

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Official Publication

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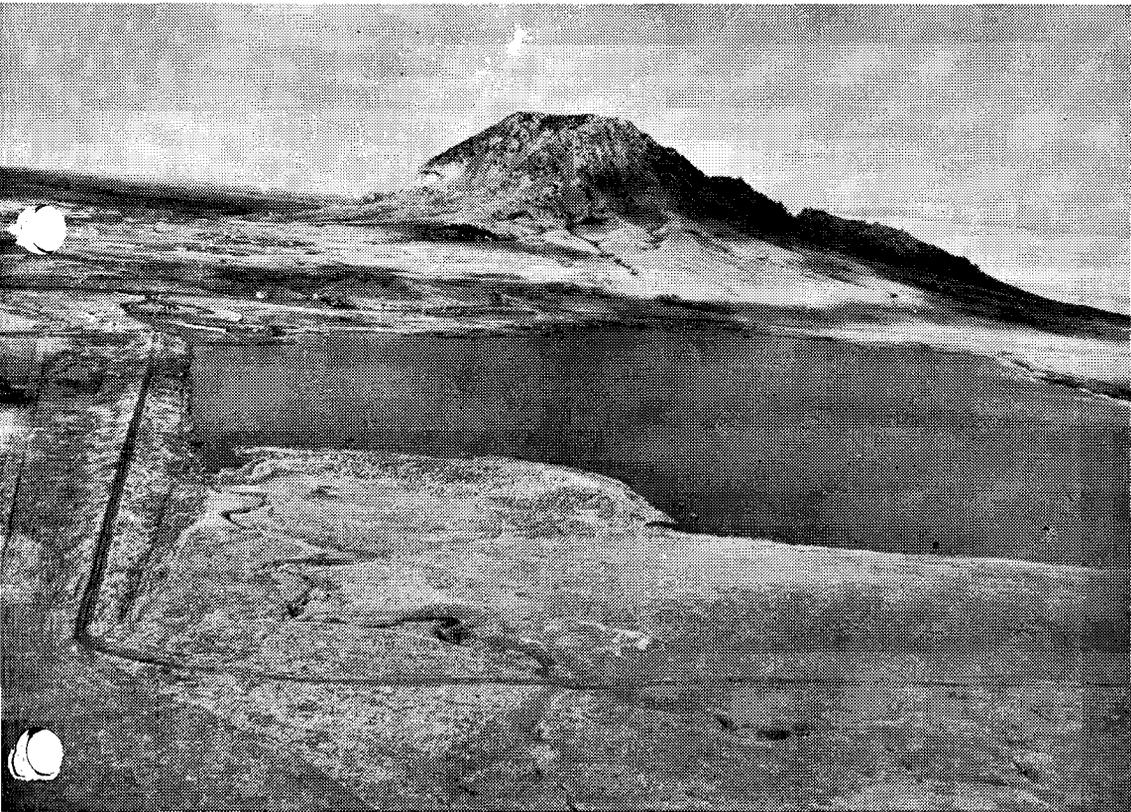
SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

(Organized 1949)

Vol. VI, No. 1

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Whole No. 20



—BEAR BUTTE—

in the foothills of the Black Hills near Sturgis, S. D.

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President's Page



IN THE last few years we have had the opportunity of knowing and appreciating several people who have been bird enthusiasts for many years. Most of them are rank amateurs as ornithologists, but without exception they are eager, enthusiastic people who have benefited greatly from their hobby. Bird-study has sharpened their power of observation to the point where they can readily distinguish between numerous sparrows and warblers. It has taken them into the open field and caused them to spend long hours out of doors trying to locate the nest of an elusive Solitaire or Western Tanager. It has given them a zest for living and an appreciation of some of the finer things in nature—the delicate colors of a Lazuli Bunting, the flaming contrast of a Cardinal in a gold-and-white birch in fall, the delicacy of a hummingbird's nest, the whispered ecstasy of a thrush late in the evening.

Several of these friends are now unable to prowl the woods in search of a certain bird. Only on pleasant days can they spend time out of doors waiting for a visit from their feathered friends. But a visit with these people shows the constant care they take in providing food for the birds in winter, nesting material and water in summer, and attractive shrubs and

berry-producing plants for both food and shelter.

Rarely a day passes that they are not hosts to birds, many of whom they recognize over and over by small differences—a peculiar spot of color, a leg that had been injured or some other little oddity. These people have friendly visitors regardless of the weather or of their own infirmities. A life-long hobby has given them pleasure, affords relief from the cares of their occupations, furnishes a spring-board to a greater understanding of nature and man, and gives their declining years innumerable memories of golden, halcyon days. Each visitor, whether Chickadee or Black-chinned Hummingbird, recalls old times with avian or human friends and is worth half an hour of reminiscing.

Birders are a peculiar clan. The first bluebird of spring can send them into ecstasies; the mating dance of the prairie chicken will get them out in the dark, cold dawn to glimpse a little of this tantalizing behavior. Peculiar? Well, maybe. But these people possess something of inner calm that is enviable. Is not this a rewarding hobby? What better, more satisfying heritage could we leave our young folks than a life-long friendship with constant companions?

Let us take a few young people out with us on each of our birding excursions this year. Let us help them learn the unparalleled joy of friendship with wild birds as free as the air they live in. Let us leave them an awareness of wild country and a solicitude for the continuing welfare of our "feathered friends."

