SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

DR. J. F. BRENCKLE
with Warbler Trap

Photo by ADRIAN C. FOX, Pres. of Neb. O. U.

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In This Number . . .

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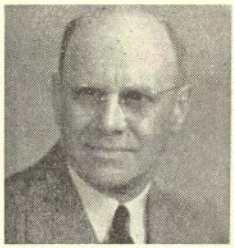
President's Page



J. S. Findley,
Sioux Falls,
S. D.

THE tax on sporting goods has provided a fund of more than $17 million to be used for wildlife projects under the Pittman-Robertson Act. It will be allotted to the states according to area and the numbers of hunting licenses sold, if the states can put up 25% additional in matching funds. South Dakota's share is $334,814 to be matched with $111,603.

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The Pittman-Robertson Act provides that the money can be spent for wildlife restoration, including "selection, rehabitation and improvement of areas of land or water adaptable as feeding, resting or breeding places"; for acquisition of such places; and for research into problems of wildlife management. The wording is sufficiently broad that it is strange some states are having difficulty finding approved projects, but it does not seem that South Dakota should have such difficulty.

* * *

One project could be replacing the wildlife areas that will be destroyed by the imminent flooding of the Missouri Valley. Even now timber is being cut off the islands and in the valley, destroying the habitat for thousands of deer and innumerable birds. There is a story of wood cutters starting to clear cedar from an island and finding the cardinals "as thick as sparrows." It will take many years to replace the cedars or even the fast-growing cottonwoods, and so the sooner the project is started, the better.

* * *

Goose hunters and bird watchers are worried about the effect the flooding may have on the migrations along the Missouri. The search for the solution could be another project.

* * *

Other conservationists are concerned over the draining of potholes and sloughs, and the resulting destruction of breeding places of shore birds and waterfowl. Why cannot some potholes and sloughs be left as they are?

* * *

We still have lots of prairie but some of it should be kept so that future generations can see buffalo grass and wild flowers; and for breeding grounds for grouse, curlews and other wildlife that now is being crowded out of existence. Some other states are preserving virgin prairie, forest or shore, but only recently Iowa had difficulty in finding a quarter section of virgin sod to preserve as a prairie park.

Maybe we do not know what we are talking about but we know what we want--conservation of our rich wildlife resources.

Harris's Sparrow In South Dakota

W. B. Mallory, Canton, South Dakota

MANY bird observers agree that any bird, when closely studied, becomes an object of intriguing interest. The recent acquisition by South Dakota Ornithologists' Union of a supply of the full-page colored plate of Harris's Sparrows by Sutton* brought vividly to my mind a study I made of this species. At Lennox, S. D., from 1924 to 1930, I trapped and banded about two hundred of these birds and observed closely many hundreds more. Harris's Sparrow is one of my favorite birds, although that may be partly because of that study.

This species is the largest of the sparrows. The average length of the male is about 7½ inches, approximately one-fourth of an inch longer than either of the two next largest, the White-throated and the Fox Sparrows. Females are slightly smaller.

The scientific name of this species, **Zonotrichia querula,** was officially adopted in 1847, although at least three other names were used prior thereto. The first known observer of this sparrow was not Harris, as its common name might imply. He first saw it in 1843 when he was with Audubon's party en route up the Missouri to Ft. Union through what is now South Dakota, but Nuttall is credited with its discovery several years earlier, in 1834, to be exact.

This interesting bird is considered a migrant in South Dakota, although a few may remain as winter residents in the southern part of the state. There is one early winter record, from Dell Rapids (Anderson-1924). Roughly speaking, the middle of its migratory range in this part of the country is the eastern boundary of South Dakota. For about a hundred miles both to the east and to the west of this line it occurs in migration in greatest abundance. However, considerable numbers appear all through Iowa and southern Minnesota. It has been seen as a migrant as far west in South Dakota as Pine Ridge and, recently, in the southern part of the Black Hills, and it is an accidental migrant nearly to the east and west coasts. At Lennox it generally appeared during the last week in March and some remained until about May 20th. Fall arrival was usually around September 25th, my latest record being November 10th, when one was accidentally killed near my traps.

