

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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## The Common Tern



Photo by ● S. Pettingill, Jr.

Cut Courtesy Wilson Bulletin

- - - AIM AND PURPOSE - - -

*The Constitution of South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, in Art. I, Sec. 2, states that the aim and object of the organization shall be "to encourage the study of birds in South Dakota and to promote the study of ornithology by more closely uniting the students of this branch of natural science."*

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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

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# MOCKINGBIRDS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

By J. S. Findley

*Sioux Falls, S. D.*

It surprises most of us to learn that mockingbirds nest in South Dakota, but the records go back to 1860. Yet in spite of a convincing number of reports we still call the mockingbird one of our rare residents. The first record was by Dr. F. V. Hayden, who surveyed much of the West. He reported taking a mockingbird in the Black Hills in 1860.

Dr. Hayden's was a western mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos leucopterus*) and this subspecies is the one still seen in the southwestern part of the state. The southeastern part has the eastern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos polyglottos*), but there is very little difference between these subspecies.

The year 1936 seems to have been a good one. A very interesting account of western mockingbirds was one written by Claude A. Barr, Smithwick, S. D., which told of the nesting of three or four pairs that hot, dry summer in a habitat very different from that usually selected. Mr. Barr tells us that the sequel to his story is not what we would expect with the better years that have followed 1936. They saw no more mockers until 1949 when one was with them for four days.

A. W. Drotts, who also lived near Smithwick, S. D., had known the birds in Kansas and so is sure of his identification of a pair that nested in his grove that same summer of 1936.

Still more is added to the record of western mockingbirds in Fall River County by Verner I. Clark, Hot Springs, S. D., who was at the Ardmore Field Station of the Department of Agriculture for several years. Mockingbirds were at the station every year from 1935 to 1942. The station was closed and there are no records for 1943 and 1944, but each year from 1945 to 1948 mockingbirds were seen in the shelter-

belt on the site of the Field Station. There were never more than two pairs but there were always young. None were seen in 1949.

Other records for the southwestern part of the state include reports of mockingbirds being seen and heard in Hot Springs every year from 1943 to 1949. There have been as many as five pairs but no young have been observed. Mr. Clark also observed them in 1945 on French Creek about ten miles east of Fairburn, Custer County.

Dr. W. H. Over, Vermillion, S. D., reports the eastern mockingbird nesting in Davison, Hanson and Yankton Counties. One of the Davison County records was made in July, 1934.

William Youngworth, Sioux City, Iowa, is one of our good South Dakota observers and has contributed many bird reports. One mockingbird record was made by him on June 3, 1936, a few miles south of Forestburg, Sanborn County. The bird was on a telephone wire and the flew across the road just a few feet in front of Youngworth's car. He also reports them along the Big Sioux River near Jefferson, S. D., on June 7, 1942. A pair was nesting then on the Iowa side of the river but undoubtedly had flown into South Dakota many times. The end of this report is not good. The farm cat broke up the nest. Another of his reports is on August 12, 1948, at Harrisburg, Lincoln County.

Judge W. B. Mallory, now Secretary of SDOU, Canton, S. D., saw a mockingbird at close range in his yard at Lennox, Lincoln County, about fifteen years ago. He is a careful observer and had a good look at the bird, but he considered his identification only tentative, because he did not then believe mockingbirds came into that part of

the state. However, a few days later he read a newspaper account of mockingbirds in Sioux Falls and drove up to try to find them. He was successful in getting a good view of one and in hearing it sing.

There are additions to the Sioux Falls records by C. J. Stringham. His first sight of a South Dakota mockingbird was in the '30's when he with Mrs. Blanche Getty and Miss Helen Peabody found a pair on the grounds of All Saints School and another pair in the yard of Frank Fosdick. Then in 1939 Mrs. C. P. Dunning called his attention to one bird in her yard. In 1945 he and George Maurer observed a pair off and on all summer in Riverview Heights.

Dr. and Mrs. John D. Donahoe saw a pair in the south part of Sioux Falls several times during the summer of 1949.

Rev. Harold W. Wagar, Brookings, S. D., another man who knows his birds, located a mockingbird nest on June 20, 1934, in Hanson County a few miles from Ethan and, after the nesting season, sent it to Dr. Over for the Museum at the University. Another of his Hanson County records is dated May 9, 1936. His 1934 records include mockingbirds on two farms three miles apart in western Hanson County.

The study is carried to the center of the state by Miss Abbie F. Whitney, Burbank, who identified mockingbirds at Pierre on June 8, 1933, and again on May 23, 1936. It would be interesting to know which subspecies these represented.

These records may indicate that South Dakota is a fringe on the regular nesting areas of both the eastern and the western mockingbirds, and is occupied so irregularly, or by such a comparatively few individuals that there is no appearance of regularity. We hope they are gradually, although much too slowly, extending their range in our direction.

## LICENSES FOR CATS

To the Editor of The Argus-Leader:

We hear a lot about raising hunting and fishing license fees. All the Game and Fish Commission would have to do to raise more money is to ask our state lawmakers to pass a bill licensing cats at the same price per license as a dog license. If this was done, we would have several million less game and songbird killers. Or else we would have enough money to stock the state with birds.

