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NORTHERN PHALAROPE

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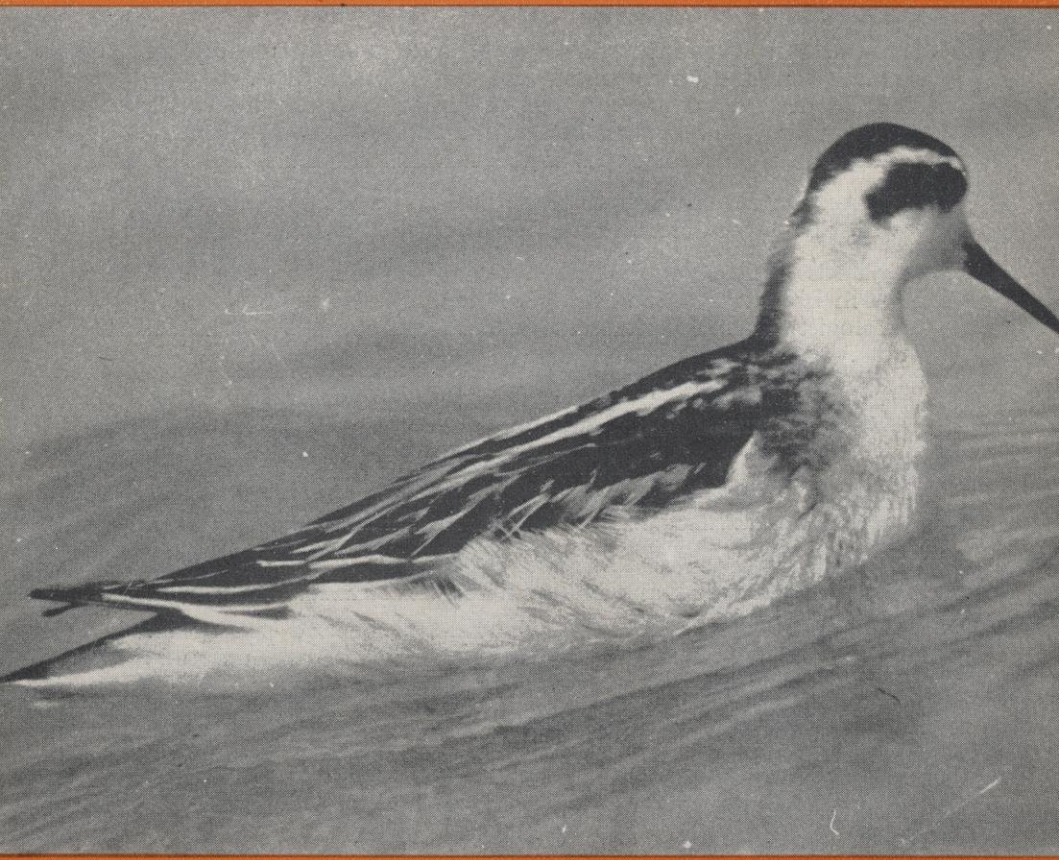

The PASSENGER PIGEON

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Meadowlarks in Wisconsin

By WESLEY E. LANYON

Part I. Historical and Ecological Aspects of Distribution

The members of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology are to be congratulated for their continuing interest in the ever-changing scene of bird-life within their state. They have demonstrated this interest in the form of invaluable "range and population studies" on a number of species that occupy, for one reason or another, salient roles in Wisconsin avifauna. This interest is especially commendable in that it freqently culminates in the publishing of personal records and observations which might otherwise remain unavailable and hence of little value to future generations.

The eastern and western meadowlark (**Sturnella m. magna** and **Sturnella neglecta**) were selected for the 1952 study and this writer, by virtue of his current research on these birds, willingly undertook the task of compiling, editing, and contributing to the results of the study. The present article will be concerned solely with historical and ecological aspects of meadowlark distribution in Wisconsin; a consideration of migration, song and other aspects of behavior has been reserved for a later report.

The source of information not accompanied by bibliographic references may be assumed to be questionnaires or personal communications from observers throughout the state, and proper authority will be designated. An attempt has been made to acknowledge as many of these contributions as space will allow. Special thanks go to Mr. Owen Gromme of the Milwaukee Public Museum for making his own field notes available to the writer, as well as the files and collections of the Museum (hereafter referred to as MPM file). The writer is further indebted to Dr. A. W. Schorger and Dr. John T. Curtis, both of the University of Wisconsin, for their critical reading of the manuscript.

General Historical Considerations

Most of us are aware of the unique relationship that exists between the two species of medowlarks occurring in varying degrees of abundance throughout the mid-west. These very closely related birds currently occupy overlapping breeding ranges extending from the northern states of Mexico northward to Ontario, a distance of over fifteen hundred miles. Wisconsin observers have an unusual opportunity to contribute toward a better understanding of this relationship for not only does their state boast one of the largest land areas within this region of overlapping breeding ranges, but many of them have personally witnessed the dramatic range extension giving rise to this situation.

The status of the two "kinds" of meadowlarks was, at the turn of of the century, one of the leading problems in the classification of North American birds. The eastern meadowlark, first named by Linnaeus in

1758 (after Catesby), enjoyed nearly a century of familiarity among eastern ornithologists before Audubon described the western form from the region of the upper Missouri River in 1843. Even to this day there are those who would question the ruling of the A. O. U.'s Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (1910) that they should be regarded as distinct species. References in the literature implying some degree of intermediacy in song or even hybridization have come from the pen of such competent ornithologists as Cassin (1866), J. A. Allen (1880), Chapman (1900), and Widman (1907). Others regarded them as valid species: Ridgway (1887), Stone (1897) and Oberholser (1900). So overcast was this problem, with lack of information and conflicting accounts, that Eliot Coues—one of this country's great ornithologists—made a complete reversal from an earlier opinion (1874) and championed the separation of the two as distinct species (1903). To this writer's knowledge, however, no record of hybridization of the eastern and western meadowlark in nature, based among other criteria on the behavior of the individuals involved, exists to this day!

Past and Present Ranges in Wisconsin

The former range of the eastern meadowlark, prior to 1900 for purposes of this paper, coincided roughly with that of the deciduous hardwood forest of the eastern United States, and more specifically with the natral and man-made clearings within that plan association. Baird (1858) and Stone (1897) had this species extending westward to the edge of the plains. It is not surprising, then, that the very earliest Wisconsin observers included this bird in their records (Sercomb 1848; Hoy 1853; and Barry 1854).

That the eastern meadowlark never penetrated the Great Plains directly to the west is indicated by its absence on the early lists of Dakota birds of Agersborg (1885), Abbott (1880), Coues (1878) and Jones (1900). In Minnesota, a state originally halved by prairie and forest, the eastern bird was "found principally in the east and in wooded sections" (Cantwell 1890).

As the forests of Wisconsin were removed and more and more of the landscape was devoted to agriculture, the eastern meadowlark was able to increase its numbers and expand its range locally, much as it had done throughout the East several centuries before. A similar range extension into formerly-forested regions of Minnesota has been described (Roberts 1936). At the present time, no Wisconsin county is without a breeding population of eastern meadowlarks. To be sure, reforestation of submarginal pasture or cropland has resulted in population reductions in areas such as Sawyer County (Kahmann) and Forest County (Davison). Local fluctuations of breeding populations of eastern meadowlarks are less dramatic, however, than the explosive, far-reaching range-expansion of its western counterpart.

The former range of the western meadowlark was given in a general way by Baird (1858) and Sclater (1861), the latter author stating it "replaces the eastern form in Western America from the high central plains to the Pacific." There is indisputable evidence that the western species was well-established as a breeding bird from the prairies of west-

ern Minnesota westward through the Great Plains when qualified observers first published accounts from that region (Suckley and Cooper 1860; J. A. Allen 1874; Coues 1874; and Abbott 1880). Although uncommon or even absent in most of eastern Minnesota and Iowa, there are reports of pioneer colonies of western meadowlarks as far east as northern Illinois (Nelson 1876; J. A. Allen 1880; Ridgeway and Forbes 1889).

At this point the reader should become familiar with the approximate distribution of original vegetation throughout Wisconsin, as indicated in Figure 1. In a study of ornithological literature of the other north-central states similar to his coverage of Wisconsin records, the writer has found a close correlation of the former distribution of meadowlarks with the two major biotic communities meeting in the central United States: the western meadowlark being confined to the grassland biome and the eastern meadowlark to early seral stages of the deciduous forest biome (unpublished MS). The transition area between these two great biotic communities was, logically, the area in which the breeding ranges of the two meadowlarks were found to overlap at the time of land settlement.

Of particular significance is the nature of this transition or ecotone between grassland and forest in early Wisconsin. The following passage, referring to the relationship of these units of original vegetation, has been quoted from Finley (1951):

> "The grasslands of the state are associated with the extensive grassland of central North America. . . . The boundary between the grassland and the deciduous forest to the east is not a sharply defined cleavage, but it more resembles a zone of transition through which grassland grades into forest through a savanna parkland zone of scattered trees . . . the grassland also occurs in this state as individual isolated patches. . . . Most of these bear the relationship of outliers or islands with respect to the main body of grassland of central North America."

One of the notable ornithological events of our time is the range expansion of the western meadowlark from its former breeding grounds—located largely west of the prairie-forest ecotone—eastward through the transition zone and then well into the native domain of its eastern counterpart. This justifies a rather detailed account of the spread of the western species across this state.

In regard to the former occurrence of the western meadowlark in Wisconsin, the writer was able to locate only four references dated prior to 1900. It is not clear what authority Hoy (1853) utilized in considering it to be a breeder within the state, but he does report on a December specimen from Racine, later identified by Baird. King (1883) wrote: ". . . it may be expected to occur occasionally in the western part of the state. I have found it on Hudson Prairie, St. Croix County, where it breeds." That it was still only a rare trans-Mississippian form at that time, however, is indicated in a later observation by King (1913): "Six miles west of River Falls, just across Lake St. Croix in Minnesota, this western variety breeds year after year on the very banks of the Lake, and yet in the eight years we have lived here we have seen but a single pair of these birds this side of the river." The third reference was found in a list of Wisconsin birds, dated 1884, from Twin Bluffs in Richland County, "mostly prepared from . . . notes, taken during the last five

years in the central and eastern parts of the state" in which both "meadowlark" and "western meadowlark" were included (McCollum 1884). The fourth reference is in the form of a vaguely worded note in which Mead (1895) says: "It was with much interest that I heard this bird was at Racine, Wisconsin, where its note sounded strange enough, although I had long been familiar with it in California. Dr. Hoy, so well known

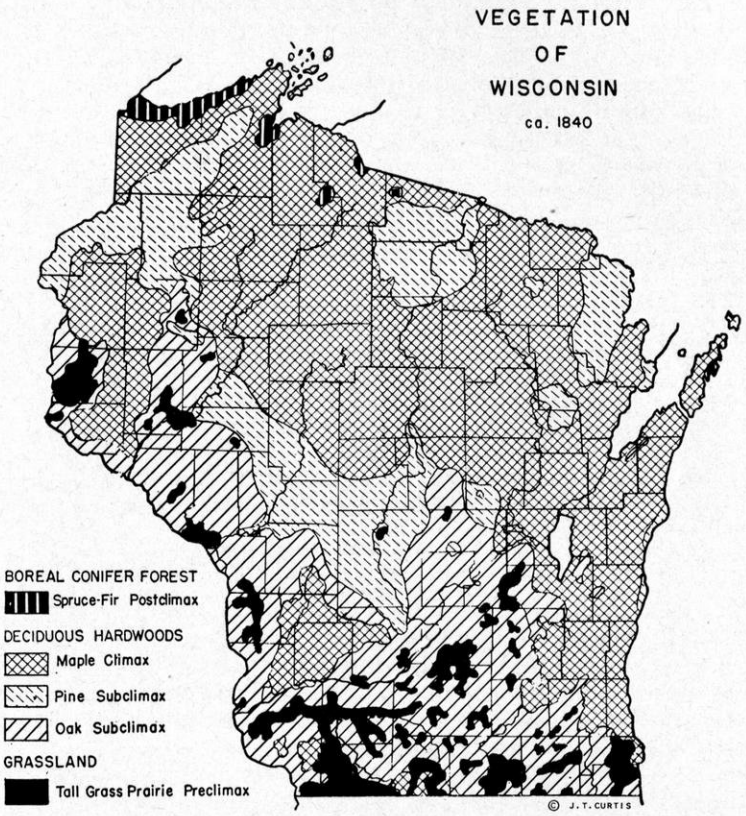

FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF ORIGINAL VEGETATION IN WISCONSIN (ADAPTED FROM A MAP BY J. T. CURTIS, **PLANT ECOLOGY WORK BOOK,** BURGESS PUBLISHING CO., MINNEAPOLIS, 1950).

in the Northwest, some years ago reported 'this variety as occurring occasionally, near Racine.'" It is not altogether clear just "when" and "by whom" this bird was seen; possibly Mead is referring to Hoy's observation presented above, in which case the number of western meadowlark references for Wisconsin, prior to 1900, dwindles to three.

