

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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## In This Number . . .

President's Page .....	51
Birds of the Hills—Cecil P. Haight .....	52-54
Ornithology Courses in S. D. Colleges and Universities— Ellig and Scobey .....	55
Birds at My Window—Mrs. D. S. Baughman .....	56
A new Member Reports—Mrs. Florence Nicholas .....	57
Books and Articles About Birds .....	58
Pioneer Prairie Ornithologists (Edwin C. Anderson) .....	59
General Notes of Special Interest .....	60-61
Destruction of Wildlife by Hailstorm; Snake in Warbler's Nest; Western Burrowing Owls; Defensive Flocking; Northern Robins; Scarlet Tan- ager at Huron; Harris's Sparrow in Southern Hills; "Dead on Road".	
Short Tales .....	62
I Remember—Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Mallory .....	63
Christmas Census .....	63
Bohemian Waxwings .....	64

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## *President's Page*



J. S. Findley

Sioux Falls

**I**N MY READING I was pleased to find this quotation that expresses clearly one of the thoughts that has been forming nebulously in my mind:

Bird-watching "is anything you care to make it. It is unquestionably a hobby that can be enjoyed an entire lifetime. It can be taken up at any age . . . To both young and old it yields the same high measure of interest. It is packed with drama because it centers on the annual miracle of creation. It is rich in movement since birds are among the greatest travelers on our continent. It combines the visual and the auditory, for there are beautifully plumaged birds and equally stirring singers. Most of all its essence lies in the unknown. Birds travel to the ends of the earth and back, we know not exactly how. Much of their everyday life is still unrecorded. Countless new channels of knowledge still await exploration by enterprising bird-students."

This paragraph is from "A Guide to Bird Watching" by J. J. Hickey, which has much more good reading in it.

In my thinking it seemed that making lists on field trips and building feeding stations probably are the

principal activities of bird-watchers, and while they are entertaining, important and commendable activities, they should be considered only as starting points for scientific investigations to fill some of the gaps in the knowledge of the habits and behavior of some of the common species of our neighborhoods. This is a very interesting but neglected phase of bird-study.

Mr. Hickey's book is full of suggestions for us amateurs. The only requirements are an inquiring mind, patience and curiosity. Perhaps the first step for most of us would be to keep records of arrival and departure dates, songs, territories, nest-building, egg-laying, incubation and care of young.

We could concentrate on the study of one species or it might be that we would rather study some activity common to a number of species; for instance, any of us could gather information about where diurnal birds spend the night, which is one of the subjects about which very little is known.

It certainly is satisfying to have a hobby with which one can go as far and as fast as he likes when he wants.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!*

# BIRDS OF THE HILLS\*

Cecil P. Haight, Spearfish, S. D.

In the Black Hills we are lucky in having, and at the same time occasionally perplexed by having, a strange ecological condition. Technically the Hills are a relict, an island of Ponderosa Pine that persists in spite of change on all sides. The location of the Black Hills area is such that it presents a meeting place for plants, birds and other animals typical of the east and the west, the north and the south.

To be able to identify all birds of this region, then, we must have manuals covering all those areas. For example, we have commonly the Mountain Bluebird (and you've never seen blue until you've seen this bird!) but the Eastern Bluebird is common enough so most of the country children recognize it. We have both the Prairie Chicken and the Sharp-tailed Grouse within the same range. We have, as far as I know, only the Western Meadowlark, but quite reliable reports indicate we may have an occasional nesting Cardinal. Over and Thoms, in *Birds of South Dakota, 1946*, state that Wilson's Snipe nests only in the eastern part of the state, yet I have seen them every month of the year in the lower Spearfish Valley. They were flying in pairs last April out there. Truly, there is room for unlimited study of birds in the Black Hills area!

Because of my brief acquaintance with the birds of the Hills, I have discussed them with Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Bennett of Spearfish who have been studying birds there since 1917 and in whose knowledge of birds and biology in general I have the utmost confidence. They have graciously given me much information, including the entire list of birds they have

positively identified in the last thirty years. I asked Mrs. Bennett how many species they had seen in that time, and she said, "I don't know. We've never thought about counting them." That, it seems to me, is the mark of a true bird-student. They have 145 certain identifications for Lawrence County, plus several others that were not positive or doubtful because the specimen was far out of the normal range for that species. Many of the identifications have been made in their own garden (a paradise for birds), around Spearfish, and up Spearfish Canyon. There is paucity of waterfowl and shorebirds on this list only because they do not frequent the area most studied by the Bennetts. The complete list could well be published in *South Dakota Bird Notes* as a thirty-year list of birds of Lawrence County.

Now for a few notes on birds of the Hills.