It certainly seems funny to me that we have to pay a license fee for our dog who goes out in the field with us when hunting and recovers better than 95 per cent of all birds we shoot.

Whereas our cat, when we don't watch her, will sneak out and do her best to kill 95 per cent of our game and songbirds. Anyone who doubts that cats are not our worst bird and rabbit killers need only go out in the fields after a snow and see for himself. Yours for less cats and more song and game birds.—A. H. Bloom, Alexandria, S. D.

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Dr. John D. Donahoe presented the second series of his fine motion pictures at the monthly meeting of the Sioux Falls Bird Club held December 8th. About 100 members and some visitors attended. "Doctor John" had some "close-up shots" of white pelicans in flight which left the spectators almost breathless. Mr. Charles H. Rogge was elected Director to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Charles Hills. Plans were made for the 1949 Christmas Bird Count, with Mr. Mark Wilson as General Chairman.

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SDOU sight record sheets, 8½ x 11, punched, are still available to members on request.—W. B. Mallory, Secy. SDOU Canton, S. D.

# Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

## SAND LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

By Clair T. Rollings

*Refuge Manager, Columbia, South Dakota*

Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge can be generally described as a prairie marsh lying in the valley of the James River thirty miles northeast of Aberdeen, South Dakota. The total area of the Refuge is approximately 22,000 acres about equally divided between upland and marsh. Two low dams retain water at what was formerly a spring level in the James River. Most of the flooded area is covered with water 1 to 3 feet deep in which rushes and cattails grow abundantly. Open water 3 to 8 feet deep is noted where the original Sand Lake and Mud Lake were found. Low, gentle banks lead up from the marsh into the surrounding level prairie. The refuge upland is of the long-grass-prairie type on which cultivated grains are grown to feed the large waterfowl populations that pass through the Refuge during spring and fall. The upland prairie habitat has been modified by numerous shelterbelts which were planted by the CCC for protection of our upland game. Natural tree growth exists sparingly near the original shorelines of the river.

A great variety of wildlife is to be noted on Sand Lake Refuge—big game, upland game, song birds, waterfowl, marsh birds, fish and small mammals. During late evening white-tailed deer are often observed browsing about the shelterbelt groves. Innumerable ring-necked pheasants can be flushed from the upland fields or observed along the roadsides. Occasionally Hungarian partridges will appear in the grain fields but their number has declined during the past few years. Rarely one of the real prairie chickens or pinnated grouse will be seen but this species has become

extremely scarce. Only a few winter visitants have been observed of late. Mourning doves readily accept the shelterbelt groves as nesting sites. Despite heavy destruction of their flimsy nests by the fierce prairie storms the doves continue to multiply and are becoming quite abundant. The clear, ringing calls of the western meadowlark and upland plover are commonly heard on the prairie fields.

During mid-May the warbler waves pass through the Refuge. A visit to one of the shelterbelts near the lake shore is sure to reveal a profusion of bird life. The yellow warbler is most in evidence, both in number and in song. The myrtle, magnolia, northern yellowthroat and many more of the warbler group can be readily observed. As spring wears on the arrival of the orioles, the ruby-throated hummingbirds, the goldfinches and the wrens adds color and music to the Refuge.

It is in the marsh that Sand Lake really displays her best in birdlife. From the tiny long-billed marsh wren, which hangs her globular home among the reeds, to the majestic Canada goose, which seeks an isolated island to build her nest, marsh birds are found in abundance.

The great "honkers" arrive before the ice has left the marsh, usually in late March. Within a few days the vanguard of snow, blue, white-fronted, Richardson's and lesser Canada geese appear on the newly-opened water. If spring weather arrives in a rush the goose clan literally swarms over Sand Lake before another week has passed. It is difficult to describe the thrill of seeing 10 million geese in the air

at one time, but such is the experience of those who visit the Refuge in early April. To see the mighty goose legions etched against the sky with a brilliant prairie sunset for a background is a thrill and a privilege for which photographers and conservationists travel hundreds of miles to Sand Lake each spring.

With the geese come the ducks, back from their winter trip in the South. All of a sudden the lake is white with the spotless vests of pintail drakes; the mallard drakes display in their most brilliant hues. Within a few days all the local ducks are noted, and all in their gayest dress. The glistening white backs of the scaups and the "cans"; the spoon-billed dabbling of the brilliant-colored shovellers; the marvelous display of the dapper little ruddy; the nervous courting displays of the teal—all are part of Sand Lake Refuge in April. By the end of the spring season from 75,000 to 100,000 ducks have moved through the area.

Whistling swans stop briefly on their spring trip to Arctic nesting grounds. Their number is small and their stay is short but the grace and beauty of these birds make the observation date one to be remembered throughout the year.