Perhaps more noteworthy than these three or four references, in documenting the former presence of the western meadowlark in Wisconsin, are the several lists from various Wisconsin localities in which mention of that species, or some "variety" thereof, is conspicuously ab-

sent. John Muir (1913), in writing about his boyhood days on a farm in Green Lake County, in the 1850's, refers to "the sweet-voiced meadowlark with its placid, simple song." The lists of Sercomb (1848) and Pratten (1852), dealing with the state as a whole; of Kessinger (1888) for Buffalo County; of Willard (1883) and Grundtvig (1895) for the east-central area; and of Thure Kumlien in 1862 (Main 1939), Barry (1854),

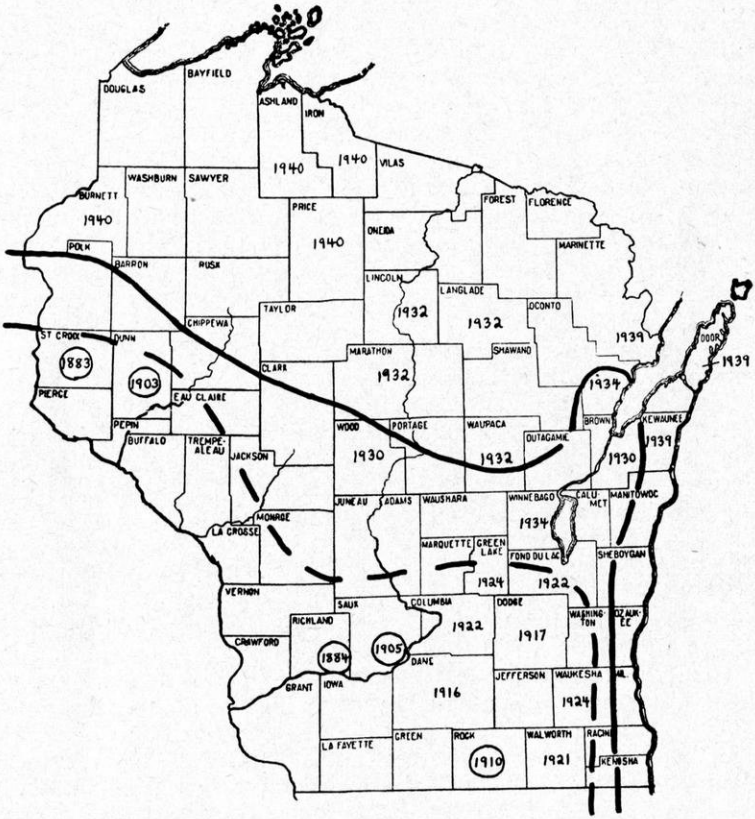

FIGURE 2. EXTENSION OF THE BREEDING RANGE OF THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK IN WISCONSIN. DATES, TAKEN FROM REFERENCES IN THE TEXT, SUGGEST GENERAL PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT. ENCIRCLED DATES INDICATE LOCATIONS OF SOME OF THE PIONEER COLONIES, PROBABLY ESTABLISHED PRIOR TO 1900. BROKEN LINE INDICATES PROBABLE LIMIT OF ESTABLISHED COLONIES BY 1925. SOLID LINE INDICATES PROBABLE LIMIT OF COMMON AND REGULAR OCCURRENCE BY 1950.

Aaron Kumlien in 1869 (Schorger 1944), Bruhin (1875), King (1882) and Nehrling (1896) for the area from Dane County east to Milwaukee, all omit reference to the western species.

If the western meadowlark had entered Wisconsin by 1900, as a few of the earliest available sources would suggest, such penetrations apparently occurred in the western and southern portions of the state but

unfortunately went practically unrecorded in ornithological history. The apparent rarity of the species at that time demonstrates that its presence very likely was restricted locally to those areas of optimum habitat inviting colonization. In general statements about its range in the early 1900's, Ridgway (1902) and Coues (1903) indicated the western form could be found regularly to the edge of the Plains, as in the Dakotas, and only less regularly or sparingly across Minnesota and Iowa, into Wisconsin and Illinois.

At the time of King's observations (op. cit.) on the early colony in St. Croix County, the western meadowlark was apparently a regular breeding bird a few miles to the east, in Dunn County (Kumlien and Hollister 1903). On his first visits to the sand prairies of Sauk County, about 1905, Stoddard found pioneer colonies of these birds surrounded and outnumbered by the native eastern species. A specimen, dated 1904, was reported by Hollister to be in the Besecker collection at Delavan, Walworth County (Schorger 1945), although the lists of Wilson (1908) and Cahn (1913) omit mention of the western form in that region. Other lists of this period, from east-central Wisconsin, likewise omit reference to the western meadowlark (Schoenebeck 1902; Abraham 1906; and Lowe 1915).

The remarkable **Daily Journal** of Will Snyder (1937), covering forty-nine years of observations at Beaver Dam, Dodge County, affords a valuable opportunity to trace the progress of this invasion at a single locality. Snyder's first entry for this "very rare" species was a bird heard singing during the fall of 1902. Migrating individuals, spring and fall, were then heard sporadically in 1904, 1909, 1910, and 1911. A bird heard singing regularly at Beaver Dam in the Spring of 1917 made Snyder wonder if it might have nested.

By 1915 the western meadowlark had made a substantial foothold in several localities in southern Wisconsin, at a time when its population in northern Illinois was rapidly expanding as well. Vos Burgh (1916) writes "In the spring of 1910, I was in . . . Rock County. . . . It was here, I first heard the western meadowlark in Wisconsin; soon got to see them, but never found a nest. Every spring since then, I have noticed that they have been encroaching on the domains of the eastern meadowlark, farther and farther to the east and north. . . . They are in about equal numbers here now, but I have never yet succeeded in finding a nest here of the western variety." The first published spring record for Dane County was made in 1916, and one of several singing individuals was collected near Madison in the following year (Schorger 1931). Riis (1921) found it in Walworth County where, fourteen years previously, Wilson (op. cit.) had recorded none. Riis also confirmed the existence of the Rock County colony, as did Jenkins (1922). A specimen in the Milwaukee Public Museum was collected in Columbia County in April 1922 (MPM No. 13752/7250), where Vos Burgh (1923) later reported the species to be "getting well established." And in Waukesha County, where Cahn had found none eleven years before, Jones observed his first western meadowlark in 1924 (MPM file).

These early reports of western meadowlark colonies, from 1900-1925, emanated exclusively from the prairie-forest ecotone region of

southern and western Wisconsin (Figures 1 and 2), where there were soon indications of a rapidly increasing population. In 1924, Schorger found the western species "fully as numerous as the eastern form" in Green County. Stoddard (1922) returned to the Sauk County sand prairies and found the western bird "abundant," and Taylor (1922) recorded it as becoming "more common" at Madison. Gromme heard his first western meadowlark for Fond du Lac County in 1922, and considered it to be common in Green Lake County in 1924. In such northern counties as Bayfield, Vilas, and Door, where the eastern bird was holding forth at this time, the western meadowlark was not reported (Schorger 1925; Cahn 1927; and Jackson 1927). However, a specimen collected in Bayfield County in June 1919 (Jackson 1943) was suggestive of the tendency toward still further range expansion.

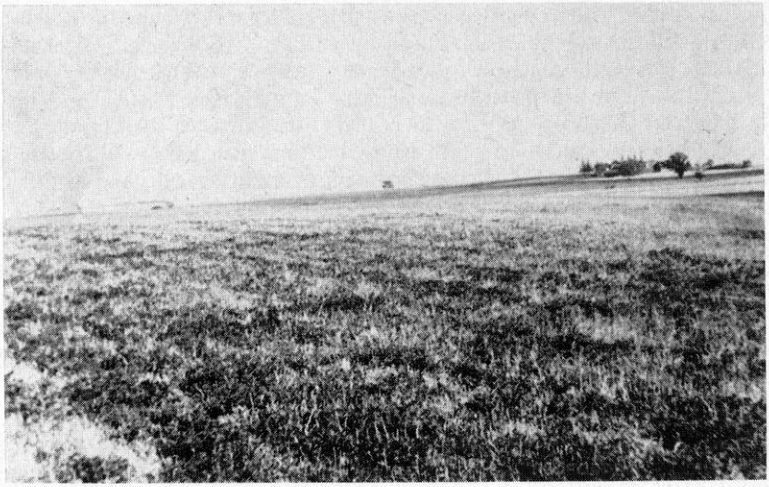

FIGURE 3. REGIONS FORMERLY COVERED WITH PRAIRIE VEGETATION, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS SCENE FROM WAUKESHA COUNTY, WERE THE LOCATIONS OF PIONEER WESTERN MEADOWLARK COLONIES AND NOW BOAST THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATIONS OF THESE WESTERN BIRDS.

Virtually no county in the southern half of Wisconsin was without its population of western meadowlarks during the 1930's and in Dane County, only fifteen years after first recording a single spring bird, Schorger (1931) considered the species to be "a common summer resident." It was about this time that the western meadowlark pentrated beyond the ecotone and into land formerly covered with climax deciduous hardwoods. In Wood County, Gromme found them numerous at Wisconsin Rapids in 1930, and Pelton (MPM file) first observed them at Marshfield in 1935. In Waupaca County, Rev. Dayton (MPM file) wrote that the western meadowlark "came in according to my observation as a summer resident rather than a straggler and from 1935 to 1940 I have seen ten or more pairs breeding in and about New London. I take it they are working eastward from the western part of the state where I have seen them sparingly in my journeys about the state. . . .

I would say they are now established in the County of Waupaca." In Winnebago County, Evans writes that he knew of but one locality, southwest of Oshkosh, where he could be sure of finding them in 1934: "From that time on we noticed that they began to spread slowly to the north and for the past ten years or so we hear them several places north and west of the city." Cleary writes from De Pere, Brown County, that "it was about 1930 when I first observed the western species. . . . The last five years the western species has increased its range greatly and at the rate they are increasing in numbers I believe that in the not too distant future they will outnumber the eastern." In Oconto County, Richter (MPM file) reported two breeding pairs in 1934 and then listed it as an uncommon summer resident five years later (Richter 1939). It was also about this time that Schaal first observed them in Oconto County. Richter writes: "Now it seems that this form has in a few localities in the county replaced the eastern form." Even Door County, where it was missed in 1927 (Jackson 1927), was apparently included in this more recent invasion, as were Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette and Shawano Counties (Strehlow 1939). In an entry for Hammond, St. Croix County, in 1931, Gromme wrote in his journal: "All meadowlarks here are of the western variety. They are very numerous." In the same year, he found them in Jackson County, and later reported them from Adams and Ozaukee Counties, in 1934. At Beaver Dam, Snyder (op. cit.) no longer considered the western meadowlark so unusual as to warrant underscoring its observation for emphasis, as he had done previously, and on an auto trip through the northern part of the state in the summer of 1932, recorded it in Marathon, Lincoln, Langlade, and Waupaca Counties. In one of the last entries in his journal, before his unfortunate death in 1937, Will Snyder commented that this species was "becoming commoner each year," thus ringing down the curtain on a truly amazing chronical of Dodge County bird-life.

During the 1940's the western meadowlark invasion was found to have penetrated into the extreme northern regions of the State, as in Burnett County where Gromme found it "common," and in Price, Ashland and Iron Counties. From Washburn County, Faith Bohn (MPM file) wrote in 1940: "I notice the meadowlarks have two distinct songs. Can it be that we have the western meadowlark here too?" By this time the invasion had reached Lake Michigan in sufficient numbers to afford Milwaukee observers an acquaintance with this species (Orians; Mrs. Schwendener), although it still remains an uncommon breeder locally (Mrs. Simmons). Furthermore, there was evidence to support a growing feeling among observers that the western species was progessivly "replacing" the native eastern bird in many areas. In 1941, Gromme heard the song of the western meadowlark everywhere over the sand prairies of Adams County, but found no eastern birds, and in the same year found the western species the predominant form in parts of Crawford and Grant Counties.

In describing a bird's range it is fallacious to consider that area included within a line connecting the "outer posts of occurrence" as a convenient designation of range. Such a practice often includes areas within which the bird is uncommon or even absent and "disregards

ecological distribution of the community of which the species is a member, and it further disregards the more important problem of relative abundance and, therefore, relative importance of a species within the various parts of its breeding range" (Pitelka 1941). This is certainly true in the case of the two species of meadowlarks within Wisconsin, and for this reason no attempt has been made to map the results of the questionnaires and correspondence received from over three-fourths of the counties in the state. Figure 2 has been included mainly as an aid toward following the account of the range expansion and should be used in conjunction with Figure 1 in the interpretation of that event. Generally speaking, the western meadowlark is now present in greatest numbers in that area within the solid line in Figure 2. The writer is confident, however, that there is no Wisconsin county in which the western meadowlark cannot now be found breeding.

Some indication of the relative abundance of these birds at the present time is afforded by the results of some standardized "singing-male roadside censuses" that were conducted during the spring of 1952 and 1953, throughout an area of 1300 square miles in southern Wisconsin. The writer here acknowledges the valuable cooperation of Dr. John T. Emlen of Madison, Vincent Batha of Waukesha and Philip Mallow of Watertown, without which this project could not have been undertaken. A sample count of over 2500 meadowlarks was taken from a twelve mile wide census area, extending from western Iowa County to Milwaukee County. In this sample, eastern meadowlarks were found to outnumber the western species over 5:1 in eastern Waukesha County, whereas they in turn were outnumbered 1:8 by the western bird in western Dane County. In the entire area surveyed in southern Wisconsin, 63% of the sample were western meadowlarks, a measure of the remarkable increase in population size within a half century.

Ecological Aspects of Distribution

The significance of the results of these and other censuses lies (1) in what they tell us about the ecology of these closely related birds, and (2) in what they suggest as a possible pattern of expansion utilized by the western species. The premise that the western meadowlark has invaded Wisconsin by virtue of the extensive additional habitat artifically created by man shows little originality on the part of the writer. Schorger (1949), Stoddard (1947), Barnard (1953: in litt.) and other have considered such an explanation, and a similar theory has been applied in the case of the range extensions of other species (Pickwell 1931; Pitelka 1941; Odum 1945). Suffice it to say here, however, that although available habitat may be the primary limiting factor in the range expansion of the western meadowlark, climatic factors are involved as well. A discussion of these interacting forces will accompany the writer's analysis of the larger picture of meadowlark distribution throughout the north-central states (unpublished MS).

During the 1930's Aldo Leopold recognized the "island-effect" created by the association of western meadowlark poulations with those localities of southern Wisconsin formerly covered with prairie grasses, surrounded by a "sea" of eastern meadowlarks (George Sutton 1951: in

litt.). Even today the results of intensive censuses indicate that the highest population density of western meadowlarks is to be found on the dry upland "prairies" of southwest Wisconsin. In a 216 square-mile census area in southern Iowa County there were only about 50 square miles that were considered prairie at the time of the original land survey (1833-1834, Original General Land Office Plats, U. S. Dept. of Interior). Yet, in a random sample from the entire census area, Emlen

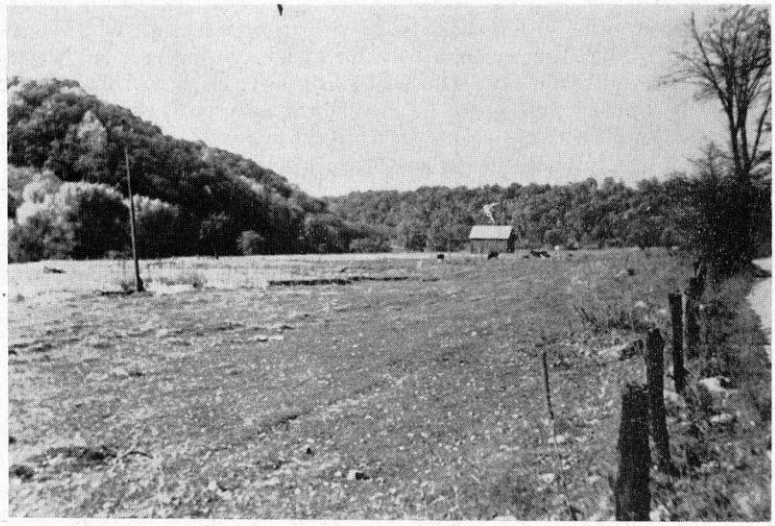

FIGURE 4. THE EASTERN MEADOWLARK, NATIVE OF NATURAL AND MAN-MADE CLEARINGS IN THE EASTERN DECIDUOUS FOREST, BREEDS REGULARLY ON SMALLER FARM CLEARINGS IN WISCONSIN, SIMILAR TO THIS ONE IN VERNON COUNTY.

found that 57% of the western meadowlarks were clustered upon these areas of original grassland. The writer found an equally "contagious" distribution in southeast Dane County where, in a 144 square-mile census area, 52% of his random sample of western birds were concentrated on the 35 square miles considered prairie by the early surveyors. Margarette Morse conducted two censuses over a combined area of 45 square miles in Vernon County. Out of her sample from a census of rather wooded, ravine country, Miss Morse found 95% of the meadowlarks to be the eastern species. Her other census, located in a heavily farmed district only a few miles west of the first census area, included about 18 square miles of land classified as prairie in the original land survey. In the sample from this area, Miss Morse found that only 54% of her birds were the eastern species. Had she extended her census area further westward to include more of the original prairie of Vernon County, the percentage of western meadowlarks would undoubtedly have been still higher.

Although western meadowlarks apparently first selected regions of extensive, dry grassland or savanna for their pioneer colonies in Wisconsin, they spread out rapidly from these nuclei as man removed the

widely-scattered oaks, oak groves, and finally the climax forest itself. But they followed a pattern in this expansion into newly-created habitat, some of which still remains discernible inspite of the "masking effect" of time. Logically enough, a preference for the drier uplands that most resembled their native habitat was exhibited in this pattern of range extension. It is noteworthy that throughout the 1300 square miles censused in southern Wisconsin, a highly significant correlation (probability of x^2 less than .01) of meadowlark distribution with elevation was ascertained; more western birds being found on "uplands" than on "lowlands," while the eastern birds showed the reverse situation.

That elevation, per se, is not always as important in this "habitat preference" as the census results above would indicate, is demonstrated by further censuses conducted over 140 square miles of the Coulee Region of La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties by Alvin Peterson. Originally much of the Mississippi River valley floor in this locality was in dry, sandy prairie and oak opening (see Figure 1), although located several hundred feet below the formerly well-timbered bluffs beyond the palisades. In his sample of meadowlarks from these lowlands, now largely cultivated, Peterson found 88% to be the western species. But in the coulees and bluffs away from the river lowlands, now supporting some dairy farming but still largely wooded with oak and hickory on the bluffs, 71% of his random sample were eastern meadowlarks. In this rather unique situation where "lowland" was synonomous with "prairie" there is demonstrated the primary importance of the nature of the land cover (and hence an inherited association for a particular physiognomic aspect of the vegetation).

Other Wisconsin observers have noticed this affinity of meadowlarks for a "preferred habitat" in their casual observations about the state. Rev. Robbins, in commenting on localities around both Mazomanie and Adams, wrote the following:

> "In the plowed lands and grain fields, the western predominates, while in the grassy marshlands the eastern is predominate. There is a particularly interesting area just north of Mazomanie that may shed some light on habitat preference of the two species. Just north of town there is a stretch of high farm land, where 'westerns' were heard exclusively; then driving north on county trunk 'Y' one soon descends to the open river grass marshes, and here I heard only 'easterns'. During my last year at Mazomanie, and since, efforts have been made to plow and grow corn on a stretch of this marsh land closest to the upland. The distance involved is short, and it would be interesting to see if the 'westerns' eventually take over this new plowed field territory."

August Derleth arrived at a similar interpretation of the relationship of the two species at Prairie du Sac and Sauk City. At Plainfield, the Hamerstroms find the eastern meadowlark more abundant on land supporting small farms and woodlots (sandy soils), while the western species is more common on the larger, more open farms (peat soils). Their observation, in light of others that have come to the attention of this writer, reflects the prime importance of land cover over edaphic factors. No constant correlation of meadowlark distribution with soil types has been ascertained during the course of this study.

Differences in agricultural practices within the past century have undoubtedly been instrumental in regulating the growth and expansion of meadowlark populations in Wisconsin. This is a difficult factor to

appraise, however, and one that will forever remain in question due to the lack of quantitative meadowlark population data. It can be pointed out that the range expansion of the western meadowlark in Wisconsin apparently received its great impetus at a time when there was a major shift away from a wheat type of farming to one of livestock and dairy farming. The latter economy, with its greatly increased acreages of tame hay and pasture, may have made more desirable the land which had been cleared a half century before—to be sure—but had been largely unsuitable for colonization because of discouraging types of land use. Reservedly, such a correlation does not necessarily imply a "cause and effect" relationship.

The reader will agree that we are far from an understanding of the psychological factors involved in the selection of, and adherence to, a particular habitat by eastern and western meadowlarks (or, indeed, any of our wildlife species). That the two species of meadowlark, historically confined to distinct biotic provinces, are still responding to the physiognomic and climatic aspects characteristic or their original range, whether artificially created or not, is a reasonable working hypothesis. Further investigation may possibly disclose a differential amplitude of tolerance, between the two species, with regard to the adherence to, or alteration of, this inherited habitat preference. In a discussion of habitat selection and distribution, Alden Miller (1942) has written:

> "In making a selection, just what does the animal perceive? It seems impossible that there is a highly intelligent evaluation of the favorable factors at a given locale, but instead an automatic, instinctive reaction, even though quite delicately adjusted, to a few key aspects of the environment. What these key characters are is of course difficult to prove . . . the process might appropriately be called perception of adequate enrivonment. . . . Intensive observation of the reactions of animals in the wild may nonetheless narrow down the field of possible clues employed by them in habitat perception."

There is considerable opportunity for observers in Wisconsin to continue this "narrowing down" process—there is indeed much that remains to be learned about our State's avifauna.

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Department of Zoology
University of Wisconsin

NEWS . . .

Several committees are functioning within W. S. O. to carry on various activities. Still working toward an eventual choice of a sanctuary site is the Sanctuary Committee, consisting of Frank King of Oshkosh (chairman), Harold Wilson of Ephraim, and N. R. Barger of Madison. Serving on the Conservation Committee are Wallace Grange of Babcock (chairman), J. J. Hickey of Madison, and Harold Roberts of Black River Falls. The Research Committee has Jim Zimmerman of Madison as chairman, Mary Donald of Milwaukee, and a vacancy to be filled. Two other committees, a Nominating Committee and an Auditing Committee, will soon be functioning in preparation for the 1954 convention.

We are always on the lookout for good bird photographs. If you have some that may be of use in **The Passenger Pigeon,** please forward them to the editor. 5x7 enlargements are most desirable, but in some cases smaller ones can be used.

Please note the new advertisement by the Mirakel Repair Company, appearing on the inside of the back cover of this issue. Whether you are thinking of purchasing new binoculars, or need to repair your present ones, this company stands ready to help you. In corresponding with them, as will all our advertisers, be sure to mention that you saw the advertisement in **The Passenger Pigeon.**

The supply department now has bird song records in seven different forms: The "Cornell" album of five large records, 78 RPM, $10.50. The Jerry and Norma Stillwell LP records, songs of 49 species, $7.95. The "Cornell" album of six medium-sized records, 78 RPM, $8.50. James Fassett's musical analysis of bird music, LP record (including some toad and frog calls), $5.00. The mockingbird record with imitations of more than thirty bird songs identified, 78 RPM, $2.50. The Birdcall Games, song imitations and narrative for school use, by Bert Harwell, (includes pictures to color) 78 RPM, $2.00. Florida Bird Songs, 78 RPM, $2.50.

(more news on page 130)

OUR FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY

The year 1954 marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. Starting with the convention in Madison, April 30-May 2, and continuing for the next few months, the anniversary will be observed by a special "store" sale in which all members can have a part, and by a membership drive that should give W. S. O. a big boost.

"STORE" TO GIVE 10% DISCOUNT

As its part in the celebration of the 15th birthday of our Society in 1954, the Supply Department will give 10% discount on all merchandise priced at $1.00 or more, beginning with the 1954 convention and continuing through August 31, 1954. Since the Supply Department handles nearly everything of interest to the naturalist, this discount will be a great help to all members and friends of the Society when stocking up on supplies and equipment.

That portion of the Society's library which we have been authorized to sell, back numbers of **The Passenger Pigeon,** and all Society publications will be included in the above birthday sale.

WHAT HAVE YOU TO GIVE AWAY?

As their part in the celebration of the 15th birthday of our Society in 1954, all members and friends of the Society are invited to donate anything salable (if it is of interest to naturalists) to the Supply Department, which they are willing to discard. A record of the name of the giver, the gift, and the value will be kept for a public report, and the proceeds from the sale of these items will go into our current expense fund. It is suggested that you bring the things with you when you come to the convention, and check them in at the table provided; or, if you cannot do this, ship them to N. R. Barger, 4333 Hillcrest Drive, Madison 5, Wisconsin.

Examples of things needed are: books, pamphlets, pictures, binoculars, song records, paintings, photographs, ceramics, bird pins, bird houses, feeders, record players, etc.

CAN WE DOUBLE OUR MEMBERSHIP?

If each W. S. O. member could interest even one of his friends to join, the Society's membership could be doubled in this anniversary year. Convention-time is a good time to start. Says the membership chairman: "Let's go for a bigger and better W. S. O.!"

Seeing Birds With A Pencil

By MARGARET LOYE

Something was wrong. Birding was not the fun it used to be. To hear a wood thrush sing, track it down, find it, and stand watching it was pleasant, diverting and healthful—but aimless. Even though, some argue, a hobby is not supposed to have an aim, mine needed one. Chasing one bird after another just to name it had long lost its appeal. Censuses, in spite of their value, left me cold. I hated arguments over a bird being this species or that. I couldn't spunk up much enthusiasm over nests. Turning bird walks into scientific expeditions seemed too much like work.

This was my attitude in spite of the unusual fascination birds had for me. I loved their colors, songs and graceful lines. Learning to identify them by both appearance and song came fairly easily to me. Watching a robin on the lawn for minutes at a time was no task. Besides, the bird books I had bought for their beautiful pictures had become enjoyable reading. I had made a good start on a hobby apparently set for life. However, it seemed as if I were going around in circles in the middle of a road that should be leading me somewhere.

Then I began seeing birds with a pencil. After a session at the Audubon Camp in Maine, which in itself had made me take my binoculars with new enthusiasm, I bought a delightful book of photographs of birds, "Wings in the Wilderness,"* by Allan D. Cruickshank, one of the camp instructors in birdlife. In the preface to this book, Mr. Cruickshank stated that he had set for himself the task of photographing as many as he possibly could of the approximately 700 species of birds on the North American continent north of Mexico. Here was indeed birding with a purpose! Something clicked in my mind. True, I was no photographer, and, much as I enjoyed seeing the work of photographers, I had neither the desire nor the money to become one myself. However, I could draw—not like Leonardo da Vinci, but well enough to have a great deal of fun. Why not draw birds?

It would seem that I was setting for myself a very difficult task because most songbirds stay in one position about an instant, hardly long enough to "copy." However, good drawing, I reminded myself is not copying. While working, I should be looking more at my drawing than my model. A bird should, therefore, be quite welcome to keep changing its pose so far as I was concerned! Could I not train myself to retain a mental picture of the bird in the pose desired against which to check my drawing? The process of this training, I had to admit, would be tough, but still it appeared feasible. Knowing at least something about bird anatomy, and the details of beak, tail, etc., of the more common birds, I should be able to fill in with this knowledge some of the gaps in my mental image of the bird I was trying to draw. So, in short, my dream seemed possible. Its difficulty offered a welcome challenge—something indeed to keep birding from becoming dull!

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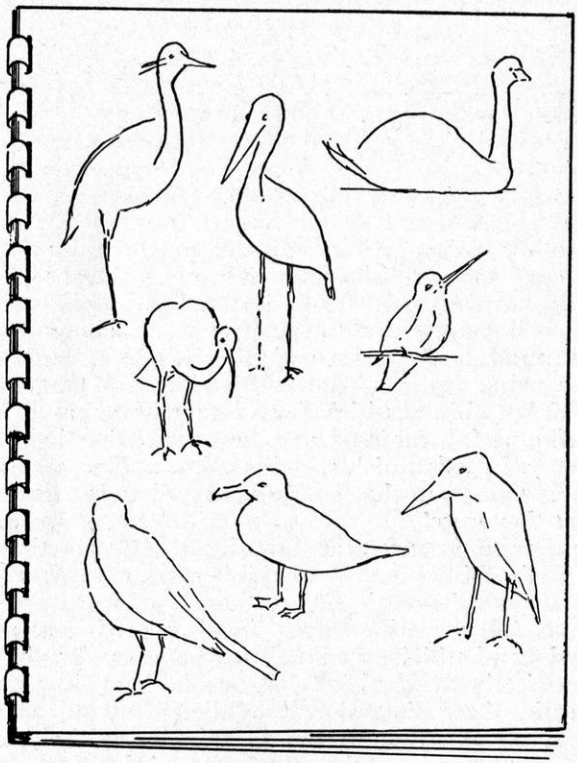
*Oxford University Press, New York, 1947.

In spite of the difficulty involved, sketching, it appeared, would have some advantages over photography. Instead of a camera, tripod, film and many expensive gadgets to buy, and also to lug around, I would have only a pad, pencil and eraser, and later, perhaps, water color supplies. The sunlight need not be bright or from a certain direction. Also, with binoculars, I could probably stay farther away from the bird than a photographer could. If a blade of grass, a leaf, or a twig would ruin the composition of a picture or hide part of the bird for a photographer, it would not need to for me. I would simply leave it out! Again, I would not have to wait for just the second that a bird assumed the right pose. Knowledge and memory could help my pencil.



IT TAKES A VERY FEW LINES TO SHOW THAT THESE EIGHT BIRDS ARE EACH A DISTINCT SPECIES.

—DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

Two books on drawing and painting birds as much as said, "You're on the right track. Go ahead!" They contained line drawings and paintings showing that it was possible for even the beginner, and gave helpful suggestions.

In high spirits, I bought some small sketch pads with spiral binding, easy to carry and hold. A mechanical pencil I already had would be good, I thought, because the lead could be retracted and would not break while being carried or need sharpening after use.

One hot summer afternoon, with binoculars slung across my shoulder, and pad and pencil in a knapsack, I set out for a lonely cemetery,

determined to make a stab at this business. I would feel very much relieved just to make a beginning. Few birds were to be seen or heard. Already, however, my new hobby was getting in its good work: I was more eager than ever before to see the few birds there were. Hearing a loud chipping, I stood still until a cardinal in a bush came into view. Although it was moving too fast for me to draw it, I did notice every turn of its head. Farther along the cemetery road was a subject made to order—a crow perched on top of a tree. I looked at it through my binoculars, then fished out my pad and pencil. My heart was beating fast. My hand almost trembled as I jotted down a few lines to represent the silhouette of the bird. I made the head too big and neck too short. When I looked up at my model, alas, it had turned its head to the other side: But I must do the best I could. The beak was stouter than I had drawn it, and I corrected it. Then the bird flew away, leaving me with a few lines that did not say very much. Nevertheless, I had at least begun, and couldn't help smiling with satisfaction. Later on, I made two drawings, not much better, of a robin.

Drawing Birds at the Zoo

Several days later, following advice in one of the books on drawing birds, I went to the zoo. On previous visits, a few minutes in front of an exhibit of various kinds of cranes had been quite enough. This time, however, my pad and pencil induced me to spend almost an hour just in that one spot. How graceful the necks of these birds were as they stooped to feed! Occasionally, too, a bird would stride as if it were not to be trifled with. These birds, which I used to pass up as dull creatures, now appeared graceful, majestic and beautiful. Starting in the upper left hand corner, I made quick sketches all over the page. I succeeded in catching a few poses, so that looking at my drawings later, I could actually tell what they were!

On another visit to the zoo, I concentrated on ducks. Another time, I found good subjects in the birdhouse. An exhibit of shorebirds was especially good. While I made it a rule not to "copy" a bird, but to study it and then give my full attention to my drawing, yet it was an advantage to have a bird stand still long enough to check my drawing, such as a willet that practically posed as it stood on one leg. Now my drawings looked more solid, three dimensional. While the results were no miracle, considering the relatively long time the bird would hold to one position, still I was pleased to have them look like birds. Even so, I was keeping to line drawings, using no shading or color.

On several zoo visits I tackled an exhibit of flamingos, storks, ibises, herons, gulls, etc. On the gull, I noticed the line formed by the meeting of the bill with the face, and found it quite different from that on a duck. I made a separate sketch to show this. The bend in the neck of the flamingo as it would stoop to feed was hard to catch, and fascinated me. I made a separate sketch of that. The adjutant storks, which had rather bored me before, so amused me that I had to make sketches of two of them. Canada geese, being large, also made good subjects. I did several studies of their heads.

One morning I went again to the cemetery, where I was delighted to see sparrows and robins. The rather stately, quiet robins made excellent models. The sparrows were always on the move, but were so appealing as they would rest a moment on a tombstone that I had to try them.

From my back porch one day, I tried my hand at a few of the many cowbirds and starlings feeding on a neighbors's lawn— most of them in rear elevation. How sorry I was not to be able to represent that waddling gait of both kinds of birds!

A Continuing Hobby

At the time of writing this article, I have made only 44 small pages of very quick sketches. This brief experience, however, has already added a lot of zest to my birding. In itself, it has also been a lot of fun. Best of all, it gives me much to look forward to.

Just improving my technique of drawing birds should keep me busy for a long time. Jotting down a few lines, as I have been doing, mainly indicating attitude and pose, has been rather simple. Making refined drawings showing the details of the toes and texture of the feathers and the skin on the legs, and the expression in the eyes, will be something else. That is only to mention drawings in black and white. Using color will call for much additional skill.

Even if I do master the art of drawing and painting birds, it should be a long time before I can lay down my pencil or brush and hunt for another hobby. One project that occurs to me is a study of the heads of different kinds of birds—a series of portraits. A book of photographs of the heads of various animals, including some birds, that was published several years ago* was not only entertaining, but very enlightening. Why couldn't a book on bird faces bring to light the many types of these that are seldom thought about? Compare the head of a thrush with that of a hawk! Even if such a book never got to the press, doing it would be a lot of fun.

With bird study growing more and more popular, should there not also be room for more pictures of birds for art's sake? There are already many pictures of birds to suit the scientist and the person who wants to identify birds. Such pictures are often jammed together, as many as will go on a page. Often they look stiff and lifeless. From the viewpoint of identifying birds and studying their structure and color, such pictures are certainly valuable. But how about pictures for those who love birds for the beauty of their shape, color and action?

Anyone handy with a pencil might get busy on birds. One need not be a Leonardo da Vinci to enjoy drawing them. The very act of making drawings that later look like junk quickens observation of birds enough to pay for the effort.

In making field notes on a bird one cannot identify, drawings would not need to be excellent or artistic to help with reference work back in the library or when consulting a friend. Just a diagram showing the shape of the bill and other important features, and the location, size and shape of important markings, would be a big help. The propor-

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*"Animal Faces," by R. Marlin Perkins, Foster & Stewart, Buffalo, New York, 1944.

tion and shape of head, wings and tail jotted down simply should help identify a bird in flight. A more ambitious bird artist could even try keeping a picture record of a field trip, sketching at least one example of each species seen.

A picture is worth—how many words?

625 Fordham Road
Bala-Cynwyd, Pennsylvania

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WISCONSIN'S FAVORITE BIRD HAUNTS

Madison

The city of Madison is especially favored as a haven for birds because of its lakes and marshes. Its natural setting and large wilderness areas owned by the state combine to concentrate the birds. By careful planning throughout the year, one can see in or near Madison most of the species to be found in southern Wisconsin.

The wild cry of the loon can be heard in spring from area "A", while exceptionally close views of this species can be obtained in area "I" just after the ice breaks up. The latter area also is used by most species of waterfowl as it is shallow and opens early in the season. Terns like to encircle this area, despite its nearness to the city.

The ice melts early also in the Unviersity Bay portion of area "C", on Lake Wingra (lying south of area "H"), and in Hammersley's and Dunn's marshes (areas "J" and "Q", respectively), thus inviting great concentrations of migrant ducks of nearly all species. Canada geese visit Lake Mendota when the deeper water becomes free of ice. The rare Holboell's grebe has been observed several times in areas "A" and "B", and the eared grebe, still more rare, has been seen in areas "C" and "J".

Area "N" is an excellent place to listen for "peenting" woodcock early in the spring. The prairie-like character of this portion of the University Arboretum also has attracted the western meadowlark, usually not found so close to the capitol.

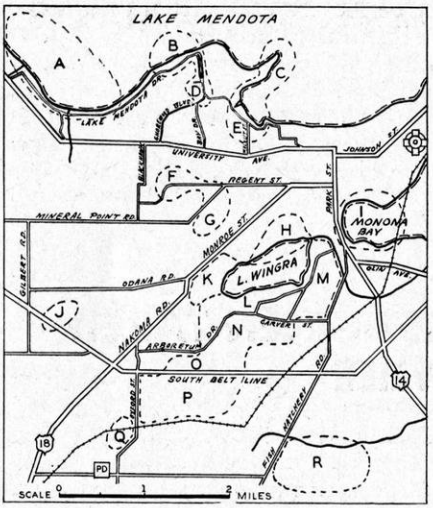
The general vicinity of Hoyt's Park (area "F") attracts the Bewick's wren, despite the recent platting of the general area. Its song can be heard here in the early spring of most years. The wooded edge of Hoyt's Park where the old quarrry begins is ideally situated for warbler study. Its high bluffs allow one to observe warblers in the tree tops below, without the strain of looking upward. The same bluffs and hills also shelter the warblers and the insects on which they feed on windy days. Hoyt's Park is one of the few areas within the city where the wood thrush remains to nest. The cemetery (area "G"), adjacent to the Hoyt Park area, is ideal for warblers and other song birds. Several observers made their first acquaintance with the sycamore warbler here in 1942.

The Vilas Park area ("H"), with its lagoons and lake shore, attracts most of the species of terns and gulls. One of the rarest terns ever to visit Wisconsin, the roseate tern, showed up here in May 1950. All

species of ducks occuring regularly within our boundaries may be found on Lake Wingra.

Area "K", that portion of the University Arboretum lying west of Lake Wingra, is an excellent study area in spring. The first swallows, the first warblers, even the first bitterns and herons are likely to be found here. The rare prothonotary warbler has appeared here and alder flycatchers nest plentifully in the brushy portions of the marsh.

Dunn's marsh (area "Q") offers many species of ducks, rails, and other marsh birds. The prairie marsh wren abounds here and the yellow-headed blackbird may be depended upon to nest. The American egret occasionally pays it a visit in later summer.



MADISON—WEST AND SOUTH SIDES

No doubt one of the most productive marshes near Madison has been Hammersley's marsh (area "J"), now slated to become part of a new real estate development project. In addition to the ducks and rails, a great variety of shorebirds annually visit this marsh. Willets, knots, Wilson's phalaropes, and Hudsonian godwits have been seen here in recent years. Further, it has not been long since single individuals of European widgeon and cinnamon teal were found on this marsh.

The arboretum woods, lying in areas "L and N", is relatively undisturbed by human beings, so offers nesting facilities for red-shouldered hawks, great horned owls, wood ducks, and other large birds. The understory also has grown sufficiently to satisfy the requirements of the hooded warbler, a few of which have been seen there during the past four or five years.

Other spring or summer species of special interest which have shown up in the arboretum (areas "K to O") are yellow-breasted chat, yellow rail, piping plover, tufted titmouse, and cerulean warbler.

When winter comes, the smaller birds tend to concentrate in the cities where there is food and cover. Madison again is favored in this respect, for it not only has fine wintering populations of the smaller species, but also many of the larger ones as well. Snowy owls and bald eagles (ospreys in the fall) occasionally visit our lake shores. Old-squaws and white-winged and surf scoters sometimes may be seen in areas "A, B, and C." Short-eared owls fly over area "R" and over parts of the arboretum. The open spring-fed streams of area "R" hold Wilson's snipe and song and swamp sparrows regularly. The two streams shown in area "A" usually remain open all winter and provide food for kingfishers, song sparrows, robins, and others. The spring in area "K" attracts robins, an occasional rusty blackbird or red-wing, and song sparrows. The va-

riety of foods available in the city attract the wanderers and sometimes accidentals. Evening grosbeaks have been seen in areas "A, B, F, H, K, and N"; pine grosbeaks in area "A"; red crossbills in area "D"; redpolls in areas "A, C, D, and K"; siskins in area "D"; and Bohemian waxwings and snow buntings in area "H." Southern species such as the mockingbird and Carolina wren have been seen in various places. Straggler white-crowned sparrows have been found in winter in area "E"; field sparrows near area "J"; and vesper sparrows near area "A."

Directions

Most of the areas described may be located easily from information furnished on the map. It might be helpful to add, however, that the University Arboretum extends from area "K" and Lake Wingra through area "P"; that much of the boundary shown is approximate only; and that parts of the Arboretum, especially parts of areas "N, O, and P," are closed to the public. Finally, one may enter the northeast corner of the arboretum from Mills Street, not cleary shown on the map.

N. R. Barger

WISCONSIN'S FIRST GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE

By MRS. WALTER E ROGERS

Those of us who have hunted birds with binoculars for many years experience few thrills that can compare with that of finding a new species in the field. To find a bird far from its accustomed range carries the student beyond a thrill into a state of wondering excitement. Such was the experience of the writer on December 27, 1952, when a friend called from Neenah to ask what the strange bird might be that she had been seeing since December 14 on her feeder and among the evergreens around her house.

Without seeing the bird, identification seemed impossible, so with several interested bird students, and both eastern and western bird books, I made a hurried trip to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lynn Cooper, 104 Center Street, Neenah, Wisconsin. Only a short time was spent in waiting for the visitor. However, no positive identification could be made, even at a distance of four or five feet from the window where the feeder stood. There was no doubt that the bird belonged to the finch family, but the coloring was obscure due to the weeks spent living in an industrial area.

To have the bird in hand seemed the only solution for positive identification. Returning to Appleton for a banding trap, which was placed near the feeder with plenty of food scattered about, the watchers left and could only hope for a call in the near future. On December

29 the call came. "The bird is in the trap," said Mrs. Cooper. Again the group lost no time in making the six miles to Neenah. The specimen was a strange bird indeed, one which had not been seen by any in the party. The stack of eastern books gave no clue, so the western books were consulted. Keying through Dawson's **Birds of California,** we found described under the finch family the bird that fitted our visitor: rufous cap, white throat and olive back. It left no doubt that the green-tailed towhee had found its way into Wisconsin and established a new record.

With the permission of Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, the writer took an early train the next morning, with the towhee in a box to the Milwaukee Public Museum. There Mr. Owen Gromme and Mr. Warren Dettman recorded the beautiful, cleaned colors of the living bird with brushes on canvas, and made a state specimen for the Museum collection.

The appearance of the green-tailed towhee, which winters in Southern California, Arizona and Texas, caused much speculation and searching among interested bird students for a reasonable explanation for the presence of this straggler. Whether it was the mild weather of the fall and early winter, a scarcity of food occasioned by the severe drought of the past several years in the Southwest, or some unknown cause, that brought the visitor to Wisconsin, will stimulate the active student of ornithology with a lasting sense of wonder, coupled with a deep satisfaction.

911 East North Street
Appleton, Wisconsin

(Editor's note: Other individuals of this species made ornithological history in other states during the same period. There was a marked invasion in coastal Texas, and scattered records in Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Virginia and Massachusetts.)

AN UNUSUAL VISITOR

By HAROLD G. LIEBHERR

The Beloit Daily News of Friday, November 28, 1952, carried the following headline over one of its feature articles, "Tired Golden Eagle Finds Beloit Friend." The article continued by saying, "A great golden eagle, apparently hundreds of miles off course and exhausted from bucking high winds, Wednesday (Nov. 26) alighted on a farm north of Beloit and was captured."

The bird was sighted by Louis Larson, the farmer on whose farm the bird alighted, Wednesday noon when he drove into the farm yard. It was huddled against one of the out buildings. When Larson approached the bird, the eagle made several attempts to fly, but only fell again to the ground, panting and showing complete exhaustion. Mr. Larson used a long stick to hold the bird down, since he was unable to get close enough to the bird to catch it barehanded. After the bird was captured, Mr. Larson placed it in his garage with the intention of feeding it and nursing it back to health.

LOUIS LARSON AND GOLDEN EAGLE
—PHOTO BY BILL BEHLING, BELOIT DAILY NEWS

Dr. Carl Welty, Professor of Biology at Beloit College, was called to the farm. It was he who identified the bird as a golden eagle and banded it. Dr. Welty theorized that the bird was blown into the Beloit area by the strong westerly winds that existed on November 25 and 26. These winds brought cold weather to the Beloit area and snow to much of the midwest.

The Larsons began to feed the golden eagle on Wednesday, but it was not until Thursday that the bird began to accept food—chicken entrails provided by the Larsons and interested neighboring farmers. The golden eagle eventually ate almost all the food, and by Sunday it was sitting on a perch in the garage, defiantly viewing the people who came to view it.

During the ten days that the bird was at the Larson farm, about 400 people came to see it. Most of the people were drawn to the farm by the article in the newspaper; some came out of curiosity and others came because they realized they might never see another golden eagle again.

The golden eagle is a bird of hilly and mountainous country; however, after the nesting season, the adults and immature birds wander widely and may appear almost anywhere. The golden eagle is found mainly in the mountains of the West, and while some are believed to nest in the Appalachian Mountains, the species is listed as rare in the Great Lakes region. The bird was easily identified as a golden eagle since it was seen at such close range. The feathers of the head were a golden brown color, while the feathers of the wings, body, and tail were a dark brown color with flecks of white throughout. Since the white band of feathers was missing from the tail, it is known that the bird was an adult rather than an immature individual.

It was originally planned that the golden eagle which landed in Beloit would be released when it was strong enough to fly. This individual had a tumor on its left foot, preventing it from opening the claws on that foot to their normal position. Because of this difficulty the bird was finally put in care of the Rock County Game Warden, Royce Dallman. The warden cared for the eagle until the week of January 5, 1953, feeding and nursing it until it was completely recovered from its exhausting ordeal. It was released during the week of January 5, 1953, after it had been visited by many more people from the Milton area.

Mrs. Liebherr and I were extremely thrilled to read about the bird and to see it. It was wonderful to know that there are people in the world who are willing to care for birds when they need help.

1540 Jackson Street Beloit, Wisconsin

STUDYING THE RED-TAILED HAWK

By GORDON H. ORIANS

Every year the W. S. O. Research Committee selects one species of bird for concentrated study. Observations from members are gathered together, supplemented by additional research, and summarized in **The Passenger Pigeon.** In recent years studies have been made of some of the smaller perching birds such as the dickcissel, yellow-headed blackbird, eastern and western meadowlarks. This year we turn our attention to a larger, less conspicuous species: the red-tailed hawk. In view of the three years of research I have already done on this species, the Research Committee has asked me to take charge of the project. It is an honor to do so.

It may be more difficult to obtain information about the red-tail than about some other species recently studied. This may also mean that less is known about this bird, and much of what we can observe may be valuable information. No group of birds need study more than our birds of prey. Many states have laws protecting hawks and owls, but the birds are still shot on sight—law or no law. We have been unable to convince the public of the value of these birds, and perhaps our failure is due to our lack of knowledge. So each W. S. O. member has an opportunity this year to contribute to a very worthwhile cause; I hope many of you will find time to make observations, no matter how small and insignificant they may seem.

Later in the year you will receive a questionnaire asking for certain types of data; you should begin observations now so as to have the desired information available. Now is also the time to examine your records of past years; they may provide much valuable information. Information of any kind will be welcome, but I am suggesting that you pay special attention to a few points which can be more easily observed and still be of great importance.

Seasonal Distribution. Because of their high mobility, red-tails are able to exert their influence over a tremendous range of territory during any given year. It is important to know when the red-tail is most common in your area, the numbers present at this time, and the weather conditions which seem to promote migrational abundance. Negative information can be valuable. If the bird is absent from your area during any particular season of the year, this should be noted. If you drive one-hundred miles through any part of the state and see no red-tails, this information may be valuable.

Plumage Variation. The red-tail is noted for its wide range of plumages. Extreme individuals may be pure white or pure black. The variation is most prominent in the west, but it is also noted to a lesser extent in Wisconsin. Observers should be on the lookout for aberrant plumages and make careful notes every time one is seen.

Nesting Activities. It is during the nesting season that any given species exerts the greates influence upon its environment because suddenly the numbers of that species are doubled or trebled. Also during this season the birds are tied down to a small territory and are more easily

observed. Fortunately the nests of the red-tail are fairly easy to locate if one makes a special effort to find them. In much of the state, wooded areas are so small that the nests are frequently visible from the roads. Red-tail nests can be distinguished from squirrel nests by the absence of leaves in the construction (squirrels use leaves in abundance), and by the flat appearance from a distance (squirrel nests are rounded). Red-tails often use the same nests for a number of years and nesting areas can frequently be spotted during the winter by noting large nests in the woods. Even new nests may easily be located, for the birds nest so early in the spring that the young are hatched before the leaves are out on the trees. These factors all aid in locating nests of this species, and even the most inexperienced observer should be able to locate one or two with a limited amount of effort. Last spring I found over thirty red-tail nests in a limited area close to my home.

Once an active nest is found, many things can be noted: the site (dense woods, open woods, or lone tree); species of tree; food remains beneath the nest (showing what the birds have been eating); and the behavior of the adults while you are at the nest (are both present, do either of them show any inclination to attack, do they attack, do they scream?). If the nest can be reached by climbing, note the height of the nest, the number of eggs or young, the food remains and the condition of the nest.

Relationship to Man. The relationship of man to these birds is a critical issue, and is at the heart of this project. Talk to some of the farmers in your area to determine their attitude toward the red-tail or toward hawks in general. This may prove to be the most valuable information of all.

I shall welcome your comments and questions as you gather information, and look forward to your cooperation when the questionnaire is sent out. "Happy hawking" in 1954!

1611—16th Avenue
Monroe, Wisconsin

THE CEDAR GROVE FIELD TRIP

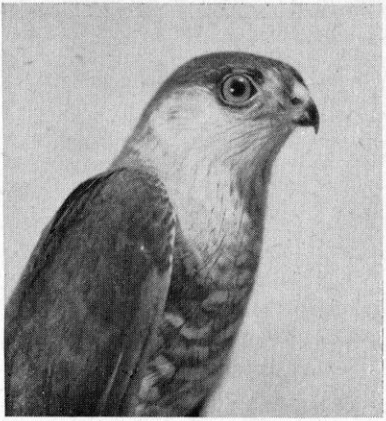
By CHARLES E. NELSON

On Sunday, September 27, a group of W. S. O. members met at Cedar Grove State Park to observe the hawk migration. Similar trips have been planned in each of the last several years, but most often the weather has not been right for a hawk flight on the chosen days. This time the day was beautiful, the wind was from the right direction, and we knew when we arrived early that morning that hawks would be flying. Many people gathered, eager and expectant.

We were not disappointed. As we sat along the ridge we were frequently alerted when a sharp-eyed observer would spot a large hawk soaring overhead; often it turned out to be a red-tailed hawk or marsh hawk. More often it was a small accipiter seen flapping past us, and a chorus of "another sharp-shin" would go up from the watchers. Even more excitement was stirred up by the few falcons that we saw:

several pigeon hawks, a sparrow hawk and two duck hawks. An osprey and four broad-wings were seen—remnants lingering after the main mid-September movements of these species. In all, a total of 101 hawks were identified:

Sharp-shinned Hawk	50
Cooper's Hawk	3
Red-tailed Hawk	15
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Broad-winged Hawk	4
Marsh Hawk	18
Osprey	1
Duck Hawk	2
Pigeon Hawk	5
Sparrow Hawk	1



SHARP-SHINNED HAWK
—PHOTO BY PRINS BROTHERS

Perhaps even more interesting for some observers was the chance to see a few hawks close up. While observers were watching from the ridge, Dan Berger and Gordon Orians were down below operating the hawk banding station, where hawks are trapped, banded, weighed and measured. In the morning Gordon and Dan brought up a male and a female sharp-shinned hawk. It was interesting to observe how much larger the female was than the male; the weight of the female was 160 grams—twice as much as the male that weighed slightly over 80 grams. After the birds had been studied by everyone, and photographed by some, they were released and flew away from the ridge.

In the afternoon another sharp-shinned hawk and a pigeon hawk were trapped, and shown to the group. These also were studied at close range, and many of us had the thrill of handling one of the hawks. After these birds were released, the group hiked down the ridge and visited the trapping area. Dan and Gordon explained the type of trap being used, and showed how the traps were baited and operated.

Under the leadership of Bernard Kaiman and Carl Frister, the group took another hike along Bahr Creek, and some continued on to the lake shore. Semipalmated and black-bellied plovers and greater yellow-legs were seen along the shore. In the wooded area were several migrants that had previously departed from the home territory of most of the observers—such birds as yellow-billed cuckoo, wood pewee, olive-backed and gray-cheeked thrushes, yellow-throated and Philadelphia vireos, magnolia and chestnut-sided warblers, Louisiana water-thrush, scarlet tanager and rose-breasted grosbeak. Late migrant nighthawks and chimney swifts were also seen.

The total count for the trip was 74 species. The hawk flight could not be classed as "spectacular" by Cedar Grove standards, but it was large and varied enough to be immensely interesting, educational and satisfying for the 55 persons present. Those included: Susan Doane, Eleanor Miles, Gordon Orians, Jean Gordon-Smith, Helen Northup and Alice Fosse, all of Madison; Ronny Schrauth, Beaver Dam; Mr. and Mrs.

Ed Peartree, Oconomowoc; Myron Reichwaldt, Kiel; S. Paul Jones, Peter Weber, Fred Alyea, Tom Soulen, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Les Compton and Butch, all of Waukesha; Arelisle Quimby, Sheboygan; Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Trowbridge, Sheboygan Falls; Helen Lee Edward, Oostburg; Dixie Larkin, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Frister, Annette Shaffer, Rufin Jankowski; Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Bromm, Karl Priebe, Dennis Hajducki, Mary Decker, Mike Becker, Emil Urban, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Kaiman, Elsia Ruselink, Anna Hehn, Leoceda Ley, Ernie Timm, Pat Daleiden, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Polacheck, Ivy Balsom, Carrie Pashelles, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Throne, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Hayssen, Ginney and Carl III, all of Milwaukee; Mr. and Mrs. Howard Higgins, Kenosha; and Dolores Doane, Springfield, Vermont.