The manner in which changes occur in the plumage of Harris's Sparrow is very interesting. The colored picture previously referred to shows in an excellent manner the four principal stages of coloration. This transformation occurs in such a way that while I was handling these birds at Lennox there were many occasions, especially in the fall, when no two birds in the trap looked alike. This was true to a lesser extent in the spring. Perhaps the best way to describe these plumage phases will be to describe them in the order in which they occur for one individual bird, beginning with the nestling, and keeping in mind that in color the sexes are nearly alike.

The young bird just leaving the nest in late July is heavily streaked and bears little resemblance to the adult in full breeding plumage. A part of this juvenal plumage is almost immediately molted, and by early September the bird assumes the coloration shown on the individual in the colored plate labeled "Immature in first winter plumage." It is thus we see our immature bird in South Dakota during its first fall migration.

The next change probably begins in late October or early November. I

believed I saw some signs of this in the last birds banded in November at Lennox. The gradual wearing away of the outer edges of the head feathers begins to disclose the black crown underneath, a change which is generally complete by the first part of March.

The next phase begins during the middle of March. The plumage of the neck, head and breast is molted and our sparrow assumes the coloration shown in the color plate for "Adult in full breeding plumage." As this is generally not complete until about April 20th, we may see our specimen in its first spring migration through South Dakota either in an intermediate stage or in the plumage of the bird identified in the plate as "Adult in full breeding plumage."

One might reasonably assume that this specimen would either keep this color pattern through life or have only two changes each year, one for breeding season and one for winter, but this is not so. Our bird is now going into its first breeding season, and at the end of this stage is about one year old. It soon undergoes a postnuptial molt which results in the coloration of the specimen in the plate labeled "Adult shortly after first post nuptial molt." This change affects principally the crown and neck and thus we see our specimen in South Dakota in its second fall migration.

Soon the outer edges of the feathers of the head and neck begin to wear away as they did the previous fall. The change is complete somewhere during the middle of February, resulting in the pattern shown in the picture as "Adult shortly before second prenuptial molt". Then beginning in early March is the second prenuptial molt, resulting finally (and again) in the color arrangement "Adult in full breeding plumage." In the bird's second spring migration through South Dakota we see it in this plumage or in an intermediate stage. Thereafter we see this individual in only this color pattern, except that the areas around the eye and on the cheek change to brown or buffy in the fall and back to black and white in the spring.

Considering all these changes, it is plain why Harris's Sparrows vary so greatly in color during their migrations through South Dakota, since we see them in three principal color phases, and perhaps, to some slight extent, in intermediate variations.

At Lennox about 4½ times as many of these birds were banded in the fall as in the spring, and that seems to be the experience at other banding stations. One can only guess that this results from a more rapid migration in the spring. Harris's Sparrows made up about 40% of all sparrows I banded, and about one in five of these repeated, that is, came back into the trap two or more times in a single migration season.

In the traps the Harris's Sparrows were not as excitable as other species. At times one could be picked up without a single flutter. One fall one individual went into the traps several times a day and seldom showed any fright when I removed it. It evidently lived almost entirely on the bait in the trap and liked the easy life so well it stayed at the trapping station for about 20 days, which was at least three times as long as the average of those birds whose stay could be approximately ascertained.

At Lennox there were very few returns, that is, few birds trapped in one season were trapped there again in another migration season. One specimen, whose exact record is not available, was trapped in the fall and was back in the same trap the next spring, five months and one day later.

* Copies of the print on 8x11 sheet, suitable for framing, specially packed for mailing, are available at 50c each (stamps). Address SDOU 504 Security Bank Bldg., Sioux Falls, S. D.

This Business of Nests . . .

Mrs. P. A. Becker, Owatonna, Minn.—The Flicker.

Do you want birds in numbers nesting in your yard? —Give them a variety of nesting material, collected during the winter months, to encourage them to nest. Although any convenient container will do, I use paper sacks, and keep them ready—in upstairs, kitchen and basement—to receive material as it is collected. I keep the feathers in a separate container.

"Nesting material should not be more than six to eight inches long. White or extremely light colors seem to be preferred. Wrapping cord, darning cotton, light-colored basting threads, ravelings from tearing cloth, and threads from the edges of fraying seams (collected on ironing day) are good. Strips of soft old muslin are a must (soft old pillow cases are fine). Keep them six to eight inches long and one-fourth inch wide. Waxwings and other open-nesting birds use them for what we term "starters". In making the final nesting check after the foliage is gone, I have noticed that the pillow case strips stand out plainly.

"Large wads of mechanic's waste, well pulled apart before being put out are excellent for birds that build nests of the type of the yellow warbler. Quite a collection of cotton can be saved, since it is used as packing around medicine containers and jewelry. Large meshed potato sacks, when unwoven and cut into six-inch lengths are a favorite with waxwings and chipping sparrows. Onion sacks and gunny sacks are not usable.

"By all means save the combings of long-haired dogs. Any acquaintance having a riding horse might save long horse hairs for your nesting sack. Human hair combings should also be saved. Increase the amount with some permanent wave cuttings from your beauty shop. If possible, select outstanding colors—blond, black, auburn and gray. It is interesting to spot them in the checkup of the nests.

* * *

"For our large purple martin colony we leave several piles of raked up spring lawn and garden debris in the open. How the martins do gather and talk things over! Spanish moss so prevalent in parts of the South, is perfect bird nesting material. Have a friend living there? Ask for a large box!

"Butter paper cut in strips, cleansing tissues, and light-colored ribbon (not too wide) are fine for robins and catbirds. During a dry spring see that the robins have a mud puddle!

"We put out the nesting material loosely arranged in a nesting rack we have designed. Small amounts may be arranged daily on evergreen boughs or on bushes. A small square of lawn can be kept closely cut and a little material scattered there each day, although rain tends to mat it when it is out in the open. A nesting rack is somewhat protected and helps keep the material dry. We have eight such racks, and keep each in the same location year after year. It is obvious by the manner in which they approach the racks that the birds come to know that the nesting material is there. String and muslin strips may be hung on the clothes-line if the day is still. Keep a count of the number put out, as part of your project.

Audubon Screen Tours are being presented in three South Dakota cities this winter. See the Sept. issue of S. D. Bird Notes for the schedules of titles and dates.

Birds of the Hills

Cecil P. Haight

(Continued from p. 54—Dec. 1951)

WE should not pass the list of more common birds residents of the Hills without mentioning a couple of jays which an ornithologist in the mountains can hardly miss. The Canada Jay, camp robber, whiskey jack, or what you will, looks much like a robin-size chickadee that has forgotten his black bib and cap. He is a devilish fellow in almost any way you want to observe him. I have lain with a camera two feet from a camp garbage pile and listened to this bird scolding and complaining, all the while coming closer, and finally landing and feeding that close to me, so pictures of the Canada Jay are not at all hard to get if one has a small amount of patience. But the very traits that make it easy to photograph give it perhaps its commonest nickname, "Camp robber." When one is cooking in camp and has a skillet of food just off the fire, if you turn your back the camp robber may flit noiselessly down and pack off a piece of food. These fearless rascals make it necessary to maintain a clean camp and keep food in covered containers. (Maybe that is a good thing, at that!) They can be far more disconcerting to a hunter who is waiting for game than are their notorious cousins, the Bluejays. They will announce one's presence and then hang around just out of sight, and continually changing their position, scold the hunter who thinks he is carefully concealed. I have known more than one hunter to change his location simply because of the Canada Jay.

Clarke's Nutcracker is a large gray, jay-like bird with black and white wings and tail. It is much less of a nuisance and far less noisy than the Canada Jay. One's first look at this bird is usually as it is flying above the treetops instead of between the branches as the camp robber does. While the name "Nutcracker" may come from its habit of feeding on nuts, yet it eats seeds of pine during winter and numerous berries and seeds during summer. This is a bird of the high mountains and pine forests and we are apt to find it in that habitat anywhere in the United States.

Now for several birds which are uncommon in the Hills or have not been previously recorded or are of special interest for other reasons. All of these birds have been observed by the Bennetts during their many years of bird-study in Spearfish and vicinity:

American Three-toed Woodpecker —seen in late winter in 1918 at Hellgate, a narrow place in the canyon about 10 miles west of Lead.

Belted Kingfisher--quite common along the streams of the Black Hills and extending its range outward from the hills along wooded stream bottoms.

Harris's Woodpecker--a subspecies of the Hairy Woodpecker--observed in 1920 in Lawrence County.

Hummingbirds—Rivoli, Rufous, Black-chinned—none of these are listed in Over and Thoms, 1946; reported as nesting species in Lawrence County.

Wood Duck—seen at the Painter Ranch north of Camp Crook, Great Plains region, near the Little Missouri River in Harding County, 1932. (Quite a distance from Lawrence County and the Black Hills. Ed.)

Golden Plover—observed at McGuigan Ranch now just north of lumber piles of sawmill; at Spearfish, 1917.

Franklin's Grouse—1920, below Rim Rocks Lodge in Spearfish Canyon.

Red-bellied Hawk—subspecies of Red-shouldered—1920, along road to Belle Fourche, open range about 3 miles north of Spearfish.

(Continued on page 10)

Pioneer Prairie Ornithologists

DR. J. F. BRENCKLE

J. FREDERICK BRENCKLE was born November 14, 1875, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the first of three children in the home of John and Mary Brenckle, who lived in the city block which is the site of the Milwaukee Auditorium.

Although he lived in the city until he graduated from Milwaukee Medical College in 1897, his most cherished childhood memories are of the visits with his maternal grandmother who introduced him to the wonders of the Wisconsin woodlands, nurturing an early appreciation of nature and initiating the training of a keenly observant and scientific mind.

His first medical practice brought him to Webster, South Dakota, where he was thrilled to find great abundance of plant and animal life on the seemingly empty prairies. His long trips to isolated patients provided wonderful opportunities for observation and time for consideration thereof. Return trips were often enhanced by detours and explorations.

Later he removed to Kulm, North Dakota, and while practicing there he married Amalia Boll of Milwaukee. To them three children were born: Dacotah, Arthur and Beatrice. When war was declared in 1914 he enlisted in the Army Medical Corps and after brief training was stationed at Fort Douglas, Utah, and Camp Pike, Arkansas. Following the Armistice he returned to Kulm. In 1923 he began practicing at Northville, South Dakota, eventually moving to nearby Mellette, where his wife died suddenly. Later he married Pearl Knickrehm who is his constant companion in work, travel, and the study of plants and animals (as well as Canasta).

While living in North Dakota he explored much of that state with Dr. O. A. Stevens, of Fargo, and it was through this friend's suggestions and interest that Dr. Brenckle began bird-banding. The Northville location was ideal because both home yard and neighborhood were wooded and quiet. The dry years of the 1930's proved to be a "bander's boon" because water and food in traps were especially attractive to birds when practically no other water and food were obtainable elsewhere. From the beginning Dr. Brenckle banded with great interest and unlimited energy, always mindful of the welfare of the birds, observant of special markings and habits of all species, and taking great joy in his first banding of a species as well as in the many "repeat" visits by birds he had banded before.

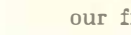
His first traps were crude, funnel-shaped, ground traps, used with constant adaptations to habits of hungry birds and supplemented by a very efficient cat-trap. The family was only slightly inconvenienced by the hand-operated trap which had a rope leading into the house through the bathroom window! His design for a six-celled water trap was developed from his observation of warblers and other birds which would not enter a trap horizontally. The traps themselves developed under his expert, patient hands in his own workshop.

The following data from his detailed record book show his success in the number of birds banded by him: 1930, 2022; 1931, 3374; 1932, 3489; 1933, 3957; 1934, 5419; 1935, 4119; 1936, 4911; 1937, 1852; 1938, 2468. His location practically in the center of the migration route of the Harris's

Sparrow, enabled him to trap 1116 of them in 1931, and 1049 in 1932, with a funnel trap, together with many repeats, while in later years, using a water trap, he took many.

With this device, where water drips into a pan and birds enter from the top to see what makes the water move, he took many Warblers: Myrtle, in 1932, 193 and in 1934, 215; Black-poll, 50 in 1932; Magnolia, in 1934, 18; Yellow, 154 in 1938; Tennessee, in 1937, 78; Orange-crowned, in 1934, 118. Of the Warbler species more rare he trapped the Golden-winged in 1931, 1933, 1936, 1941 and 1944; Blue-winged in 1931; of Blackburnian, and Black-throated, a total of 6 each.

Dr. Brenckle has welcomed the coming of organized bird-study in South Dakota through SDOU, of which he is a charter member, for he is always eager to share ideas, stimulate interest, and help others in bird-banding or bird-study. Now, in 1952, the proud possessor of a Fifty-year Medical Service pin, thirteen grandchildren, and three great grandchildren, he continues his country practice, reads widely, carries on much correspondence, and keeps several traps in operation, all with undiminished interest and energy.—Beatrice Brenckle Davis, Northville, S. D.