The herons, grebes, cormorants and pelicans put in their appearance after the first influx of ducks. The black-crowned night heron, pied-billed grebe, western grebe, double-crested cormorant and white pelican remain to nest. The raucous call of the night heron and the shrill cry of the western grebe are so welcome after their long winter's absence!

The cormorants and pelicans immediately begin fishing operations. The cormorants work singly and catch the fish by diving and swimming under the surface of the water. Pelicans often operate in teams; the fish being driven into a shallow bay and scooped up in the huge bills. These birds feed primarily on carp, bullheads and other

"rough" fish. A visit to the nesting colonies of the pelicans and cormorants is an experience; the odor of decaying fish and regurgitated food lingers long in one's memory! Nests, eggs and young of all ages appear to be jumbled in one great mass. Some nests are built only inches apart. Cormorants and pelicans may nest closely together on the same island. A cormorant builds a nesting platform of sticks or reeds ten or twelve inches high, while the pelican merely hollows out a shallow depression in the ground.

A description of Sand Lake Refuge would not be complete without mention of the terns and gulls. During spring the Franklin's gulls create a nightly bedlam with their incessant cries. The common and Forster's terns loudly protest one's every excursion into the marsh. These species, together with a few black terns, remain to nest in abundance. During migration the large ring-billed gulls and herring gulls are observed.

Among the rare finds is the American egret; one was observed during June, 1949. A very few green herons have been seen in the Refuge.

These are but the highlights of wildlife on Sand Lake, a Refuge which fed and sheltered a quarter of a million waterfowl during the past spring (1949)—a Refuge on which one may find a variety and heavy concentration of wildlife equalled in few areas in our country.



# BIRD STUDY IN TWO COLLEGES

By Ruth Habeger

*Madison, South Dakota*

General Beadle State Teachers College at Madison, S. D. and Southern State Teachers College at Springfield, S. D. offer a beginning course in bird study. Perhaps it may be of some value to our members to know how we handle these courses.

Mr. M. E. Burgi is the instructor at Southern and I am the instructor at General Beadle. Both of us are interested in encouraging young people to observe birds and are amazed at how few the average college student can identify when he enters our classes. We are equally amazed at the great satisfaction the student seems to get from the correct identification of each new bird he adds to his "life list."

We begin with an introductory study of birds. I find Roger Tory Peterson's new little book, *How to Know the Birds*, fine for this purpose. It is a good aid to beginners because it gives the short cuts to bird study which the seasoned observer often takes for granted. Mr. Peterson tells just what to look for. What is the bird's size? What is the bird's shape? How does the bird act? How does the bird fly? What are the bird's field marks? Where is the bird found? When is it found? What kind of a voice does the bird have? Mr. Burgi uses *A Guide to Bird Watching* by Hickey for this introductory study.

General Beadle College has an old collection of mounted birds. This is usable for study of structure and the comparative sizes of birds. When a student measures a 20-inch crow and a 11-inch grackle, he is surprised by the difference in the size of these two common birds and begins to understand why size is important in bird identification. In this laboratory exercise the student also learns to use guides and

other references for the identification of these mounted specimens. Students usually prefer *A Field Guide to the Birds* by Peterson, and generally buy copies for their own use before they finish the course. We both find this book the best publication for field identification. Structural study at Southern is done through lecture, demonstration, reading assignments and by study of a few mounted bird specimens. (\*)

The book which is used as a text at General Beadle is *Book of Bird Life* by A. A. Allen. This is the basis for class help to direct the student's observation and enable him to interpret what he sees the bird do. In this book Mr. Allen stresses the underlying principles that govern the action of birds.

Mr. Burgi handles his class periods in a different manner. He gives five lectures which cover the following topics: the origin of birds, fossils, bill, feet, wings, skeleton, feathers, digestive system, food habits and economic importance. This is followed by reading assignments in *Birds of America*, *Modern Bird Study*, *Birds and their Attributes*, *Jack Miner and the Birds*, *South Dakota Birds*, *Birds of South Dakota* and *Birds in the Garden*.

I use two class periods a term for film showing and discussion. Many of Dr. O. S. Pettingill's films are splendid for this area. I also use Allen's film on the seasonal activities of the redwing and the film on the Lower Souris Refuge. The latter consist of 3 reels and can be secured free, except transportation costs, from the Department of Interior, Washington, D. C. You should order it at least six months before you plan to show it because it is in great demand.

The other films are one reel in length, in color, and can be ordered from the Extension Division of the University of Iowa at Iowa City for a rental fee of \$1.50 and transportation costs.

Both of us agree that actual field work in small groups is most effective. Large classes are unwieldy and it is difficult to center the attention of all on the bird in question. I was interested to learn that during the summer Mr. Burgi scheduled his field work between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m., and I have concluded that I am a lazy teacher because I have never scheduled classes before 5 a.m. I did discover this summer that 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. was a splendid time for the study of water birds.

A record kept in convenient pocket notebooks is essential for field observation. Memory is treacherous. Permanency is the first consideration. The letter W is an excellent guide for facts to be recorded: who, what, where, when was the bird seen. I check the notebooks of each student at the end of each field trip. Next year I plan to use the splendid sight record sheet put out by S. D. O. U.

