



# LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## **The passenger pigeon. Vol. II, No. 9 September 1940**

Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, September 1940

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/E7VMCRO5KPRJT9A>

<http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.

(13)

# The Passenger Pigeon

TO ENCOURAGE STUDY OF WISCONSIN BIRDS

VOL. II

September, 1940

No. 9

## BALD EAGLE RANGE AND POPULATION STUDY

By MURL DEUSING  
Milwaukee Public Museum

### Scope of Work

This report is based upon a total of 169 Wisconsin records of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) collected from cooperators, published records, and museum specimens. No attempt was made to distinguish between the Northern and Southern varieties. The Dane Co. Field List published by the Kumlien Club lists the Northern variety. Josselyn Van Tyne in his Check List of Birds of Michigan also lists the Northern Bald Eagle. Roberts, on the other hand, lists the Southern sub-species for Minnesota.



*Immature Bald Eagle brought to Milwaukee Public Museum by S. Paul Jones from Waukesha County when found unable to fly. The bird recovered and was released. Photo Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Museum.*

All of the specimens in the Milwaukee Public Museum, except one, are of the Southern variety. This exception is an immature bird taken in December in Jefferson Co. Probably all of the nesting Bald Eagles are the Southern variety but the winter residents may be the Northern subspecies. A complete check of specimens taken in all parts of Wisconsin during all times of the year will be necessary before the status of the subspecies can be definitely determined.

For this study we have used Prof. Leopold's state map, showing rough ecological divisions for "Game Areas". In the areas described on this map, the greatest number of records, 60, came from the Northern Forest Area, the Southeast Area following closely with 57 reports. The

Monthly Bulletin of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology  
 Membership fee of \$1.00 includes 75 cents for subscription to THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

Send membership applications and dues to the treasurer.

Manuscripts should be sent to the editor, except that bird field notes and bird banding data go to respective editors of these departments.

Editor: (Office of Publication) W. E. Scott, Conservation Department, State Office Bldg., Madison.

Treasurer: J. Harwood Evans, 517 Jackson Dr., Oshkosh, Wis.

Field Note Dept. Editor: N. R. Barger, 132 Lathrop St., Madison, Wis.

Bird Bander's Dept. Editor: Harold C. Wilson, Ephraim, Wisconsin.

Entered as second-class matter Sept. 4, 1940 at the Post Office at Madison, Wis., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Southwest Area had 32 reports; the Transition Area had 11 reports; and the Central Sand Area, 9 reports. There were 32 counties in the state with no reports on the Bald Eagle. These were evenly distributed among all the areas. Dane County led in the number of reports turned in with a total of 38 while Door County followed with 17. Oneida, Vilas, Sauk, Sheboygan, Waukesha, Milwaukee, and Dodge Counties all had 5 or more reports.

#### Nesting and Summer Records

At one time the Bald Eagle bred in all parts of Wisconsin containing a suitable environment of lake or stream and forest. Dr. Hoy in 1853 speaks of it as "numerous throughout the state." King called it a "resident throughout the year" in 1883. Ludwig Kumlien in 1891 remarks for Wisconsin that it is "found along the larger streams and lakes." Settlement and development of the lake area for resorts gradually drove the eagle out of the southern part of its breeding range. Kumlien and Hollister state in 1903 that "the summer resorts about our lakes have gradually driven this species from its former nesting haunts . . . In southern Wisconsin at the present day the eagle is mainly a spring and fall migrant about the inland lakes, but specimens are occasionally seen in mid-summer."

Today the nesting range of the Bald Eagle in Wisconsin is largely confined to the Northern Forest Area. Of the 60 reports from this area 22 definitely describe nests. All but 13 of these reports are dated between the months of April and August, the nesting seasons of the Bald Eagle. Even in the Northern Forest Area the eagle can not be called common. Many places containing a suitable habitat do not have their pair of nesting eagles. The breeding stock is below the capacity of the range to support it. The disturbances coming from an increasing summer resort population is probably the factor that keeps this bird below its normal range capacity.