A CONTEMPORARY SAYS . . .

I first called on Dr. Brenckle on April 30, 1913. An hour or so before I had been out on the prairie collecting bees. He was much interested in that and on our trips together he gave attention to fungi, I to bees, both of us to plants. That was before birds came to the foreground. We carried on quite an active correspondence, dealing chiefly with fungi. I was traveling around quite a bit and by collecting dead and diseased plants of kinds which he did not have a chance to see I was able to add quite a few new records to his collection.

The Doctor was tireless in pursuit of new fields. He could not let pass any opportunity to secure new material. As I recall it he made one of his visits to Fargo during the trapping season and was at once impressed that here was a new field which he was not using. His location happened to be well adapted to the purpose. My theory has been that in a prairie country the birds congregate in the "islands" of trees and brush, as for example about dwellings and small towns.

The birds flocked into the Doctor's traps in almost unbelievable numbers. Hundreds of Harris and White-throated sparrows were banded. His ingenuity began to seek still larger captures by improved trap designs. The 6-cell water trap soon developed and became one of the most successful kinds. It captured warblers in numbers equal to the sparrows in the older style traps. This made the identification of warblers an immediate and pressing problem which was quickly accomplished in the usual energetic style.

We never did get involved in expeditions to band gulls or other water birds. Perhaps we were not sailors. At any rate we seemed to find an endless supply of material on dry land.

Birds were not a prominent part of our field trips although I recall the Orchard Orioles at Scatterwood Lake and the abundance of Chats at Northville. At Yellowstone Lake the gulls feeding upon the discard of fishermen were outstanding, also the White-crowned Sparrows at Fishing Bridge and near Laramie. On an earlier trip to the Black Hills I was interested in the Western Robin, whose song seemed to me more rapid than that of our eastern bird. Also it was found out in the woods rather than around houses.—Dr. O. A. Stevens, Fargo, N. D.

Books and Articles About Birds

A GUIDE TO BIRD SONG by Aretas A. Saunders, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, N. Y. 1951 304 pp. $3.00. A revised and enlarged edition of a deservedly popular handbook first published in the 1930's.

The author employs symbols and helpful text to show time, pitch, loudness, quality and phonetics of bird song. There is a 20-page Key similar to those often found in bird guides. Since the text describes nearly 200 species, most of which are found in South Dakota either as residents or migrants, the book is of direct interest to SDOUers.

The Guide can make the bird-watcher aware of the character of the bird-song and help the inquisitive answer the question, "What bird is that?" After observing some expert field ornithologists in action I know that noises made by birds are valuable aids in identification which are available to all who can hear and will listen intelligently. The "looker" is only half-equipped.—HFC

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AUDUBON WATER BIRD GUIDE by Richard H. Pough, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N. Y. 1951, 4½ by 7½, 352 pp., 48 colored plates, 138 drawings. $3.50.

This handy-sized book includes the water, game and larger land birds of eastern and central North America. It is much more than an identification guide. For each species is shown first measurements of size and weight, with page reference to the colored plate; then the text covers identification, habits, voice, nest and range. Drawings of many species by Poole accompany the text, while pages of colored plates of some 450 species, by Eckelberry, appear together midway in the book.

Because birds of vast territory are treated, much of the material may be interesting only to local bird-watchers. However, the outstanding reputation and ability of the author and artists assure the very real worth of this book for use in amateur bird-study anywhere in its range. The companion, AUDUBON BIRD GUIDE, published earlier, is said to cover every bird of eastern North America not described in this one.

This little book again indicates that Mr. Pough is a leader among the practical, intelligent conservationists of the country.

BIRDS OF THE HILLS

(Continued from page 7)

Alaskan Longspur—killed by traffic in snowstorm of May 10, 1930; specimen sent to Brookings and identified there.

Dickcissel—not uncommon during the summer in open fields of Lawrence County.

Rock Wren—seen in winter in Spearfish Canyon, 1949 and 1950.

Oven-bird—common in northern part of Black Hills; Spearfish Canyon. One killed against glass was brought in for identification.

Kentucky Warbler—seen in 1920 in Spearfish Canyon.

Wood Thrush—observed high on Terry Peak (7000 ft.) nesting.

Bald Eagle—seen during the winter months; observed in 1927.

Golden Eagle—one seen perching, flew across road from one tree top to another, about one mile south of Camp Comfort, at Spearfish.

General Notes of Special Interest

SAW-WHET OWL KILLS SPARROW—After several weeks of severe weather there was a quiet twenty-below day late in January, 1947. It was hardly daylight when I prepared to refill my bird-feeder. I noticed that all the sparrows were in a lilac bush. As I stepped out, a Saw-whet Owl flew from the ground directly at my feet to a limb of a sumac about eight feet away and two feet above me. I wondered at its tameness but, when I looked to see what was its interest on the ground, I found a half-eaten sparrow. The owl sat still until I went into the house, then immediately returned to its meal.

(Photo by Tom Kent, Cut—Iowa Bird Review)

As there was fresh blood on the snow it appeared the owl took the sparrow from the feeder box. This species is not supposed to menace small birds but the continued cold weather and heavy snow may have compelled this owl to take the sparrow for food. It was nearly three days before sparrows would come to the feeder again and even then they were jumpy.—**Dr. W. E. Harper, Watertown, S. D.**

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MULTIPLE USE OF ROBINS' NESTS—Two ago Robins built a nest in an elm near our house; another pair nested on a bracket under the eaves. Last summer a pair of Mourning Doves superimposed their nest of twigs on the nest in the tree and raised two young. House Sparrows took over the nest under the eaves and covered it with a big bundle of grass. It was unsightly but out of reach. Workmen with ladders were at the house in late January and when asked to pull down the Sparrows' nest said a Screech Owl was perched on it when they came to work late that morning. The nest is still in place, and we are waiting to learn whether it will be used as a nest by the owls or was merely a shelter.—**Mrs. J. S. Findley, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

WINTERING BIRDS IN NORTHERN BLACK HILLS—Feb. 2, 1952. We seem to have rather fewer birds this winter. Chickadees, Tree Sparrows, Slate-colored Juncos, Blue Jays and Goldfinches are with us as usual, but have not spent much time in town. Since before Christmas I have seen regularly half a dozen Wilson's Snipe and one Killdeer wintering along an open stream. Both Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers are seen regularly but not frequently. In the last month I have twice seen a Yellow-shafted Flicker and one of the teachers here says that one has been in her yard all winter. A dozen or so Starlings are wintering on a farm down the Valley from Spearfish where they spent most of the last year and a half. One of my students reports a Lewis's Woodpecker has resided in a large tree near his house ever since last summer, where it is seen nearly every day. They are not unusual here at any time. Toward the end of last October a rather large flock of Evening Grosbeaks came into town, spent a couple of days looking around the trees, and moved on. We saw a few in December, but they did not return in numbers until a week and a half ago. About January 23 we had some cold weather and snow and the Grosbeaks flocked into town again. Fifty of them spent half a day in our boxelder tree eating the seeds that had remained on since last fall. A circle about twenty feet in diameter under the tree was completely littered with the wings of these seeds. A few birds remained around for about two days and then moved to other trees with more food. Early in December we saw and heard Bohemian Waxwings briefly and they, like the Grosbeaks, returned when the cold and snow hit this country. They have been thoroughly working over all the berry bushes and fruit trees for over a week now. Meadowlarks have been around all winter, too. In early November I saw a flight of probably 100 pale, dull, nearly songless birds. They were apparently migrating. More recently on two occasions, and again February 1, I saw some single birds. The one I saw yesterday was bright colored—just as bright as the ones we see in April and May.

I might mention the weather, for what it is worth. We have had a much milder winter than any of the country in the eastern two-thirds of the state. We had snow and freezing weather fairly early in October, but the temperature has only twice, I think, reached 25 below. Right now we are driving around town without topcoats, the sun is bright, and the snow is gone except in a few spots where it was drifted rather deeply. Perhaps this kind of weather every year accounts for some of the birds we see here the year round.—**Cecil P. Haight, Spearfish, S. D.**

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PURPLE FINCHES EAT APPLES—There are two crabapple trees in our yard and the fruit, about the diameter of a nickel, is left on the trees. During a few days in the spring of the last two years several Purple Finches have fed on the thawing apples. They came April 25, 1950, but I did not record the date last year.—**Dr. E. W. Harper, Watertown, S. D.**

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AVOCETS IN N. E. SO. DAK.—Late in July, 1951, while on Highway 25 west of Garden City, we saw 24 Avocets on a slough near the road. We got out of the car and watched them for an hour or so and all the time their "kleeks" of concern never got any less. The cinnamon on their heads and necks was getting a little faded, but the sight of so many of those beautiful birds together made it a "Red-Letter" day for us. We believe we found one of their breeding places in South Dakota and plan to go there in June to look for the nests.—**Dr. and Mrs. S. W. Keck, Huron, S. D.**

WINTER SINGING OF CARDINALS—Do Cardinals sing during the winter in South Dakota? Do they sing around the calendar or is there a period when they remain silent, except for call notes? My records are by no means conclusive nor is my curiosity satisfied. However, over a period of some three years (Jan. 1949-Feb. 7, 1952), I believe I have found that Cardinals do sing here in the wintertime but that they also begin to rest from song late in summer or early in autumn and remain so for possibly five months.

I have records of Cardinals' singing for every month of the year except June, July, November and December. June and July, the vacation months, take me away from Sioux Falls. Although I have no listings for these two months, no doubt Cardinals continue the vocal efforts they began in spring. I have records for August, one, in 1951, being as late as the 26th. September and October seem to be the uncertain months. While I have three or more records for each of the singing months, for September I have only one, and that in 1950. The day, Sept. 7, was cold and blowy. The Cardinal, a male, sat in the lilacs outside my window, opened to a crack. The song was so softly sung that I'm sure it was inaudible forty feet away. But the "what cheer, what cheer" was distinctly articulated. Perhaps this was the "whisper song," common certainly to the Thrushes and the Robin. My impression, however, is that this ventriloquistic effort occurs more likely during the courtship than during the so-called rest period supposedly following the completion of domestic duties. My solitary October date, the 25th in 1949, is perhaps unusually late. November, December and January seem to be the silent months. I have only one record for January, and that very late---the 30th in 1952. This is also my earliest song record for the period. February seems to be the time for returning to song, as these dates may suggest: 1949, February 8th; 1950, the 4th; 1951, the 16th. Apparently these are not single attempts or isolated efforts. Once the time for song arrives, singing continues. Nor does temperature seem a determining factor, as the following records indicate. In these, temperatures were noted for only two of the three years:— 1950: Feb. 4, 7, 11; 1951: Feb. 16, 21 degrees, 19, 31 degrees, 21, 24 degrees; 1952: Jan. 30, minus 3 degrees, Jan. 31, 40 degrees, Feb. 1, 28 degrees, Feb. 2-7, varying from 34 to 17 degrees.

I am wondering whether or not the records kept by SDOU members bear out my suggestion.—**Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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FALL AND WINTER BIRDS, UNION COUNTY, S. D.—The TV aerial at Judy Daileys' home at McCook Lake was the favorite daytime roost for a flock of Eastern Bluebirds from October 12 to 21. One Avocet was noted with a flock of Yellowlegs Oct. 26, and 3 on a Missouri River bar on the 27th, while 3 Western Willets were observed on another sandbar near Gayville that day. From my own observations and reports from others I would say Am. Goldeneyes were more numerous here this fall (1951) than at any other time in the last 15 years. Blue and Snow Geese were plentiful along the Missouri for about 5 weeks, as were White-fronts; this is uncommon, as during their fall flight these species usually go through without stopping here. A flock of about 25 Golden Plovers was observed flying rapidly over plowing and stubble near Jefferson on Oct. 28. On Dec. 16, while I was visiting my old duck blind on a nearby slough, I found a nice flock of Mallards and several times a Long-billed Marsh Wren flew about 50 feet just above the snow and ice and then fell. I was almost able to capture the poor thing, but it finally got into the rushes and eluded me.—**W. R. Felton, Jr., Jefferson, S. D.**