—Cecil P. Haight

White Throated Sparrow's Song

W. B. MALLORY, Canton, S. D.

TO HEAR the song of the White-throated Sparrow had been my deep desire for years. It was not until the spring of 1953 this wish was gratified. However, it was well worth waiting for, its beauty and poignant tone seeming to me to be excelled possibly by only the song of the Song Sparrow, and I am not at all certain that the White-throat's song is not the more charming.

In 1953 White-throated Sparrows appeared on my place at Canton on April 25. I put out a large quantity of millet seed and their numbers increased rapidly. On May 2 I counted 43 in the morning and the count varied but little throughout the day. By this time they had become very unafraid and allowed me to approach closely. Even when they took flight they alighted close by and almost immediately returned to their feeding ground. Generally a few adventurous individuals refused to take flight unless I tried to stalk them, when, with a sharp, metallic "chink" they flew away but a short distance.

The evening of May 4 was very warm and springlike, and I started to plant garden seeds. Becoming somewhat weary I sat down on the warm grass to rest. It was then that I had the long-deferred pleasure of hearing the White-throat's magnificent song. It came from a lilac bush not more than 15 feet away. Almost involuntarily I "froze", hoping, but in vain, to hear it again.

The song had much greater volume than I had expected. It rang out in a wild, free expression of joyous exuberance, as if the singer could no longer delay giving voice to its inner rapture. I shall never forget

that moment which I consider one of the highlights of my bird-watching.

It is difficult to describe the White-throat's song, although it has frequently been reduced to written musical notes, while others say it starts with two or more such notes. The song I heard began with three notes. The first was a vigorous high-pitched note, as if the bird was announcing the song, while the next two notes were on a slightly lower pitch, but still vigorous.

The next four phrases were the well-described "Peabody, Peabody, Peabody, Peabody", from which has come the frequently used name "Peabody Bird." Here again I find authorities differ. Some say the "Peabody" phrase is repeated four to six times, while the song as set to music in one text shows but three such phrases. However, that may be because, having shown the "Peabody" phrase, the authors choose to save space, leaving it to the reader to understand that additional phrases are the same. In the song I heard, the "Peabody" was given four times, although I had the impression there were only two notes in the last one. But as my hearing is not the best and authorities agree that the phrase becomes weaker, I was probably mistaken. Inasmuch as Stewart Edward White states he has heard nine different variations of this song, it is not strange that other authors differ on the point.

Some call the song melancholy, but it did not so impress me, although it was sung in a high-pitched minor key and had a plaintive poignant motif, yet full of joyous hope.

(Continued on Page 13)

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Problems of Becoming a Bird Bander

MISS RUTH HABEGER, Madison, S. D.

MARCH 21, 1952, was a "red-letter day" for me! On that day I received Federal Bird Banding Permit No. 7039, and a fine letter of welcome as a cooperater in the Federal Service of Bird Banding.

I had made my application for a permit, on form 3-481, to the Bird Banding Office, Patuxent Refuge, Laurel, Md. I had met the requirements of being over 18 years of age, and my ability to identify positively all the local species of birds had been vouched for by three recognized ornithologists or banders. I had agreed to participate in a voluntary program in which the bander donates time and furnishes all equipment, while the Service provides the bands, report forms and franked envelopes.

But I was not yet a bird bander, I had yet to overcome obstacles and solve problems which I did not even realize existed, before I could band my first bird.

With the permit and letter I received admonishment that there are two cardinal rules which every bander must keep in mind: first, never band any bird about whose identification there is the slightest doubt; and second, inform the Office at the end of each banding year, regardless whether one has anything to report.

The report from Bander No. 7039 for two years has been "No Report". This was not because of lack of interest or effort, but, perhaps, was the result of fear of the unknown. I read and reread the banding instruction pamphlets furnished by the Fish and Wildlife Service; I studied books and periodicals; but I was still unwilling to trap birds until I knew more. I was not yet a bird bander!

The selection of types of traps to

be used and getting them built was a project of formidable proportions. But "that's another story," as Kipling used to put it. When finally the traps did arrive, they proved to be complete Chinese puzzles. The trip door was the major problem. When that was solved, the cages had to be painted a dark green. My official tags, with my permit number, name and address, were then fastened to the traps.

At last the day came when I set up a trap at Mrs. D. S. Baughman's fine feeding station. In five minutes there was a Black-capped Chickadee in the trap. What a thrill! I finally had a bird! But Mrs. Baughman looked sad and exclaimed, "Oh, no! Not one of my chickadees!"

What to do next? The bands and the pliers were handy, but the records called for the age and sex of each bird I banded. It had not occurred to me that this would be a stumbling block. I was not sure of either the age or the sex and was still unwilling to band the bird until I knew more; so we lifted the cage from our first trapped bird and it flew away, without a band.

My next move was to telephone Sioux Falls and solicit Herman Chapman's help. He furnished me the names of the nearest bird banders—Dr. W. H. Over, Vermillion; Dr. J. F. Brenckle, Mellette; Mrs. Charles Peterson, Madison, Minn.; and the Carl Johnsons of Worthington, Minn. All were a hundred miles or more from me, but I chose to go to Dr. Over for help. By a long distance call, I found that Dr. Over's son would be visiting him during the week I planned to be there. Not wishing to disturb a happy reunion with my problems, I de-

cided not to go there and made more telephone calls and wrote more letters.

The solution to my problem began to unfold when I happened to ask my neighbor, a biology teacher, if he had any suggestions. "Why yes", he said. "Why not get Maurice Anderson of the State Game Department to help?" Imagine my delight, for Mr. Anderson lives only four blocks from my home! He is a biologist on the Pittman-Robertson staff.