Since my course is designed to aid elementary teachers, I give some practice work in field guiding in the grades. Early in May before the leaves are out is an ideal time for this work. This is handled in groups of five or fewer with the bird students acting as guides. Both the guides and the grade school children seem to enjoy this assignment very much.

I hope I have done justice to the course offered at Southern which seems to be a fine course. I do appreciate the opportunity of exchanging ideas with other teachers of ornithology and hope to improve my course by doing so.

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South Dakota Academy of Science will hold its next annual meeting at Sioux Falls about May 1st. A. L. Haines, Vermillion, S. D. is Sec.-Treas.

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(\*) Southern State Teachers College,, Springfield, S. D. recently purchased a collection of about 100 specimens of local birds which were collected and prepared by the late J. W. Keiser, of Tripp, S. D.

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All of the dead hawks found along the highway during the past hunting season by officers of SDOU have been immature birds, and they were of species protected by law!!



SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES



# Pioneer Prairie Ornithologists

## Gabriel Smith Agersborg

Gabriel Smith Agersborg was the first known resident bird student of what is now South Dakota. He was born in Norway, May 3, 1840. While young he came to America with his parents who settled in Wisconsin. At the age of twenty-four he came to Union County, Dakota Territory, and filed on a homestead. In 1869 he moved with his family to Vermillion, South Dakota, but later was employed for two years in a drugstore in Sioux City, Iowa. He then returned to Vermillion to engage in the drug business and practice as a veterinary surgeon. With the exception of two years spent at Springfield, South Dakota, as Commissioner of Public Lands, he continued to live at Vermillion until his death, March 3, 1900.

Mr. Agersborg is best known as a bird student and taxidermist, and by 1891 had assembled a fine collection of the rarer species which he donated to the University of South Dakota as a nucleus for a Museum. These were stored in a room in the old Main Building and later most of the larger specimens were loaned as part of the State Exhibit to the World's Fair at Chicago. At the close of the Fair, through gross carelessness of some one, these specimens were sent to Yankton, South Dakota, from which place Mr. Agersborg was never successful in having them returned to the museum. The collection was never received by Yankton College. In 1893 the remainder of the collection was destroyed by a fire which partially burned the Main Building at the University. It is lamentable that of all the specimens presented by him to the University, only two are in the Museum today in memory of Mr. Agersborg. The conditions under which these were

saved are still a mystery to the writer. One is a turkey vulture which is rare in Clay County, the other is an Eskimo curlew, which has been extinct for many years.

Many of the species collected by Mr. Agersborg are rare in the state today and his collection, if available, would be immensely interesting to present-day bird students.

Mrs. Agersborg, who still lives in Vermillion (1930), informed the writer that "during the severe winter of 1880-81 Mr. Agersborg was fortunate in securing rare specimens of hawks of the far-north regions that seldom migrate as far south as southeastern South Dakota." She also says "he did considerable exchanging of bird skins with eastern collectors."

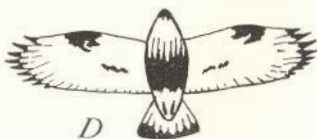
In 1881 Mr. Agersborg contributed an article to the Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club entitled, "The Novel Nesting Sites of Woodpeckers." This had particular reference to flickers and red-headed woodpeckers nesting in places other than hollow trees in a prairie region.

Mr. Agersborg demands our attention as the pioneer bird student residing in the area embraced in South Dakota. Audubon, Coues, Grinnell, McChesney and others visited the territory and published lists of birds seen on their respective trips but Mr. Agersborg published in *The Auk*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1885, the first local bird list by a resident.\*—W. H. Over, in *Proceedings of South Dakota Academy of Science* 1929-30.

(\*Note: The list, entitled, "The Birds of South Dakota" includes 225 species and is briefly annotated, but is too lengthy to be republished now. Ed.)

# MELANISM IN ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS

(Note: Bruce F. Stiles, now State Conservation Director of Iowa, has given us permission to republish the following material which appeared as a General Note published by him in the *Wilson Bulletin*, Dec., 1937.—Ed.)



"The winter of 1936-37 in southeastern South Dakota was one of unusually deep snow. Highways were blocked for days and the prairies were covered early with a blanket of snow that increased in depth as the season advanced.

The American rough-legged hawk was abundant, probably forced south in more than usual numbers by the deep snow and severe blizzards which likely made it difficult to procure sufficient food in its northern range.

"As the roads were cleared of snow after each storm, large flocks of horned larks, Lapland longspurs, and ring-necked pheasants were attracted to the graveled highways. Many of these birds were killed each day by passing cars and furnished a continual banquet for the crows, in which they were quite frequently joined by rough-legged hawks.

"I spent five days a week all winter long traveling this territory and I doubt if a single day passed that I did not see at least one rough-legged hawk. Usually I saw many each day and I was especially interested in their great variety of plumage, which ranged from the pure black that gives the rough-

legged the name of 'black hawk' throughout the Middle West, to birds of such light plumage they might easily be mistaken for the ferruginous rough-legged by the incautious observer. Melanism in the American rough-legged hawk is so common as to excite little interest under ordinary circumstances and I had given this phase no more than ordinary attention until an incident occurred which brought it to my notice more forcefully.