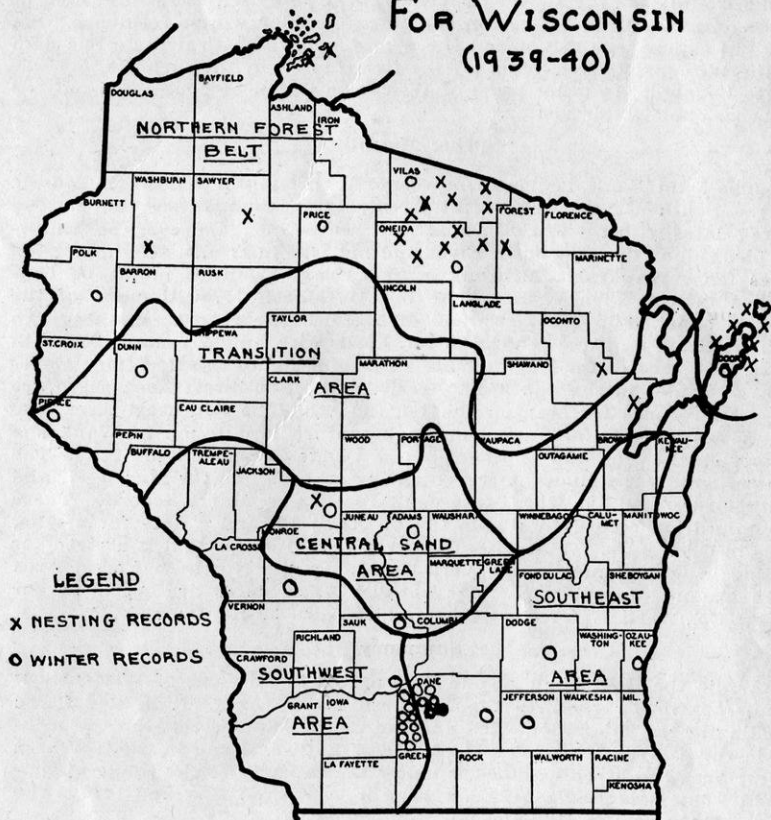
We have only one report for the nesting of the Bald Eagle in the Transition Area within recent years. This report comes from Richter for Oconto Co. He states that they have nested regularly along Green Bay since 1928. Very possibly there are other nesting areas that have not come to light but on the whole the nesting of the Bald Eagle in the Transition Area must be considered as sparse and of a local nature. The same might be said of the Central Sand Area. Zimmerman reports a nest for Jackson Co. in 1936. This is the only recent nesting record for this area.

There are no definite nesting records within recent years for the Southwest Area. Schaeffer saw a pair of Bald Eagles for one entire summer at Cedar Lake in Washington Co., about ten years ago but found no nest. There is no doubt that the Bald Eagle was once a common summer resident of this area but the settlement of the country drove it out. Now it is only a migrant.

There are no nesting records or summer records for the Southwest Area. It is possible that even in the early days the Bald Eagle was not a common breeder in this part of the state. We have no nesting records of any kind, past or present, except the general statements made by Hoy, King, and Kumlien.

The Bald Eagle begins nesting in the state in the months of April and May. Schoenebeck states that they begin laying in the middle of May but Richter found highly incubated eggs on April 26, 1927, and a fresh set of eggs April 8, 1928. A nest on June 18, 1883 had two young not fully fledged and another nest on July 20, 1837 still contained two young. A nest that was known to have young during the summer did not have young when the observer returned on September 7.

## RECENT BALD EAGLE RECORDS FOR WISCONSIN (1939-40)



### Fall Migration

The Bald Eagle begins leaving the Northern Forest Area during September. We have only three records for October and two for November for this area. There is only one fall date for the Central Sand Area—that of September 7. The Transition Area has three fall dates—one for September 28, one for October, and the last one for November 9. The Southeast Area has a number of fall records. Eagles begin moving through the Southeast Area as early as September 3. The height of the migration is reached during the middle of October and then gradually tapers off in the first two weeks of November. The Southwest area shows only a few October and November dates. To summarize we could say that the migration of the Bald Eagle in autumn begins early in the month of



September, reaches its greatest peak in October, and the last of the eagles come through during the first two weeks of November. At no time can the Bald Eagle be considered a common migrant.

