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# *The Passenger Pigeon*

The Monthly Bulletin of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology

Vol. I.

October, 1939

No. 10

## SPREAD OF THE STARLING IN WISCONSIN

A study sheet on the Starling in Wisconsin was sent out with the April, 1939 issue of the PASSENGER PIGEON. Returns were not too encouraging, but at least 13 first observation records for the state were secured along with other data.

From this data it was quite definitely determined that the first authentic record of the Starling in Wisconsin was to be based upon two specimens collected in 1923 at Milwaukee and now in the Milwaukee Public Museum, according to Deusing. Sister M. Martha reports that a Mr. Mike Moore of Sturgeon Bay states that he saw a pair on his farm in Door county in 1913, but this record must be discounted as the earliest Michigan record is 1924. Herbert L. Stoddard found the first bird at Milwaukee on February 17, 1923 and George W. Paine the second at Whitefish Bay on March 12, 1923.

Deusing also cites another record for the Milwaukee region with one seen in the fall of 1926. He states that he did not see another Starling until 1928 when Schorger also found a flock of 40 on March 18 at the outlet of Lake Monona. S. Paul Jones of Waukesha evidently had the third state record with two adults seen on June 13, 1926 and the first nesting record with nest and four eggs found on June 19, 1926.

Records in 1929 include a specimen collected by Schorger on October 4 and a record of one seen by Richter at Oconto "between Christmas and New Year." Strehlow also cites a verbal report of Starlings seen by Otto Langosch at Green Bay in 1929. Main also found three birds at Madison on Dec. 26 and Dunbar reported five at Elkhorn on the same date.

The years 1930 and 1931 saw a further increase in territory with another Strehlow report of a Mr. Bedoro seeing them at Suamico in Brown county, and Sister M. Martha reporting them on a Mr. Elhers farm near Sturgeon Bay, Door county, in 1930. W. E. Snyder at Beaver Dam, Dodge county, recorded the first observation to the credit of Mr. L. H. Zimmerman at that place on February 11, 1931 and had several other later observations that year. An unknown

## THE PASSENGER PIGEON

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Send membership applications and dues to the treasurer.

Manuscript and field notes should be sent to the editor.

Treasurer: Karl W. Kahmann, Hayward, Wisconsin

Editor: W. E. Scott, Wisconsin Conservation Dept.

Annex, 20 N. Carroll St., Madison, Wisconsin

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observer reported one bird at Grafton on Dec. 24, 1930, Wallig found eight at Kenosha on Dec. 25, 1931 and Palmquist a total of 35 at Lake Geneva on Dec. 26, 1931. Increase in numbers were also shown at Milwaukee, Madison, and Oconto, with Richter taking his first set of eggs on May 11, 1931.

By 1932 the birds had moved into southwestern Wisconsin, according to Leslie D. Beadle's first record at Platteville of three seen on February 2 of that year. This year also marked the time they really became common in the Milwaukee region, according to Deusing. The year 1932 also is the publication date of the first edition of Roberts' "Birds of Minnesota" in which he states that the Starling is still confined to the extreme southeastern portion of Minnesota near the Iowa line.

Wisconsin records also show that the north-northwestern influx of the Starling did not come until after 1932, and surprisingly, records for the Fox River Valley even show their first birds at a later date. Strehlow at Green Bay did not record any of them until four were seen on April 24, 1934. J. Harwood Evans of Oshkosh, Winnebago county, lists his first two birds on April 9, 1934 and Mrs. Walter Rogers of Appleton, Outagamie county, did not see any until she noticed a flock of 19 on Dec. 26, 1935. No records are available for Watertown previous to Buzzewitz's 21 birds on Dec. 26, 1934.