"On January 29, 1937, in McCook County, south of Montrose, South Dakota, while driving along the highway I noticed two large hawks some distance ahead of me, one on a telephone pole and the other on the snow near by. I was able to drive within twenty yards of them and take out my glasses before they took wing. They were identical, no single feature of either size or plumage differed in any respect. Both were black except the under surface of the distal third of each wing. They flew across the road in front of me, turned and came back low and almost directly overhead. Their markings were unusual even for the rough-legged and the fact that they were alike was, to

me, very extraordinary. I made a sketch of the under-surface of those hawks which is shown in Figure A. I had been keeping a list, as was my custom, but had not been keeping the melanistic individuals separate from the regular type, except in one instance. On January 11, 1937, two miles southeast of Kaylor, S. D., I saw my first completely black hawk. This bird was not the glossy black of the crow but was of a dull black or very dark brown. It was entirely without light markings of any kind. It was unsuspecting and allowed me to approach to within a short distance. It was an American rough-legged hawk, without question.

"I started keeping a record of this phase, and, in the short series I was able to make, found that the plumage of about one bird in five differed in some degree from normal, considering as normal plumage that shown by

Walter A. Weber on page 330, Vol. 1, Roberts' "The Birds of Minnesota," and shown here in Figure D. In the sketches I have copied the outline from Weber and filled in the dark and light areas from the drawings in my notebook made at the time of observation. The bird in Figure B was seen on February 4, 1937, two miles north of Alexandria, S. D.; that of Figure C was seen on the same date one quarter mile west of Stanley Corner in McCook County, S. D. Aside from those shown here, birds of almost every intermediate degree of light and dark coloring were seen.

"The fact that the two hawks seen on January 29 were alike makes me wonder if the dark and light phases might not be inherited. I would be at a loss to know how to explain these identically marked dark hawks unless they were from the same brood.

## *Books and Articles About Birds*

(Note: The first two items appeared in *Iowa Bird Life*, published by the Iowa Ornithologists Union, for Sept. 1949, under the title "Recent Bird Books." The first is by the Editor and member of S. D. O. U. The Secy.-Treas. of the Iowa Union, wrote the second.—Ed.)

**BIRDS' NESTS: A FIELD GUIDE**, by Richard Headstrom (Ives Washburn, Inc., New York, 1949; cloth, 12 mo., pp. 1-128, 61 photographs; price, \$2.75).

In this little book the author has tackled the difficult job of describing the nests of the birds of eastern United States. It is a very complete, carefully prepared compilation. If the bird student will study it thoroughly and make use of all the clues to identification of nests which are given, he will be certain to get much benefit from it.

The book is divided into two main sections—"Nests on or in the Ground" and "Nests Above the Ground." The first section is subdivided in these six classifications: nests in fields or pastures; in woods; in marshes; on or near seashore and lake beaches; in burrows in the ground; on rocks or rocky ledges. In the second section there are nine sub-divisions: hanging or semi-hanging nests; covered on outside with lichens and saddled on branch; felted nests of cottony materials; containing a layer of mud; made chiefly of bark, fibers,

twigs and rootlets made chiefly of grasses, rootlets, leaves and straw; containing twigs or sticks; in holes in trees or stumps, in birdhouses or similar places, in or on buildings.

Under each of these sub-divisions are described the nests of various birds, some 300 species. There are many distinctive types of nests mentioned, such as open nests, arched nests, colony nests, and these are broken down into detailed descriptions.

It is a sincere attempt to help the bird student identify the nests he finds. The accompanying 61 photographs of nests add a great deal to the book.—F. J. Pierce.

**BIRDS: A GUIDE TO THE MOST FAMILIAR BIRDS**, by Herbert S. Zim and Ira N. Gabrielson, illustrated by James G. Irving (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1949; cloth, 24 mo., pp. 7-157, with 100 color plates; price, \$1.00).

A beginner in bird study will find this pocket bird guide of much value. It pictures in full color 112 of the most

familiar American birds—the male bird and sometimes the female and young. Using these birds as key birds, the book mentions additional related and similar species helping to identify about 250 birds.

The text under each plate emphasizes field markings, differences between male and female, related birds, and special facts of importance. Included also are small colored range maps showing summer, winter or permanent residence of each species pictured.

To make the book more complete are tables showing arrival and departure dates, egg size, nesting data, and food preference as well as "profiles" or silhouettes of typical birds of the major groups.