#### Winter Residence

The Bald Eagle may be found as an occasional winter resident in any part of the state. We have winter records from Oneida, Vilas, Polk, Door, and Price Counties in the Northern Forest Belt; from Dunn and Pierce Counties in the Transition Area, from Adams, Jackson, and Sauk Counties in the Central Sand Area; from Dane, Sauk, and Monroe Counties in the Southwest Area; and from Dane, Jefferson, Ozaukee, and Dodge Counties in the Southeast Area. Dane County with 16 winter records is the only county in Wisconsin showing a regular winter residence. Six or eight eagles regularly spend the winter below the Prairie du Sac dam on the Wisconsin River living off the fish injured by the turbines, according to Leopold. In other parts of Wisconsin it can be considered only as an occasional winter visitor.

#### Spring Migration

The Bald Eagle begins to move north through Wisconsin in March. In the Southeast and Southwest Areas, Dane County has the earliest March dates with the 3rd, 8th, and 12th. These may, however, be wintering birds along the Wisconsin River and not true migrants. The migration dates from Waukesha, Milwaukee, and Grant Counties might be considered typical. The earliest date here is March 19, with most of the records bunched in the last week of March. The records in these two areas indicate a sparse migration for April, with only 7 records for both areas. The records for May indicate a continuation of this desultory movement of eagles in the Southeast Area. In the Southwest Area there are only two records for May on the 1st and 8th. The Southeast Area also shows two records for June, one an immature bird taken in Waukesha County on the 2nd, and another shot in Dodge County on the 22nd. The Central Sand Area shows only two spring records one for March 11, and another for April 16. The Transition Area has no March records. There is a migration record for Pepin Co. on April 10, and a date for nesting birds in Oconto Co. for April 8. Gruntvig (1883) states that it arrived for nesting in Outagamie Co. on April 24-28. In the Northern Forest Area there are no March dates. The earliest April dates are April 20 for Oneida Co., April 27 for Bayfield Co., and April 29 for Door Co.

#### Summary

While the Bald Eagle at one time nested in all parts of Wisconsin it is now confined largely to the Northern Forest Area. It is also found breeding in the Transition Area and the Central Sand Area, but the nesting in these areas is sparse and of a local nature. Even in the Northern Forest Area the breeding stock is below the capacity of the range to support it. The Bald Eagle begins nesting in April and May and brings the young off the nest in July and possibly August.

The Bald Eagle begins to leave the Northern Forest Area during September. The height of the fall migration in the southern part of the state is reached during the middle of October and then gradually tapers off in the first two weeks of November.

Bald Eagles may be found as occasional winter residents in any part of the state, and are regular winter residents on the Wisconsin River in Dane Co.

The Bald Eagle begins to move north in the middle of March with the height of the migration reached in the last week of March. During April and May the Bald Eagle continues to move north through Wisconsin in small numbers. At no time is the Bald Eagle a common migrant.

This study was made possible through the contribution of data by the many bird observers in Wisconsin. We sincerely thank them for their generous cooperation.

By RALPH C. HOPKINS

*Wisconsin Conservation Department*

On the afternoon of September 1, 1940, my companion and I observed an immature Great Blue Heron walking along the shores of Lake Beaver Dam in Barron county. We desired to obtain a close-up of this bird, so proceeded down the lake and moored our canoe among the bulrushes that lined the shore. The Heron continued in our direction, stalking slowly through the water, and occasionally picked up various items which we could not identify. When the bird had approached to within twenty-five yards, of our canoe, it suddenly struck an object lying in the shallow water and skillfully flipped it out onto the shore. It proved to be a bullhead which we estimated at ten to twelve inches in length, and which must have weighed a pound or more. The Heron immediately proceeded to strike it several vigorous blows. It then stepped back and watched the bullhead, apparently for signs of life.

During the next twenty minutes we observed a routine in which the Heron would first strike the fish, pause for a minute or two, step back, take aim, and let drive with terrific power. Following three or four of these blows, the bird would seize the bullhead in his bill, step over to the lake, nonchalantly give said fish a dunking and thorough washing, after which we would return to the beach and repeat the hammering routine again.