124 Oxford Road
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Country Calendar: Winter . . .

By AUGUST DERLETH

i. The Gathering of Birds

I have observed over many winters the curious patterns in the gathering of birds, not nearly so evident in summer—if indeed they occur, as I suspect they do not then. It is entirely probable that the advent of a harsher season, in which survival is more difficult, draws birds together which would not ordinarily tolerate group or flock invasion.

It would seem that size determines the gatherings. I have found robins, meadowlarks, bronzed grackles, red-winged blackbirds, starlings, cowbirds together; and I have often seen various kinds of sparrows together with juncos and goldfinches. But these do not mix, any more than that solitary thief, the blue jay, will travel with any flock. In such gatherings, clearly, birds move among birds of their own general size.

They seem to exist amicably. I have watched them in the wild, and in the village, at feeding stations, and simply at rest; and all act as disciplined members of the flock, fighting such common enemies as squirrels and blue jays at feeding stations, but seldom quarrelling among themselves.

Though sparrows and goldfinches are irrespressible, the larger birds tend to be quiet, seldom giving voice, even on warm, pleasant days of thaw. On one occasion a large flock of winter birds came winging in to where I sat in the sunlight at a brook trestle south of Sac Prairie, making no sound other that that of their wings. They began to move, one by one, and in groups, to the brook to drink or bathe—the robins, of which there were but three, were insistent on bathing in a sunny, shallow spot—but all of them were never down at the same time, leaving a few of their number posted as sentinels, as it were. The group was predominantly grackles; the robins and four red-winged blackbirds had attached them-

selves to it in its wandering flight through the Wisconsin bottoms, and all were clearly remaining for the winter. None gave voice.

The lesser birds, however, invariably chatter. Junco's whispered song is often incessant; so is the glib chatter of English sparrows and goldfinches. These winter flocks always make themselves known; they are never come upon by surprise; and they customarily pursue their own way separate from larger birds, though in places of shelter, the flocks often join. In one isolated, weather-beaten barn for hay on the Lower Meadow, for instance, I discovered under the same roof English sparrows, juncos, goldfinches, cowbirds, starlings, pigeons, and grackles, all living amicably together there.

These flocks persist throughout the winter season, but with the first hint of spring in air, they are no more, a partnership dissolved.

ii. **Master of the Winter Woods**

Such, by day, is certainly the pileated woodpecker—in those woods where he is to be found at all. A rare and increasingly rare bird. There are perhaps half a dozen of the birds which range between Sac Prairie and the country of the Ferry Bluff six miles south. And who, what woods-wanderer, has not heard their cries ringing through the woods with the greatest of pleasure?

His path is marked. Wherever he goes, he riddles the still standing bole of any dead tree, in search of the insects and the larvae, worms and cocoons deep in that rotting wood, tearing away bark and pulp and leaving great open wounds to glow in the dark woods, and piles of shavings about each bole. And his long, loping flight is unmistakable, too, usually accompanied by his challenging cry, "so much larger," as one lad once put it, "than a flicker's."

PILEATED WOODPECKER NESTING SITE
—PHOTO BY CARL RICHTER

None challenges him where he goes, though I have more than once apprehensively watched lads with guns in hand in the marshes, the gun itself daring the boy to shoot, to demonstrate his superiority over all other creatures —the superiority of the killing weapon. But somehow the bird casts a spell. So rare, so big, so fearless—it has the enchantment of the unkown for most boys, who see the bird but momentarily and know it not.

A score of years ago there was not one bird of his kind in the lowlands south of Sac Prairie. Ten years ago, but one or two, seldom seen more than once in any season. Now scarce a day goes by without the defiance of that ringing cry. Thus conservation creeps along, infinitesimally, and the woods that belonged to the clan of owls by day as well as night, are given to the pileated woodpecker by day.

iii. An Owl at Evening

I used to see an owl come flying over the Lower Meadow on the edge of dusk every evening of late winter last year, sit high up in a budding elm tree on the meadow's eastern rim, making no sound, and wait there while I walked by and back, and then fly off into the west, toward the dark wood there. I never saw him dip for mouse or hare, mole or shrew; he always came out, sat in his accustomed place, and waited, perhaps, for some voice I could not hear, to leave again. I saw him there for thirty evenings at least, and he did not come again. An owl freed from nesting, perhaps, for this little while? I could have guessed otherwise, but one night I celebrated him in this little poem, called **Time of Afterglow:**

> The little owl comes silently into the hyla choir,
> sits dark on afterglow's orange fire,
> to look at evening where the light
> draws westerly before the coming night.
> He stirs no jeers, no high alarm, no cries
> of fear where on wings of down he flies,
> and no bird rises now to challenge him
> where he sits athwart an old elm's budding limb,
> soundless under eye of Venus, evening's start,
> until he hears faintly from afar
> that one keening which alone he knows,
> and then, fading fast into the dusk, he goes.

Sauk City, Wisconsin

ORGANIZING A BIRD CLUB

WE CAN HELP YOU GET STARTED

There are a number of very successful bird clubs in several cities in the state. Those who belong to these clubs find real enjoyment and pleasure in their association with others interested in birds. It has many advantages in increasing our knowledge and appreciation of birds and encourages others to acquire an interest in bird lore.

If there is not a bird club in your community, why not talk with two or three of your friends, who have a similar interest, to consider and plan to start an organization. These clubs do not have to be pretentious or expensive. Many clubs have pleasant social and educational meetings in people's homes. Others may meet in schools, churches, or recreational buildings.

A review of the constitution and by-laws of several successful clubs has been made. Some are quite formally drawn up; others are merely an informal statement of the purpose, and rules for election of officers. This information is available to anyone interested in forming a club if he will write the Chairman of the W. S. O. Education and Publicity Committee.

Club Page

The Ned Hollister Bird Club

By HAROLD and HILDEGARD LIEBHERR

In the beginning there must be an idea, and the idea came to us in the spring of 1952. We had attended the W. S. O. convention in Kenosha and had met several people from Beloit who also belonged to W. S. O. Meeting these people was a great surprise to us, and we reasoned that there must be more people in Beloit who were interested in the study of birds.

In October 1952 a small article was placed in the **Beloit Daily News,** asking that any people interested in forming a bird club contact us by phone. To our surprise twelve people responded and arrangements were made for the first meeting. This meeting, and all other meetings during the first year, were held in the homes of members. This was possible because the group was small.

The organization of the club was very informal during the first year of its existence. There were no officers, no dues were charged, and there were no organized programs. Much of the time was spent in talking to one another, telling of our past experiences, and listing good birding places in the Beloit area. This informality has served a useful purpose.

Two organized activities were held by the group—both bird counts. On the Christmas Count (1952) 5 people participated, and on the May Day Count (1953) about 15 people participated. While these counts did not produce results comparable to the Madison or Milwaukee counts, we felt elated for having completed an organized venture into the field of ornithology.

It was in May that several club members mentioned that we would have to organize more thoroughly in the coming year if we were to continue as a group. These people began to see that with no definite purpose the club would become just another organization, and therefore would have no right to exist. When the fall of 1953 arrived the main objective before the club was to organize formally. The club was to be given a name, officers were to be elected, dues were to be determined and a plan of action was to be decided upon. The club was named after Ned Hollister, an early Rock County ornithologist; dues of $1.00 per year were charged; and four officers were elected—a president, vice-president, secretary and a treasurer. The president is to be in charge of the monthly meeting; the vice-president is to have charge of the monthly programs and field trips; the secretary is to keep a history of the club and promote publicity; and the treasurer is to keep an accurate accounting of club funds and membership. One field trip a month is to be held in addition to the monthly business meeting and program. Recently we obtained a meeting place (the local Girl Scout Offices); since our membership had about doubled, we had outgrown private homes as a meeting place.

The monthly programs are designed to aquaint the members with various phases of nature study, in addition to bird study. We feel that a person cannot go far in bird study without some understanding of the inter-relation of birds with animals, plants, soil, etc. Club members and members of the community are utilized to provide the programs.

A good word must be said for the **Beloit Daily News;** the publicity has been wonderful. An account of every meeting is published by them prior to the meeting date. Our Christmas Count evoked a great deal of interest, with an editorial about Christmas Counts in general being found in the paper. Newspaper cooperation can make much easier the job of building a club.

At the present time the Ned Hollister Bird Club has two primary aims: (1) to educate each other and the community on the value of ornithology as a science, and (2) to obtain an accurate picture of the nesting, wintering, and migratory birds of Rock County. Several steps have been taken to meet the first goal. The club has purchased a complimentary subscription to the **Audubon Magazine** for the the Beloit Public Library, and we publicized the Christmas Count in a way to show the scientific nature of the count. This part of our program can continue to grow through sponsorship of the Audubon Screen Tours and a program for young people. The second objective is being met by collecting field notes from club field trips and from individual observations. The information gathered on these trips must be compiled in a manner in which it will be readily available to all people. This is something that must be accomplished within the near future.

Any of you are more than welcome to visit the Ned Hollister Bird Club when in this area. We will do our best to show you how we operate, and to acquaint you with birding on Wisconsin's southern border.

1540 Jackson Street
Beloit, Wisconsin

More News . . .

The American Ornithologists' Union will hold its 71st annual meeting on the University of Wisconsin campus from Wednesday, September 8, to Sunday, September 12. The meeting will involve three days of papers and a field trip on Sunday. This will be the first time that the A. O. U. has met in our state, and members of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology are cordially invited to attend. One need not be an A. O. U. member to attend the sessions. Dr. A. W. Schorger (Department of Wildlife Management, University of Wisconsin) is serving as chairman of the local Committee on Arrangements.

Chances for members and friends of W. S. O. to watch the nuptial dancing of the prairie chicken will be afforded at Plainfield on Saturday and Sunday, April 24 and 25, thanks to the Frederick Hamerstroms. People planning on these trips should plan to arrive the evening before for briefing at the Hamerstroms: 8:00 p. m. on April 23 (for April 24), and 7:00 p. m. on April 24 (for April 25). These are separate groups, limited to about 25 persons each. Make your reservations now with Charles E. Nelson, 124 Oxford Road, Waukesha.

The Wildlife Management Institute has announced that the 1954 North American Wildlife Conference will be held at Chicago, March 8-10. Headquarters will be the Palmer House.

(more news on page 133)

BOOK REVIEWS

A GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI. By Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. Oxford Univ. Press. 1953. $6.00.

Bird-watchers who have had occasion to travel in the east and south in the past several years have found Dr. Pettingill's Eastern **Guide** invaluable, even indispensable, as an aid in finding birds, and will welcome eagerly this latest companion guide to western bird finding. Here, precisely as in the earlier guide, the vacationer or tourist can find exact information on what birds are to be found at what times and in what places. Dr. Pettingill has again carefully included many references to road numbers, mileages and landmarks to help the stranger in finding his way to each birding spot, and, again, much attention has been paid to describe overnight accommodations, where to park the car, special equipment that might be needed (such as rubber footwear in wet areas) and many other details that can be of the utmost importance in planning and enjoying a trip.

Noteworthy, too, is the frequent mention of a local bird student, affording the traveler an opportunity to meet many very helpful and understanding field birders in all parts of the country. This reviewer well remembers the friendly spirit and enthusiasm of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Merritt of Clewiston, Florida, who give up many hours to help birders who seek smooth-billed anis.

An important feature of these guides, in the opinion of this reviewer, is the fact that both of these volumes point up the wealth of birding spots that we can enjoy that are comparatively close at hand, in our own and in neighboring states.—Bernard Kaiman.

LAND BIRDS OF AMERICA. By Robert Cushman Murphy and Dean Amadon. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1953. Pp. 240. $12.50.

If your interests run to photography—as photography or as art—you may wish to have this book. Its principal offering is some 264 photographs, 221 of which are in color. The photographs are accompanied by a text declared by the dust jacket to contain 55,000 words.

As the title states, the volume is confined to "land birds" of the eastern and western United States. Within this definition of land birds, the following orders are included: birds of prey, gallinaceous birds, shorebirds, pigeons and doves, cuckoos, owls, goatsuckers, swifts and hummingbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers, and perching birds. Neither the photographs nor the text materials cover all the U. S. species within the orders included; and many species, some of them common, are omitted altogether. The text is not designed to serve for field identification purposes, but is devoted rather to commentary on habits, habitat and distribution. And this commentary is far less comprehensive than that found, for example, in Richard Pough's **Audubon Bird Guides.**

The relatively few black and white photographs are uniformly good, and the best are superb.

The best of the color pictures are exquisite in their composition, the fidelity of the color reproduction, and in catching a characteristic pose of the species in a typical habitat. And these finest reproductions may well justify the entire cost of the book. But the very excellence of the best serves to point up the inadequacy of the poorest.

Of the two major shortcomings, the first—occasionally unfaithful color reproduction—is perhaps unavoidable at the present stage of development in color reproduction. Somewhere between the live bird seen by the photographer and the picture you see in the book something goes amiss now and then in the color process; grays go to blues, and the like.

The second deficiency—poor color register in printing the plates—seems inexcusable in a volume so costly. Perhaps the particular copy examined by the reviewer was a poor one, but in it at least twenty per cent of the plates were blurred by poor alignment of one or more of the primary colors. So when you shop to buy, you will do well to examine carefully the copy you take.—G. William Foster.

SONG BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN. By John K. Terres. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1953. Pp. 274. $3.95.

This is a timely book. Americans are becoming more bird conscious; membership in bird societies is growing, shops everywhere are displaying bird houses and feeders, more bird watchers are afield, more and more homes have devices for attracting birds. And now here is a book designed to answer all questions about attracting and caring for birds.