The first part of this guide serves as a practical advisor on seeing and identifying birds in the field, the necessary equipment required, and suggesting several amateur activities such as attracting birds, bird photography, bird banding, bird counts, and life histories.—Lillian Serbousek

"Bird Man's Wife," the story of what one girl learned when she took a research ornithologist for a husband, written by Lynn Trimm and illustrated by H. Wayne Trimm (a member of SDOU) was published in the Sept.-Oct. 1949 issue of Audubon Magazine. This is the fascinating true story, charmingly told, of two lovable, earnest, talented young folks starting their married life in a Sioux Falls, S. D. apartment almost too small to house them with the ornithological gear of the student-husband and the pedagogical equipment of the school-teacher-wife. One photograph is of the Man and the golden eagle which so many Sioux Falls folks admired, while another is of the Maid on a wee sail boat. There are several excellent illustrations by the artist-husband, one a magnificent head of the eagle. The well-balanced article ends on this inspiring note: "I can tolerate personal inconvenience and cramped living quarters when I realize that all outdoors and the living things in it belong to me. They become mine as I learn, through my husband, of the fascinating habits of wild things, their struggle for a place in the world, and that these animals are individuals, with dispositions as different as yours and mine."—H. F. C.

In the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, October, 1949, Wol-

cott Cutler, under the title "Looking Beneath the Feathers" urges bird students to "never forget to watch the birds themselves" . . . and from them learn more of the natural world from which man has never quite graduated. His point is illustrated by his seeing a bittern, which was standing in rushes, sway and weave from side to side as the rushes and tall grasses moved in the wind. As the breeze died away the movements of the bird ceased.—H. F. C.

"The Sandhill Crane Still Calls" is the title of an article by Henry Sheldon in Natural History, Oct. 1949. Familiar locale and nostalgic sentiment are found in his statement: "One of my early impressions of the sandhill crane came while on a survey of the big Bad Lands of South Dakota. No great wilderness is more profoundly desolate and silent than these bad lands. So when a flock of sandhill cranes gave voice I thought I had never heard any bird notes so beautiful and satisfying. The sight of them a mile high was equally inspiring and, as the late naturalist, Vernon Bailey, so aptly described them, 'I watched their southward flight until all was gone but the sound of their magnificent voices.'" Sheldon describes the courting dance of these cranes as a "most spectacular and amazing sight" and adds: "S. S. Visher's description has been called the best account of this performance." Dr. Visher, now a member of SDOU, made a study of the sandhill crane which was published in the Wilson Bulletin, Vol. XXII, pp. 115-117, June, 1910.—H. F. C.

The Bibliography of South Dakota Ornithology, by T. C. Stephens, was designed to present in chronological order the titles of all literature bearing on South Dakota bird life, published up to and including 1944. Dr. Stephens was engaged in compiling this material during a period of over 25 years. His annotations increase its value. It is made up on 28 sheets 8½ x 11, paper cover.

There is no other like compilation of this information. In Birds of South Dakota a short list of publications is given, but reference is there made to the Stephens material for a complete list. SDOU has practically all of the available copies of this exceptionally valuable index to source material; for sale to members of SDOU or subscribers to Bird Notes at \$1.00 postpaid.

## General Notes of Special Interest

**NESTING OF BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.** For years I have noted the black-crowned night heron as common during the summer months in our lake areas in northeastern South Dakota. A pothole of any size near Webster will attract from one to several of these birds as visitors at some time during the summer. Their nesting colonies have been of particular interest to me. During 1925 to 1928 they nested on mats of phragmites near the east shore of Rush Lake. The colonies probably averaged in the neighborhood of seven hundred nests. I found one nest with a full set of eggs on top of a muskrat house. During the period 1929 to 1933, inclusive, there was a colony on Rush Lake Island in the trees. The nests numbered from five hundred to nine hundred over this period. One tree, in 1931, held twenty-five nests of this bird. Other nesting sites have been found in the woods at Hedtke's between the north and south Waubay Lakes and in the woods at the south shore of Dry Wood Lake about 18 miles north of Ortle, South Dakota. During the summer of 1949 these herons were noted carrying nesting material into Wendt's Bay on South Waubay Lake. I did not get an opportunity to check their nesting definitely, but was somewhat surprised because the Bay contains bulrushes and no phragmites, the latter being a favorite for their nesting on water.

I have banded a number of the juveniles of this species, but returns have been quite meager. However, two returns may be of interest: one was a nestling banded in July, 1931, and killed October 25th of the same year in Guatemala; the other was banded in June, 1931, and killed 30 miles northwest of Havana, Cuba, in October, 1932.—Arthur R. Lundquist, Webster, S. D.

**BANDED COOT KILLED.** "I received a report on a coot which had been banded by me as a juvenile at our Lakeside Bass Hatchery on September 1, 1941. This bird was shot on October 28, 1948, on the Suisun Marshes, Salano County, California, by a Mr. Howard C. Pangburn, 1243 Ohio Street, Fairfield, California. A notation on the return says, "Band number was deciphered by chemical etching." The marshes mentioned are about 50 miles northeast of San Francisco. This is very interesting to me because the banding operations show the great range of migration of this coot, evidently migrating southward in the Central Flyway, then across the Rocky Mountains and up the Pacific Flyway." In Conservation Digest, Nov. 1949.—Fred Curtis, Redfield, S. D.