The spectacle was both impressive and amusing; impressive because of the grace, coordination, rhythm, and power the bird exhibited; comical because every time he struck the fish it would sound like someone shoving his fist through a rotten pumpkin. Strangely, the bullhead exhibited no sign of life whatsoever after the first blow was delivered.

Approximately one-half hour after the heron first stunned the bullhead, he made his first attempt to swallow it. During the next half hour, approximately half a dozen attempts were made to consume the fish. First he would wash and swish the fish around in the water for two or three minutes, balance the fish in his bill, and then attempt to swallow it head first, not by holding his head upright and letting it slide down his throat by the force of gravity, but by holding his head low and trying to "wolf" the fish like a dog would wolf a hamburger. When the attempt was not successful, the bird would again go back to his washing and hammering.

Finally, he managed to swallow the fish far enough so that he could close his mouth. At this stage he looked like he had an acute case of the mumps. During the next twenty minutes the bird sat very quietly, and the fish gradually passed down his throat; he appeared to go into a stupor. At this point I flushed the bird to see what his reactions would be. He flew very heavily, and only for a short distance.

The notable features in this performance were the grace and timing the bird exhibited in his movements, the size of the bullhead, and the striking power he exhibited in killing the fish, particularly in view of the fact that it was an immature bird. I really believe that this bird, under ideal conditions of course, could crack a man's skull.

## PASSENGER PIGEON TRAPPER FOUND

Two men in Sparta, Monroe County, have original knowledge of the Passenger Pigeon flocks which once nested in that vicinity according to Mr. A. D. Polleys, Melrose. They are Dr. Spenser S. Beebe, who watched the pigeon trappers as a boy, and Mr. A. F. Baldwin who with his brother, William Baldwin (now deceased), was one of the foremost pigeon trappers in that area. Plans are being made to secure data and pictures on the method used from Mr. Baldwin.

By N. R. BARGER, Editor

*(Kindly send field notes to N. R. Barger, 132 Lathrop St., Madison, Wisconsin, at the end of each month. Use the A. O. U. order.)*

Eight or ten Loons on Lake Mendota, August 10, (Jane Tuttrup), furnishes more evidence that they may be nesting in Dane County. Great Blue Herons have been more abundant in parts of Dane County from reports of Mrs. Koehler and others. Again, however, records for the American Agret in Wisconsin are lacking, except one Scott records one for Dane County, August 30. On Aug. 6, Richter observed many Black-crowned Night Herons, both adult and immature at Pecor Point, near Oconto. Deusing notes increase in numbers at Wind Lake. Strehlow notes them regularly for Green Bay, but most observers do not record them, possibly because it is a bird to be found active chiefly on dark days or at night.

#### **Nesting Waterfowl Recorded**

While making his duck census for the Biological Survey, Aug. 6, Richter found the Black Duck to outnumber the "greys". There were many immature Blue-winged Teal, some unable to fly. The Ruddy Duck, which rarely breeds in Dane County, was present Aug. 30, when Scott saw four. Paulson notes 7 at Green Bay, Aug. 14. The latter observer has two Green-winged Teal, Aug. 3 and three Hooded Mergansers, Aug. 29, both good summer records for Green Bay. Throughout August, Dr. von Jarchow saw a female Red-breasted Merganser with five young at Racine. This is a valuable record for that far south.

Throne, while vacationing, watched a Bald Eagle after Loons in Vilas County, but the eagle met with no success. Mrs. Koehler discovered the Duck Hawk in a new part of Dane County during August.

#### **Piping Plover Nesting in Oconto County**

A record of interest is that by Richer, the finding of three Sandhill Cranes in the central part of Oconto County. They were there throughout the month. A bird often looked for, but seldom found, nested in Richter's territory. It was the Piping Plover which, on Aug. 6, brought forth a newly hatched brood. The tiny little fellows already were able to stretch out on the sand when pursued or overtaken.

A Piping Plover, which must have been a migrant, reached Racine by Aug. 12 (G. & E. Prins). Richter records three young Wilson Snipe for his area, Aug. 6. Stage of development was not given. Miss Heisel counted three Upland Plovers at Pound, Oconto County, Aug. 12-16. Strehlow has them for the same period at Green Bay. Two Spotted Sandpiper young were out, Aug. 3 (Prins Bros.) at Racine. They have quite an early record for the Sanderling, 4 migrating, Aug. 3. No other Sandpiper record was received that was of unusual interest, but most of the species were mentioned so the migration must have been about normal.