John K. Terres is admirably equipped to give inspiration and guidance. He is managing editor of Audubon Magazine, and writes with charm and authority; he has been a professional government biologist; he has for years been attracting birds to his own home.

Three things are needed to bring birds to our gardens: food, water and shelter. The author tells what foods are best and easiest provided. Proper selection of trees and shrubs can provide food and shelter for birds and still meet our landscaping requirements. Other foods can be purchased, and table scraps utilized. He tells how to purchase or build suitable feeding devices. He mentions fountains, bird baths and pools—how birds on cold winter morning enjoy a steaming warm bath for chilled feet.

One of the most perplexing problems facing the back yard bird addict is what to do for young birds thrust by misadventure on the care of human foster-parents. Although it is illegal to keep these birds permanently, Terres gives tips on feeding and caring for these helpless wards until they are returned to their parents or are able to fend for themselves. Predators—cats, squirrels and certain birds—are discussed, and schemes are outlined to defeat these pests without resort to killing.

He writes in an interesting way about "squeaking"—attracting birds by making high-pitched sounds with the lips or with mechanical devices. This is a valuable trick, rapidly growing among bird watchers.

Wisconsin bird lovers will be interested in the author's discussion of the cliff swallow barn near Deerfield, which he calls "the greatest back-yard bird attracting project in this country."

The appendix is most helpful. It discusses the seasonal needs of birds—plants available in various parts of the country; dealers in bird supplies and devices. A helpful bibliography is provided. Here is a book equally helpful to novice and expert.—Mrs. R. A. Walker.

KNOW YOUR BINOCULARS. By Robert J. and Elsa Reichert. Mirakel Pepair Co., Mount Vernon, N. Y., 1951. Twelve pages, fully illustrated. Price 10c.

This pamphlet explains why binoculars are made in different ways, the various advantages of each kind, and how to pick the model best suited to **your** purpose. It compares light transmission and magnification in the various sizes, discusses hardcoating of lenses, and explains why some glasses have a wider field of view than others. It describes several ways in which binoculars can fall out of alignment—how many new binoculars are out of alignment when sold for the first time, in fact.

All who are planning to purchase a binocular will benefit by reading this pamphlet.—N. R. Barger.

More News . . .

Jim Zimmerman, 2114 Van Hise Avenue, Madison 5, is anxious to receive more 1953 spring arrival dates for those species receiving special attention in a nation-wide survey. Observers throughout the United States east of the Rocky Mountains are engaging in a five-year study of spring arrival dates of the following species: Canada goose, marsh hawk, killdeer, mourning dove, nighthawk, chimney swift, ruby-throated hummingbird, flicker, Eastern kingbird, phoebe, wood pewee, barn swallow, purple martin, crow, house wren, wood thrush, black and white warbler, yellow warbler, myrtle warbler, redstart, red-wing, Baltimore oriole, rose-breasted grosbeak, indigo buting, goldfinch, junco, chipping sparrow and white-throated sparrow. To date only the following counties have been heard from: Adams, Dane, Fond du Lac, Jackson, Jefferson, Kenosha, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Marathon, Rock, St. Croix, Sauk, Shawano, Sheboygan, Vernon and Waukesha; this means that there are 55 Wisconsin counties yet to be heard from, to say nothing of additional observers in the counties mentioned. If you have any 1953 records of spring arrival dates for the above species in your area, please send them to Mr. Zimmerman at once. Equally important, plan on keeping arrival dates on the same species this coming spring.

The third annual W. S. O. camp-out in Door County promises to be a most attractive one. One feature (weather permitting) will be a boat trip to Sister or Hat Islands to observe the nesting colonies of the Herring gull. Reservations must be made in advance for the boat trip; details about the reservations will be announced later.

The Christmas bird counts already on hand indicate a most interesting observation period. If you took a count and have not yet sent a copy to the Associate Editor, please do so at once. Please note his new address: 2334 East Washington Avenue, Madison 4, Wisconsin.

News Flash! We have just learned that Wisconsin is to have an Audubon Nature Camp in southern Washburn County. Details will follow in the next issue.

By The Wayside . . .

Edited by C. DENNIS BESADNY

Carolina Wren in Vernon County. On May 10, 1953 a Carolina wren was seen in the watercress along a small stream near DeSoto in Vernon County. Last year a Carolina wren was observed on April 23 in our yard in Viroqua where it spent some time around our bird bath. These are the first records for this species in Vernon County.—Margarette E. Morse, Viroqua.

A Carolina Wren Also Visits in Adams County. On July 21, while I was in the back yard listening to the Bewick's wren that had been with us all summer, I heard a different, less familiar song. After some memory-searching I guessed that the song was coming from a Carolina wren. A subsequent search brought several good views of the bird and confirmed the identification. Both the Carolina and Bewick's wrens preferred the same general area, but did not appear to pay much attention to each other. After a few minutes the Bewick's wren flew off to spend the rest of the day elsewhere, as has been his usual custom. The Carolina wren stayed close by all day, proving to be bolder and tamer than his relative. By the next morning, the Carolina wren had disappeared, and has not been seen again.—Sam Robbins, Adams.

A Western Sandpiper Near Castle Rock Dam. On the morning of July 24, while on a hike around Adams County, I spotted a Western sandpiper—the first I have seen in 15 years of bird-watching in Wisconsin although I have seen them several times in New England. The bird was seen in a drainage ditch two miles north of Castle Rock Dam, and could be compared with several leasts and one semipalmated sandpiper. It was slightly larger than either the least or semipalmated, grayer than the least and buffier than the semipalmated. The bill of the Western was longer and heavier, drooping slightly at the tip. The Western sandpiper was quite belligerent, constantly driving away the other nearby sandpipers.—Sam Robbins, Adams.

Prairie Chickens Hold Their Ground. Every year the WSO group motors to Plainfield to spend two days with the F. N. Hamerstrom family to observe the booming of the prairie chickens and hooting of the sharptails. This year Mr. and Mrs. Carl Frister had more than usual amount of excitement around their blind. At 4:20 the first prairie chickens began to fly in and take their territorial positions. A fine snow was falling and they began to dance and boom. Shortly before dawn a great horned owl swooped down over the chickens and flushed them from the area. After several minutes, half of the birds returned. Once again the owl swooped down over the prairie chickens, but this time the birds held their ground and hunched down motionless until the danger was passed. The owl did not make a kill.—from CHICKDEES, a monthly paper of the John Muir Club, Vol. 2, No. 7, April 1953.

Convention News . . .

Vice-President Bob McCabe and a host of other active Madison ornithologists are hard at work preparing for the 1954 W. S. O. convention, April 30-May 2. So much activity is being planned for this convention that there are prospects for starting the program on Friday afternoon, rather than the Friday evening opening that has been customary in recent years.

As in past years, WSO members are entitled to present papers as part of the convention program. A good number of titles have already been received. In order to give coherency to each paper session, the program committee has decided to give each of the sessions a central theme and try to group the papers according to these topics. If you have in mind a paper that fits well into one of these sessions it will be especially welcome, although of course we will be glad to have any contribution. Session topics are as follows:

Friday afternoon: **Ecological geography of Wisconsin birds.** (Distribution of Wisconsin birds related to vegetation, topography, and other habitat features.)

Saturday morning: **Bird behavior and population controls.** (Relationships between bird behavior and trends in or controls of population levels.)

Saturday afternoon: **Migration.** (Patterns, timing, and environmental relations in the migration of Wisconsin birds.)

If you have a paper you are invited to send in your title and an abstract of the paper to the program chairman not later than April 1, 1954. The abstract is needed for advertising purposes. Titles should be sent to Fred H. Wagner, Program Chairman, 425 Sterling Ct., Madison, Wisconsin.

FIELD NOTES

THE EARLY SPRING SEASON **February-April 1953**

By C. DENNIS BESADNY

Temperatures for the month of February averaged warmer than normal, although it was not as warm as the same month last year. No extremely low temperatures were found anywhere in the state. Most sections of Wisconsin had more precipitation in February than during any previous month since last August. The nights were cold enough to hold back any major waterfowl migrations, but several species of ducks in small numbers were noted rather early on some of the ponds in Dane County. Only one small red-wing flight was reported.

March was warmer, cloudier, and wetter than usual. It was the warmest March since 1946. Our coldest weather occurred during the first week with lowest temperatures coming on the 1st and 7th. This cold weather held back any large migrations. Geese and dabbling ducks were becoming more concentrated than usual, probably due to less corn in the fields.

The high winds and freezing rain on March 15 were followed by an unseasonal hot spell with temperatures reaching 78 degrees on March 21. This hot weather continued until March 28 and by this time several of our earliest and a few of our not-so-early migrants had invaded southern and central Wisconsin. The western and pied-billed grebes arrived very early as did the black-crowned night heron; the swan flight was strong and widespread; good red-wing flights were reported bewteen the 10th and 20th ;and the hawk migration was well under way, although not in very large numbers. The hermit and olive-backed thrushes were several weeks ahead of schedule in Rock County. Several towhees arrived in this early push in Milwaukee; then none were seen for several weeks. This unusual weather also brought in the first wave of shorebirds to the mudflats.

Recurrent rain, lower than normal temperatures, and strong winds were common during the first three weeks in April. This unseasonal weather did not seem to disrupt the migration pattern for the arrival dates of most land birds ran true to form in most areas. A few uncommon species showed up on several check lists including the European widgeon, golden plover, willet, and Bewick's wren. Several observers reported the tufted titmouse to be up in their area. The warbler migration was somewhat delayed, with the birds beginning to trickle in near the end of the month. The season's highlights follow:

Loon: Seen on Mar. 29 in several localities: Columbia County (Howard Winkler); Dane County (P. D. Skaar—Mrs. R. A. Walker); along the Lake Michigan shore(Mrs. F. L. Larkin—Mrs. A. P. Balsom); Waukesha County (Tom Soulen—Fred Alyea—Charlie Sontag). Seen farther north a few days later: Manitowoc County, Apr. 1 (Myron Reichwaldt); Adams County, Apr. 7 (Sam Robbins); and Burnett County, Apr. 8 (N. R. Stone).

Red-throated Loon: First seen in Milwaukee, Apr. 8 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin—Mrs. Riegel); 300 seen on Lake Michigan off Ozaukee County, Apr. 11 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin—Dick Gordon—Emil Urban). This was the largest number ever noticed at one time in this area.

Holboell's Grebe: Single birds seen on five occasions in Dane County, first on Apr. 12 (Bill Foster—P. D. Skaar); Manitowoc County, Apr. 26 (Myron Reichwaldt). Birds were in breeding plumage. Seen in the Appleton area Apr. 23-29—a new record here (Mrs. W. E. Rogers—Mrs. H. L. Playman).

Horned Grebe: Arrived in Madison, Mar. 29 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Western Grebe: Seen in Milwaukee, Mar. 15 (C. P. Fristers).

Pied-billed Grebe: Dane County, Mar. 11 (P. D. Skaar); Wood County, Mar. 12 (B. W. Hubbard)—very early dates. Later in Adams County, Mar. 22 (Sam Robbins); Manitowoc County, Mar. 29 (Myron Reichwaldt).

Great Blue Heron: First seen in Milton, Mar. 15 (Chester Skelly); Burnett County, Mar. 22 (N. R. Stone—Hollis Barrett).

American Egret: Crawford County, Apr. 18 (Harold Burgess); 3 in Burnett County, Apr. 30 (N. R. Stone).

Black-crowned Night Heron: Early arrival in Milwaukee, Mar. 24 (C. P. Fristers).

American Bittern: Columbia County, Apr. 14 (Howard Winkler); Burnett County, Apr. 18 (N. R. Stone); Manitowoc County, Apr. 25 (Myron Reichwaldt).

Least Bittern: Seen quite early in Winnebago County, Apr. 22 (J. H. Evans).

Whistling Swan: Winnebago County, Mar. 20 (Wm. Urban). Seen later in Adams, Bayfield, Brown, Burnett, Chippewa, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Jefferson, Manitowoc, Milwaukee,Waukesha, and Winnebago Counties. Flocks of 300 were observed along the Wisconsin River bottoms near Arlington, Mar. 30 (Arlene Cors).

WHISTLING SWANS AT GREEN BAY. SEVERAL WISCONSIN AREAS BOASTED SIMILAR SIGHTS THIS SPRING.—PHOTO BY J. B. KENDALL

Canada Goose: First arrivals at Horicon Marsh, Feb. 7 (L. R. Jahn). Later observed in Waukesha County, Mar. 1 (Tom Soulen); Adams County, Mar. 16 (Sam Robbins); Brown County, Mar. 22 (Wm. Fisk); and also in La Crosse, Mar. 22 (Alvin Peterson).

Snow Goose: Scattered reports from Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Winnebago Counties all between Mar. 7 and Apr. 26. Mar. 7 record from Crawford County (Harold Burgess).

Blue Goose: Seen in Adams County, Mar. 16 (Sam Robbins); several in Waukesha County, Mar. 17 (Charlie Sontag).

Gadwall: Dane County, Mar. 15 (P. D. Skaar—Bill Foster); Milwaukee, Mar. 17 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin). Observers report this species to be more numerous this season.

European Widgeon: Scattered reports again were received on this casual transient visitor. Columbia County, Apr. 5 (Howard Winkler); Winnebago County, Apr. 19-22 (Evans, Wellso, et al.).

Baldpate: Seen on Mar. 8 in Milwaukee (Mrs. A. P. Balsom—P. D. Skaar); and in Waukesha County on the same day (Ed. Peartree).