Last winter Mallards were seen by the hundreds on open stretches of Spearfish Creek and on spring-fed ponds, but not another species of duck was seen there all winter.

As many as a dozen Wilson's Snipes could have been scared up along a half-mile of spring-fed stream at almost any time during the past winter. On April 1st four pairs were seen in this area. It is believed they are permanent residents and nest here.

The Long-billed Curlew has rather steadily retreated before the invasion by Man. Where one used to see them in considerable numbers in numerous dry-grass areas he now has to search to find any. However, there are several dry, upland parts of eastern Lawrence County where they may still be found. Their haunting "curlew" is a sound one never forgets. I recall

\* Presented at 1951 annual meeting of SDOU, Vermillion, S. D.

one nest which I watched while still a boy. It was a thin layer of grass and stems lining a shallow depression in the ground in a stubble field. There were three or four pullet-size, spotted eggs in the nest and the female Curlew guarded them carefully by trying to draw intruders away by feigning injury. If that ruse was unsuccessful, as it frequently was with an exploring farm boy, she would take wing and dive closer and closer to my head, all the while calling and snapping her long bill—and even a farm boy uses caution when that happens. This activity would often excite any other Curlews in the vicinity and they would come circling and calling a short distance from the center of the disturbance.

The Bennetts inform me that perhaps a dozen years ago Bobwhites frequented a field across the road from their house, and that their cheery calls could be heard throughout the spring. In the three years I have been in Spearfish I have not seen or heard one in Lawrence County. On the other hand, pheasants are present in considerable numbers. In small areas of Spearfish Valley, along the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project, and on the state land at Mirror Lake, their density may approach that of any part of eastern South Dakota.

On several occasions about a year ago I observed a number of Sharp-tailed Grouse displaying, fighting and drumming during the latter part of the breeding season. In all these respects their activities are very similar to those of the Prairie Chicken. It is interesting to note that these typical prairie birds may be found in clearings in the pines several miles from the nearest open grassland.

Lewis's Woodpecker, the fellow dressed in black with gray-red underparts, is one of our permanent residents. It is a true woodpecker in flight and other actions. Early in spring and during winter individuals

may be seen undulating their way from treetop to treetop across town or campus, but during the nesting season and in summer they apparently prefer the pine timber which is not far distant.

The Lazuli Bunting is not uncommon in the Hills, and last summer it "took over" a large part of Spearfish Valley and the open land surrounding the northern edge of the Hills. When you are looking for color don't believe your bird books about this gay little fellow. It is brighter and yet more delicately colored than any illustration of it I have yet seen. One came to the trees close to our house last summer and sang softly yet insistently each morning and evening for a week or ten days. It would perch on a dead branch about eight feet from the ground and sing for several minutes, then quietly slip away to another dead branch near the top of a small tree and repeat. A little later it would be on a pile of brush, then back at the first tree. The singing perch was always out in the open and the bird at all times could see a considerable area immediately beneath it. A definite pattern seemed to be followed as it went from one tree to another. Now and then it would disappear for a few minutes, but, on returning, almost always took up the pattern of flight where it had left it.

Western Tanagers, one of our nesting species, spent quite a bit of time in Spearfish last summer. One's first impression is that they are large Goldfinches with scarlet heads. Their raspy, robin-like call certainly is not the thing of beauty one might expect from such a striking looking bird. In winter plumage the male's bright red head becomes inconspicuous olive-green. About the first of August last summer some of the males had so nearly lost the red that the head appeared pale orange.

In early April a year ago 10 inch-

es of wet snow drove many birds in to town for food. A few cups of bread crumbs, suet and apple paid off handsomely in our yard, for we could look out the window and see various species of birds feeding within a few feet of us. Our pride for the entire spring turned out to be some migrants which visited us for nearly a week. Audubon's Warblers, Myrtle Warblers and Orange-crowned Warblers fed, sun-bathed and rested where we could fully appreciate their tiny size and delicate coloring. The Orange-crowned has a little crest which is used somewhat like the Kinglet's . . . when the bird is excited or singing the crest shows beautifully, but when it is resting or feeding, the crest is invisible. This year favorable weather caused these three species to pass us by.

The Water Ouzel or Dipper is a character! It is not particularly shy and yet one can seldom come closer to it than about twenty-five feet. Bob-tailed and light sooty-gray, its shape and color blend with its rocky background almost to perfection, but its constant dipping or bobbing, bending its knees as it were, gives it away to a careful observer even at a distance. One who watches carefully sees a strange thing happen: the Ouzel deliberately walks off the rock and down into the water, to break surface several yards away. Again you see it submerge and walk calmly along under the water and now and then looking almost as if it were flying under water, then suddenly it sees you too near and swiftly flies upstream only inches above the water. The Ouzel's nest is built in a very damp place, plastered with mud on the outside and camouflaged with living moss, located close to water, often in a niche in the rocks only inches from a small waterfall. Mr. Bennett tells me that when the young are hatched they are deposited along the stream a hundred yards or so from

one another. It's a busy Dipper that cares for young scattered as widely as that. The Ouzel is a permanent resident here and can be seen along the streams any month in the year.