There was another telephone call, but this time not by long distance. Things are all set now and with the help of Mr. Anderson, I hope soon to band my first bird. After two years of indecision, I shall finally be a bird bander.

The birds which I band will be permanently recorded. When any banded bird is trapped or found, the information on the band should be sent to the Bird Banding office so it can be used in the study of birds. That's a long story, all by itself.

One who finds a banded bird should remember these points when reporting the data:

1. On the letter or report, print the full number of the band, including the series designation and the serial number. The series designation may be a single letter or a two or three digit number. It may be stamped to the left of or over the serial number and may be at right angles to the serial number. A designation such as "48" is not a date and should not be so interpreted. Samples of the full numbers and the manner in which they should be written are: A-678901; 48-345921; 141-543678; 20-167; and 496-00517. Bands may bear the inscription "Notify F. and Wildlife Service" or "Notify Biological Surveys" Washington, D. C. These are frequently abbreviated to "F & W Serv." or "Biol Surv Was D. C."

2. If the bird is alive, read the number without removing the band and release the bird; if dead, remove the band, flatten it out, and fasten to a letter with transparent tape. If the band is desired as a souvenir, the band will be returned to the finder after being examined.

3. State the exact date, location (town, county, state) and manner in which the bird was obtained (shot, trapped, found dead, etc.).

4. Print your name and permanent address clearly on your letter. Keep a record of the band number and refer to it on all subsequent correspondence.

5. Address the envelope to: Bird Banding Office, Patuxent Research Refuge, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, LAUREL, MARYLAND.

6. Each letter will be acknowledged and this acknowledgement will state the name of the bird, date and place banded, and the name and address of the bander.

Banding the first bird will be a thrill, but receiving word that the band has been found will be an even greater thrill! Becoming a bird bander has its problems, but it is worth it!

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WHOOPING CRANES

There are current reports, which seem to be reliable, that one group of 15 Whooping Cranes was sighted this spring near the Missouri River not far from the south boundary of the state, and a single specimen near Sioux Falls. In view of the importance of this information, if correct, we prefer to leave it on the "rumor" basis until it is checked and confirmed, as far as possible. There was not sufficient time available to do this before publication of this issue.—Eds.

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Keeping Records

WE WHO have studied birds a long time realize how often an observation seems inconsequential; as a result, we fail to record our find and thus lose a chance to add to human knowledge. Personally, I wish all our members would keep voluminous records, following their own bent in the type of things put down in writing. For example, why not make yourself famous in our state organization by keeping a year-by-year account of all nests and young? Even one year's data would be interesting; after a few years you would have not merely some interesting notes for our columns but a longer article.

Maybe you are interested, like the editor, in migration data. Too few people take the trouble to record the first and last dates of our migrants. Try it one season and find yourself with a lifetime interest. There should be two dozen migration-record students working all the time in our state.

What do birds eat, how much, how often? Your observation might add something very strikingly interesting to ornithology. The late Cal Rogers, of Glasgow, (Ky.) had a perfect mania for knowing what birds feed their young. Through a long life he remembered fascinating things he had learned while watching adult birds feed their young; his notes formed the basis for a valuable article in the *WARBLER* written by Dr. Lovell after Mr. Rogers' death. I do not know of any continuous study such as this that is being made in the state today.

Some of you with good ears should devote some time to learning and recording the varying songs of any given species. Why not become a song expert? The older scholars in this field are passing away pretty rapidly;

they would have been the first to declare that they had merely started a study that should be carried on further by younger and more persistent students.

The address by Dr. Howell at our recent meeting opened up a field that has had too few people to cultivate—population studies over a given area annually. Our censuses are valuable and should be kept up, whether they represent a one-day count at Christmas or in nesting season or are carried on at stated intervals in every season. Recently I suggested to one of the park naturalists of the state a monthly census in his park, taken with the same care that all of us lavish on our Christmas censuses.

My own interest in ecological factors, as in the Mammoth Cave National Park, has made me wish that we could have a good number of other studies of areas that are undergoing ecological changes because of the retiring of farm lands from cultivation, the development of plantings, the changes resulting from farm practices that are promoting the "green pastures" program. Stake out some such area and begin, however sketchily, a study that will ultimately make you a scholar in your little area.

Only an occasional person can hope to discover a new subspecies; trained museum men will have to do that kind of work. But even the humblest of us can observe and record what might otherwise escape people less bright-eyed than we. And here is a selfish interest I have in this, selfish for our society: report your findings systematically to the *WARBLER*. What you have found out might be something valuable and would make good reading for all our members.

—Gordon Wilson, Editor, *The Kentucky Warbler*, official publication of Kentucky Ornithological Society.

Books and Articles About Birds

CONSERVATION OF SOUTH DAKOTA'S NATURAL RESOURCES. 1953 Prepared by Conservation Curriculum Workshop, Northern State Teachers College, Aberdeen, S. D. Price not stated, but copies may be available, free from Supt. of Public Instn., Pierre, S. D.

Wildlife Review says of it: "A teaching guide and source of much elementary information for those handling conservation instruction in grades 6-8 . . . Principles are clearly stated, but are not always emphasized. Major sections treat soil, water, plants, wildlife and minerals. Many demonstrations and class activities are suggested . . . There are also brief lists of selected textbooks, references for teachers, reading references for children, magazines, visual aids, and free and inexpensive materials. In the wildlife section, major groups or species and their adaptations and management are discussed . . . The reviewer's chief complaint is that the aesthetic values of wildlife are virtually ignored . . ."