#### **Nests of Common Tern Deserted**

Herring Gulls showed a decided increase at Green Bay, by the last week in August (Strehlow). Strelitzer notes an influx at Milwaukee beginning, Aug. 18. Richter found the Ring-billed Gulls to far outnumber the Herring Gulls at Pensaukee, Oconto County, August 6. Many of the Ring-bills were immature. From 50 to 60 Bonaparte Gulls, mostly immature or partly in immature plumage, were present. Richter and Strehlow listed a few Caspian Terns in August, but the Common Tern was more abundant. From 500 to 600 of the latter were easily found by Richter, and nests were still in various stages on Aug. 6 near Oconto. A conspicuous feature was the presence of many deserted nests with large young in eggs, dead. Incubation was still in process on some of the nests, as birds were flushed, and some contained eggs fairly fresh even at this second or third laying. Numbers of downy Black Terns were swimming about, Aug. 6 (Richter).



Black-billed Cuckoos were carrying caterpillars to their nest in an alder swamp along the Oconto river Aug. 19 (Richter). Scott noted large flocks of Nighthawks in Dane County Aug. 17. A Kingbird still attending young was observed Aug. 19, at Oconto. The Prins Brothers saw two Yellow-bellied Flycatchers at Racine, Aug. 23.

#### Albino Tree Swallow Observed

Something of unusual occurrence was an albino Tree Swallow, seen by Zaumeyer, Aug. 25 near Neenah. It was feeding and winging with Martins and other Tree Swallows, but the latter would occasionally "gang up" on it and attack it on the wing. Twenty-one Purple Martins, all young, were picked up by G. Prins, Aug. 20, which had been struck and killed by cars. Dr. Roo, of Milwaukee Bird Club, discovered a second nesting of Cedar Waxwings in Oconto County, newly hatched, Aug. 31.

Black and White Warblers had arrived in Racine, Aug. 23 (G. Prins), and the Nashville and Palm Warblers had reached Milwaukee by the last week in August (Stevens and Schaeffer). Mrs. Hussong counted 5 Cape-May Warblers in Door County, Aug. 18.

Dickcissels with young out of the nest were found, Aug. 20 and 27 by the Prins Bros. at Racine. Mrs. Hussong again records the Leconte's Sparrow for Green Bay, 5 on Aug. 3 and one Aug. 10. White-throated Sparrows in small numbers were also seen at Green Bay by Mrs. Weber, the first part of the month.

#### BY THE WAYSIDE

King found a nest of the Wood Pewee containing three downy young on August 9 in Manitowoc county.

W. D. Barnard, custodian of the Interstate Park, states that Cardinals were common there during the spring and summer and that Pileated Woodpeckers were numerous for the first time in his memory, having increased steadily for a number of years. The Wood Duck is also considered common in the park area along the St. Croix river.

George Ruegger of Radisson reports that the Cardinal has moved into that area only in the last few years and has so far been observed only in summer, the first date of their arrival being 1928. He also has recorded a pair of Upland Plover for that vicinity in the summer of 1939 and states that these were the first ones observed by him in that area.

George Ruegger, Jr., also of Radisson, has recorded the nest of a Green-winged Teal for the summer of 1940 in that vicinity.

The 1940 waterfowl census of the national forests in Wisconsin was made during the month of July along the shores of water areas in these forests. Their report issued on September 5 estimates the nesting population on the Chequamegon Forest at 5,000 ducks with only four species definitely observed to be nesting: Mallard, Hooded Merganser, Blue-winged Teal, and Black Duck in that order of numbers. On the Nicolet Forest in northeastern Wisconsin, a breeding population of 4,000 ducks was estimated with seven species recorded in the following order of numbers: Black Duck, Wood Duck, Common Mallard, Hooded Merganser, American Merganser, Blue-winged Teal, and Ring-necked Duck. The 1939 study on this area observed Green-winged Teal nesting as well as indications of nesting on the Ruddy Duck and estimated a breeding population of 7,500. R. Dale Sanders was in charge of the Chequamegon survey and Deane Mather supervised the Nicolet study.