Reports from northern and northwestern Wisconsin are few but indicate definitely that the Starling spread to those areas in 1935 or later. William Urban of Rothschild, Marathon county, saw his first four birds on May 10, 1935 and another group of six on May 15, 1936. Ralph Hopkins of Cumberland, Barron county, reports the first Starling seen there in June, 1936 and a second on August 15, 1936, while Paul F. Gleiter of Hammond, St. Croix county, states that they were first noticeable there in any numbers in 1937 and were fairly common in 1938. On August 17, 1935, A.W. Schorger found a flock of 32 birds in a pasture on Madeline Island,

## STARLING IN WISCONSIN

Ashland county, where it remained during his stay. Mrs. A. A. Axley of Washburn, Bayfield county, observed this bird there on March 17, 1938 and others in 1939 also at Chequamegon Springs, while Mrs. M. C. Knake of the same city observed them at Barksdale on April 19, 1939.

It is still possible that some villages and towns in northern Wisconsin do not have Starlings in any perceptible numbers, but without doubt they now are found throughout the state near places of habitation. Records do not show them as found in the heavily forested regions.

### Observations on Habits

Mention should be made of some further observations. One of the most striking features is the fact that almost all "first records" were of birds seen in the winter or early spring, indicating possible fall movement to new locations or, of course, increased noticeability due to lack of other birds. Indications are that northwestern Wisconsin has only seen small winter flocks of from 30 to 40 birds up to the present time, while southern Wisconsin has large flocks banding up in August and September and moving or wandering short distances to feeding locations until April.

Flocks of 100 or more birds are reported in fall, winter and spring by Strehlow in Brown county, Sister M. Martha in Door county and Richter in Oconto county, while large flocks in southeastern Wisconsin are well known where hundreds of birds have roosted in the trees of cities in Beloit, Racine, Milwaukee and Delavan, causing considerable damage and creating a public nuisance. That the birds winter over in any part of the state affording food is definitely established.

Deusing has banded a number of these Starlings and reports that returns show their range as localized to a distance of about 25 miles. Nesting is cited by Richter as beginning at Oconto from May 1 to 15, and Evans has observed nesting from May through June. Schorger found a partially completed nest on June 8, 1929 and another nest with five young in it on June 15 of that year. Jones states that he believes the nest he found on June 19, 1926 was a second brood as an immature bird was noticed fully plumaged with the adults.

Some reports mention the singing of the Starling as a mimic of other birds, but more of them mention the aggressiveness of this intruder in his fights for nesting sites with the Purple Martin and other hole-nesting species.

(continued on page 143)



## WITH WISCONSIN'S BIRD BANDERS

The October, 1939 issue of Bird Banding Notes issued by the Biological Survey outlined the extent of operations of Wisconsin's bird banders during the period from July 1, 1938 to July 5, 1939. Operators of 18 state stations were listed in the records with Vernon C. Rossman of Waukesha listed as banding the largest number, with a total of 2,021 birds. Harold C. Wilson of Ephraim, comes into the group banding between 800 and 1,000 birds with his operations on gulls on the Door county islands, while Theodore M. Sperry at the University Arboretum takes third place with between 500 to 800 birds banded near Madison.

Harry G. Anderson, of the Kumlien Club and now in Illinois, banded between 300 to 500, and Wallace N. MacBriar of Milwaukee, Laverne Foeckler of Waukesha and Mrs. Frances Hamerstrom of Madison also come in this group.

Four Wisconsin bird banders marked between 200 and 300 birds. They were Carmen Beining of Platteville, Eugene C. Bosl and Mr. and Mrs. Owen J. Gromme of Milwaukee and Mrs. Melva T. Maxson of Milton. Seven banders were listed in the 100 to 200 class, including Robert Adams of Waukesha, John J. Gundlach of Neenah, Paul W. Hoffman of Wauwatosa, Frank Hopkins of Poynette, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence S. Jung of Milwaukee, Miss Agnes E. Russell of Westfield and Professor George Wagner of Madison.

These records should stimulate some of Wisconsin's other bird banders to increased activity in this new year as this state offers many excellent opportunities for this work. Bird banders are invited to use the pages of the PASSENGER PIGEON to record their activities and unusual observations.

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### BANDING HAWKS AND OWLS

Owen Gromme, with the help of Deusing and Feeney, spent considerable time this fall catching and banding hawks in Sheboygan county on the major flyway. Up to October 9 they had already banded about 60 birds, mostly Sharp-shinned Hawks, but including about a dozen Duck Hawks. Gromme is very anxious to have other banding stations of this type set up, especially in Door county, and northwestern points. Any interested bird banders should contact him for details.

## OBSERVATIONS BY THE WAYSIDE

J. H. Evans reports that on the morning of September 10 he visited a small creek which flows into Lake Butte des Morts and was able to observe, through great care, 25 to 35 males, females and immature of the Wood Duck. They were on a log and on the bank as well as in the water but flew up quickly when he made a false move. This is the largest group of Wood Ducks he has ever seen at any one time.

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Strehlitzer released a male Golden-crowned Kinglet which was spread-eagled in two plants of hound's-tongue at Big Bend on September 30.

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Ben Logan of Platteville reports that on September 30 he saw over 600 Robins within an hour in the field and in addition many flocks of over 1,000 Bronzed Grackles during the latter part of September. He also reports the nest of a To-hee containing two young on September 1.

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Rossmann reports that an almost completely white albino Robin has been seen during the summer and fall at Waukesha and that three or four other partial albinos have also been noted in the same region this summer.

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Edward Prins sends in a note which is quite unusual. He states that on September 23, he found both an English Sparrow and a Parula Warbler light in some ashes and sit, neither eating nor bathing. Upon feeling of the ashes, he found them still to be warm from the fire. The day was fairly cold and windy. He also observes that the Robins present by the end of September are almost all of the pale variety, and suggests that they must be of the northern subspecies.

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### STARLING IN WISCONSIN (continued from page 141)

Schorger cites in his "Birds of Dane County" the record of a Starling killed in a field on October 26, 1929 with "its stomach crammed with grasshoppers." The economic status of this bird in Wisconsin is still to be studied, but it is already known that wherever they congregate in large numbers during the fall, winter and spring they are very likely to become an unwanted pest deserving severe methods for eradication. They are therefore legally unprotected.

## SEPTEMBER FIELD NOTES

Upon the recommendations of several members of the Executive Board, the editor wishes to announce a new policy in regard to field notes. Hereafter only those notes of unusual import will be recorded, so as to reduce the amount of material and thereby make the more important observations easily available. The notes will also be divided according to a new method so that records will be grouped in general according to the various wild life zones in the state. These zones are outlined roughly on the state map in the April, 1939 PASSENGER PIGEON and include the southeast, southwest, central sand, transition and northern forest belt areas.

As will be noted, almost all field observations in September were made in the southeast area and members in other territories are urged to contribute their field records so that this department may become more comprehensive in scope. Contributors are requested to send their notes to the editor at the end of each month.

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SOUTHEAST AREA—Strehlitzer of the Milwaukee Bird Club reports that Loyster and Mueller collected a Hudsonian Curlew at Cedar Grove in Sheboygan county on September 11. The bird had first been seen on July 20 and 21. According to his report a Knot was seen, caught, banded and released at McKinley Beach in Milwaukee on September 12. Another unbanded Knot was observed by Mueller at the same location during the last week of the month. BIRD BANDING NOTES list no Knots banded in the United States last year and this therefore becomes a more important record. Also, according to Strehlitzer, Mathiak on September 13 observed a Pipit, two Baird's Sandpipers and several Franklin's Gulls at Milwaukee and a Mockingbird at Lake Park, which was observed by both Mueller and himself.

Vernon C. Rossman reports for the Waukosha area that early in September he caught a Connecticut Warbler in his traps. This is an unusual record for the fall season. He also states that a Stilt Sandpiper and Dowitcher were observed during the summer months, that the White-throated Sparrows were noted this fall in unusual abundance and the Slate-colored Juncos arrived about one week earlier than usual.



## SEPTEMBER FIELD NOTES

Strehlow for Brown county states that the local club recorded 57 species in September with the last September dates as follows: Baltimore Oriole, 2nd; Chimney Swift, 3rd; Nighthawk, Wood Pewee, and Tree Swallow, 5th; Barn Swallow 6th; Mourning Dove, 11th; American Egret at Cedarburg by Kingston and Allen Kerr, 17th; Bobolink, 19th, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 27th by Kendall and Fonder. Kendall also observed four tree Swallows east of New Franken on September 28.

On the Sheboygan Marsh, September 27, Zimmerman and Conservation Warden Edick estimated 5,000 American Coot, 1,000 Baldpate, 3,000 Blue-winged Teal, 1,000 Wood duck, 500 Black duck, 1,000 Mallard, 500 Shoveler, 25 Great Blue Heron, 20 American Egret, 15 Black-crowned Night Herons, 1,000 Red-winged Blackbirds and also recorded the Florida Gallinule, Little Green Heron and American Bittern. These estimates are all made previous to the hunting season by a few days, and are conservative rather than maximum numbers.

Arthur Koop of Fredonia reports that two American Egrets were seen by him throughout the entire summer months in the Milwaukee river about two miles north of Saukville, Ozaukee county. This is the third record of possible nesting Egrets in Wisconsin during the past summer.

Hopkins and George Gehrke at Horicon Marsh in Dodge county on September 14 noted a few Redhead ducks along with other ducks, 20 Lesser Yellowlegs, two Virginia Rails, and a dead King Rail. They also picked up a Black Mallard which was sick, evidently with botulism, and caught by hand a Marsh Hawk, which was very weak and may also have been diseased.

J. H. Evans of Oshkosh reports that he and Ralph Buckstaff saw 18 American Egrets on September 9 in a widely scattered area of Spring Brook Marsh, which empties into the Fox river between Oshkosh and Omro. On the 10th, he also saw four American Egrets in a marsh near Lake Butte des Morts and was advised by a local farmer that as many as 26 birds have been seen there this year in a single observation.

A. W. Schorger collected a Gambel's Sparrow near Madison on September 30. At Marshall pond in Dane county, Zimmerman and Scott on September 8 observed 10 Golden Plover, one Semipalmated Plover, numerous Semi-palmated and Least Sandpipers and 12 Egrets. At this same pond on September 20, Scott



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observed one Golden Plover, four Baird's Sandpiper, 13 American Egrets, and a Henslow's Sparrow, while on the 24th, at this same place, five American Egrets still remained. Both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were evident on all these dates with the Lesser approximately ten times as numerous as the Greater. Also in Dane county, Fairfield and Wildner report a Prairie Chicken seen at Deansville marsh on the 25th.

In Columbia county, Zimmerman recorded seven Canada Geese flying over Arlington prairie on the 17th at sundown, and Scott observed the Nelson's Sparrow on the 28th at the Arlington Goose pond.

C. T. Black on the Faville Grove Wildlife Area near Lake Mills in Jefferson county reports various interesting records as follows: American Egret on four dates, with the 22nd latest, Sharp-shinned Hawk on the 22nd and Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged on the 24th, Least Sandpiper on the 21st, Ring-billed Gull on the 27th and 30th, Red-breasted Nuthatch on the 30th, Olive-backed Thrush on the 22nd, Purple Finch on the 24th, Rose-breasted Grosbeak the 24th, and Lapland Longspur on the 30th. On Sept. 29 Black estimated 1,100 Crows going to roost near Cottage Grove about 12 miles east of Madison.

Edward Prins of Racine reports that he and his brother saw their first Dickcissel on the 30th and that Walter Boerger recorded the first Wilson's Phalarope for the region since 1936. Of the hawk flight, Sparrow Hawks seemed scarce while Sharp-shinned and Cooper's were fairly numerous and Duck Hawks on the increase with five seen since the 24th. Of arrival dates, the following deserve note: 2nd, Sharp-shinned Hawk; 3rd, Palm Warbler; 4th, Myrtle and Connecticut Warblers; 16th, Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush; 17th, Golden-crowned Kinglet; 23rd, Laughing Gull (Ed. Note: Very rare straggler); 24th, Duck Hawk; 30th, Lapland Longspur, Lincoln Sparrow, Baldpate and Rough-legged Hawk. Of late dates, Prins lists the following of note: 4th, Louisiana Water Thrush; 15th, Yellow Warbler and Semipalmated Sandpiper; 16th, Acadian Flycatcher; 17th, Yellow bellied Flycatcher; 20th, American Egret and Olive-sided Flycatcher; 23rd, Cape May and Parula Warbler; 27th, Philadelphia Vireo; 28th, Cliff Swallow; 30th, Black-poll Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Alder Flycatcher.

## SEPTEMBER FIELD NOTES

**SOUTHWESTERN AREA**--Ben Logan states that his only unusual observation at Platteville in September was a Purple Gallinule which he saw on September 24. This very rare straggler for the state must be questioned without a specimen record, but is worthy of mention. Logan also states that the Pectoral Sandpiper is rare in the vicinity as only two birds were seen during the month.

On the 19th Palmer and Scott observed two American Egrets at Potosi along with some Herons, but found that the ducks were surprisingly few on the Mississippi River at that point. On the same day they recorded four Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawks near the mouth of the Platte River in Grant county.

**CENTRAL SAND AREA**--Fairfield and Scott watched eight Sandhill Cranes on the Endeavor Marsh in Marquette county on September 30.

**TRANSITION AREA**--Eugene Schmidt reports for the Door County Junior Bird Club at Sturgeon Bay some records secured under the supervision of Frances Francis, their instructor, as follows: 13th, American Pipit observed by F. Francis; 15th, a small flock of Slate-colored Juncos and a few Tree Sparrows; 18th, seven Wood Thrushes and a flock of about 150 Bluebirds; 23rd, ten Woodcock seen by Robert Leist. Schmidt adds that on September 3 he found a Mourning Dove nest near Sturgeon Bay containing three young about four days old.

**NORTHERN FOREST BELT AREA**--Mrs. A. A. Axley of Washburn, Bayfield county, reports a Goshawk seen on the 11th and a Purple Finch on the 14th both at Washburn.

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**NOTE:** Anyone joining the Society before Jan. 1, 1940 will receive full membership for 1940 as well as the remaining bulletins issued in 1939. Have your friends join now and don't forget membership in the Society and the PASSENGER PIGEON as a possible Christmas present.

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Conservation Warden Willard Loesch recently observed the Pileated Woodpecker in northeastern Juneau county. He states that others have been reported there quite frequently.

## NEWS NOTES

A feather for the hat of Conservation Warden Bob Lake of West Bend for making what was probably the first state arrest of a hunter for shooting hawks or owls. On October 15 Lake arrested a Milwaukee hunter for shooting two Short-eared Owls out of a group of eight near Port Washington in Ozaukee county. The hunter pleaded guilty and was fined \$10.00 and costs for his lack of knowledge.

The Milwaukee Bird Club recently showed its hawk and owl protection exhibit at the Teacher's Convention in Milwaukee. Many teachers secured owl pellets from the club to be used in their teaching work.

Albert Hockbaum of the Kumlien Club again worked and studied on the Manitoba waterfowl nesting area this past summer. He also assisted the Ducks Unlimited field personnel in their aerial survey of duck nesting populations. During the summer both Mr. and Mrs. Hamerstrom, also of the Kumlien Club, visited his project.

This past summer Wisconsin was favored with a visit from one of its favorite sons in the wildlife field, Herbert L. Stoddard. Cleveland Grant also spent a fair amount of time here this summer in another trip to secure sound motion pictures of grouse and other birds.

The Hamerstroms are again continuing their Grouse banding project in Central Wisconsin near Hancock and at other points throughout northern Wisconsin in cooperation with the Federal Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service. Their primary study is of the Prairie Chicken and another food study of captive chickens will be made at the State Experimental Game and Fur Farm of the Wisconsin Conservation Department under their direction this winter.