**STARLINGS IN THE BLACK HILLS.** I saw several starlings in Rapid City three weeks ago (mid-October). This is something new. Have seen birds that looked like starlings here the past winter, but could not get close enough to be sure.—Harry C. Behrens, Rapid City, S. D.

Mrs. H. B. Stevens, of Hot Springs, S. D., reported at the meeting of Am. Ornithol. Union, at Omaha, in 1948, that starlings had already reached her home town.

**SPRING MIGRATION OF AVOCETS AND WILSON'S PHALAROPES.** On May 3, 1949, a Mr. Fred Endres of St. Paul, Minn. and I were driving on U. S. Highway 81, south of US 16. There had been a heavy rain the previous day and there was water in the ditches and low spots in the fields. When we were a few miles north of Freeman, S. D. we saw two groups wading and feeding in shallow water in the road ditch, and counted a total of 16 avocets and 7 or 8 Wilson's

phalaropes. The avocets were apparently finding food on the bottom of the puddle, because they were submerging their heads and necks, and tipping up their white sterns much like dabbling ducks do, but, of course, without paddling. Neither of these species is known to nest in the southeastern part of the state.

—H. F. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.

**HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGES INCREASE.** I recently ran across a covey of about 15 Hungarian partridges a few miles north of Lennox, S. D. Mr. Frank Jones of Canton states that he knows of a covey north of Canton. Field Warden F. H. Sundling, located at Canton, says he thinks there is a definite increase in this species in that area.—W. B. Mallory, Canton, S. D.

**SNOWY OWL.** E. Nesson, Arlington, S. D., proprietor of Sportsmen's Lodge on the west shore of Lake Poinsett, reports seeing a large, white bird, slightly spotted, near Hayti, S. D. in late November, 1949. He believed it to be a snowy owl.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS IN EASTERN SO. DAK.** In 1941 and for a year or two following, there was a large colony of double-crested cormorants on the point jutting out from the east shore of Lake Poinsett and on the islands south of the west end of the point, in southeastern Hamlin County. There were two groups of twenty nests each on the point and 260 nests on the islands. These were on the ground. When the water level raised this nesting area was flooded. Later a colony of thirty nests was found on the point on the west bank of Dry Lake which is directly north of Lake Poinsett. The point is at the south border of the public shooting grounds. During the summer of 1949 this colony was shot up and quite a number of the birds were killed. Apparently some fishermen objected to the competition given them by these fish-eating birds. Another colony of a hundred or more nests was found on the south bank of White-wood lake, near the east end. They were in a row of trees on an island. This colony can be reached easily by going south from U. S. 14 two miles on the first road east of Hetland, S. D., then west to the lake and then north a short distance to the colony.—J. O. Johnson, Watertown, S. D.

**WINTER VISITANTS AT CANTON.** During the snow storm on Dec. 11, 1949, at one time between 3 and 4 p.m. I had 9 cardinals on the grounds. At another time I counted 30 individuals, including: cardinals, downy woodpeckers, hairy woodpecks, flickers, white-breasted nuthatches, red-breasted nuthatches, chickadees, brown creepers and blue jays. The traffic was lively, and how the suet, sunflower seeds and chickfeed did go!—W. B. Mallory, Canton, S. D.

**WEST RIVER NOTES.** On August 31, 1949, three turkey buzzards were noted along U. S. Highway 14 east of Rapid City. A few of these birds have been seen annually in the prairie and badlands region between the Black Hills and the Lacreek Refuge area. General observations of the birds of prey in this territory indicate the population status of most species is similar to that of last year, except the Swainson's hawk which appeared to be rather scarce this season. The American rough-legged hawk reappeared September 11 in the Lacreek area and these birds are again quite numerous in that locality. Golden eagles began appearing at the Lacreek area on October 12 and the usual number of wintering birds is present. On November 17, 1949, a golden eagle and two bald eagles were noted at Bear Butte Lake near Sturgis. The presence of these large birds of prey apparently had little disturbing affect among waterfowl resting on the lake, including a pair of whistling swans and several thousand ducks. An osprey was observed at Lacreek on September 30. The prairie falcon was noted occasionally in recent months.—Kenneth Krumm, Martin, S. D.

# I Remember

BY W. B. MALLORY

CANTON, S. D.

In an article in the October issue of *Sioux Falls Bird Notes* I stated that screech owls should not be tolerated among birds which have been invited to make their homes at one's place. Here is an incident which, with others, caused me to reach that conclusion.

Years ago I had a sixteen-compartment martin house which usually was filled to capacity. One day I saw a martin, about two-thirds grown, come out on one of the porches and, after walking crazily about, fall to the ground. I found that both of its eyes had been destroyed and the head and neck were badly torn. At once I suspected screech owls but I knew of none close by. I noticed, however, that the adult martins maintained unceasing vigilance.

A few days later Mrs. Mallory and I were watching the adult birds come in at evening. There were about twenty on the porches and top of the house. Suddenly one of the adults gave a terrified cry and the birds scattered as a screech owl came from a tree and dove in among them, but owing to the timely alarm and our yells there were no casualties. However, it was a long time before the old birds came back to the box, and when they did they flew directly into the nests.