There are two pieces of literature, presently available, which we think are necessary adjuncts to an understanding of an important phase of wildlife, ornithology, in South Dakota. The only book which purports to describe all the birds of the state, is "Birds of South Dakota," a publication of the University of South Dakota. It was expressly designed to aid teachers and school children and has special sections of particular value. Our own South Dakota Bird Notes is the only publication devoted exclusively to the study of birds in this state. Neither book nor publication is referred to in the text or in the reading lists or references.—HFC

KNOW YOUR BINOCULARS, by R. J. and Elsa Reichert, first appeared in Audubon Magazine. The reprint which was enclosed with the December, 1953, issue of Bird Notes, was supplied by the authors at our request in order that SDOUers might have the best available information about the care and use of the aids to vision which are so important to us all. The authors operating as Mirakel Repair Co., distributors of Guaranteed Binoculars, 14 West First Street, Mount Vernon, New York, have a splendid reputation for dependable service and helpful advice.

* * *

DAKOTA HORTICULTURE, published at Sioux Falls, S. D., regularly carries two departments of interest to SDOU folks. Miss Ruth Habeger, Treasurer of SDOU, as Chairman of the Bird-Study Committee, reports frequently on ways the garden-lovers can further the cause of bird-protection. The last issue has her fine statement of various projects of this sort. Dr. O. A. Stevens, of Fargo, N. D., regularly writes a careful article about some species of bird of the Dakotas. His description of the Barred Owl is in the current number. A compilation of the whole series of Stevens' articles would be of exceptional value to local bird-watchers.

* * *

CHECK-LIST OF SOUTH DAKOTA BIRDS—There accompanies this issue of Bird Notes a copy of a Check-List of South Dakota Birds prepared and furnished by Philip A. DuMont, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C. Mr. DuMont has been a member of SDOU from the start and is much interested in advancing the cause of bird-study in this state.

The compiler has used some modern names with which we are still a bit unfamiliar, such as, "Red-necked Grebe" for "Holboell's Grebe" and "Common Snipe" for "Wilson's Snipe". Whimbrel, Dunlin, Black-billed Magpie, etc., may cause some hasty leaf-turning. The inclusion of Mountain Plover and Pileated Woodpecker may startle some of the more conservative SDOUers.

Mr. DuMont states at the outset that he bases this list on "Birds of South Dakota", the last edition of which was issued in 1946. That results in no recognition being given to some rather good "firsts" which have been reported in Bird Notes (1949-54). The situation thus presented may give impetus to the still rather hazy idea that a complete, current, annotated check-list of birds of this state should be compiled and published by SDOU.—HFC.

THE COVER

The Cover "Bear Butte" is the name of the eminence, as well as of the man-made lake at its foot. This is the site of a small Federal Wildlife Refuge under the management of Kenneth Krumm, immediate past president of SDOU. This small area, near Sturgis, should present a great variety of habitat and species of resident birds—an opportunity for a significant critical study. Cut—Conservation Digest.

Annual Meeting

THE Fifth Annual Meeting of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union will be held in Spearfish May 29-30, 1954. The meeting will begin with a field trip at 1 p. m. Saturday the 29th. Registration will be at 5 p. m. for the convenience of those who cannot come in time for the field trip. Sunday calls for an extended field trip, banquet and program. This year we are emphasizing field trips to give a maximum opportunity to all members from the eastern part of the state to see as many of our truly western species as possible. Details of the program and information about room reservations will be sent to each of you in advance.

We urge all members to attend and bring guests if they wish. Why not keep a "driving list" of birds seen all the way across the state with notes where you first see the western species?

We hope to see all of you May 29-30 in Spearfish, until then good birding!

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CORRECTION

In the December, 1953, issue of South Dakota Bird Notes, the upper and lower portions of column 1, page 69, were, unfortunately, transposed. The first 21 lines should follow the rest of the column, rather than precede it, and the first line of the column should be, "ney Swift, several, Chamberlain;"

Please indicate this correction in your copy.

Snowy Owl Report

Mr. Bernard A. Nelson, Federal Aid Coordinator, Pierre, S. D., in submitting a summary of observations of Snowy Owls made during the winter of 1953-4 by biologists under his supervision, makes the following comments:

"The density estimates of 8 per township in the Aberdeen Area and 1 per 7 sections on the Hanson County Area flown by Smith are interesting. It is also interesting that more owls were seen in the Aberdeen Area and south in the James River Basin than in other parts of the state. Do other reports you have suggest a movement along the James River?"

SNOWY OWL OBSERVATIONS — WINTER 1953-54

Area	Observer	Observations
Chamberlain	Robert Johnson	None seen in course of field work.
Statewide	Eldon Smith	3 seen Jan. 30, 1954 while making an aerial census of pheasants over a 21 sq. mile area near Farmer in Hanson Co.
Huron	Robert Dahlgren	12 31 53, 1 owl, 10 mi. S. and 12 E. of Huron. 1 25 54, 1 owl, caught on barbed wire fence 11 mi. S. and 9 E. of Huron. Bird released, seen 2 weeks later lying dead in plowed field. 1 26 54, 1 owl seen 50 feet from where above bird was released. May have been same bird, but seemed to have more and heavier barring. (No date). I owl seen flying at junction of 37 and 34 E. of Forestburg.
Madison	Maurice Anderson	2 2 54, 1 owl 4 mi. W. and 2 S. of Nunda.
Madison	Wilbur Foss	None Seen
Gettysburg	Walter Larsen	None Seen
Mitchell	John Seubert	1 14 54, 2 owls, Hanson Co., North of Highway 38. 1 5 54, 1 owl, Hanson Co., North of Highway 38. 1 6 54, 2 owls, Hanson Co., N. of Highway 38.

(SNOWY OWL REPORT CONTINUED)

1|18|54, 1 owl, Hanson Co., N. of Highway 38.

1|19|54, 1 owl, Hanson Co., N. of Highway 38.

2|4|54, 1 owl, Hanson Co., North of Highway 38.

Rapid City _____Lester Berner _____None Seen

Spearfish _____Fred Priewert _____None Seen

Custer _____Wendell Bever _____None Seen

Webster _____Ray Murdy _____1|7|54, 1 owl, S. W. Clark Co.

Webster _____Ed Johnson _____2|18|54, 1 owl, N. W. Clark Co.

Brookings _____Carl Trautman _____2|2|54, 1 owl South side of Oakwood Lake.

Mobridge _____Reuel Janson _____None Seen

ABERDEEN AREA—ERLING PODOLL, OBSERVER:

Date	No. (Total 19)	Location	County
Jan. 8	1*	X 4 mi. E. of Barnard _____	Brown
8	1**	X 4 mi. E. and 1 S. of Frederick _____	Brown
25	1**	X 7 mi. W. and 1 S. of Hecla _____	Brown
25	1	X 4 mi. E. and 3 N. of Westport _____	Brown
27	1	5 mi. W. and 3 S. of Aberdeen _____	Brown
29	1	3½ mi. W. and ½ N. of Lily _____	Day
29	1	1 mi. S. of Westport _____	Brown
Feb. 2	1	6 mi. N. of Columbia _____	Brown
2	1	8 mi. N. of Columbia _____	Brown
3	1	X 4 mi. E. and 3 N. of Barnard _____	Brown
3	1**	X 7 mi. W. and 3 S. of Hecla _____	Brown
3	1	X 1 Mi. S. of Ordway _____	Brown
5	1	8 mi. N. of Groton _____	Brown
8	1	1 mi. S. of Richmond _____	Brown
15	1**	X 5 mi. E. of Frederick _____	Brown
18	1**	X 4 mi. E. and 3½ S. of Hecla _____	Brown
Mar. 2	1*	X 3 mi. E. and 3 N. of Aberdeen _____	Brown
5	1	16 mi. N. of Groton _____	Brown
5	1	X 3 mi. E. of Aberdeen _____	Brown

* Observed twice in approximate location.

** Observed three times in approximate location.

X Observed along pheasant route.

Eleven of the above observations were along a 50-mile pheasant route. Judging from that, there must have been at least 8 Snowy Owls per township in this area.

General Notes of Special Interest

MARbled GODWIT AND WILLET IN N. E. SO. DAK.—The most comprehensive study of South Dakota shorebirds in the annals of South Dakota bird study appeared in the December 1953, issue of *Bird Notes*, in a two-season report by Mr. Alfred Peterson of Brandt, S. D. This excellent paper brings up to date many of the records of 25 years ago, made in much the same area by Arthur Lundquist and Wesley Kubichek. (Mr. Youngworth contributed materially to that study. Ed.)

In going over my old field notebooks, 1929 to 1935, which I kept up during bird trips to northeastern South Dakota, I note we found nearly all the species listed by Mr. Peterson. It seems that most of the species are holding up pretty well. We did find the dainty little Piping Plover, a rare but regular summer resident at Bitter Lake, but never more than one or two pairs. The Red-backed Sandpiper was found several times during the 1930 season, a flock of about 150 on June 5 at Bitter Lake.

In comparing my records with Mr. Peterson's I find that my count on Willet was much the same as his, made 25 years later. We saw only two or three pairs a day and at the most four or five pairs, which would indicate that the nesting birds at the present time might be a few less.

From Mr. Peterson's scarce records of the Marbled Godwit it would seem that this species is in lesser numbers than formerly. On a field trip on June 7, 1930, which took in most of the Rush Lake and Bitter Lake areas, we estimated we saw about 15 pairs.

June 11, 1930, was spent working around most of the then big Rush Lake, by car and afoot. It was de-

termined that about 16 pairs of Upland Plovers nested in that particular area. I think nearly that number of nesting birds of this species could have been found in the Bitter Lake area also, that same summer. It is, therefore, possible that this Plover may now be somewhat depleted in numbers, although by no means absent from that section.—**Wm. Youngworth, Sioux City, Iowa.**

* * *

WHITE RIVER NOTES—The drive from Stamford to the valley of the White River is interesting enough in itself to be well worth while, but this is secondary to the assemblage of Western birds to be found there. On Aug. 14, 1953, I listed near the river: pair Blue Grosbeaks; pair Bullock's Orioles; family Spotted Towhees; family Yellow-breasted Chats; several Magpies; many Lark Sparrows; one Swainson's Hawk. The first three were new to me.—**Alfred Peterson, Brandt, S. D.**

* * *

PURPLE FINCHES NEAR SIOUX FALLS—As we drove along a side-road near Hartford, S. D., on April 11, 1954, we saw a small flock of about 20 sparrow-like birds that seemed to be feeding on the ground near the grass and weeds along a fence. They were unwilling to let us approach close enough to see them well, or would get between us and the sun. Finally, after half a mile, persistence paid off and we saw several of the birds on fence wires when the sun was at our backs. They were birds with much raspberry color on their heads and on the bars and marks one expects to be white. Purple Finches.—**Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Findley, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

FOOD HABITS OF SOME BIRDS—

A gun-collector, photographer, hunter, may also be a bird-watcher. But many watchers are also photographers, hunters or collectors of one thing or another. All of them doubtless note the association of their hobbies. The watcher studies the habitat of his birds and so does the hunter. Many of their observations are of interest to others. For instance, some people say that oats are not good bird-feed. Perhaps not, but sparrows can shuck the oats and do eat them.

Our jelly crab tree is popular all winter. There is more fruit than we can use and the high ones are left on the tree. Then the squirrels eat the seeds from many of the crabs which freeze and hang on the tree. Next several species of birds feed on them. On Dec. 27, 1953, three Evening Grosbeaks came there to feed, and Robins like the fruit, too.

Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Chickadees, Blue Jays and Yellow-shafted Flickers are among the regulars at our feeding tray, and, of course, the Sparrows. They do not seem to fear Flickers, probably because the Flickers do not seem to bother them. But they give the Blue Jays a wide berth. The Jays are pretty but . . . One day two of us watched a Blue Jay crowd a Mourning Dove on her nest, steal an egg from under her, carry it away and eat it. That is likely the reason for the lack of nesting success of Doves which build here every year, lay eggs and then abandon the nest. We find egg-shells on the ground.

Miss Esther Krans seems to have a way with birds. She has a pet Martin (*) so I took an injured Robin to her. She nursed it until it recovered and it now lives in her house with the Martin. The latter sings and the Robin seems to try to imitate it. The

Martin's song is much more canary-like than its typical grating noise.—

Dr. E. W. Harper, Watertown, S. D.

(*) See Bird Notes, p. 64, Vol. IV., No. 4.

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McCOOK LAKE REPORT—Birding in the S. E. corner of the state has been quite uneventful this winter. Horned larks and longspurs aren't nearly as common as other winters. We have some wintering Bluebirds and Robins and also a few Mourning Doves. Mallards have been here in numbers all winter. The return flight of Mallards and Pintails was early this year and the first Geese were seen by me on the 23rd of Feb. On a drive Feb. 28 to Gayville ducks were seen in large numbers till we crossed the Vermillion River, then in 40 miles of driving only one small flock was observed. There had been many ducks in the area a few days before but there was enough snow in the area to explain their absence. Only four small geese were seen on the entire trip. The American Mergansers are here in number now and I have seen one Ring-neck and a few Scaups, also two Herring Gulls.—**W. R. Felton, Jr., Jefferson, S. D.**

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WINTER NOTES FROM REDFIELD—Several Harris's Sparrows again wintered here, feeding regularly at the feeding station in front of the window. Western Meadowlarks were observed on many different days feeding about in the farmyard until Feb. 4, on which date three were observed. Several Snow Owls and many Rough-legged Hawks were seen this winter. Neither Tree Sparrows nor Horned Larks were numerous here this winter. Saw perhaps fewer than 50 birds of each of the last two species named.—**H. V. Padrnos, Redfield, S. D.**

HEAD RIVER VALLEY NOTES—I've enjoyed South Dakota Bird Notes very much and I suppose anyone watching me will think I'm crazy as I stalk through the trees with my field glasses, stopping and looking at any bird that flutters past but I'm having a wonderful time, discovering birds I did not know lived in this region.

We have always lived on the prairie but at present are living at Fort Pierre near Bad River with its tall trees and low brushes.

I've been hearing a whistle that had me utterly bewildered, as I've studied bird calls and bird flights for years and knew those on the prairie. High on a tree top was my find of a beautiful Cardinal and the next morning I discovered his mate. First ones I've ever seen and they are scary but musical.

I've studied with interest the Christmas Bird Count of 1953 in Bird Notes and know most of the birds.

We, also, have had several pairs of Barn Swallows that nest around the buildings. Last spring, I saw two Chimney Swifts but they were only there for part of a day, then they were gone.

We have a special Brown Thrasher that comes early in June to sit on high perches and sing his heart out for several days.

To date my list includes: Cardinal and mate, Juncos, Starlings, Robins, Meadowlarks, Crows, Magpies, Canada Geese, and several kinds of ducks, (these have stayed on Capitol Lake in Pierre all winter), Bald Eagles, Hawks of various kinds, Downy Woodpecker, Catbird, Brown Creeper and Black Capped-Chickadees, with more birds arriving daily. (March 18, 1954).—Mrs. Chas. G. Wilson, Fort Pierre, S. D.

THREE HAWKS—A young Red-tailed Hawk upon a house-top near highway, with claws claspings the globe of metal ridge roll facing highway, came to my notice almost as an apparition Sept. 24, 1953, while I was on my way from Florence to Waubay. The bird stood fast perhaps ten seconds as I siapped a binocular onto it, then moved over to a large leafy cottonwood near by.

On Oct. 4, west of Tunerville, a dark, almost black, Swainson's Hawk, perched on a telephone pole, paid scant attention as I stopped directly alongside its position. Within a few minutes it twice dropped suddenly to grass mat at fence line, each time seizing a meadow mouse, one of which it ate on the ground, the second it carried to pole top, thence to several places on ground, as I persistently followed on foot.

A hawk in a willow, clinging loosely like a rag—that is what I found near Dempster Nov. 16. It was a small Swainson's, entirely confident. Considerable scurrying about and throwing of sticks induced it to fly from a flimsy support to a tree across the way. Nearly 25 Goldfinches and 3 Redpolls, busy in a heavy patch of sunflowers, arose as the hawk came near but soon returned, showing no real fear, several of them flitting about in the tree near the hawk. At last I stood directly beneath the "bird of prey" waving a cane and raising my voice to attract attention. The best I got was an occasional glance in my direction, although so near that I could have touched it with an 8-foot pole. What can one think of a bird like that? My guess: A captive, released or escaped.—Alfred Peterson, Brandt, S. D.

WINTER NOTES FROM RAPID CITY—A new locality always presents many surprises to a bird-student, especially to one who had known very little about the bird-life of the region beforehand. Therefore I am describing my more impressive observations during my first winter in the Rapid City region. Situated as it is, partly in the Black Hills, and partly on the Great Plains, the region has many interesting ornithological features.

The outstanding surprise to me has been the mildness of the winter. Moving up here from the Southeast, I had expected a fairly rugged winter. We have had, however, only one severe cold wave, in the middle of January, and one heavy snow on March 12. Otherwise, the weather seemed to be very favorable to wintering birds.

During the past two years, I have made three winter censuses for the population studies program organized by Audubon Field Notes. In this region, we have so far selected two study areas. The first is an open pine-covered hillside at the mouth of South Canyon, adjacent to the northwest corner of the Rapid City limits. I censused this area several times in January and early February, recording a total of nine species. The average density was 139 birds per 100 acres. The results will appear in the June, 1954, issue of Audubon Field Notes.

Shortly after my arrival, Harry Behrens showed me one of his favorite study routes, which follows Spring Creek from U.S. Route 16 to State Route 79, about five miles south of Rapid City. Near the east end of this route, we selected an area of about 50 acres for a population study on grazed grassland. We made four trips during the winter months, but found only two species, Sharp-tailed

Grouse and Marsh Hawk. A flock of 15 grouse was seen flying over once, and two Marsh Hawks were seen once. On two trips we have been unable to find any birds at all on the study area. This emphasizes the low winter-carrying capacity of open prairie. We hope to continue this study during the breeding season and next winter, to reach fairly accurate estimates of the population density.

Canyon Lake, at the southwest corner of Rapid City, is a favorite place for everybody to watch and feed waterfowl. Weekly trips have shown a maximum wintering population of about 2200 Mallards, with 10 Gadwalls, one male Wood Duck, 30 American Goldeneyes, and 20 American Mergansers. Usually a drake Redhead and a drake Canvasback were also present, feeding in deeper water. In addition, a few exotic ducks were present all winter, probably having escaped from nearby zoos. Visitors to the lake fed the ducks large quantities of bread, and at certain times, particularly on week ends, this may have been a considerable portion of their total food supply.

Apparently only a few passerine species winter in the Rapid City region. I have seen only one Golden-crowned Kinglet during the winter but in view of the scarcity of this species in the Hills it should be reported. It was in female plumage, feeding in pines along Rapid Creek in Dark Canyon, on Dec. 13, 1953. Shortly after the close of my population study, on Feb. 25, I found a flock of 36 Pinon Jays feeding in pines on the study area. Occasional flocks of Cedar Waxwings and Evening Grosbeaks have been reported in town by other observers.

The characteristic winter species of the Black Hills seems to be the White-winged Junco. The flocks along the Spring Creek bottoms must

have numbered several hundred individuals—at least in one small part of the bottoms we found over 200 feeding. Behrens tells me that this is larger than the usual wintering flock. Scattered individuals of other species—Black-capped Chickadees, Pine Siskins, and Tree Sparrows—frequently feed with flocks of Juncos. In more exposed areas, a few Juncos appear alone, without the company of the other species.—**Nathaniel R. Whitney, Jr., 4350 Meadowwood Drive, Rapid City, S. D.**

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MONTANA JUNCO AT VERMILLION, S. D.—On March 13 I noticed a lone Junco among the house sparrows feeding on cracked grain on the sidewalk at our back door. It was smaller than the Slate-Colored Junco, moved more rapidly and had a light bill. Its head was blackish, sharply contrasting with a light breast and brown back. The wings and tail were gray, the latter edged with reddish brown. Later it was on the bird-feeder, picking at husks of sunflower seeds. We last saw it March 18, on the ground in the front yard, under the feeder, moving rapidly. I call it a Montana Junco, one of the migrating stragglers.—**Adelene M. Siljenberg, Vermillion, S. D.**

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OSPREYS NEAR MADISON, S. D.—On April 22-24, 1954, two Ospreys, assumed to be a pair, were seen in the trees along the shore of the shallow part of Lake Herman. An observer saw one bird take a good-sized fish from the water.—**Ruth Habeger, Madison, S. D.**

MIXED COMPANY AT WENTWORTH SLOUGH—On the afternoon of April 18, 1954, we spent some time on the highway grade across the east end of Wentworth Slough, a mile or more northeast of the town of Wentworth, S. D., always a good birding spot. A strong wind was blowing in from the northwest, making quite a little surface disturbance along the flat shoreline. In a little cove a compact, mixed group of birds was busily engaged in feeding on material the waves brought to them.

While there was much shifting of position by the birds, especially because of wind and waves, there were rather definite "areas of occupancy." On the sandy shore were shallow puddles where Semipalmated, Pectoral and Western Sandpipers fed. At and in the edge of the lake were Lesser Yellow-legs and three Hudsonian Godwits (a first for LNC). Next there was a pair of Wood Ducks (first for both of us!) feeding with three Blue-winged Teal. Still further out were four Avocets, in full glory of spring plumage. They often went beyond wading depth, easily maintaining place against the strong wind and waves, and fed with the head, neck and much of the body submerged. One Avocet regularly flew out a few rods, lighted and fed as it drifted toward shore.