Lawrence H. Walkinshaw of Battle Creek, Michigan, reports that during late June and early July in 1933, he spent several days in northern Wisconsin searching the jack pine areas for nests of the Kirtland's Warbler. Although he was unable to locate any nests of this bird, he and Al Dodwing found a Loon nest on Lake Nancy in Washburn county northwest of Spooner on July 1. The nest was built on an old muskrat house surrounded by water five feet deep and the two eggs were chocolate colored, spotted and streaked with a few markings of black.



At a business meeting of the Madison Bird Club on October 16, William Elder was elected the new president and Sam Robbins, secretary-treasurer.

Mrs. Arthur Koehler of Madison attended the 36th Annual Convention of the National Audubon Society in New York City from October 11 to 15, and explained the work of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology at that meeting. At this session, W. E. Scott was elected a member of the advisory board of the Audubon Society to represent the state of Wisconsin.

Prof. Gustav Swanson of the University of Minnesota has sent the editor a copy of a mimeographed publication entitled "The Passenger Pigeon" which was published in 1928 by a group of natural history students at the University of Michigan. Although this paper is no longer in existence, the similarity of name is of interest.

Mr. A. D. Polleys of Melrose has recently completed an article on his recollections of the Passenger Pigeon in Wisconsin which was published in The Melrose Chronicle. Mr. Polleys has quite a considerable bird collection and has been interested in this study for many years.

At the October meeting of the Kumlien Club, A. W. Schorger reported on the "Mammals of Madeline Island."

Meetings of the Inland Bird Banding Association and the Wilson Ornithological Club will be held at the University of Minnesota, November 22-24, and all Wisconsin bird students who could possibly attend should be there.

Mr. E. C. Hanson of Racine is making definite plans for study of the possibilities of propagating Prairie Chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse and is investigating available lands in central Wisconsin in this regard.

The Executive Board of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology met in Milwaukee at the home of President Alvin Throne on November 8. Decisions made by that body will be reported to the members in the next issue of THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

A new publication entitled "Food Habits of Woodcock, Snipe, Knot and Dowitchers" was recently issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C., as Wildlife Research Bulletin No. 1.

#### NEW MEMBERS—

Walkinshaw, Dr. Lawrence H., 1416 W. Michigan ave., Battle Creek, Michigan

— Hertz, Harry, care of Boy Scouts of America, 7 High st., Oshkosh, Wis.

— Kirkpatrick, Chas. M., Dept. of Zoology, Univ. of Wis., Madison, Wis.

Kozlik, Frank M., Haugen, Wis.

Dayton, Rev. F. S., 701 Dickinson st., New London, Wis.

Martin, Joseph H., 2625 Washington ave., Racine, Wis.

— Cuthbert, N. L., Genetics Bldg., Univ. of Wis., Madison, Wis.

— Peterson, Mrs. Chas. E., Madison, Minnesota

— Aberg, Wm. J. P., 16 N. Carroll st., Madison, Wis.

— Ruegger, Geo., Radisson, Wis.

Gay, Miss Hazel, Librarian, Amer. Museum of Natural History, New York City.

— Wright, Earl G., Chicago Academy of Sciences, Chicago, Illinois

— Rinkob, Severn, Baraboo, Wis.

Peartree, Edward W., 425 S. State st., Oconomowoc, Wis.

Wheeler, F. G., 810 College ave., Appleton, Wis.

Calhoun, W. T., Wis. Conservation Dept., State Office Bldg., Madison, Wis.

Cohen, Mrs. Delmar, 608 Menomonee, South Milwaukee, Wis.

— Post, J. K., 48 Bellair Court, Appleton, Wis.

Paulsen, Mrs. Martin, Route No. 1, Sussex, Wisconsin

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS—

Address changes are as follows: Earl Mitchell, 2101 Knapp st., St. Paul, Minn.; Eldon Zicher, 126 Cascade st., River Falls, Wis.; Miss Enice Rueppel, 153 N. Ashland ave., Green Bay, Wis.; Mrs. Clara Hussong, Route 3, Green Bay, Wis.; Frederick Ott, care of Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio.