and noticing upon



many occasions a third bird with a mated pair, I wonder if the ravens need more than one year to reach maturity, that is, the breeding stage.

During the winter months the birds occur usually in pairs only, the mates of which are inseparable and nearly always seen together. At times however, and not so rarely, a third bird is seen joining the pair, but it remains always at what appears to be a respectful distance. Certain pairs seem to be never without an extra escort, excepting of course the summer and autumn months when these birds congregate in families and flocks. Fights in such cases were never observed, however.

Mated ravens are very devoted couples. A pair flying leisurely just above the tree tops and talking to one another with gentle, pleasant, gurgling notes, resembles a friendly devoted human couple on a slow, easy promenade, so much so that an observer cannot help drawing the comparison.

About the middle of February, but sometimes earlier, the male begins with his nuptial song. For this purpose he sits on a branch, raises his wings a little, bristles his feathers, twists and cranes his neck, moves his head and emits a series of gurgling and clucking sounds resembling those of a crow under similar circumstances, but considerably stronger. One performed upon several occasions less than thirty feet from our woodland dwelling, while perched not more than about fifteen feet above the ground. But, though apparently familiar with the cabin and the neighborhood, the slightest movement behind the window pane caused him to leave with the greatest haste.

In spring when the ice on our isolated lakes and ponds begins to melt, ravens (and crows) are seen walking upon the ice picking various water insects and even small fish. The latter are driven by water currents (and gases perhaps) into cracks between the ice where they are frozen during the winter.

During the breeding season of crows which now are scattered widely throughout the northwoods, ravens, having to supply a family of nearly fully grown always hungry youngsters, are almost continually on the wing. Then numerous fights occur between ravens and crows. At that time of the year, whenever one sees or hears a congregation of crows flying around and cawing excitedly, four times out of five the cause of it is the presence of a raven. Crows are very persistent and will follow the raven a mile or more. The chase, however, goes very rarely directly across the woods; it follows usually the valleys and gullies of permanent or temporary streams. In the late summer and early autumn when the crows assemble in large numbers on their nightly roosts and the ravens are also found in flocks, both species, though not associating, pass one another apparently without fights. Whether the ravens ever plunder crow's nests of eggs or young I am unable to say, although I have kept several nests of crows under observation.

Sometimes, though rarely, a raven will rise high in the blue sky, very often beyond the sight of the naked eye, while its coarse croak is heard plainly by the listener below. After watching this from a sphagnum bog for a number of years, I have come to associate these comparatively rare occasions with the blooming of *Arethusa* and the yellow and the pink lady's slippers.

Until the end of May or the beginning of June the young remain in or near the vicinity of the bog where they were hatched and where the food is to that time comparatively easily obtainable. With the growing density of the vegetation in the bogs the family moves to the more open upland woods, where it spends the summer and early fall. The change of habitat falls in line with the exodus of frogs—the mainstay of food for so many birds and mammals—from their wet spring habitat into a drier territory. From then and until the middle of October their clucking and gurgling notes are heard daily, as a rule all day long, reverberating through the heavy timber of the upland woods.

The localities frequented daily are those parts of heavy timber which remain under water well into June. Due to this and the heavy dense shade, very little ground vegetation usually develops there; a few sedges, small, sickly appearing groups of jewelweed (*Impatiens*), numerous clusters of corpse plant (*Monotropa*) and its smaller and rarer cousin *Hypopitys* and an occasional flesh-colored orchid (*Corallorrhiza*) are practically the only forms of vegetation growing there during July and August.

But these, often extensive, damp and fertile flats are populated during the hot, dry summer months with numerous frogs, toads, salamanders and other animal life; and the heavy, deep, rich humus harbors an immense number of various worms, grubs and larvae. These are not so evident to a casual observer in summer. But in spring, especially after a heavy quick thaw, when every little puddle of water a few yards square often contains a tumblerful of drowned white larvae of about an inch in length; one begins to visualize the amount of nourishing bird food the fertile woodland soil often contains.

These heavy timbered shady flats are visited by the ravens daily. Swinging their heavy bodies from side to side they walk sedately over the nearly bare ground, while turning leaves and pieces of decaying wood, or boring holes in the soft black soil. Often they run and jump awkwardly after a frog or some other nimble prey.

During the years of our living in the vicinity, the best and the most extensive of these flats was occupied by a family of goshawks. As bold and fearless as the ravens undoubtedly are, the presence of these bold, daring predators of the north woods kept the ravens at a respectful distance and prevented them altogether from visiting that particular area of heavy timber. It is needless to emphasize that a bird, who, a month or more after its young have left the nest still will fly like a demon at a man's head, is more than a match for a raven.

During the drought and grasshopper era of seven, eight, nine and ten years ago, ravens (and practically every other bird and many mammals) were observed daily hunting grasshoppers along the lonely woodland road and fire lane nearby—an altogether too nimble prey for these birds while on the ground. The results, however, were evidently very satisfying.

On nice sunny afternoons, from about the middle of August until the end of September—if the season remains warm, a family or more of these birds assembles in secluded corners of the heaviest timber for the purpose of singing. For this the birds select one or more of the largest

and tallest trees in the neighborhood, usually a tall giant oak, or a great straight column of white ash, reaching with its top far above the others. Perched on one of the highest branches one begins to warble, into which, after perhaps thirty seconds like at a command, all join with a most remarkable jumble and medley of very pleasing sounds. A short pause follows and then the performance is repeated. The duration of these concerts is of varying lengths; the longest in our experience was on August 25, 1938, when the birds, after being frightened from the old place the day previously by my awkward approach, sang about one hour and a half on the tall trees within a stonethrow of our cabin.

If not disturbed they will sing day after day at the same place, otherwise they will abandon it for days or, if too frequently disturbed, entirely. It is practically impossible to approach them without being seen. I have attempted it time and again, but all I have accomplished was to frighten them away.

The song has very little resemblance to any of their other calls, even to the nuptial song of the male. It is a soft musical warble, very mild and pleasant, considering the size of the bird and its usual coarse croak. Owing to the dense foliage at that time of the year the concert, though of a considerable volume closeby, cannot be heard a long distance away even if everything else is real quiet.

Although the ravens sometimes brave very strong winds and fly when no other bird ventures in the open, they become extremely upset by those terrible summer thunderstorms which have visited the north-land woods in recent years with considerable and disastrous frequency.

When the night-like darkness envelops the landscape, the strokes of wind, slight at first, increase in frequency, violence and fury to a mad, rushing torrent of air, trees sway and bend and, broken and uprooted, crash with dull thud to the ground, the horizon is aflame, clouds burn in ceaseless strokes of lightning, deafening crash of thunder follows one after another, clouds burst, heavy hail rattles down and torrents of rain flood the woods; when every living creature runs or flies for shelter, our otherwise audacious, fearless bird displays fear which is truly surprising.

Since they keep their daily routine with remarkable regularity unless disturbed, I have heard their anxious, anguished, pitiful cries from the nearby woods upon several occasions. Investigating, I have discovered them sitting in streaming hail and rain on the lower, horizontal branches close to the tree trunk under the dense canopy of evergreens or hardwood foliage, displaying all the signs of fear. Craning and twisting their necks, swinging their heads sideways and back and forth while emitting an indescribable medley of the most unusual, fearful, lamenting notes, they sat there apparently scared out of their wits and usual jauntiness to such an extent that they forgot everything else. Under these circumstances I have been able to approach them within less than twenty feet without apparently alarming or causing them to move. The birds of course kept staring at me uneasily, but the fear of the pandemonium reigning around was greater than their fear of man.

Previously, I have pointed to the keen eyesight displayed by these birds at all times. We have seen them early in the morning and sometimes during the day sitting high up in the tall trees, which hemmed in on all sides the small clearing around our cabin. But if we thought of



observing them easily through our windows and without precaution, we were badly mistaken. A slight movement behind the window panes was sufficient to frighten them away.

Anything within the sight of these birds, from the tiny ring-necked snake to the big fox snake lying dead on the dusty road; from a little shrew dropped by a cat or some other predator to a dead porcupine; from a varying hare to a deer; even in the dark densely shaded woods, is found and appropriated in record time, often from an unbelievable height or distance.

Domestic cats, returning from their nightly excursions chockful of poorly chewed, undigested mice, usually regurgitated part of the contents of their stomachs at the entrance to our road about two hundred feet from the cabin. Often it was a matter of a few minutes only that this welcome addition to their diet was discovered by the ravens. With a surprising suddenness these birds appeared from somewhere; a swish of the wings announcing their arrival. In a few moments the remnants were devoured or carried away and the birds vanished out of sight. Their sudden appearance and disappearance is actually uncanny and a continual source of marvel to anyone who has had the opportunity to study these birds for a considerable length of time.

Early one morning in April, while standing on the porch watching with binoculars the entrance to our narrow road, I noticed our unusually big white tomcat approaching the entrance with a big meadow mouse in his mouth. Suddenly, without noticing the birds before, I heard the familiar swish of the wings and saw, like a bolt of lightning, a big, black object diving down at the cat's head; which caused the surprised animal to drop the mouse and jump three to four feet high and out of the way. At the same moment another black object dived at the mouse and in a second or two both birds vanished among the trees. Although the woods were still bare and I was on the spot in a few seconds, I was unable to detect a trace of the birds.

I have seen similar performances repeated later. While watching the cats return home in the morning, carrying usually a mouse or other prey, I have seen ravens waylay one or another of them somewhere along the woody road, pounce at it, and take the mouse before the surprised cat recovered from its fright.

During the summer months ravens indulge considerably in daring, risky appearing, aerial evolutions. In the form of an arrowhead, with the wings slightly open, they dive from the top of the tallest tree toward the ground; but, by spreading the wings just in time, break the fall. Or they may rise high above the road, fire lane or other convenient opening, dart back and forth, dive at one another, or drop like a stone straight down to a height of about fifteen to twenty feet, when, by repeating the same maneuver as before, break the fall again. The performance is repeated many times in succession while accompanied by many croaking, clucking and gurgling notes. These evolutions were performed upon numerous occasions within the sight or hearing distance of our cabin.

Although ravens have no enemies of importance, man excepted, they must at times yield to a much smaller but bolder and more agile bird.

Last year about the end of May and the beginning of June I observed a family of ravens on the distant end of the nearby pond. The birds were hunting, as is usual at that time of the year, among the sphagnum, dry old sedges and reeds, after mice, frogs, and other small game. All was very peaceful and the ravens were not molested until the 29th of May, when a pair of kingbirds took over its old nesting site in a small black spruce.

The little bird attacked the ravens on the ground until it had the whole family of six in the air. To give them credit the ravens did not abandon the place without a fight as crows and nearly all other birds do under similar circumstances. They twisted and doubled their bodies in the form of a fishhook to ward off the attacker, but to no avail. Rising above them and striking one after another again and again, it finally, after a five minutes battle, forced the flock to give up and disappear in the distance among the dense evergreens.

Besides the already mentioned croaking, clucking, gurgling and warbling calls, songs and notes, there is another, to my mind the most remarkable call, which is heard but a short time only. This is a loud, metallic, bell-like note which may be fairly well imitated by the stroke of light hammer on a heavy piece of tin. From about the beginning of August until the third part of September one may hear this loud, ringing, resonant sound whenever ravens are in the neighborhood, but mostly in the morning and toward evening. No one, upon hearing it the first time, can pass it without a surprise and a comment. Our visitors, though paying but slight attention, if any at all, to Nature or birds, looked up with a puzzled surprise upon hearing this peculiar, conspicuous, loud and ringing call reverberating through the woods.

Aside from the terrific, hair raising and blood curdling scream of the great horned owl, the coyote or young wolf-like yelping of the barred owl, which are heard but rarely, there is not a sound in the northland woods comparable to this call of our grandest, most mysterious bird—The Raven.

Hayward, Wisconsin, June 22, 1945.

**KILLDEER**



PHOTO BY  
MARY STAEGE



## *Raven's Nest*

By ELEANOR and PHILIP MILES

Herewith submitted, is a photograph of the raven's nest found on March 28, 1945 in Vilas County, Wisconsin and noted in the April issue.

The nest is in a white pine of approximately 24 inches in diameter (measured at 4 feet above the ground), growing in a swamp, about 107 feet (paced) from the edge of the upland. It may be desirable to state that occasionally one or more white pines venture out some distance into the swamp; various instances could be cited for the same locality. It is not easy to estimate the height—one of us estimated that the nest is 35 feet, the other that it is 45 feet or more, above the ground. The nest appeared to be fully 24 inches in diameter, and somewhat less deep than wide; is made of sticks, and is built on branches close to or against the trunk.

Ravens are common, and have been common, in the locality during the twenty-five years of our acquaintance with it.

The circumstances of the find were as follows: Mrs. Miles' attention was attracted by a raven which flew swiftly and erratically over and around us; she queried whether there might be a nest nearby. The nest was spotted a moment later. As we, keeping to the upland, moved beyond and away from the tree, a bird (which did not approach us closely) lit beside the nest, but flew up again when we stopped. The calls of the birds alone would suffice to identify them as ravens.



Photographs were secured on March 30, 1945. One of the birds spotted us at a distance, and again flew over erratically, just above the tree-tops, beating the air with its wings as though to brush us away; then veered off. Before and after, it used a good part of the raven vocabulary. The other bird left the nest (though until then it had been invisible to us) while the camera was being set up slightly over 100 feet from the tree. It approached the nest closely while the camera was being set up in another location, then sheered off.

Having made the exposures we waited a minute or two and withdrew. Then one of the birds settled on the nest while we were still in plain view.

Madison, Wisconsin, July 10, 1945.

## Some Conclusions About the Raven

By N. R. BARGER

The status of the raven in Wisconsin has been discussed periodically in *THE PASSENGER PIGEON*. In the April issue of 1942 one of two nests, found in Forest County by State Forest Ranger Davison, is described as it was collected for the Milwaukee Public Museum. Mr. Gromme here calls attention to Mr. Schorger's reprint from *The Wilson Bulletin* setting forth the status of the crow and raven in early Wisconsin. In the same issue of *THE PASSENGER PIGEON* as noted above, Mr. Feeney's raven nest containing four young is described—also a Forest County record.

Prior to these records little was known of the nesting of the raven in Wisconsin as no perfect accounts had appeared in print. In his crow and raven article, Mr. Schorger points out that "in early days the raven ranged over also the southern portion of the state but now it is restricted nearly to the northern third," and we may add at all seasons. "Farming by the white man," he says, "has brought in a greater crow population to the southern portions while driving the raven northward." A record of a raven being shot by a hunter in Dane County, in October of 1934 and reported to *The Auk* by Leonard Wing, must be regarded as an exceptional southern record for the state since early days.

These six positive nesting records of the raven in northern Wisconsin from 1942 to 1945, combined with many supposed nestings (based on incomplete data or the presence of young) show that the raven, at least currently, does nest in Wisconsin. And why shouldn't it? In late winter, when the raven begins to construct a nest and lay eggs, the northern forests have supplied them an abundant food supply—starved deer.\* Carrion is an important food item with the raven since the latter is found frequently at deer carcasses by men in the field, so much so that the presence of ravens in the air is used by biologists as an index to the whereabouts of the carcass. Whether the raven was so frequent a nester, or indeed so plentiful in numbers, prior to the years of deer abundance in northern Wisconsin is probably unknown.

\*These animals die at their most rapid rate of speed in late winter since, having withstood the rigors of winter, their vitality is low at a time when their food is scarcest.

Not Common Enough to be a Factor  
In Bird Population Control

## *The Butcher Bird*

By JOHN A. IZRAL, Jr.

It is a warm winter day. The northern shrike, sitting on the top of a maple, carefully preens its feathers. That done, it carefully surveys the world about and may even whistle a few notes. Only the movement of its tail which it keeps raising and lowering indicates its other than peaceful intentions. Soon an English sparrow happens to fly by, a split second and the shrike takes after it; the sparrow vainly tries to dive away but it is borne to the ground. A single blow and its skull is cleft and the "butcher bird" has another victim to hang up in some hawthorn tree or wild plum hedge. This, I believe, is a typical introduction to the character of this prodigious killer.

Here in northern Wisconsin I have seen shrikes every now and then during other years but never so often as this winter. This is due to the fact that one of them learned that there were always plenty of English sparrows over on the neighboring farm. Hardly a day would go by that I would not see it chasing them around. In this way I had a good chance to study its habits and characteristics.

The shrike likes to come upon some small bird feeding unaware. Swooping in, it pins down and kills by repeated blows with its beak. Being a true songbird it cannot catch its prey in its talons but must get it on the ground. Many times though, it catches birds by chasing them. I have seen that, regardless of how a bird dives or flies, the shrike keeps right after it and finally forces it down. In this manner I have seen it literally ride on the back of an English sparrow. Only if there happen to be some bushes or evergreens nearby can a bird hope to make good an escape.

One of the favorite perches of the shrike was a large elm just back of the house. Here it would often sit for hours at a time waiting for some sparrow to leave the cover of the barn and come past the tree. Of course, after a few sparrows had been caught this way they gave the tree a wide berth in their travelings so the shrike would change his position also. It was always exciting to watch these aerial combats. One that I remember very clearly took place on February 16. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning when a large flock of English sparrows came flying toward the barn. The shrike saw them and immediately started flying up to intercept them. As soon as the sparrows saw the shrike they climbed high in the air and began shifting back and forth. The shrike stayed a little below and about ten feet away but kept right after them. For all of fifteen minutes they shifted and dodged about the sky. Finally one of the sparrows either became too frightened or else thought it could make it to the safety of the barn because it left the group and dropped straight down. The shrike saw it, closed its wings and dropped right after it. From where I was standing I could not see whether it caught the sparrow or not but these sky fights went on almost every day and there were many times I saw the shrike successful.

If the shrike caught a sparrow on a day that was warm and sunny it would come to a wild plum tree not far from the house to eat it. On a cloudy or cold day it would usually fly off to the woods after making a kill. This plum tree seemed to be a favorite dining place and the examination of the bits of fur and feathers under the tree gave a pretty good idea of its daily diet. A tight crotch served the shrike well as a dinner table. Carefully pushing its victim's neck between the crotch and hammering it with its head so it would be tight it was ready to start its meal. Sometimes it would pluck out almost all the feathers before feeding but other times it would simply tear it apart with its bill and eat feathers and all. It would not always use the crotch in feeding but would sometimes just impale it on some convenient thorn and then feed. An English sparrow or similar small bird would be devoured in one meal, however, I never saw him feed again on the same day. After a good meal it would spend some time in preening its feathers and then go to chase the sparrows around again.

A peculiar habit of the shrike, and which probably gave it the name of "butcher bird," is its way of killing more than it can eat and then hanging it up in some convenient tree or bush. On February 18 I happened to come across one of its caches in a small clump of hawthornes about a mile from the house. Here three English sparrows, a black capped chickadee and a pine mouse were neatly impaled on the sharp thorns. Then about a week later I noted that they were still there and that two more English sparrows had been added. I decided to come here again in a couple of days to see if the shrike would feed on any of these or would add to this storehouse. The next day was quite warm and it being a Sunday I went down in the afternoon. When I got there I noticed at once that all the birds and the mouse were gone. I began to wonder what could have happened as I knew the shrike could not possibly have eaten all of these in such a short time. Looking around a little I happened to notice a wing feather of the barred owl, so that seemed to clear it up. Evidently the owl found the cache and with an appetite like it has could easily clean up the whole mess in one night.

But then, that should not bother the shrike any. I doubt very much if he ever comes to eat what he has hidden away. Perhaps if it could catch nothing else it would feed on them, but as long as it can get plenty of fresh meat it does not care to eat what it has killed before. The following seems to show this. On March 10 a shrike killed a redpoll, took it to the orchard and impaled it on a barb of the barbed wire fence. I left it there until March 23 but it did not come to get it at all even though I noticed the shrike in the orchard quite a few times during that time. It would probably still be there if I had not taken it down.

Although the shrike may have its faults I will have to admit it is an accomplished singer. On a winter day that is warm and sunny and especially toward spring, it would often mount some tall tree and sing for long periods of time, sometimes even hours. Its various whistles and warbles, which to me seem to resemble those of the brown thrasher are remarkably clear and far reaching. If the day was still, one could hear him plainly singing from some tree in the swamp about a quarter of a mile away.



Perhaps many of you may think the northern shrike is a pretty expensive guest to have around because of its murderous habits. This may be true to a certain extent but shrikes are never common enough to make a great difference in the bird population. Furthermore, they are here only in winter when their presence adds interest to a season that would seem empty without them. I have also noticed from observations this and other years, that the English sparrow suffers the most from its depredations. Woodland birds, such as the chickadees, have a much better chance of escaping among the trees than these birds of the open. Being only a little better than ten inches in length it can kill only the smaller birds and so probably kills nothing larger than English sparrows. I have seen it chase snow buntings but it seemed in a half-hearted manner. If it were hungry, no doubt it would be different. Once I noticed a starling chase the shrike because it had dared to perch on the starling's nesting tree.