Pintail: Crawford County, Mar. 13 (Harold Burgess); Columbia County, Mar. 17 (Howard Winkler); Adams County, Mar. 20 (Sam Robbins); and in Sheboygan County, Mar. 22 (H. Koopmann).

Redhead: Dane County, Feb. 7 (Mrs. R. A. Walker)—quite early. An albino was seen during the spring on Lake Kegonsa (Warden DeBrock).

Ring-necked Duck: Crawford County, Feb. 26 (Harold Burgess).

Canvasback: Observed quite early in Dane County, Feb. 7 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

White-winged Scoter: One pair was seen on Lake Michigan off Virmond Park in Ozaukee County on Mar. 8 (Several members of WSO on field trip). This is a sight record only.

Ruddy Duck: Very early record: Milwaukee, Feb. 15 (C. P. Fristers).

Hooded Merganser: Early bird in Madison, Feb. 7 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Turkey Vulture: Noted in several localities: Milwaukee, Mar. 22 (C. P. Fristers—Mrs. A. P. Balsom); Waukesha area, Mar. 27 (Emma Hoffmann); Vernon County, Apr. 5 (Margarette Morse); Kettle Moraine State Forest, flock of 5, Apr. 5 (Fred Alyea—Charlie Sontag); Adams County, Apr. 20 (Sam Robbins).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Dane County, Feb. 4 (P. D. Skaar).

Broad-winged Hawk: Chippewa County, Mar. 12 (Dr. Kemper). Earliest date on record.

Marsh Hawk: Milwaukee, Feb. 22 (C. P. Fristers); Washburn County on Mar. 22 (Diane Feeney).

Osprey: Seen in Burnett County, Mar. 22 (Hollis Barrett).

Duck Hawk: Several good records. Rock County, Mar. 21 (Harold Liebherr); Milwaukee, Apr. 11 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); Crawford County, Apr. 17 (Harold Burgess); Adams County, Apr. 21 (Sam Robbins).

Pigeon Hawk: Very early date: Milwaukee, Mar. 1 (Mrs. A. P. Balsom).

Ruffed Grouse: In the Baraboo Bluffs, Columbia County, Mar. 1 (Arlene Cors).

Prairie Chicken: Began booming in Adams County, Mar. 18 (Sam Robbins).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Burnett County, Apr. 4 (N. R. Stone).

Sandhill Crane: Seen in Adams County, Apr. 14 (Sam Robbins). The only report for this season.

Florida Gallinule: Winnebago County, Apr. 28 (J. H. Evans).

Coot: A few early dates: Dane County, Feb. 7 (Mrs. R. A. Walker); Crawford County, Feb. 26 (Harold Burgess); Milwaukee, Mar. 8 (C. P. Fristers—Mrs. A. P. Balsom); Shawano County, Mar. 12 (Mary Staege).

Killdeer: One wintered in Manitowoc County (John Kraupa). Seen in the Madison area, Mar. 11 (N. R. Barger).

Golden Plover: This uncommon visitant was observed in two areas: Adams County, Apr. 22 (Sam Robbins); and in Dane County, April 25 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Wodcock: Dane County, Mar. 15—at the Univ. of Wis. Arboretum (C. D. Besadny); Winnebago County, Mar. 21 (Beck and Wellso).

Wilson's Snipe: Waukesha County, Mar. 24 (Emma Hoffmann); Heard winnowing in Madison, Apr. 1 (J. B. Hale).

Upland Plover: Several observed in Winnebago County, Apr. 18 (J. H. Evans); Adams County, Apr. 23 (Sam Robbins).

Spotted Sandpiper: Winnebago County, Mar. 25 (Wm. Urban); Burnett County, Apr. 2 (Hollis Barrett).

Willet: Winnebago County, Apr. 26 (Evans, Wellso, et al.). And early date for this rare species.

Greater Yellow-legs: Observed in Winnebago County, Apr. 6 (J. H. Evans); Dane County, Apr. 15 (F. H. Wagner); and in Burnett County, Apr. 18 (N. R. Stone).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Waukesha County, Apr. 3 (Tom Soulen); Dane County, Apr. 15 (F. H. Wagner); Milwaukee area, Apr. 21 (Mrs. A. P. Balsom). This species is considered rare along Lake Michigan.

Glaucous Gull: Seen in Milwaukee, Mar. 8 (Fred Alyea—Charlie Sontag—Tom Soulen). This bird was near an adult herring gull and the observers had an excellent color and size comparison.

Bonaparte's Gull: Manitowoc County, Apr. 9 (John Kraupa); Dane County, Apr. 13 (P. D. Skaar).

Forster's Tern: Early record: Winnebago County, Apr. 25 (J. H. Evans); Dane County the same day (Mrs. R. A. Walker—P. D. Skaar).

Caspian Tern: Milwaukee County, Apr. 14 (Jack Spear—Mrs. F. L. Larkin); Brown County, Apr. 25 (Wm. Fisk).

Black Tern: Observed in Dane County, Apr. 26 (P. D. Skaar).

Mourning Dove: Columbia County, Feb. 8 (Howard Winkler).

Short-eared Owl: Noted in Milwaukee, Feb. 8 (C. P. Fristers).

Belted Kingfisher: Kenosha, Mar. 15 (Mrs. Howard Higgins); Burnett County, Mar. 22 (N. R. Stone).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Columbia County, Apr. 5 (Howard Winkler); Burnett County, Apr. 11 (Hollis Barrett).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Present all winter in Chippewa County (Dr. Kemper); Milwaukee County, Mar. 19 (Mrs. Fred Hook).

Eastern Kingbird: Milwaukee, Apr. 25 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin).

Tree Swallow: Found in Columbia County, Mar. 22 (Howard Winkler).

Purple Martin: The earliest arrival was reported from the northern part of the state: Burnett County, Apr. 6 (N. R. Stone); later in southern Wisconsin, Rock County, Apr. 7 (Chester Skelly).

Raven: Sawyer County, Mar. 11 (Karl Kahmann); Washburn County, Apr. 12 (Diane Feeney).

Tufted Titmouse: Dane County, Mar. 20 (P. D. Skaar); Adams County, Mar. 24 (Sam Robbins).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Winnebago County, Mar. 21 (J. H. Evans); Chippewa County, Apr. 28 (Dr. Kemper).

Brown Creeper: Columbia County, Feb. 8 (Howard Winkler).

House Wren: Dane County, Apr. 2 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Winter Wren: In Chippewa County, Mar. 19 (Dr. Kemper); Winnebago County, Mar. 20 (Mrs. Glen Fisher).

Bewick's Wren: First seen in Madison, Mar. 29 (A. W. Schorger); Adams County in a snowstorm on Apr. 19 (Sam Robbins).

Brown Thrasher: Seen very early in Lake Park, Milwaukee on Mar. 29 (Dr. Anna Hehn); Kenosha County, Apr. 21 (Mrs. Howard Higgins). Winnebago County, Apr. 24 (Mrs. Glen Fisher).

Wood Thruch: Columbia County, Apr. 5 (Arlene Cors).

Hermit Thrush: All observations made the same day, Mar. 21; Rock County (Harold Liebherr); Milwaukee (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); Winnebago County (Beck and Wellso).

Olive-backed Thrush: Milton, Mar. 10 (Chester Skelly)—very early; Winnebago County, Apr. 9 (Mrs. Glen Fisher).

Willow Thrush: Seen on Apr.25 in two localities: Brown County (Wm. Fisk); Winnebago County (J. H. Evans).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Uncommon transient visitor seen in Dane County, Apr. 25 (Mrs. R. A. Walker); Waukesha area, Apr. 30 (Tom Soulen).

Pipit: This irregular transient visitor was seen in the Madison area on Apr. 4 (P. D. Skaar); and in two places on Apr. 26: Columbia County (Howard Winkler), Winnebago County (J. H. Evans).

Migrant Shrike: Adams County, Mar. 22 (Sam Robbins); Vernon County, Mar. 28 (Margarette Morse); Chippewa County, Apr. 2 (Dr. Kemper); Manitowoc County, Apr. 5 (Myron Reichwaldt).

Black and White Warbler: Seen near Madison, Apr. 25 (Mrs. R. A. Walker); and in Pardeeville, Apr. 30 (Howard Winkler).

Orange-crowned Warbler: A few reports from the southeast: Kenosha, Apr. 21 (Mrs. Howard Higgins); Milwaukee, Apr. 23 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); and Madison, Apr. 25 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Nashville Warbler: Observed in Columbia County, Apr. 27 (Howard Winkler).

Myrtle Warbler: Milwaukee, Mar. 21 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); Manitowoc County, Apr. 5 (Myron Reichwaldt); and Burnett County, Apr. 6 (Hollis Barrett).

Bay-breasted Warbler: The only observation for this season: Plainfield, Apr. 20 (F. H. Wagner).

Pine Warbler: Adams County, Apr. 22 (Sam Robbins).

Palm Warbler: Milwaukee, Apr. 22 (Mrs. A. P. Balsom); Dane County, Apr. 25 (Mrs. R. A. Walker). Two places on Apr. 29: Adams County (Sam Robbins), and in Milton (Chester Skelly).

Grinnell's Water-Thrush: Waukesha County, Apr. 26 (Emma Hoffmann); Columbia County, Apr. 28 (Howard Winkler).

Louisiana Water-Thrush: Present in five areas in Adams County since Apr. 22 (Sam Robbins).

Northern Yellow-throat: Very early. Solitary bird seen at the Horicon Marsh, Apr. 9 (Tom Soulen—Fred Alyea—Charlie Sontag).

Western Meadowlark: Dane County, Feb. 14 (Mrs. R. A. Walker); Jefferson County, Feb. 15 (P. D. Skaar).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Madison, Apr. 20 (P. D. Skaar); Kenosha, Apr. 21 (Mrs. Howard Higgins).

Red-winged Blackbird: A flock of 75 seen near Lake Koshkonong, Dane County, Feb. 24 (F. H. Wagner).

Baltimore Oriole: Sawyer County, Apr. 24 (Karl Kahmann): Milwaukee, Apr. 25 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin)—early.

Brewer's Blackbird: Milwaukee, Mar. 15 (C. P. Fristers); Chippewa County, Mar. 19 (Dr. Kemper).

Cowbird: Wintered in Milwaukee (Mrs. F. L. Larkin).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Early date—Chippewa County, Apr. 14 (Dr. Kemper).

Evening Grosbeak: Seen regularly between Mar. 10 and 17: Adams County (Sam Robbins); Burnett County (N. R. Stone); Chippewa County (Dr. Kemper); La Crosse (Alvin Peterson).

Purple Finch: Madison, Feb. 8 (Mrs. R. A. Walker).

Pine Siskin: Waukesha County, Feb. 15 (Ed. Peartree); in Milwaukee, Mar. 15 (C. P. Fristers).

Towhee: Milwaukee area, Mar. 21 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); Winnebago County, Mar. 28 (Mrs. Glen Fisher).

Savannah Sparrow: Dodge County, Apr. 9 (Tom Soulen). Seen in Milwaukee on Apr. 11 (Mrs. F. L. Larkin); and also on the same day in Winnebago County (J. H. Evans).

Oregon Junco: Columbia County, Feb. 8 (Howard Winkler).

Chipping Sparrow: Kenosha, Mar. 22 (Mrs. Howard Higgins); also in Rock County the same day (Harold Liebherr).

White-crowned Sparrow: Horicon Marsh, Apr. 9 (Tom Soulen—Fred Alyea—Charlie Sontag). Early migrant. More seen this year in more areas than previously reported.

White-throated Sparrow: Wintered in Milwaukee (Tom Soulen). Good flights in the Madison area, Apr. 27 (N. R. Barger).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Milwaukee, Apr. 21 (Mrs. A. P. Balsom); Waukesha, Apr. 26 (Tom Soulen). Thin streaks and buffy band were plainly seen.

Lapland Longspur: Seen in several localities on Mar. 15: Chippewa County (Dr. Kemper); Jefferson County (P. D. Skaar); Milwaukee (C. P. Fristers). In Winnebago County on Mar. 16 (Mrs. Glen Fisher); and in Adams County on Mar. 17 (Sam Robbins). About 500 were seen on Apr. 9 in Dodge County (Tom Soulen).

Snow Bunting: Reports from Chippewa, Columbia, Dane, Milwaukee, Shawano, and Winnebago Counties.

BOOST THE ENDOWMENT FUND!

Remember, folks, the letter I wrote you a year ago asking you to make a contribution to the W .S. O. Endowment Fund, and explaining that we hoped to continue this for a few years in order to build up a substantial backlog for the Society? That time is here again.

We hope those of you who so generously helped this fund last year will do so again, and that those who could not contribute then will find it possible to do so now. If you have not paid your dues, send an extra dollar more with your renewal, earmarked for our Endowment Fund.

We would also welcome any bequest or a Life Membership to the Society.—Dixie Larkin, Director of Endowments.

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Order feeders and houses from J. L. Diedrich, 818 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3

All other items including books and pamphlets from N. R. Barger, 4333 Hillcrest Drive, Madison 5

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 1-10, 1954—Field notes for November, December and January, together with 1953 Christmas bird counts, should be sent to the Associate Editor.

March 7, 1954—Field trip at Milwaukee; meet at McKinley Beach at 8:00 a. m.

April 24-25, 1954—Field trips to watch prairie chicken at Plainfield; meet at the Hamerstroms at 8:00 p. m. April 23, or 7:00 p. m. April 24.

April 30-May 2, 1954—Annual W. S. O. convention at Madison.

May 1-10, 1954—Field notes for February, March and April should be sent to the Associate Editor.

May 16, 1954—Annual May-Day Count.

June 12-13, 1954—Third annual W. S. O. campout in Door County.