We have both the Robin and, in the Hills and infrequently in town, the Western Robin. The latter keeps more to itself and out of the path of human activity. Its most readily observed difference from the common Robin is the lack of white spots at the corners of the tail.

And another of the thrushes which we of the mountain country love is the Mountain Bluebird--a soft bit of the spring sky with gentle warbling call telling that spring is really here and that shortly life will burst from bud and egg.

The Bennetts' yard is a place of beauty and enjoyment not only for humans but birds as well. Numerous birds are attracted to it by fruiting shrubs and flowers. For years catbirds nested there and birds of other sorts came to feed upon fruits, nectar from flowers and insects. It was quite obvious that hummingbirds nested in the yard or in that immediate vicinity and came to the garden to feed. Mr. and Mrs. Bennett have observed five species of hummers in the yard at one time, but were able to identify only three positively: the Rivoli, a metallic green bird with black, green and gray underparts, somewhat larger than the Ruby-throat; the Black-chinned, bronze-green above and gray below with a velvety-black chin and upper throat and about the size of the Ruby-throat; and the Rufous, slightly larger than the Ruby-throat, the male being cinnamon-rufous above, duller below, with bronze or bronze-green crown and a metallic scarlet throat. They have never seen the Ruby-throated Hummingbird in the northern Black Hills.

(To Be Continued)

# Ornithology Courses in South Dakota Colleges and Universities

LeRoy J. Ellig and Norman O. Scobey

The study upon which this article is based was conducted as a special assignment in wildlife studies at South Dakota State College, under the supervision of Dr. Gerald B. Spawn. The purpose of the study was to determine what, if any, ornithology courses are offered by institutions of higher learning in South Dakota. There are sixteen such institutions and questionnaires were sent to all of them; fifteen replies were received. Information submitted by the five colleges which regularly offer courses in ornithology is summarized in the following table:

Name and Location	Course is offered	Course has been taught	Specimens in college collection	Average students per class
General Beadle State Teachers, Madison, S. D.	Every yr., Spr. and Summer	4 yrs.	68	12
South Dakota State College, Brookings, S. D.	Every yr., Spring	15 yrs.	424	15
Southern State Teachers, Springfield, S. D.	Every yr., Summer	4 yrs.	100	6
Wessington Springs College, Wessington Springs, S. D.	Upon demand, 2nd semr.	—	16	—
Mt. Marty Jr. College, Yankton, S. D.	Upon demand	1 yr.	12	—

Northern State Teachers College, Aberdeen, and Sioux Falls College, Sioux Falls, include ornithology in their zoology and nature-study courses. The former has bird-study skins and mounts listed as "hundreds". The latter uses the Pettigrew Museum specimens. At Wessington Springs College, Wessington Springs, a course in nature study is required in the teacher-training curriculum and bird study is strongly emphasized in this course.

The following institutions have bird specimens in the numbers in parentheses, but do not offer ornithology courses: Black Hills Teachers College, Spearfish (20); Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell (40); Yankton College, Yankton (502); University of South Dakota, Vermillion (1350 in W. H. Over Museum). South Dakota School of Mines, Rapid City, reports "a few commercially prepared specimens for demonstration purposes."

Institutions reporting neither course work in ornithology nor possession of specimens, were: Freeman Junior College, Freeman; and Notre Dame Junior College, Mitchell.

# BIRDS AT MY WINDOW

Mrs. D. S. Baughman, Madison, S. D.

Birds come to my window for food almost any day in the year, but with the advent of winter they are really there in full force. This year they soon finished up a bag of suet and cleaned out the mixture of peanut butter, cracked corn, crumbs, suet, sunflower seeds, and pie crust that had filled the holes bored in a section of a cottonwood limb. I refilled these containers and started hanging them up. I stood on the flat garage roof that runs at right angles to our breakfast room where we always eat unless there are more than eight of us. (I try to hang the bird food in front of the windows where it will be in full view from within.) A Downy Woodpecker came to a branch within reach of my arm, but, after looking me over very carefully for a few minutes, decided he had urgent business elsewhere and would come back later. Not so cautious, the Nuthatch, while I was hanging up a new bag of suet, was hurriedly getting the last piece from the old one. A Chickadee, not the least bit afraid, was busily picking tidbits from the filled log at my feet. I could have stepped on him. There were brilliant flashes from waiting Blue Jays screaming in the background.

A few Chickadees are with us the year round. Early this spring one came in crippled—a leg hanging helpless. After a bad storm it was missing for many days but came back and now with two others appears daily. The injured claw of the cripple is curled up next to the body and is completely useless. The cheery little fellow has to hold on to the branch and sunflower seed with one claw while it rips off the shell. Now if someone will tell me if, in the chickadee family, "the female is more

deadly than the male", I will know whether my little cripple is "Mama" or "Papa". Most definitely the cripple is boss. When "Crip" comes to feed, if one of the others is there—it politely leaves. When Crip has finished, another one comes—after it, the next—all very quickly and orderly.

Many other birds in migration southward stop here for food and a brief rest. Of flocks of Juncos, a few will remain all winter and come at very frequent intervals for food—I do not know how they can eat so much.

For the past three years we have had a pair of Cardinals arrive in January and feed daily at our window for three or more months. I am told that they nested in Madison this past year.

\* \* \*

Besides the food mentioned, hungry birds will eat almost any kind of food from the table. Fat from the roast or chops is much better for them than for you; likewise potatoes, and they love them mashed. Use up waste fat in pie crust for the birds. Juncos shell the tiny proso seed and a tiny Chickadee can rip off the shell of a big pumpkin seed in a flash.

\* \* \*

The summer birds are a different story. They do not require much but water except when they are feeding their young. The Brown Thrashers, Blue Jays, Doves, and even the Baltimore Orioles have brought their young to our garage-roof banquet table where they can fill them up in a hurry. We find that if Blue Jays can find sufficient food for their young they are not likely to rob the nests of other birds.



## A New Member Reports . . .

Dear Mr. Findley:

I want to thank you for the letters you have written me with suggestions that have added to our interest and enjoyment of the birds about us.

I am afraid that you will be quite disappointed with anything I have to offer, as I am still very much a beginner at bird-watching. However, I do love it, and the whole family has become interested and we have observed a great variety of birds in the last year.

The birds I enjoy the most are the ones I see from the windows of our home. We live on the edge of a small town. All around us is prairie, but we do have nice trees and a lot of shrubbery in our yard. Just now the plum thicket in our garden near the dining room is full of Harris's sparrows. The sun has just come out after a cloudy day and they are singing to beat the band. I am quite sure I have identified them properly. Yesterday I saw a big flock of Juncos and a lot of Golden-crowned Kinglets. And we have had Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Brown Creepers, and Spotted Towhees and Flickers—(Yellow-shafted is all I have identified.) And last month I saw a flock of Redstarts. All of these birds are just here in migration.

We had Baltimore Orioles nest in our yard this year; also Mourning Doves and Robins and Yellow Warblers and Thrashers and Kingbirds and Barn Swallows. The Orioles raised four or five; I never was sure. This is the first year they have nested here where we have seen them.

The Hawk you asked about had a large nest in a tree out in our flax field. We saw it nearly every day from June until late in August when it disappeared. It would swoop down at us and scream at us as long as we were in the vicinity. I can't find any

description of a hawk that fits this bird. The head was very black and the black came down over the breast in a well-defined "bib." (Like a Towhee). There was another hawk on the the nest earlier in the summer, but we never saw two in the air at once, and don't know whether or not they raised a family. We always intended to spend more time and watch them more closely but were just too busy. One of my sisters now has a good book on hawks and she is going to read up on them and we shall try to make our observations more scientific in the future.

You asked me once if Magpies are numerous. My husband tells me that he has seen less of them on the ranch this year than usual. We have seen Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Prairie Horned Larks and believe that they nest on our farm, but we have not found their nests. I have not learned to recognize the Pipits. We'll try to watch the prairie birds more next year.

If you folks are out this way, do stop in and see us.

Very truly yours,

Florence Nicholas

(Mrs. Hoyt Nicholas)

Oct. 18, 1951, Ree Heights, S. D.

\* \* \* \*

Anyone who is not entirely happy about being called a "bird-lover" might suggest, as a substitute, "sub-sub-amateur ornithologist."

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In the June, 1951, issue of South Dakota Conservation Digest there is a directory of State Parks and Recreation Areas, which includes name and address of the Supervisor in charge, and the location of each of the 35 sites. These are all good birding spots. Write to Game, Fish and Parks Dept., Pierre, S. D., for free copy.

## Books and Articles About Birds

**BIRDS AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES.** By Glover M. Allen. Published by Marshall Jones Co., Frankestown, N. H. First printed in 1925. 338 pp. including references, index, colored frontispiece, and a number of photographs and some drawings. \$4.00.

The cover flap says: "This book aims to present in a nontechnical and readable way some of the more important matters regarding the life and structure of birds—their economic and aesthetic value, their general anatomy, the form and fashion of their feathers, their origin and relationships, their food and their habits . . . It was prepared with a special view to interest the amateur bird-lover in the broader aspects of ornithology as well as to stimulate him to make more valuable observations of his own. As a book of supplementary reference, it should prove of value not only to the general reader but to the teacher of natural science or of ornithology as well."

Members of SDOU will recall that in the December 1949, issue of Bird Notes, it was stated that at Southern State Teachers College at Springfield, M. E. Burgi used this work as a source for reading assignments. Several mid-western ornithologists have recommended it to me as a book which serious bird-watchers should own and read. It should be (and may be) in the library of a majority of the members of SDOU.—HFC

**LIFE HISTORY OF THE BLUE GOOSE.** By J. Dewey Soper. Published by Boston Soc. of Nat. History (1942) and available through Fred J. Pierce, Winthrop, Iowa. 91 pp. 6 pp references, 8 pp. photos and 2 maps. Paper cover. \$1.25.

Members of SDOU in South Dakota have an opportunity each year to see

in the eastern part of the state the spring migration of Blue and Snow Geese, one of the most magnificent wildlife spectacles that this continent has to offer. During late March literally millions of these birds feed upon the fields and idle in the shallow sloughs between Vermillion and Aberdeen. Reading this little, unique book is one sure way to appreciate this almost incredible phenomenon.—HFC

**FALL OF THE SPARROW.** By Jay Williams. Illustrated by Richard Taylor. Oxford University Press. 158 pages, \$3.00. A naturalist-conservationist lists 106 species of mammals and perhaps as many birds that have disappeared since the beginning of the Christian era, and discusses some of the reasons for their extinction.

Perhaps some of the missing are not to be regretted; some may have disappeared because of man's wantonness; others, like the Passenger Pigeon, may have had habits contributing to the rapidity of their disappearance; and others could not adapt themselves to changing conditions. However, there are probably many more songbirds since the primeval forests have been broken and more favorable environments provided.

Present practices point to the preservation of species, and the Whooping Crane, Condor, Ivory-billed Woodpecker and other threatened species may not meet the fate of the Great Auk, the last of which was killed on June 4, 1884, by so-called "collectors". But we question the necessity of "collecting" scores of Red Crossbills to see whether all have the same shade of red, and of having the rare specimen in hand before it is added to local list.—JSF

# Pioneer Prairie Ornithologists

EDWIN C. ANDERSON

Harold W. Wagar, Minot, N. D.

Early in 1931 I discovered that Edwin C. Anderson, a rural mail carrier of Dell Rapids, S. D., was a bird-bander. Since birds were a special interest of mine, I made his acquaintance. Soon a fast friendship, centered in a common interest, developed between a Lutheran Layman and a Methodist Pastor. He helped me to identify birds by calling me to his place whenever he trapped a new species. Within a year, and upon recommendation by Mr. Anderson and Professor Over of Vermillion, I received a permit to band birds.

Mr. Anderson was born on a homestead south of Dell Rapids on March 14, 1884. He married Miss Anna Klanderud of Sioux City, Iowa, on October 18, 1909. One daughter, Edna, was born to them. They lived on a farm south of Dell Rapids from 1913 to 1917. From 1918 to 1920 Edwin suffered from tuberculosis, spending much of his time in the sanitarium at Saranac Lake, New York. The doctors there advised him to become interested in some hobby which would take him into the open a great deal. Bird-banding became that hobby. In 1920 the family moved back to Dell Rapids where he became a mail carrier, continuing in that service until his death on December 25, 1933.

During those 13 years he never lost interest in his hobby. His bird-banding ventures brought many returns, one, delivered after his death, reporting a Grackle banded in Dell Rapids May 5, 1932, and shot in Streetman, Texas, November 11, 1933. In another instance an immature Bronzed Grackle which he banded May 29, 1931, was caught in my trap April 13,

1931. This pleased him, for it revealed that Grackles, after migration, do return to the place of origin.

Of his many experiences in identifying birds, the one which he enjoyed perhaps the most was finding Golden-winged Warblers, which was described in the March, 1950, issue of South Dakota Bird Notes. Dr. Over reports that Mr. Anderson sent the skin of one of these Warblers to the University Museum on May 10, 1933.

Mr. Anderson took special interest in the Cliff Swallows which nest in the Dells of the Sioux River near Dell Rapids, S. D. Dr. T. C. Stephens, Sioux City, visited him at least twice and together they studied the colony.

Another joy of Mr. Anderson's was making the annual Christmas bird census, and his reports are referred to in Dr. Stephens' Bibliography of South Dakota Ornithology. He also wrote articles on Bird Banding, some of which were published locally.

On December 19, 1933, Mr. Anderson made his will. Let me quote from it: "My bird traps, receiving cage and trap bait in the basement shall be given to my friend Rev. H. Wagar, free of charge." Needless to say, I prize these things, and, as I use them, I am reminded of my good friend. He gave his bird books and magazines to Dr. Stephens. His bird bands and records were sent back to the Bureau of Biological Survey.

One very close to Mr. Anderson said, "He loved birds, dogs and little children." He was devoted to his family. He was a man of high ideals, who, in spite of physical battles, lived a well-rounded life. He made many splendid contributions to bird-study in South Dakota.

## General Notes of Special Interest

"Correct indication of habitat is one of the most essential items in the history of a species." Coues.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DESTRUCTION OF BIRDLIFE BY HAILSTORM**—When a hailstorm swept along a section of the South Dakota-Nebraska border on June 19, 1951, the nesting colony of hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants and White Pelicans at LaCreek Lake sustained heavy losses from the slashing, wind-driven hailstones, which attained the size of walnuts. Following the storm 363 Cormorants, chiefly immature birds, were found dead, and 158 dead Pelicans, including 14 adults, were counted. One of the dead Pelicans bore band No. 40-812984, which upon reference to the bird-banding section of the Fish and Wildlife Service, was found to have been affixed to the specimen exactly eight years previously, at Lake Bowdoin, in central northeastern Montana. Only 23 immature Pelicans and 14 young Cormorants were noted to have survived; possibly they received shelter from the bodies of adult birds which had not fled or been swept away by the storm. Loss and damage to nests were also noted among ground-dwelling or nesting species, songbirds in the scanty groves or tree claims and marsh-dwellers inhabiting emergent vegetation. Fortunately such destructive storms are usually confined to relatively local areas.—**Kenneth Krumm, Martin, S. D.**

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**SNAKE IN WARBLER'S NEST**—In late May, a few years ago, while I was fishing along Rapid Creek, I heard cries of several Yellow Warblers in a box-elder tree. I soon found a nest on a branch hanging over the creek and, as I put my hand in the nest to learn what might be there, a small garter snake crawled over my hand and fell into the creek. The nest was badly broken and no eggs or young were found. After the snake was gone the warblers quieted down.—**Harry C. Behrens, Rapid City, S. D.**

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**WESTERN BURROWING OWLS**—In the *Oologist*, July, 1935, appeared a narrative of the experiences of a party searching in North Dakota for eggs of this species. Since similar conditions prevail in those sections of South Dakota where this is a nesting species, the essential facts are here condensed: In a large stony pasture a male Burrowing Owl was observed on a large mound of horse manure and pebbles. It stood quite erect and allowed very close approach before he half ran and half flew away. The mound on which he had been doing sentry duty was at the entrance to the nesting cavity. The nest, containing 10 eggs, was at the end of an abandoned Badger burrow. Both tunnel and nest were well lined with loose dried horse manure. The female was on the nest, and, while being held for photographing, blinked her eyes rapidly and snapped her bill repeatedly. The male stayed close by, but hopped and flapped away whenever an attempt was made to get close enough for taking a picture. Another nest was found in the same pasture, at the end of a badger burrow at least three feet long and a foot or more deep, containing seven eggs; while a third, similarly located, contained ten eggs. All nests were composed of the same material. . . . One night last summer Mrs. C. and I made a trip through the Lower Brule Reservation over faint cattle trails and hay-roads which repeatedly forked. There were only two sorts of traffic signs; the stars glowing with an intensity and in numbers to which we "city slickers" were wholly unaccustomed, the other a lot of Burrowing Owls which took turns alighting in the wheel marks of the trail, turning their blazing yellow eyes toward the car lights and there "curtesying apprehensively" until the front bumper threatened them.—**H. F. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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**DEFENSIVE FLOCKING**—On Oct. 15, 1951, a Buteo was observed flying low over a cornfield a few miles southwest of Sioux Falls. Above, behind, but

fairly close to the hawk there followed a compact flock of perhaps 100 small dark birds. The hawk paid no attention to them, apparently, and when it alighted the flock flew away. While this behavior, sometimes called 'defensive flocking' is occasionally described in published reports, this was our first opportunity to observe it. We identified the Hawk as an immature Red-tail, and believe the others were Redwings.—**Herbert Krause and H. F. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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**NORTHERN ROBINS**—It is common knowledge there are distinct waves in the fall migration of Robins, at least through the eastern part of the state. Some observers report that the later arrivals seem to have a much more distinct broken white eye-ring and line extending back from the eye than do the earlier migrants. It is also suggested there is a marked difference in the color of the back as between the two groups. One ornithologist, whom we are not in position to quote, suggests the possibility this is a northern race of Robins which comes down from some distant area. Let's study this!—**HFC**

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**LATE FALL SCARLET Tanager AT HURON**—Nov. 7, 1951, while busy in the kitchen, I looked out and there at the base of a near-by tree was what turned out to be (after much excitement and study) a male Scarlet Tanager in winter plumage of black wings and olive-green body. We have no other record of it being seen here after the fall molt.—**Mary Aberdeen Kettle, Huron, S. D.**

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**HARRIS'S SPARROWS IN SOUTHERN HILLS**—I am particularly happy to report that this fall during our first early snow we had a flock of Harris's Sparrows come in and partake of our catonastor berries. I called particular attention to these birds as I knew they were strangers. They were in migration, no doubt, and the first I had seen. Since apparently none of these birds have been reported before as seen in the Black Hills, I thought you would like to have this information.—**Jane A. Butts, Custer, S. D.**

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**GREEN-WINGED TEAL NEST NEAR WEBSTER**—We have one water area up here where state technicians have found nesting Green-winged Teal. At first only one pair was noted. Three or four years have passed and now at nesting season (1951) there were at least six pairs in the region. My theory is that birds which were hatched here (perhaps the females) have brought their mates back with them to the old home grounds. It would have been interesting to have banded the first nesting birds and their young.—**Art Lundquist, Webster, S. D.**

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**"D ● R"**—Study of specimens found "Dead on Road" or elsewhere is one method resorted to by some folks who want to examine specimens in hand but who are not willing to collect living birds. These specimens, sometimes rather badly mutilated and occasionally with marked BO, do afford excellent temporary opportunities for a study of details which cannot be made when the living bird is seen in the field. A preliminary and necessary step is to obtain a "salvage permit", from the Director of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, S. D., for which the annual fee is \$1.00.

Harry C. Behrens, of Rapid City, is building up a useful collection of birdskins by utilization of dead specimens found by him or by others, often children, who know of his interest. His list includes: Oven-bird, Yellow Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Crossbill, Western Tanager, Red-shafted Flicker, Nighthawk, Bullock's Oriole, Lark Sparrow, Mountain Bluebird, Horned Lark, Robin, House Wren, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chipping Sparrow, Black and White Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Olive-backed Thrush.

## Short Tales

The J. S. Findleys, Sioux Falls, watched a Snowy Owl for 40 minutes, Oct. 28, 1951, 2½ miles north and 1 east of Lone Tree, Moody County. It seemed to them rather early in the season and in a year that should be in the low point of the cyclical incursions of Snowy Owls.

"I have noticed a certain individual bird at our bird bath every evening for two weeks. I call it our 'Spotted Robin' for there are white feathers scattered all over its back." W. H. Over, Vermillion.

"A Townsend's Solitaire visits us now and then along with other birds. It likes the berries on the cedar tree north of the house—as do the Robins who tell him very often to "git out." TS watches its chance and grabs a few berries before taking off. The bird bath interests it, too." Mrs. H. B. Stevens, Hot Springs.

Wilson Bulletin, Sept. 1951, published (p. 201) a general note by Robert L. Eng, recording a "first" for Barn Owls in Montana. Mr. Eng is now in the Dept. of Zoology and Entomology, Montana State College, Bozeman. He is a Dakotan, a former pupil of Dr. G. B. Spawen at State College, Brookings (former president of SDOU) and he is himself a member of SDOU.

Willis Hall, Yankton, has found Robins common all winter in the Missouri River Valley from Vermillion to Yankton, feeding, whenever possible, on the fruit of the hackberry tree, according to a note by Wm. Youngworth, Sioux City, in Iowa Bird Life, June, 1951.

"One day we had a lot of Juncos", writes SDOU Secy. Mallory, Canton. "This was a cold day. There were an unusual number of the female-plumaged birds among them, that is, an unusual number for the fall."

When a party of amateur bird-watchers were recently examining a Short-eared Owl found dead on the road they were surprised to observe its ears. The outer ears were large, complicated, bare affairs, somewhat similar to the human outer ear, well covered with large feathers which apparently could be lifted and completely uncover these "sound-traps". Interestingly enough, these were not quite symmetrical on the two sides of the head.

Wilson's Snipe, commonly called "Jacksnipe", was given the name of the great ornithologist, Alexander Wilson, who distinguished this species from the English Snipe which it closely resembles. Look for this chubby brown fellow using a decidedly long, heavy bill for probing in soft mud among short grass clumps for worms, and wearing a brownish-black coat striped with light buff or cinnamon, ending in a very short tail.

John G. Bell was a member of Audubon's Missouri River expedition through what is now South Dakota, during the summer of 1843. Bell served as taxidermist for the party. On May 6th, somewhere near Omaha, Nebr., a new bird, a Vireo was secured, and Audubon named it in honor of his scientist-friend. Bell's Vireo is a summer resident of South Dakota.

The Starling is credited with a flight speed of nearly 50 miles per hour (45-49) in Glover Allen's book "Birds and their Attributes". He characterizes the flight as "swift and strong". Absence of undulation also aids in making identification of a distant flock.

# I Remember

Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Mallory,  
Canton, S. D.

**BIRD ANTICS.** From a window beside our breakfast table we have observed several incidents of bird feeding behavior which seem worth recording.

After a Brown Creeper fed for some time at suet fastened to a tree it suddenly spiraled rapidly round the tree up to the smaller branches at the top. Then it dropped like a falling leaf to the foot of the same tree and repeated the spiraling operation ever more rapidly. Nothing was pursuing it. It seemed to go through these antics from sheer exuberance possibly generated by a big meal of suet.

A White-breasted Nuthatch dropped a small piece of suet but caught it with a quick thrust without moving its body. It was one of the quickest moves we have ever seen a bird make.

One male Cardinal is a very regular visitor at our feeding station. Two other males come often, but the regular visitor will not allow them to eat more than about two sunflower seeds before he drives them away. We believe the dominant one has been making our feeding station his regular source of winter support for several years and that the other two are younger birds.

One of the more spectacular incidents we observed was when a male Hairy Woodpecker tried to bluff a Starling away from the suet. He flew to a spot about three inches from the Starling; fluffed up his feathers and spread his wings until he appeared twice his normal size; and then threatened the Starling with his long, sharp bill. However, the Starling was unimpressed and the woodpecker without making a closer approach finally left his opponent in possession of the suet.

# Christmas Bird Census

Claude A. Van Epps, Census Chrm.,  
780 Utah, S. E., Huron, S. D.

This year SDOU will again cooperate with National Audubon Society in the annual Christmas Bird Census. This will be the 52nd year for this nation-wide activity in which groups and individuals throughout the United States list species and number of individual birds in their communities at Christmastime.

Observations are recorded in reports under the following rules: The count may be made on any one day, December 24 to January 1, inclusive; the territory covered must be within a circle with 15-mile diameter; a dusk-to-dawn count is preferred, and if time in field is less than 7 hours the report may not be accepted; time in field and number of observers in each party should be stated; temperature, wind direction and velocity, and other field conditions should be reported; the brief, typed report should list species according to AOU check-list order as shown in the Peterson Guide or Audubon field cards.

Reports should be sent promptly to the Census Chairman who will edit them and forward the entire set for South Dakota for publication in Audubon Field Notes.

Those not receiving the standard detailed letter of instructions and complete rules, who desire to participate, should write immediately to the Chairman. Suggestions of names of additional observers will be appreciated, if sent in NOW.

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Did you know that a barnyard rooster flaps his wings before crowing and that a cock pheasant crows, then flaps?

## COVER PICTURE

Special thanks to Ella Schroeder, Editor of The North Dakota Teacher, Bismarck, N. D. for the cut for the cover picture, and to Mr. S. B. Nissen, Editor of SDEA Journal, Sioux Falls, S. D., for his cooperation in securing the cut from her for us.

### BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS

Over and Thoms, in *Birds of South Dakota*, say of this lovely bird, "an irregular winter resident, always in compact flocks of a dozen or so. Brownish gray with plumage of smooth velvety effect. Distinguishing marks are the crest, the black throat, the (red) wax wing-tips and yellow on the end of the tail. They keep well up in the trees and seldom utter a note."

In Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* we read that this species is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, about an inch longer than the more common Cedar Waxwing. This one is grayer than the other; has white on the wing, while the smaller one has none; and chestnut-red under-tail coverts rather than white. RTP credits the Bohemian with nesting in western Canada.

Roberts, in *Birds of Minnesota*, explains: "When feeding, its habit is to gorge itself to the beak and then sit quietly in a tree-top for a brief hour, when it is ready for another meal . . . . This Waxwing is a great wanderer when away from its northern home, whence the name, Bohemian Waxwing.

Mountain-ash berries are a favorite food of this species, and, when these are gone, any small fruit or berry will be eaten. It is little short of amazing to see the parent Cedar Waxwing "up-chuck" swallowed berries, one at a time, and pass them ever so gently to open-mouthed youngsters. No doubt the Bohemian is equally efficient and just as gentle . . . . .

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