As spring came on I noticed it fewer times chasing sparrows and as it still came over to the plum tree to feed I would still see it. Its diet now seemed to run mostly to field mice, although feathers of a junco were also noticed. By the end of March it had stopped coming altogether. Perhaps it had left for the north to nest or else moved to some other place. Anyway, it had given me much pleasure and at the same time reduced the English sparrow population so drastically that I do not need to worry about having to clean them out of my bird houses. Even though he has not bothered them now for some time they still do not fly around as usual and when moving from place to place make only short dashes from one piece of cover to another. Perhaps he will come again next winter and I'll say: "**Butcher bird**, you're welcome!"

Catawba, Wisconsin, April, 1945.

## *Sac Prairie Summer*

By **AUGUST DERLETH**

**24 June 1944:** A mature male American bald eagle drifted down over the Wisconsin early this afternoon, soaring up from time to time, and, having got down some way, he came slowly back up on a higher level to just beyond the old wing dam, where he came down lower over the water and turned to go with the Wisconsin down past the highway bridge and the railroad bridge, down past Bergen's Island to that high bluff where his nest is. A fine bird, and a fine eyeful.

**29 June 1944:** When I paused this afternoon at the mulberry tree on the side-hill northeast of the wing dam, a half dozen robins fled the tree, and sat in the oaks nearby complaining bitterly at my theft of what was manifestly their food; but presently, they came back, one by one, and resumed eating where they had left off at my coming. I have observed similar treatment of poachers among the wild strawberries and raspberries, among cherries and blackberries, but seldom have I heard complaint from birds taking flight out of apple trees or elder-berries. If any behavior pattern is implied, it is not evident, unless it is proof only of taste and preference on the part of the birds.

**3 July 1944:** The crows, which have daily assaulted the summer afternoon with their cries at my approach, designed to warn me away from

their nest, succeeded at last in drawing unwelcome attention to themselves when they flew out today at a pair of lads with bows and arrows. The parent crows, together with their young,—a lone bird—sat out in an oak tree not far from the nest, and would have gone unnoticed had not both mature birds made a great to-do, with the result that the lads looked upon them as fair game, and began to discharge their arrows at them. The outcome of the matter was the death of the young bird, at which both mature birds made off in the direction of the valley northeast of the moraine, and were not thereafter seen again. The boys came past later, bearing the young crow's body on their arrows, which I did not like to see, and observed to them that it would surely have been more sporting to have spared the fledgling.

**21 July 1944:** I stood for some time tonight at the railroad bridge watching the birds forage among the insects dancing over the water of the Wisconsin. There were but three kinds—chimney swifts (well over a hundred), purple martins (circa forty), and nighthawks (a dozen in number)—though it seemed to me that an occasional whippoorwill flitted across the water once or twice. The birds seemed to be tireless in their foraging. I stood there for well over an hour, during which the nighthawks were constantly on wing, the purple martins rested on the average but once, and the chimney swifts left off foraging only to go spiralling around the chimney of the tractor works, down into which they ultimately went. The swifts had come from this chimney originally, the nighthawks out of the woods along the east shore of the river, as far east as the low Ganser hills along the Mazomanie road, and the martins from up in the village, having been ranged along the telegraph wires for ten or fifteen minutes in a compact array before they began to forage.

**29 July 1944:** Elton Weismer said today that his favorite bird was the "chimney sweep." He said of the typical chimney swift cry that it was a matter of "the ultra-short waves" which enabled them to make such rapid cries.

**30 July 1944:** The mourning doves have begun to gather, though manifestly not yet for flight. Forty to fifty of them flew up this morning from the fence-rails before the house, and settled along the telephone wires beside the road. Four days ago there were but a score or less.

**1 August 1944:** Circa 5:30 Sun Time I walked into the marshes this morning to take note of the variety of bird-calls or songs at this hour and heard the following: a single chickadee (the familiar **phe-be-be** call), seven song sparrows, three cardinals, three quail (two bob-whiting, one quirt-ing), wood thrushes (in numbers), pewees (about a dozen), swamp sparrows (three), goldfinches (in numbers), a marsh wren, crows (in numbers), six phoebes, two kingfishers, two little green herons, half a dozen crested flycatchers, easily a score of mourning doves, two black mallards, red-wings (in numbers), yellow warblers (in numbers), and five indigo buntings.

**2 August 1944:** An English sparrow seized upon a cicada in Water Street today, but the cicada, escaping, set the bird a frenzied chase, darting up and over and down. Finally, however, the sparrow went off in full flight after the cicada, which whirled swiftly over a nearby roof and was captured in triumph at the gable.

**4 August 1944:** Walking out to the house tonight circa midnight, I was

surprised to hear a barred owl calling from somewhere in Sac Prairie, well up in the village. The night was still, and the village was quiet, the midnight shift from the ordnance plant having not yet begun to move toward Madison, so that I heard the call plainly and fixed its location at two blocks or so from the river's edge. Its call was promptly answered by two barred owls in the bottoms—one from the upper reaches of the Spring Slough, and another from somewhere at that slough's lower reaches. These three carried on quite a colloquy, which lasted for several minutes (circa 10), for I heard them still as I turned west along the Lower Mill Road, and then heard them no more.

**13 August 1944:** In the marshes this morning there sang or called several red-headed woodpeckers, a scarlet tanager (**chip-churr**: unusual at this time), flickers, catbirds, goldfinches, pewees, chewinks, mourning doves, least sandpipers, indigo buntings, song sparrows, vesper sparrows, swamp sparrows, yellow warblers, redstarts, cardinals, quail, killdeer, and singles—wood thrush, blue jay, kingbird, kingfisher, Baltimore oriole, and little green heron. I observed that the song of the wood thrush seemed somehow less lyrical, a little harsher, insofar as that song can ever be thought of as harsh, dryer, not so liquid, however pleasant.

**16 August 1944:** Cedar waxwings made a brief appearance in the village today. A half dozen of them spent a quarter hour in the locust trees just south of the railroad bridge this evening, but presently flew north.

**21 August 1944:** A screech owl and a saw-whet owl\* called this evening near the house, after the pewees had stopped crying. The screech owl's wail came early, past dusk, and the saw-whet's strange call sounded some time later, when all was dark, and the thin sickle of the new moon had already gone down below the western rim. Their voices came drifting into the studio and, after all was dark inside, the saw-whet came directly up under the window and called.

**1 September 1944:** In the marshes this evening killdeer called, and robins made the sounds of evening in the underbrush—the flutterings, half-cries, broken snatches of song, all so melancholy in being typical of autumn's coming; from the deep woods came the nostalgic songs of pewees, and from the nearby brush, the catbirds' mewing and the complaint *tchek* of a solitary cardinal. Nighthawks skycoasted over the Upper Meadow, and, with dusk, the swamp and barred owls began to call. I walked down to the triangle lane crossing, and there turned, but had hardly reached the mid-meadow trestle before I heard a whippoorwill calling far in the south; so I stopped there to take pleasure in this song, observing that the calls came seldom, and then in groups of from three to eight calls at one time, separated by minutes, as against seconds in the spring. As I stood there, a nightawk came feeding all around me, flying so close that I could feel the brushed air off his wings, but soundless, neither voice nor wing giving off any sound whatever, though he flew before me and behind me, circling after flying insects, doubtless ants, which were winged in great numbers today and filled the air, accounting in part also perhaps for the wide range of swifts and purple martins this evening, these birds having left the river unusually to fly over hills and fields.

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\*More commonly observed by me in spring and fall than in summer.



Later tonight, at the Ferry Bluff, the whippoorwills called, not steadily—but yet called, fast callers and slow callers, making a beautiful melody in ears, a memory of spring again, and of that elusive sense of adventurous expectancy which suggests a never-never land always beyond reach of the romanticist.

**10 September 1944:** A little group of rose-breasted grosbeaks paused briefly in the willows along the railroad embankment, making broken snatches of calls and songs, before making the signature of autumn by flying up and into the south: a migratory group clearly.

**12 September 1944:** Observing a Northern yellowthroat this morning in the marshes, I could not help wondering why the bird had not been called the masked warbler, which would seem to me the obvious name for him, as apart from the undistinguished one bestowed upon him, and promptly made up my mind henceforth to refer to him as the masked warbler.

Sauk City, Wisconsin, June, 1945.

## MADISON AND PALO ALTO

By PROF. GEORGE WAGNER

It occurred to me that it might be of some interest to compare the birdlife of these two university towns, even though, in the nature of the case, the comparison will have to be a rather cursory one, and restricted to winter conditions in the California city. Palo Alto is a city of some 25,000, about thirty miles south of San Francisco, in the wide and level Santa Clara Valley. Its latitude is about that of St. Louis and Norfolk, its elevation only about twenty or thirty feet above sea level. It profits much, so far as climate is concerned, by being sheltered from ocean winds and fog, by the Coast Range. Freezing temperatures are rare. A purely residential city, it abounds in many beautiful homes and heavily planted grounds; but also in many vacant lots which during the rainy winter produce an abundant supply of weed seeds. A large proportion of the homes have bird baths or garden ponds. It is an ideal spot for birds, but the prevalence of hedges and dense shrubbery make bird observation a little difficult.

To the newcomer from the Middle West, many birds have a familiar look, but with a difference. Others are quite new. The bird that more nearly than any other takes the role the robin plays with us, is the brown towhee. Easily recognized as a towhee, it differs from our eastern chewink in its very inconspicuous plumage of cinnamon and grayish brown, but also in the entire absence of any shyness. It can be seen at any time, summer or winter, on any lawn and exhibits little fear of man. The robin, of course, occurs also. I have heard his call ever since December as one does in March or April in Madison. By the end of January robins become very numerous, much more so than I have ever seen them in the East. It is a common thing to see from a dozen to twenty in a single tree waiting their turn at the bird bath. I have counted a hundred in a walk of four blocks. But they are almost wholly winter visitants. After March very few are seen. They come here from the north and from the neighboring hills, and at the end of the rainy season return there to nest. There is very good reason for this. After the rains

end the adobe soil of the valley bakes hard and the chances of ever finding a worm are non-existent.

Of other birds we expect to see in early spring in Wisconsin, the meadow lark is here also all winter and its spring song can now be heard with that of the robin. Cowbirds are absent. Grackles are mainly represented by Brewer's blackbird, common even on downtown streets, foraging between the parked autos, only reluctantly dodging moving vehicles. Redwings probably occur in the marshes along San Francisco Bay areas. I have not yet had a chance to explore these.

Our bluejay is replaced by the California jay, not as abundant, as gaudily colored, nor as vociferous, but more alert and furtive, hence harder to see. Here is the place to point out how dissection of this Pacific area by mountain ranges brings about differences within comparatively small distances. The California jay is the only one seen here. In the Big Basin area, only thirty miles from here, but on the sea side of the Coast Range, I saw only Steller's jay, larger, more brilliantly colored and much more noisy, all traits showing its closer relationship to our bluejay.

There are, of course, many kinds of finches, more than I have yet learned to recognize or ever expect to learn. Here again the character of the country produces a multitude of forms. For the San Francisco Bay region, meaning the nine counties which border on the bay, there are listed ten subspecies of the song sparrow. The common form here is known as the Santa Cruz and is about as abundant here, in winter, as our Wisconsin form is in April or May. White-crowned sparrows, probably of two varieties, I see on our lawn every day, as I do the golden-crowned sparrow. White-throats are said to be occasional winter visitors, but I have neither seen nor heard any. But goldfinches are common; I have seen half a dozen at our bird bath at one time of the Arkansas goldfinch. But the most characteristic finch of all California is the house finch, a close relative of our purple finch and not easy to distinguish from it. The house finch, a permanent resident in most of California, occurs at this time of the year in small flocks much like our English sparrows. A little later, as I saw last year, it is given to nesting in vines and bushes around dwellings. In the total picture of birdlife here it largely takes the place of the English sparrow, and, thank heaven, by its own audacity plays a large part in keeping that pest in check. A flock of juncos comes wandering through our trees quite often, but it is the Oregon junco, with strikingly black head and brown back. Other finches I have not yet had opportunity to observe.

Frequently as I walk along the street, a small flock of birds will fly out of a bunch of weeds, a bush, or even a tree, only to disappear in some other shelter farther on. Other flocks will follow at intervals, all of them twittering away in flight. These are bushtits. You can see them many times a day, and every day, but to get a good look at them is quite another matter. They move too fast for my old eyes. But they are a most delightful feature of the landscape with their cheery twitter.

Cedar waxwings, as elsewhere, are irregular wanderers, but I have frequently seen them in large numbers and heard their unmistakable faint peep. There are always abundant berries for them to feed on.

Quite surprising to a Wisconsin man is the presence throughout the winter of a warbler. Outside of one of our windows, on a branch of a

loquat tree, hangs a bird feeding device always well stocked with suet and other materials. It attracts various birds, but its best and steadiest customers are Audubon warblers, coming every day and many times a day. I have seen the same species often and in many places during my daily walks. It is evidently the winter warbler here. However, I have also seen myrtle warblers at various times.

Another bird, quite as startling to me, is the Anna hummingbird. There are six species of hummingbirds listed as occurring at least occasionally in the San Francisco area. Of these the Anna is the largest and the only one occurring in winter. It is recorded as nesting in nearby Oakland as early as January 15. Last year in the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco I had an opportunity to watch a male, from his perch high above the female, swoop down and up again in a long arc, and uttering a surprisingly loud, sharp note, as he reached the bottom of the arc. It certainly does something to me when I read about subzero weather in the Madison paper and then turn around to see this brilliant little creature hovering over the loquat blossoms outside the window.

As to hawks I have noted a few marsh hawks, but have been particularly interested in the sparrow hawks. They were very abundant last winter in the city here. I saw more of them than I had seen in years before. They were everywhere, perched on live oaks or telephone and fence posts and I had frequent opportunity to observe their remarkable skill in hovering in midair while hunting. Most of them disappeared by the end of April.

Screech owls I heard at frequent intervals all through the winter. A larger owl, probably the long-eared, appears occasionally late at night on the branches of a honey locust in our garden. I have not yet been lucky enough to see the little pygmy owl, which occurs in this region and is said to venture into the city once in a while.

A delightful element of birdlife here is the great abundance of the pretty valley quail. Extensive flocks of them can be seen at any time on the Stanford campus, usually called "The Farm," quietly feeding, almost as tame as chickens. Smaller flocks occur along garden fences and in weed patches in many parts of town.

Waterbirds I have had little opportunity to observe so far. Lack of gas, you know. But about the middle of January I walked over to the Palo Alto yacht harbor, some three miles to the east, on an inlet from San Francisco Bay. It was well worth the effort. The many gulls I had not time to unscramble. But in a very large artificial pond were hundreds of mallards and coots. Over the yacht harbor itself a brown pelican was cruising back and forth, with an occasional plunge after a fish. But best of all, along the banks of another inlet (it was low tide) were six American egrets, solemnly and warily stalking along as usual. As with us, they are said to be very irregular visitors here, but certainly have been quite common both this winter and last.

What I have seen here makes me wish for two things: that I were thirty years younger and that I could get ample allowance of gasoline. But who doesn't?

Anyone interested in the birds of this area will find "Directory to the Birdlife of the San Francisco Bay Region" by Joseph Grinnell and

(Concluded on page 94)



Junior Co-author of  
"Birds of Wisconsin"

## Ned Hollister

By A. W. SCHORGER

Wisconsin has furnished several men to illustrate the fact that a formal education, or a specialized one, is not necessary in order to make important contributions to the natural sciences. Increase A. Lapham was a civil engineer, Philo R. Hoy a physician, and Capt. B. F. Goss a merchant. It is indeed remarkable that at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the possession of a college degree had become a fetish in American life, that Ned Hollister, without graduating even from high school, should have accomplished so much in systematic zoology.

Ned Hollister was the son of Kinner Newcomb Hollister and Frances (Tilden) Hollister. Youngest of a family of four children, he was born at Delavan, Wisconsin, November 26, 1876. His ancestors were of English origin, one of them, Lt. John Hollister, coming to America in 1642. His grandfather moved from the state of New York to Rock Prairie, in Wisconsin, where he took up land in 1839. His father was born on a farm near Delavan. Subsequently he moved to Delavan and, with the exception of the period of the Civil War in which he served as a captain, engaged in the mercantile business until his death in 1911. The Hollisters were substantial, prosperous citizens who had the wisdom to encourage the son in his passionate interest in the outdoors.

It is a common sequence for love of hunting to be followed by a scientific interest when a little encouragement is tendered. Strange birds and animals that fall to the gun stimulate the inquiring mind. Ned and his brother Warren often accompanied the older sportsmen of Delavan in their hunting excursions in the neighboring lakes and prairies. There were duck "holes" on the farm near Delavan, and opportunities for hunting on the lands owned by the family in Florida and Minnesota. In after years, he seldom failed to return to Delavan for his annual hunt.

He was inordinately fond of dogs. Osgood<sup>12</sup> remarks: "His favorite dog was a pedigreed English setter, 'Chick Stanton,' which he had raised from a pup and trained for hunting and field trials. During the long season when I was intimately associated with him, nothing impressed me more than his love for this dog. When other subjects failed, he was always ready to talk about dogs, and, at times, it seemed as if he loved 'Chick Stanton' more than mother, brother, or any human being."

Hollister received, apparently, no formal education beyond that provided by the public schools of Delavan. Actually he did not graduate from high school as he was absent on a collecting trip during the last days of the school year.\* His sister, Margaret Hollister Lowe, wrote to me: "I remember how he pleaded with our parents to be allowed to leave school that he might have more time for ornithological study, collecting, writing, etc., and how reluctantly they finally consented." He did not attend college and the substitute was a most fortunate contact, at the age of nineteen, with Prof. Ludwig Kumlien then teaching at Milton College, a short distance from Delavan. Through Kumlien he received a thorough grounding in the exactitude necessary for a scientist. The extension of the chain of circumstances is most interesting. H. H. T. Jackson, the well-known mammalogist, who entered Milton College at the age of sixteen, was shortly introduced to Hollister, his senior by four years. Following the death of Kumlien in 1902, Hollister became Jackson's counselor and was subsequently responsible for bringing him into the U. S. Biological Survey, now the Fish and Wildlife Service.

He began collecting the stomachs of birds to aid the Government in its work on economic ornithology as early as 1892, and it was during this year that the collection of skins and eggs became a serious occupation. Eventually the specimens occupied two rooms in the Hollister home. His early field work was done with his brother Warren who retained his interest until he left Delavan to enter business. In this is seen an analogy to the Goss brothers of Pewaukee. Aside from encouragement from

\*A fire many years ago destroyed the school records. His sister thinks that the last year that he attended school was 1894. According to American Men of Science (1921), he was educated privately. This appears to refer to his contacts with Kumlien and others.



NED HOLLISTER

his father, Hollister was frequently accompanied in the field by his uncle, F. E. Burrows, who photographed various birds and nests that he had found. Eight of Burrows' photographs appear in the **Birds of Wisconsin**.<sup>17</sup>

He assisted his father in the store from the time of leaving high school until the spring of 1902. The period was broken by numerous hunting trips at a distance and collecting excursions about Delavan. He visited the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum in Washington in March, 1901. The impression that he created was so favorable that the following spring he received a temporary appointment of four months duration as assistant to Vernon Bailey. One of Hollister's outstanding

characteristics was his great sense of humor, and he enjoyed referring to the fact that when he joined the Biological Survey party in Texas, "Bailey suggested that they have a conference in a quiet place and for this purpose chose the cemetery in the little village of Jefferson, Tex."

The summer of 1903 was spent in field work in Alaska with Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood. This sympathetic, appreciative biographer wrote: "Throughout the trip, he impressed me more for all-around balanced qualities than for outstanding ones. The broad fact about him was the all-embracing character of his love of animals and nature. Down to the meanest detail of work, there was nothing connected with the observation and study of animals, alive or dead, which did not partake of this love. Each phase of the subject was to him only part of one whole, none of which was to be slighted. The excitement of the chase and the exultation of capture or discovery held great charms for him, but the laborious paring of hides and other supposed drudgery seemed to give him no less pleasure. He did such things not only with good cheer but with an obvious enjoyment that was related not to the work but to its object. . . . I have never known a man who, without being meticulous, took such pride in the quality of his specimens and such care of them subsequent to preparation. He evinced the same joy and maintained similar high standards in method and practice in making field notes, in keeping catalogues or records, and in publishing results."

There was a temporary appointment to field work in Louisiana in the spring of 1904, but from June, 1904 until 1910, with the exception of a brief furlough in the spring of 1906, he was engaged continuously in field or museum work for the Biological Survey. During his employment by the Biological Survey, he added 3,625 mammals and 1,509 birds to its collections.

He married Miss Mabel Pfrimmer, of Kentland, Indiana, on April 15, 1908, and a home was established in Washington late in 1909. Mrs. Hollister continues to reside in the capital city. She retains title to the property on Catfish Lake, near Eagle River, Wisconsin, owned by her husband before he went to Washington to live permanently.

Hollister's publications, up to the year 1909, dealt entirely with birds. Beginning with his field trip in Texas in 1902, until the date of his death, the study of mammals absorbed most of his energy. On January 3, 1910, he assumed the duties of assistant curator of mammals in the United States National Museum and was entirely responsible for moving and arranging the huge reference collection, some 70,000 specimens, in the new building in April of that year. He continued in this position until late in 1916, the interval being broken by two field trips, one in the Canadian Rockies in 1911, the other in the Altai Mountains of Siberia in 1912.