Albert Gastrow of Prairie du Sac has begun his tenth year in a fall, winter and spring census and study of Bobwhite Quail on the same area near that town but in Columbia county. The project was begun by Paul Errington and continued by Professor Aldo Leopold when Errington left Wisconsin. This year the Wisconsin Conservation Department is contributing to this work through its Pittman-Robertson fund.



## NEWS NOTES

Ralph N. Buckstaff, Curator of Natural History at the Oshkosh Public Museum, informs the editor that this museum has on exhibit a Passenger Pigeon which was collected in Winnebago county. They also have an egg of this bird which was collected at Oakfield on June 19, 1881. Both specimens were presented to the Oshkosh Museum by Mr. Buckstaff a number of years ago. These specimens were not listed in the September, 1939 PASSENGER PIGEON.

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Murl Deusing recently had an article on the Herring Gull published in the Wilson Bulletin and one on the Pied-billed Grebe published in the Auk. Reprints of the Herring Gull paper are being presented to members of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology with this issue, through the kind donation of Mr. Deusing. Copies of a published list of Wisconsin Birds are being given to all members of the Society through the co-operation of the Wisconsin Conservation Department.

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The Cinnamon Teal collected by Schorger and Main on May 7, 1939 in Dane county is now in the collection of the Milwaukee Public Museum and will eventually be placed in their case of rare Wisconsin records, according to Gromme.

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Mr. C. T. Black, who last winter banded many Crows in Illinois when working for their Natural History Survey in a Crow Investigation, is now manager of the University of Wisconsin's Faville Grove Wildlife Area near Lake Mills in Jefferson county. Black is a welcome addition to the ranks of Wisconsin ornithologists and will undoubtedly have many valuable bird notes to contribute in the future.

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William Elder, member of the Kumlien Bird Club who this year added the Western Burrowing Owl to the Wisconsin list with his collected specimen, has been in the University infirmary with a case of tularemia for a considerable time. Elder contracted the disease while doing research zoology work involving the dissection of rabbits. It is hoped that he will soon again be able to continue his work in the field.

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The Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology will meet in Madison on December 4 to discuss details of the coming Annual Meeting and editorial policies. Anyone having suggestions regarding matters which might be

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considered should contact the secretary, Murl Deusing, at the Milwaukee Public Museum.

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George A. Ammon of the Milwaukee Bird Club is now located at Colgate. He is preparing a thesis on the Yellow-headed Blackbird from a great amount of data which he collected while with the Biological Survey in drainage investigation work throughout the eastern part of the country.

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C. P. Fox of the Milwaukee Bird Club had an article entitled "The Farmer's Allies--Hawks and Owls" published in the Wisconsin Agriculturist and Farmer for October 7, 1939. This idea of educating the farmer on the value of these birds is most commendable and should be continued.

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Earl Loyster and Walter Mueller of the Milwaukee Bird Club went up to Cedar Grove to collect a Hudsonian Curlew on July 21 only to have Mueller accidentally collect Loyster, putting him in the hospital for three weeks. However, Loyster recovered and succeeded in collecting the bird on September 11.

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Deusing advises the editor that the Milwaukee Bird Club will be happy to loan its exhibit of bird photographs to any interested group in Wisconsin that is willing to cover the shipping expenses. He should be contacted for details.

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Additional records of Hungarian Partridge near New Lisbon in Juneau county have come in from Mr. J. C. Curtis of that city. The largest covey reported was 20 birds  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of town on September 29.

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Mr. B. H. Kettelkamp of the Dept. of Biology at River Falls State Teachers College was nature instructor at the Lost Lake Biology camp in Florence county this past summer. He has advised the editor that more bird study work will be done in future years, but that he did note nesting Blue-winged and Green-winged teal, Osprey and Pileated Woodpeckers rather frequently this past summer.

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Mr. E. R. Hamann, once professor at Concordia College, Milwaukee, and a good friend of A. J. Schoenebeck informs the editor that he had never seen the Anhinga mentioned by Schoenebeck in his collection. He also states that he believes Concordia College possesses a Passenger Pigeon specimen.