Occasionally the whole Sandpiper group would rise, fly about a bit, then drop into place and resume feeding. The ducks were inclined to waddle back onto shore a few feet and "just sit" for a brief interval, then resume activity. There was no noticeable conflict between individuals or species.—**Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

SANDHILL CRANES—I went to Herreid, S. D., for an Izaak Walton meeting with State President, Carl Sundahl, March 29th. They told me some stories about Sandhill Cranes damaging corn in that area. They claimed there were several sizes of cranes and I hesitate even to repeat their estimate as to numbers.

Here is a letter I wrote after I got home: "Mr. Art Huber, Herreid, S. D., Dear Art: You and your pals were telling me about the cranes last night. I have looked up several authorities. Apparently there are two sizes of Cranes.

"Over, in "Birds of South Dakota", calls them Little Brown Crane and Sandhill Crane. Peterson calls the smaller one the Sandhill Crane and the larger one the Greater Sandhill Crane. Over states there has been no record of the smaller one in this state since 1900. Judging from our conversation, you have had both species. In addition, there are the immature birds of each species to help complicate the issue.

"Perhaps I shall have time to visit your area, when these birds get numerous there next fall, and try to take some movies. If one of you will drop me a line when they are there I'll try to get up your way."—**Arthur R. Lundquist, Webster, S. D.**

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WATCHING CARDINALS AT CLOSE RANGE—The old adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," paid off after seven years of coaxing Cardinals to come regularly to our home grounds. Last fall my husband built a winterized feeder which he placed with its back to the north wind, near the window of our dining alcove. I glowed when a male Cardinal stopped there a moment on Jan. 20, 1954, but evidently he did not sense the food in the box and departed. I retaliated by strewing sun-

flower seeds on the top of the feeder.

Finally, on the last day of February, a pair of Cardinals alighted together at the feeding station. The female left at once, but the male stayed 2 or 3 minutes, expertly cracking sunflower seeds. Since then they have visited us regularly,—the male more frequently.

Although they are inclined to feed on the ground, today, March 3, the male dropped to the ground, retrieved one of the seeds which had blown off the tray, and rose to the top of the feeder to eat it—a fastidious creature for the moment. I concluded that the wood of the feedbox felt more comfortable than the snowy ground.

I am confident that when this scarlet, regal-crested creature flies in, his mate is near, perhaps feeding or walking about on the ground below, while he perches above. When she alights, she appears more sensitive, moves her head from side to side, and retreats quickly.

At this season the male Cardinal has considerable brown in his back feathers, resembling the general color of the female. She carries a red wash at the lower edge of the primaries and a generous amount of red in her tail feather. Her bill outflames her master's and is in sharp contrast with her brown body feathers.

A pair fed in the bittersweet vine in our backyard on Feb. 2, 5, 13 and 17. Senor Cardinal whistled his tree-top tunes throughout February, as I heard his exultant melody on Feb. 4, 5, 13, 22 and 26. On March 1 I saw and heard 3 in the same neighborhood, all within a few minutes.—**Adlene M. Siljeborg, Vermillion, S. D.**

A Winter Letter From The Black Hills

OUR house, on the Rim Rock Highway, west of Rapid City, is only about 300 feet from Rapid Creek. When we picnic by the creek the friendly Water Ouzel usually shows up and we watch it snatching food in the water and listen to its clear, sweet song.

We read in Bird Notes that the Nuthatch isn't plentiful in this state, but of course the Black Hills are different in many ways from the rest of South Dakota and we have enjoyed a pair of Nuthatches and their broods for two years. They are back again now (Feb. 22) inspecting their old home. The male, I think, has been looking things over for about a month and boarding at the feed-tray. On one trip he inspected all six of our bird-houses, but when his mate came he concentrated on attracting her to the old home,—one they stole from the Tree Swallows two years ago.

Nuthatches come so much earlier than the Swallows they can take their choice of nests. The first year there was a terrible squabble, but the Swallows took another house. They had stolen the first one from the Bluebirds six years before. Our Swallows raise two broods each summer.

The Bluebirds have nested here ever since we came in 1938. There was one house on a pole; the pole rotted and fell and we put the house under the eave of the garage. They used four houses that year.

Towhees nested somewhere around, and the young used the feed-bench until late fall. (A young Goldfinch ate there, too.) We couldn't find that nest until the leaves fell from the top of a lilac bush.

Of course the Robins are around. They had four nests in the yard last

year. And I was interested in some small birds that are here regularly. They were brown but not much like sparrows. I think they were Pine Siskins.

Then we have the Western Tanager. And Catbirds nested here for several years but they haven't been back since a stray cat got the babies in the lilac bush two years ago.

Sometimes the Columbine and Hollyhocks attract Hummingbirds. The Chickadees and Juncos eat our feed all winter. I had wondered about the brownish Junco until I read the article in the last issue of Bird Notes.

Once a Wren nested in one of our houses. She was so inquisitive I think it caused her death. One day we had quite a hailstorm and I suppose she went out to see what was going on. Anyway we never saw her after the storm.—Mrs. G. W. Robertson, Hot Springs, S. D.

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White Throated Sparrow's Song

(Continued from Page 4)

In the several available books which have this bird's song reduced to music I find only one which gives the song exactly as I heard it. In Frank M. Chapman's "Birds of Eastern North America," the second example is an exact representation of the song I heard.

Taken altogether, I think I shall paraphrase the song as did Farmer Peverly, who interpreted it as an order to "plant wheat." My version is "Ha e e, Plant seed, Mallory, Mallory, Mallory, Mallory." However, I did not have the success with my garden which I planted that day as did Farmer Peverly with his wheat.