In November, 1916, he accepted the superintendency of the National Zoological Park. He filled this position with great success up to the time of his death. His interest in waterfowl continued undiminished and the collection was enlarged to nearly half a hundred native species. A small pond was converted into so inviting a habitat that nearly one-fourth of them bred annually. Despite his duties as superintendent, he wrote **East African Mammals** that appeared in three volumes (1918, 1919, and 1924). This publication required a great amount of bibliographic work in which he was ably assisted by his wife.

The introduction to the **Birds of Wisconsin** states that the junior author's observations covered a period of fifteen years. The conclusion may be drawn that he started his records at the age of twelve. In 1892, when he was sixteen years of age, his first papers, three in number, were published. The article, **Floridan Races**<sup>4</sup>, that appeared the following year, pointed out the differences in size, color, and habits between the Florida and Wisconsin forms of such birds as the bob-white and blue jay. In 1893, he wrote that four specimens of Barrow's goldeneye<sup>5</sup> were taken on Lake Delavan several years previously. When the **Birds of Wisconsin** appeared ten years later, with commendable caution, he failed to mention this indefinite record.

His published notes contain data of much value. In 1896 he recorded the taking of Holboell's grebe on November 15, 1895, and three white pelicans seen on June 6, of the same year<sup>7</sup>. The former status of a species is always of interest as there may be a change in numbers or migration route. A double-crested cormorant collected April 6, 1896, was the only occurrence for many years. The Wilson's phalarope was "rather rare," while the yellow-bellied sapsucker was considered uncommon until April 11, 1896, when it appeared by hundreds. Among the changes that had taken place in the bird life about Delavan by 1919, he regretted the apparently total disappearance of the ruffed grouse<sup>28</sup>.

Hollister<sup>9</sup>, on September 8, 1896, was presented with an immature male passenger pigeon killed that day by a local hunter. This appears to be the last definite record



for Walworth County. His optimism regarding the survival of this species proved unfounded. In a note published in August, 1899, he said: "Of this however, I am positive: the passenger pigeon now occurs regularly in Southeastern Wisconsin every year in small numbers, and doubtless does in other parts of its former range. . . . The species is in no present danger of total extinction. In fact, there are several forms of North American birds that will perhaps be extinct before the wild pigeon is."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the last specimen for the state was taken in September of the above year.<sup>13</sup>

A friendly sportsman gave him a Sabine's gull (*Xema sabini*)<sup>14</sup> shot on Delavan Lake on October 7, 1900. He also reported the following interesting birds in the collection of Charles Besecker, Delavan: turkey vulture, September, 1903; goshawk, October 23, 1907; barn owl, April, 1910; western meadowlark, June 21, 1904; and Brewer's blackbird, June 6, 1904 and April 14, 1910.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting that the last two species have since increased in the state to the point where they are quite common. In his notes on the nesting of the blue-winged warbler, he mentions collecting a female and nest with six eggs on May 22, 1899. He thought that this bird was mated with a Nashville warbler since the latter on collection proved to have greatly enlarged testes.<sup>13</sup>

Many of his papers, such as his notes on the winter birds of Arkansas<sup>15</sup> and the occurrence of the yellow rail<sup>16</sup> near Delavan, were the results of hunting trips. He and his companions shot 1,167 ducks at Delavan Lake from the fall of 1892 to the fall of 1899, of which 8 were old-squaws, 6 American scoters, and 3 surf scoters.<sup>23</sup> In connection with his interest in waterfowl, he published a paper showing that the ring-necked duck is more closely related to the redhead than to the scaups.<sup>27</sup>

Hollister's main contribution to ornithological literature was the *Birds of Wisconsin*, of which Ludwig Kumlien was senior author. Kumlien was too ill during the last year of his life to do much work and, with his death on December 4, 1902, the onus fell entirely on the shoulders of the junior author. Hollister spent most of the winter of 1902-03 in completing the manuscript that appeared in published form in July, 1903. He was unable to see it through the press since he left in May of that year for field work in Alaska.

Every precaution was taken by Hollister to make the work as complete and accurate as possible. Ten years after the appearance of A. J. Schoenebeck's *Birds of Oconto County*, H. K. Coale<sup>44</sup> called attention to some of its unusual records: anhinga; Eskimo curlew; Columbian sharp-tailed grouse; and the nesting of the chestnut-collared longspur. Hollister<sup>22</sup> then quoted from his correspondence with Schoenebeck in 1903 to show that no specimens of the above species had been preserved and that the identifications were honest errors. Capt. B. F. Goss was with Schoenebeck in June, 1893, when a supposed nest of the chestnut-collared longspur was found. The female was shot but not preserved, indicating that Goss himself was none too careful about identification when collecting eggs.\* Hollister took this occasion to withdraw the long-tailed chickadee from the *Birds of Wisconsin* even though some specimens were so identified by Elliott Coues.

Hollister bought Ludwig Kumlien's collection of bird skins in February, 1903. The data on the disposition of the Hollister-Kumlien collection are incomplete. Warren D. Hollister has kindly examined Ned Hollister's old records and reports that the following sales were made: 580 skins to C. K. Worthen in February and March, 1903; 41 to C. K. Reed in March and 19 in April, 1903; 12 to J. P. Babbitt; and 74 to New Hampshire State College in April, 1903. In March most of the remainder was disposed of to the Milwaukee Public Museum. Dr. H. H. T. Jackson informs me that some of the skins were purchased by James H. Fleming and are now deposited in the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, Toronto, Canada. Other skins were sold to the Chicago Museum of Natural History, and to Dr. H. V. Ogden and Dr. Ernst Copeland of Milwaukee. Skins of the ivory-billed woodpecker and parouquet in the possession of Warren D. Hollister were recently donated to the Colorado Museum of Natural History.

The following communication is due to the courtesy of Dr. H. H. T. Jackson: "I first became acquainted with Ned Hollister in May, 1897, when Kumlien asked me over to his home one evening to meet Hollister. Although we did not see much of

\*The methods used by the early collectors would not pass muster today. Thure Kumlien secured many of his eggs from boys, while Dr. P. R. Hoy<sup>45</sup> broadcast: "I am desirous of procuring eggs of all kinds of Hawks, Owls, Cranes, Bitterns and Curlews. . . . Each egg to be numbered, and a note accompanying them, with the name of the bird and a description of the nest. . . . If my young readers will assist me in procuring any of these eggs . . . I will liberally reward them for their trouble."

each other in the early years of our acquaintance, yet we soon became close friends, a tie that became closer in later years. We were both pallbearers at the burial of our mutual friend, Kumlien, in December, 1902. Hollister visited his Milton friends at least once thereafter, in May, 1904, at which time I asked him if he would like to see Kumlien's old laboratory in the Main Hall of Milton College, knowing that he had never been there. We spent some time looking at things mostly of ornithological interest in the laboratory, wandered on down through the library and other parts of the building, and on out, when Hollister with his characteristic drollness commented, "Now I can say I went through Milton College."

"Drollness and good humor, modesty and quietness, and sincerity and loyalty stood out among his virtues. I never heard from him a mean remark about any of his co-workers or fellow scientists. True, he could criticize the work of others or reprimand his subordinates but it was always done without reproach."

"We used to correspond frequently, but preceding his transfer from the Biological Survey to the National Museum in January, 1910, I had not heard from him for several months. I learned several years later that at this time Dr. C. Hart Merriam, then Chief of the Biological Survey, called Hollister into his office one day and asked him if he had any suggestion for a replacement for himself, that he had lost Osgood to the Field Museum, and him to the National Museum and that he did not know what to do. Hollister told Merriam he knew of only one man he would care to recommend but he was not sure where he was, what he was doing, or whether he would come, but that he could always be reached at Milton, Wisconsin. As a result I attempted as best I could to fill the boots that Hollister had worn in the Biological Survey, and at the same time renewed my personal contact with Hollister that had been broken for six years. Our offices and laboratories were near each other in the New National Museum, then recently opened to the public, and we almost daily counseled together. These personal contacts were continued with less frequency after Hollister was transferred to the superintendency of the National Zoological Park in November, 1916. There in the delightful and spacious council room of the Zoo offices occupying an old mansion in the park we spent many hours working together on affairs of the newly organized American Society of Mammalogists and in starting the *Journal of Mammalogy* on its career, until Ned left us for all time."

He once remarked to Jackson: "It ought to be considered a crime to bring a child into the world and think so little of it as to forget to name it, and just bring it up and call it 'Ned.'"

Ned Hollister died on November 3, 1924, in Washington, D. C. He became an associate member of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1894 and was elected to membership in 1910. He was a member of the Wilson Ornithological Club, and of the Wisconsin Natural History Society until its dissolution in 1920. Among his activities, he was for a time associate editor of the *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, and a member of the publications committee of the Biological Society of Washington, of which society he became president in 1921. He was also a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London. In addition, he was one of the principal organizers of the American Society of Mammalogists in 1919 and, as editor of its *journal* for the first five years, he served faithfully and well.

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2. Wisconsin swallows. *Ibid.* 1 (June, 1892) 150-2.
3. Notes from southern Wisconsin. *Oologist* 9 (1892) 147-8.
4. Floridan races. *Ibid.* 10 (1893) 176-8.
5. Ducks in southern Wisconsin. *Ornith. and Oolog.* 18 (1893) 128-9.
6. Some winter bird life. *Oologist* 11 (1894) 207-9.
7. Notes from southern Wisconsin. *Wilson Bull.* 8, No. 8 (1896) 2-3.
8. Evening grosbeak in southern Wisconsin. *Auk* 13 (1896) 259-60.
9. Recent record of the passenger pigeon in southern Wisconsin. *Ibid.* 13 (1896) 341.
10. Young of the killdeer *Aegialitis vocifera*. *Wilson Bull.* 9, No. 12 (1897) 4.
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13. *Helminthophila pinus* in Wisconsin. *Wilson Bull.* 13, No. 35 (1901) 30-2.
14. Capture of Sabine's gull in Wisconsin. *Auk* 18 (1901) 392.
15. Notes on the winter birds of Arkansas. *Wilson Bull.* 14 (1902) 10-5.
16. The yellow rail (*Porzana noveboracensis*) in Wisconsin. *Auk* 19 (1902) 197.
17. The birds of Wisconsin. *Bull. Wis. Nat. Hist. Soc.* 3 (1903) 1-143.

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23. The black vulture in the District of Columbia and Maryland. *Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington* 30 (July, 1917) 123.
24. The trumpeter swan. *Oologist* 34 (Oct. 15, 1917) 176-8.
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26. Brooding habit of the American coot. *Auk* 36 (1919) 102.
27. The systematic position of the ring-necked duck. *Ibid.* 36 (1919) 460-3.
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29. Report on the National Zoological Park for the year ending June 30, 1917. *Ann. Report Smith. Inst. for 1917.* (1919) pp. 71-87.
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31. The National Zoological Park: a popular account of its collections. *Ann. Report Smith. Inst. for 1917.* (1919) pp. 543-93.
32. Segregation of male mallards. *Condor* 22 (1920) 36-7.
33. Relative abundance of wild ducks at Delavan, Wisconsin. *Auk* 37 (1920) 367-71.
34. The willow thrush in the District of Columbia. *Ibid.* 38 (1921) 463.
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39. Report on the National Zoological Park for the year ending June 30, 1923. (1925) pp. 87-103.
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43. A. W. Schorger. *Auk* 55 (1938) 531.
44. H. K. Coale. *Auk* 28 (1911) 275-6; 29 (1912) 238.
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168 North Prospect Avenue, Madison.

### MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION OF THE SOCIETY

Just where our members live is an interesting question. As in most organizations, our membership list changes quarterly, and with it the distribution. When our last mailing of THE PASSENGER PIGEON was made during the second quarter, the following graduated distribution was in effect beginning with the greater: Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Oshkosh, Appleton, Racine, Waukesha, Manitowoc, Beloit, Hayward, Kenosha, Neenah, Oconomowoc (the last four are tied), Wausau, Fort Atkinson, and Janesville. Towns having less than five members are omitted here as they are quite numerous. Although no effort has been made to solicit members outside of our state this group has expanded rapidly. They are found in the following order beginning with the larger: Illinois, Michigan, New York, Minnesota, California, and District of Columbia. Smaller numbers are to be found in other states and foreign countries.





## A TRIBUTE TO EARL T. MITCHELL

On a farm in the little town of Omro, in Winnebago County, a baby boy was born on May 16, 1917. Unobtrusively he made his way through Madison West High School and the University of Wisconsin; quietly he married and began his life work; without fanfare he answered the call to duty; and on January 15, 1945, his name was added to the list of war casualties when he succumbed to wounds received in battle on the Western front. This, to a disinterested bystander, would be the biography of Earl Treleven Mitchell.

But to those who knew Earl, and to all Wisconsin ornithologists, this simple tale takes on the aspects of a sad tragedy. Earl Mitchell will always be remembered as one of Wisconsin's keenest bird observers. In high school he often went on field trips with his Latin teacher, and from that time right up until his entrance into the armed forces, he could be found out in the field much of the time, in fair weather or foul, looking for birds. Earl had all the vigor and enthusiasm of an ardent, youthful bird-lover, but at the same time he was free from that strain of over-eagerness that so often characterizes youthful ornithologists. Many outstanding Wisconsin bird records are due to his keen, observant eyes.

But Earl was much more than a keen field observer. He was a true scientist and conservationist. He was as careful, methodical and con-

servative in his studies as he was in his field work. In high school he was prominent athletically and scholastically; in college he pursued his goal with vigor and determination. In addition to his majoring in biology, he became well grounded in agronomy—so much so that he was offered an attractive opportunity to pursue his studies in that field at the University of Wisconsin. This he turned down because he was firm in his purpose to go into conservation work. For that purpose he continued with his studies at the University of Minnesota, specializing in wildlife management under Dr. Gustav Swanson.

In January of 1942 Earl began work with the Wisconsin Conservation Department on the deer research project, being stationed at Ladysmith. In May he transferred to the Horicon Marsh Development Project, and when J. R. Smith was inducted into the armed services, Earl became acting manager of the area. Though he was there only a year and a half, his contribution to conservation at Horicon Marsh was very real. He did a big job in setting basic procedures for new operations on crop and wildlife management.

In reality Earl was just beginning to settle down to the type of life for which he had diligently prepared, when he was called to the colors. Here, as in everything else he did, Earl responded faithfully, met his responsibilities unflinchingly, and gave all that was in him to the job that was his to do—and in this last great job it meant his very life. He was inducted into the armed forces in October, 1943, and rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. Wounded in action among the Normandy hedgerows last August, he was back in action for the battle of the Belgian Bulge, where he was wounded again—fatally this time.

Earl made other contributions to Wisconsin ornithology besides his excellent field work. Birders in Madison will remember him as an active member of the Madison and Kumlien Bird Clubs. His interest in conservation on a wider scope was exhibited by his membership in the "Save the Redwood League." He was a charter member of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, serving as secretary-treasurer pro tem, and always thereafter an active participant in its activities. His efforts at the very start of its existence played more than a minor part in the establishment of what is now a live, growing organization.

Important as have been these contributions to Wisconsin ornithology and conservation, those who knew Earl best will remember him not as a scientist, but as a man. He was a man with an ideal; he had a purpose in life. He wanted to be a conservationist; he wanted to marry, to settle down to his chosen work, and raise a family. Earl never talked much about the things he wanted to do; he just went ahead and did them. No substitute, no second best alternative could satisfy him. He knew what he wanted, and went after it. There were plenty of temptations and obstacles in his way, but they only served to make him all the more determined. His marriage to Frances Elizabeth Herman was eminently a happy one—one that marked an important landmark toward his goal. But not everything went as well as that. Earl and Betty knew the tragedy of losing their first child at birth, but that did not turn them from their purpose. Yet Earl never realized the fulfillment of this ambition, for his son Robin Thomas was born just three weeks before his death. Nor did he realize the success of doing the life work he had planned, for he

answered the call to arms just as his work was really getting under way.

In this sense, Earl Mitchell's life was tragically incomplete. But in a larger sense his life reached a truer sense of completion in the short span of 27 years than many another life reaches in 70. His parents, his brothers Wayne and John, his infant son, and most of all, his dear wife Betty, can attest to this. We can see the fully completed stature of manhood in Earl—the devotion to a worthy ideal, the realistic acceptance of the hard knocks in life but not the submission to them, the driving determination and the will to succeed that makes any life a finished success no matter how long or how short that life may be. These are the qualities that never die, for when we recognize them in others, they become a part of our own lives. Thus our own lives have been enriched by knowing a man like Earl Treleven Mitchell. Earl has made a real contribution to Wisconsin ornithology, but he has made a greater contribution to all mankind.

Mrs. Walter E. Scott  
Francis S. Jones  
Sam Robbins

## Zimmerman Reports Bird Records From South Pacific

By PFC. WALTER E. SCOTT

With bird students such as Lt. (jg) F. R. Zimmerman frequenting the Pacific Islands (he's now in the Philippines), our interest and knowledge of birds there surely will increase. Somehow he has been able to name the birds he has seen, and this may be because he was lucky enough to run into Charles Silby, who is a taxonomist in ornithology from the University of California. There ought to be an ornithologist's field day out there if Zimmerman ever could get together with fellow members of the Society also in the Philippines, M/Sgt. George Becker and Cpl. George Hartman. Besides this, Sgt. Frank Kozlik is in New Guinea, SK2/c Wallace Grange was in the Admiralties, and both Lt. Irvén O. Buss and Ensign Dan Thompson are on the Pacific Seas. A letter from Lt. Buss states that he already has identified 24 species of oceanic birds of 515 seen in 1944, but he unfortunately does not often get to shore.

As the society's interest in birds is taking in an ever wider range, many members will undoubtedly wish to read more on the subject, and some will want a copy of Dr. Ernest Mayr's timely guide, "Birds of the Pacific War Zone." Members might practice their imaginative powers on the following birds observed by Lt. Zimmerman on his recent "overnight stops" at these places: New Guinea: Grass Finch (*Loncheua castaneothorax*); White-shouldered Wren Warbler (*Malurus alboscapulatus*), Harrier (*Circus spilonotus*), Australian Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon nigricans*), Yellow-bellied Sunbird (*Cinnyris jugularis*), Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*), Crow (*Corvus orru*); Admiralties: White-rumped Swift (*Collocalia spodiopygia*); Philippines: Kingfisher (*Halcyon chloris*). But if you'd like the truth, all of us would far rather be seeing such common birds as robins and meadowlarks this Spring Season!

Oahu, Hawaii, April, 1945.



# THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

When a man runs for president it is usually on a platform of: "If elected I will—" and so forth. His campaign managers exploit his good character and to the best of their abilities hide from the public whatever weaknesses or evil they know of him. He is represented to the public as the best.

Fortunately, in my case, no campaign promises were made and no platform offered. However, in accepting the presidency of The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, I feel that as its titular head a few random thoughts would be permissible.

Our publication has developed under the able guidance of its editor into a journal of which the society may be justly proud; an attractive format as well as interesting literature. It is our desire to continue to improve both form and substance. To do this our members, wherever they are, are urged to contribute articles that to them seem of interest. Let the editorial staff have material to choose from. They are interested in the entire range of ornithological literature—from minor incidents and local lists, to studies of bird behavior, methods of acquiring information, biographical essays, in short, through whatever ramifications the pursuit of bird study leads the mind. It is the exchange of this knowledge that leads to progress and our society desires to be of value to membership by offering excellence in this field.

A second objective of the society is to develop a library for the use of its members. At the present time this collection of books is small. It has nevertheless some interesting volumes including such valuable items as A. C. Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds" to date. There is a selection of current periodicals from other societies which is available for source material to any who are interested in information recently published. Contributions of volumes to the library, and the use of its books are both solicited.

The business of membership is one that should reflect the interest of bird students in the subject of ornithology. We urge each of you to encourage your non-member bird student friends to join. The society's program has, I feel, much of value to offer to them.

It is hoped that in another year conditions will be such once more to permit the convention, with all its pleasant stimulations and renewed friendships.

Suggestions and criticisms are also welcome. They indicate the active interest of members and help to maintain the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology as one of the progressive bird study groups in this country.

CLARENCE S. JUNG.

## THE SECRETARY REPORTS . . .

The Directors of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology met in the home of Mr. Clarence Jung, Milwaukee, May 5, 1945. After a most delightful and appetizing dinner the meeting was called to order. Six officers were in attendance: President Clarence Jung, Vice-president Mrs. W. E. Rogers, Secretary Mrs. A. P. Balsom, Treasurer J. Harwood Evans, Director Howard L. Orians, and Editor N. R. Barger.

It was voted to set the machinery in operation to raise the fee of patron membership in the society from \$50 to \$100 and the life membership fee from \$25 to \$50. Sustaining membership of \$5 per year and active membership of \$1 remain the same.

Reports by the treasurer and new appointments made by the president appear elsewhere in this issue.

It was recommended that more of the surplus income of the society be devoted to THE PASSENGER PIGEON, the same to be accomplished by adding more pages and more photographs whenever possible. Hope was expressed that more articles and bird notes from northern Wisconsin would be forthcoming, since so little is known of its fauna. It was thought desirable to print lists of new members in THE PASSENGER PIGEON and to make the list of officers a regular feature.

Purchase of the new book "Birds of Georgia" for the society's library was approved, and all money accumulating from patron and life memberships was voted to be invested in Government Bonds which in turn would be kept in a safety deposit box in Madison.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. A. P. Balsom, Secretary

## THE WISCONSIN SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY, INC.

### Treasurer's Report May 5, 1945\*

Cash on hand at beginning of year (expendable).....	\$ 326.26
Endowment fund .....	275.00

#### Receipts

Memberships .....	895.05
Sale of check-lists and back issues .....	60.07
Auction profits of the Milwaukee Convention, gifts, and interest on bank account.....	357.63

#### Disbursements

THE PASSENGER PIGEON, publishing four issues .....	\$ 502.50
Mailing costs (includes also printed stationery).....	87.18
Miscellaneous expenses (treasurer's supplies) .....	11.20
Total receipts .....	\$1914.01
Total disbursements .....	\$ 600.97
Cash on hand May 5, 1945.....	\$1313.04

Respectfully submitted,

J. Harwood Evans, Treasurer

\*This report covers roughly the past twelve months since previously all annual reports were made at the spring convention.

## BY THE WAYSIDE . . .

**Some Food Studies of the Great Horned Owl.** On May 13, 1945, in the "Governor Dodge Woods," four miles south of Dodgeville in Iowa County, on the ground beneath a nest of great-horned owls 73 feet high in a red oak, among owl pellets—but not in a pellet—I found a skull of a least weasel (*Mustela rixosus*).

The development of the skull and teeth indicated that it came from an adult least weasel in the prime of life. It was almost perfectly cleaned, so that it was probably disgorged with a pellet or was cleaned by insects. This is another of many instances of comparatively rare, and little seen mammals being recorded from owl nests or roosts.—Mrs. Cleveland P. Grant, Mineral Point.

**Banded Bluebirds Return to Place of Birth.** While reading about the Bluebird Trails in our last issue I was prompted to write a few things we have been doing around our house for bluebirds.

I live right adjacent to the country club, and this year I have approximately twenty-five houses scattered throughout the country club and the homes adjacent. I believe that this area should make quite a bluebird factory because last year we raised sixteen broods successfully. I used the Berlepsch house by Herbert Huwerth of Long Island, New York, and find them satisfactory. I banded not a few of the fledglings last year, and fortunately I have seen a number of the birds which we banded last year this spring.—Paul C. Gatterdam, M. D., La Crosse.

**Salt as Bird Food Again.** A flock of pine siskins and three red crossbills were seen to eat from a salt block in Vilas County this spring.—Mrs. Philip E. Miles, Madison.

**Some Food Studies of the Kingbird.** During the cold spell of June 4th, I noticed kingbirds sitting on stones a few inches above the ground in a nearby meadow. Suddenly, one would jump from the stone, run a few feet and beat with the wings, at the same time leaping several inches high as if catching something. I could not see, even with the eight-power glass, what it was, but I presume that the birds, being hungry, were trying to stir and raise some numb flying insects hidden among the grass. The meadow was still partly white with frost and the temperature, two hours earlier, was only 24° above.

Some days later I observed another feeding habit of the kingbird. I noticed, at a distance of about 50 yards, a bird fluttering around a trunk of white pine and finally landing on the trunk itself in the manner of woodpeckers. Coming nearer, I saw that it was a kingbird, and subsequent investigation revealed large ants running up and down the trunk which the bird apparently picked off to eat.—Francis Zirrer, Hayward.

**Some Winter Feeding Habits of the Screech Owl.** During the winter months I have at least two or three screech owls in boxes in my yard, but as spring comes they usually leave and go to the woods adjacent and to the hills. In cleaning out the boxes, I find that they are filled with two or three inches of bird feathers, so they get not a few during the winter months. I checked over the feathers in one of the boxes this spring and found them to be mostly junco, a few sparrow's and one male cardinal's.



My neighbor had some rabbits hung up in the rear of his house which they ate from quite frequently, and I have placed some sparrows on a little tin by my kitchen window which they have taken frequently.—Paul G. Gatterdam, M. D., La Crosse.

**Brown Trashers and Rodents.** On June 12 I found a thrasher's nest with four eggs, built on the ground instead of in a bush or brush pile as is usual. I revisited the nest on June 20 and found that a hole had been burrowed through the bottom of the nest and the eggs were gone. I believe a field mouse or other rodent may have been the culprit.—Harold Kruse, Loganville.

**Goldfinch Bathing.** During a dry spell when there was little water available, I saw a goldfinch bathing in the dew drops on an astilbe bush. The overlapping foliage made a heavy, solid mat onto which the bird would cling and bathe, then dash over to another place to repeat the process.—Mrs. Andrew Weber, Green Bay.

**Bird Music in Ice Covered Trees.** On the morning of April 16, following the ice storm, fox sparrows were very abundant in our woodlot. Incidentally, this particular morning offered an unforgettable picture with ice covered trees and bushes sparkling in the early sunlight, and fox sparrows everywhere filling the air with their songs. It is occasions of this sort which make bird-watching the enjoyable hobby that it is.—Harold Kruse, Loganville.

## THE SPRING SEASON . . .

(Field notes should be sent to the editor at the end of the four seasons. They should be turned in promptly and the A. O. U. order may be followed. All members are invited to participate.)

**Red-throated Loon:** One, Milwaukee, May 13 by the Orians-Cialdini-Zeit group.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Present at Oshkosh, Mar. 30 (Evans-Buckstaff).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Lake Winnebago, Apr. 8 (Dettman).

**Great Blue Heron:** Pierce County, Mar. 19 (Toppe).

**American Egret:** Two in Horicon Marsh, May 4 (Jones and group).

**Green Heron:** Milwaukee, Apr. 18 (William Jackson). Nest and eggs, Milwaukee, May 13 (Vogelsang).

**Blue Goose:** Madison, one with flock of 25 Canada geese, Mar. 31 (Robbins).

**Black Duck:** Hen with ducklings, Forest County, June 25 (Schmidt). Another brood of 8 or 9 in same county, June 28 by same observer.

**Blue-winged Teal:** Nest of twelve eggs, Green Bay, June 17; all were hatched two days later (Eric Richter).

**Wood Duck:** Nest found near Racine, Apr. 28 (von Jarchow).

**Buffle-head:** Vilas County, Mar. 23-30 (Mrs. Miles).

**American Merganser:** Douglas County, Mar. 22 (Schmidt). Three broods of 6, 9 and 15 in Forest County, June 19-20, species undetermined (Schmidt).

**Turkey Vulture:** Pierce County, Mar. 20 (Toppe). Two in Sauk County, May 6 (Robbins). Racine, April 5 (Zell). Oshkosh, April 8 (Kasper). Rusk County, June 12 (Hartmeister). Sawyer County, May 28, two (Schmidt). Madison, Apr. 8 (Barger).

**Goshawk:** Forest County, Apr. 27 (Hartmeister). Oneida County, May 18 and 31, also by Hartmeister.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Nest with three eggs, Sauk County, May 30 (Kruse). Old crow's nest was used.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Migrating continuously rather in the usual flocks this season. This applied also to some of the other species of hawks.

**Golden Eagle:** Two, Oneida County, Apr. 12; and again on Apr. 25; one, Price County, Apr. 4; and one, Oneida County May 18 by Hartmeister.

**Osprey:** Building nest in Langlade County, Apr. 15 (Bradle).

**Duck Hawk:** One on Mar. 28 (Bierman).

**Sparrow Hawk:** Two, Sawyer County, Mar. 23 (Schmidt).

**Ruffed Grouse:** No diminishing in numbers, as reported in northern counties, has been noted of this species by Derleth and Kruse in Sauk County. Brood of 4 or more chicks, Forest County, June 15 (Bradle). Nest of 5 eggs, Forest County, June 28 (Bradle). Brood of 9 chicks, Sawyer County, June 28 (Hartmeister). Brood of chicks about 3-5 days old, Oneida County, June 12 (Schmidt).

**Killdeer:** Pierce County, Mar. 16 (Toppe). Nest of 4 eggs, Sauk County, Apr. 8 (Kruse). Nest of 3 eggs, Fond du Lac, Apr. 8 (Vogelsang). A nest built between two delphinium plants was discovered by Eric Richter in Green Bay, Apr. 30. First egg, May 4; third and last, May 6. On June 1, first egg hatched; and on June 2 the other two hatched and the young left the nest.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** Appleton, May 16, several hundred (Mrs. Rogers and party). Flock of sixty-four, Winnebago County, May 19 (Kaspar).

**Woodcock:** Sauk City, Mar. 14, in aerial dance (Derleth).

**Upland Plover:** April 6 (Loyster).

**Willet:** Milwaukee, May 19 (Gordon Orians). Rare.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** Milwaukee, Apr. 7 (Bub).

**Caspian Tern:** Appleton, May 9 (Mrs. Rogers).

**Mourning Dove:** On nest in jack pine, Sauk County, Apr. 23 (Kruse).

**Nighthawk:** Milwaukee, Mar. 25 (exceptionally early), observed by both A. and M. Doll. Heavy migration not until about May 24.

**Kingfisher:** Fresh nesting burrow, Sauk County, Apr. 22 (Kruse).

**Flicker:** Door County, Mar. 25 (Wilson). Oshkosh, Mar. 25 (Evans).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Very late in arriving in Sauk County (Kruse). Observed with a bluish egg in its beak, May 20 by Mrs. Weber.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Madison, Mar. 31 (Robbins). Sauk County, Mar. 30 (Kruse). Milwaukee, May 13 (William Jackson).

**Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker:** Forest County, Apr. 20 (Bradle).

**American Three-toed Woodpecker:** Discussed on rear page.

**Kingbird:** Building nest in white oak June 16 (Eric Richter).

**Crested Flycatcher:** Nest found in top of white oak. Three eggs. Entrance was from top and side. Nest composed of grey and black plant fibers, bark and horsehair—no snakeskin. Found June 19 by Eric Richter.

**Phoebe:** Pierce County, Mar. 26 (Toppe). Ashland County, Mar. 26 (Dede).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** Madison, June 11 (Robbins).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** Two in Madison, June 10 (Robbins). Milwaukee, May 13 (William Jackson).

**Least Flycatcher:** Milwaukee, April 10 (Stretlitz). Early.

**Tree Swallow:** Nest with five eggs in Green Bay, June 3 (Eric Richter).

**Bank Swallow:** On June 18 twenty-one nests were found mostly with young but a few with eggs in Oconto County (Eric Richter). Fresh burrows, Sauk County, May 6 (Kruse).

**Barn Swallow:** Sauk County, Apr. 7 (early) by Kruse. Nest with one egg, May 28, also by Kruse.

**Purple Martin:** Merrill, Mar. 30 (Schaars). Pierce County, Mar. 31 (Toppe).

**Blue Jay:** Nest in oak with four eggs. Sauk County, May 23 (Kruse).

**Crow:** Nest with 3 eggs, Sauk County, Apr. 1 (Kruse). Observed by Schmidt flying off with young killdeer in latter part of May.

**Hudsonian Chickadee:** Forest County, May 29 (Bradle).

**Tufted Titmouse:** Black River Falls, Dec. 28 (Miss Evelyn Jones). Milwaukee, Mar. 26 (A. Doll).

**Winter Wren:** Door County, Mar. 25 (Wilson).

**Bewick's Wren:** Sauk County, Mar. 30 (Kruse). Observed at various times until May 13 by Kruse. Dane County, Mar. 26 (Barger). Others were observed in Madison by several observers. Last recorded May 13.

**Brown Thrasher:** Milwaukee, Apr. 7, early (Bub).

**Robin:** Claiming nesting territory Mar. 21, Madison (Mrs. Barger). Young out of nest, Black Earth, May 3 (Mrs. Scott).

**Hermit Thrush:** Green Bay, Mar. 28 (Eric Richter).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Milwaukee, Apr. 15 (Vogelsang).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Sauk County, Mar. 25 (Kruse). Ashland County, Mar. 27 (Schmidt).

**Cedar Waxwing:** Found dying in numbers in Dane County this season by Mrs. Kochler and others. Reason thus far undetermined.

**Starling:** Nest found by Dr. von Jarchow containing three normal eggs and two small white eggs.

**Myrtle Warbler:** Madison, Mar. 31 (Robbins). Oshkosh, Apr. 6 (Evans).

**Prairie Warbler:** Milwaukee, May 21, one female and two males by Mrs. Nunnemacher and Mrs. Balsom in one spot. Rare.

**Hooded Warbler:** Milwaukee, May (Gordon Orians). Rare.

**Wilson's Warbler:** Milwaukee, May 13 (Robbins).

**Meadowlark:** Ashland County, Mar. 22 (Dede). Washburn County, Mar. 22 (Schmidt).

**Redwing:** Pierce County, Mar. 16 (Toppe). Ashland County, Mar. 22 (Dede). Nest in rye field with two eggs and one of cowbird, Sauk County, May 19 (Kruse). Nest eight feet up in spruce, thirty feet from water (Eric Richter).

**Orchard Oriole:** One immature male in song at Lone Rock, Wisconsin, June 22 (Miss Morse).

**Baltimore Oriole:** Nest with 4 eggs May 30 in Sauk County (Kruse). Arrived Apr. 20 in Milwaukee (Vogelsang). Early.

**Bronzed Grackle:** Pierce County, Mar. 17 (Toppe). Ashland County, Mar. 22 (Dede). Oneida County, Mar. 25 (Schmidt).



**Cardinal:** Nest with 5 eggs, Sauk County, May 30 (Kruse).  
**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Vilas County, May 11 (Schmidt).  
**Indigo Bunting:** Nest and one egg, June 10, Sauk County (Kruse).  
 Nest without eggs as yet, June 19, Green Bay (Eric Richter).  
**Evening Grosbeak:** Milwaukee, May 24 (Vogelsang). Late.  
**Pine Grosbeak:** Forest County, May 1 (Hartmeister).  
**Red Crossbill:** Three in Vilas County, Mar. 23 to 30 (Mrs. Miles).  
**Vesper Sparrow:** Nest with two eggs and one cowbird egg, Apr. 30, in Sauk County (Kruse).  
**Lark Sparrow:** Several at Lone Rock, June 22. One was feeding a young cowbird (Miss Morse).  
**Junco:** Ashland County, Mar. 24 (Dede). Dane County, May 14 (Mrs. Barger).  
**Chipping Sparrow:** Sauk County, nest and young May 31 (Kruse). Milwaukee, Mar. 17 (A. Doll). Earliest on record.  
**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Eight nests under observation at Green Bay by Eric Richter. On June 3 they were at various stages from no eggs to a complement of four.  
**Field Sparrow:** Nest and eggs, June 19, in Sauk County (Kruse).  
**Harris' Sparrow:** Horicon, May 12 (Jones). Rare.  
**White-crowned Sparrow:** Oneida County, May 10 (Schmidt).  
**Gambel's Sparrow:** Oshkosh, May 19 (Kaspar). Rarely seen.  
**White-throated Sparrow:** Racine, June 3 (Dr. von Jarchow).  
**Fox Sparrow:** Ashland County, Mar. 27 (Schmidt).  
**Lincoln Sparrow:** Milwaukee, Apr. 10 (Strelitzer).  
**Song Sparrow:** Ashland County, Mar. 22 (Dede). Door County, Mar. 22 (Wilson). Nest on ground with four eggs, Forest County, June 8 (Bradle).  
 Correction: In volume VII, number 2, under Song Sparrow in the field note section, Eric Richter's Mar. 1 record should have read for Green Bay instead of Oconto.

## Which?

By MRS. H. J. NUNNEMACHER

To most habitual observers in the Milwaukee area, identification of the warbler species, thanks to their vivid markings, presents little difficulty during spring migration.

At a glance, the larger birds, swallows, wrens, and thrushes are recognizable, color, call, or song, giving the lead to recognition.

The flycatchers, all but the "sticklers" (the Alder and the Acadian) cause no trouble, and the spectacles on two of the vireos, the bland coloring and sing-song of the warbling, the eye-stripe of the red-eyed, and the yellowish underparts of the Philadelphia are with a good binocular look, added to one's bird-list with satisfaction.

However, at the end of the A. O. U. check-list are the sparrows and as if planned that way, the difficulties rise to a climax.

The vesper, junco, tree, chipping, field, white-crowned, and white throated, the fox, swamp and song sparrows have characteristics plainly visible. In proximity, the eye-stripe and the spot on the breast besides the pink legs of the Savannah and the buffy breast-band and fine streakings below of the Lincoln aid one to sure recognition.

The hook of the problem is in the less common sparrows.

It is impractical carrying in the field several bird-books, their size ranging from one just too large for the average pocket, and the rest almost requiring the conveyance of a coaster-wagon.

Yet it has been done, and by consultation on the spot with lengthy bird-keys, notes, long-winded or concise, and the plates, never bound adjacent to the bird described—aha!—one has arrived but by this time the sparrow in question has flown or scurried to parts unknown!

Now, who of the readers of the "Passenger Pigeon" whether bird-bander or observer is really familiar enough with the grasshopper, Henslow's, LeConte, and clay-colored sparrows to give brief, clear, and positive identification; in other words, some **short** and **sure** hints? And will they be generously offered?

These sparrows are here. They buzz, trill, sing, sulk, run, hop, perch, and flit like others, but oh! for the bird in the hand and not two in the bush!

2815 East Newberry Blvd., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July, 1945.

## KAY T. ROGERS

Kay T. Rogers, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Rogers of Appleton, and charter member of our society, has received the following citation which speaks for itself:

"By Command of Major General McLain, the Silver Star Medal is awarded to **FIRST LIEUTENANT KAY T. ROGERS** (Army Serial Number O1316672), 2nd Ranger Infantry Battalion, United States Army, for gallantry in action against the enemy in Germany, from 7 December 1944 to 8 December 1944. First Lieutenant Rogers was in charge of a group of men evacuating wounded from the top of a hill, under heavy enemy direct artillery and mortar fire from three sides. Several times, in complete disregard for his own safety, First Lieutenant Rogers traveled alone to and from the collecting point and the company aid station on the hill. When First Lieutenant Rogers led volunteers to carry water, food, and a large box of medical supplies to the aid station on top of the hill. By persistently volunteering for hazardous duty to lead his men to save the lives of others, First Lieutenant Rogers thereby set an example of courage and selflessness which was an inspiration to the men under his command. The aggressive leadership, outstanding courage, and devotion to duty displayed by First Lieutenant Rogers reflect great credit upon himself and the Military Service. Entered Military Service from Wisconsin."

We join in congratulating Mr. Rogers and wish him a speedy return to Wisconsin.

## MADISON AND PALO ALTO

(Continued from page 77)

Margaret W. Wythe, published in 1927 by that very active society, the Cooper Ornithological Club, very useful indeed. It is to be superseded, in part at least, by a very much larger work now in press, covering the whole state. They do such jobs magnificently well out here.

546 Washington Avenue, Palo Alto, California, February, 1945.

# *The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology*

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Wisconsin Birds—Check List with Migration Charts

In charge of Earl L. Loyster, Route 1, Middleton



## *An American Three-toed Woodpecker in Wisconsin*

On March 30, 1945, in Vilas County, Wisconsin, Mrs. Miles heard, spotted and identified an American three-toed woodpecker. The closest view we had was at approximately 25 feet, at which distance, through the binoculars, the yellow cap, barred sides of the breast, ladder back, and otherwise dark upper parts were clearly discernible. It appeared to be somewhat smaller than a robin; and was working on a large, broken, lodged white spruce. It flew into the swamp while the camera was being readied, but returned later, and, beginning at the roots on the outer side of the standing stub, worked up the under side of the lodged trunk. Unfortunately, a poor photograph was obtained.

This find was incorrectly listed in our April issue as an Arctic three-toed woodpecker, which Mrs. Miles has previously reported from the same general area. Mrs. Miles' notes for February 21, 1941 list an American three-toed woodpecker seen on that date, within a mile of the "find" herein reported.  
—Mr. and Mrs. Philip E. Miles.

This woodpecker is a resident of the alpine regions of the eastern half of Canada, occurring only occasionally in the extreme northern portions of eastern and middle-western United States. Most of the records in this country have come from the regions of the Adirondacks in New York and from northern New England. It has been observed rarely in northern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin and upper Michigan.

Kumlien and Hollister state that "from 1860 to 1870 about a dozen specimens were taken by Thure and L. Kumlien near Jefferson. In September 1898, two specimens were taken in Iron County by Ogden and Copeland and preserved in Milwaukee." On the basis of the Jefferson records, the range of this species has generally been given as "casual in southern Wisconsin," but it should be looked for chiefly in the northern counties. It may be that future observation in the northern regions will prove this species to be a more frequent visitor in Wisconsin than the records indicate.—Sam Robbins.