Shortly afterward we were away from home all day. On our return we found the old martins flying about high in the air, evidently badly frightened. I found one adult screech owl with four young in a tree about two hundred feet from the martin house. This danger was soon removed. It at once became

apparent the martins had seen these owls in the tree and, on their disappearance, realized the danger was over, because they immediately came down and entered the box with cries quite different from those they had previously made.

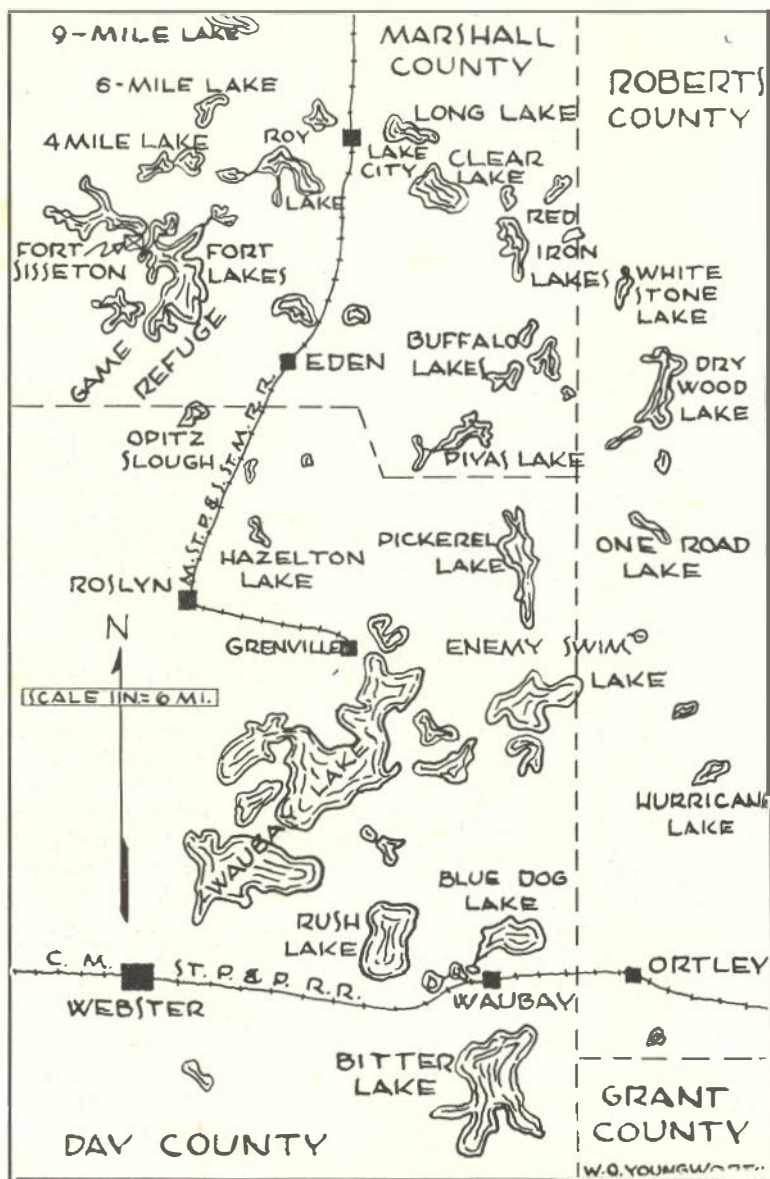
Screech owls are undoubtedly of considerable economic value in that they kill many harmful rodents and insects. However, keeping them about where you have a plentiful supply of food handy, such as a colony of martins or other birds, might well be likened to placing a small boy at a table loaded with cookies, telling him he must not touch them, and then leaving him alone with the tantalizing food.

Speaking of owls reminds me of the days when I kept chickens. One early fall morning when we returned from a trip there was not a chicken in sight. But I did find them under every low-growing shrub and in every other available hiding place. Then up in the trees we saw two great horned owls, and the mystery was solved.

Later I had a good laugh when I saw our smallest South Dakota owl, a saw-whet, (two inches shorter than a robin) perched in a tree, looking just as bold and dignified as the great horned owls. These comical-looking little owls are probably more plentiful in South Dakota than might be supposed, as they are nocturnal in their habits and have a very retiring disposition.

I was recently awakened in the night by the barking-like notes of two long-eared owls. While only half awake I thought a pack of dogs was close by.

## Map of Fort Sisseton Area



Cut Courtesy Wilson Bulletin

One of the most interesting parts of South Dakota, from the viewpoint of the bird student, is the lake region in the northeastern corner of the state. Since frequent reference is made to locations in that section, a map of an important portion of that area should be of interest and value to SDOU members and subscribers to *SD Bird Notes*. The above map was published in the *Wilson Bulletin* for Sept. 1935, in connection with an article by William Youngworth (now a member of SDOU) entitled "Birds of Fort Sisseton, South Dakota."