CENTRAL BLACK HILLS REPORT—On November 3, while hunting in the Victoria Creek area, I saw a Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Brown Creeper. The Creeper was working the trunks of the trees while the Kinglet foraged principally in the upper branches. I was able to observe the Kinglet for some time and to approach within 4 or 5 feet. The orange on its head was encircled by yellow and the yellow by black which indicates the male bird. I surmise that this bird is a straggler here. A male Hooded Merganser was seen at Canyon Lake on December 2, 1951. The 2000 (est.) ducks wintering there included a male Wood Duck and about 30 American Golden-eyes. There are usually some Blue-winged Teals, Baldpates, and Gadwalls, but these could have been overlooked among the greater number of Mallards. Have been looking for the Pygmy Nuthatch for years but have never seen one. Wyoming claims to have them. They may be on the west side of the Hills, but as I don't often get over there I may be missing them.—**Harry Behrens, Rapid City, S. D.**

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CENTRAL SO. DAK. OBSERVATIONS—Some personal observations: A flock of 75 to 100 Sandhill Cranes flying south over Presho October 16, and, two days later, another flock, nearly as large, near Onida. Two Golden Eagles seen near the highway between Miller and Ree Heights on Dec. 11. Two Snowy Owls observed near Iroquois on Jan. 4; one was very white, the other had much more brown. One seen in same area on 6th may have been one of this pair. We have a Shorteared Owl which lives in my coal bin. We feed it pork liver and mice (when we can catch them!) The Owl is quite tame, and when hungry and after some coaxing, will alight on my hand and take food. The bird was shot in one wing, but this has healed quite well and by spring it should be able to fly quite well.—**Claude A. Van Epps, Huron, S. D.**

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LACREEK REFUGE NOTES.—Except for a period of snowstorms and zero temperatures in December, the winter has been generally mild and open here, with thermometer readings frequently reaching the forty and fifty degree range throughout most of January and early February. A few small flocks of Canada Geese began appearing as early as Jan. 31, and some early return migration was noted among Mallards and Pintails during the first half of February. These geese and ducks have moved in nearly three weeks earlier than usual. Of the wintering birds of prey, fewer Golden Eagles were noted, but the Bald Eagle was observed more frequently this season. Rough-legged Hawks were numerous again, and more Marsh Hawks were present. A solitary Prairie Falcon was noted occasionally. A few Jacksnipes (Wilson's Snipes) were observed on an open, spring creek and are apparently wintering there. Pheasants and Sharp-tailed Grouse are numerous and have been greatly favored by the mild, open weather. A solitary Mountain Bluebird was observed at refuge headquarters Jan. 31. Tree Sparrows have been present in numbers usually observed at this season. A tremendous concentration of Lapland Longspurs was noted at the refuge during the last three days of January. Great flocks of these birds suddenly appeared at the area, drifting restlessly to and fro over the meadows, occasionally settling at some favored feeding site, then taking wing in loose formation to swirl out briefly and return to the same scene. Speculation arises as to whether this great Longspur concentration may have originated from a mass exodus of the birds from blizzard-swept areas adjacent to this locality, or if the mild, springlike weather prevailing in this section of the state at the time may have stimulated an early seasonal migratory movement.—**Kenneth Krumm, Martin, S. D.**

CENTRAL SOUTHEASTERN S. D. WINTER VISITORS—This winter we have been on the edge of the severe storm belt and our bird-feeder has been very popular. Red-breasted Nuthatches visited it regularly during November and early December. They disappeared for a few weeks, they returned, and now, in late January, they are gone. They were so friendly that when I left the house they flew toward me chattering and several times lit on my hand to pick pumpkin seeds from a mixture with watermelon, muskmelon and sunflower seeds. White-breasted Nuthatches, Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and Cardinals also come regularly to the feeders. Flickers (yellow-shafted), Blue Jays, Slate-colored Juncos, Tree Sparrows and Goldfinches do not come so regularly.—**Miss Katherine Kaufman, Freeman, S. D.**

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EARLY MIGRANTS IN SOUTHERN BLACK HILLS—(Feb. 12, 1952). For the past week or more the birds have flocked in here. Several days we counted 15 or more Robins at the birdbath, besides several Townsend's Solitaires, various kinds of sparrows, also Juncos, etc. The last two days not so many at a time, so probably they're traveling on.—**Mrs. H. B. Stevens, Hot Springs, S. D.**

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BLACK-NECKED STILT IN CENTRAL S. E. SO. DAK.—On May 18, 1951, I was on Highway 81, a few miles south of Highway 16, when I saw a Black-necked Stilt, with other waders, in a small roadside marsh. I watched it for several minutes while referring to the description in the Guide I carry, so I feel positive of the identification, although this is not one of the common birds of South Dakota.—**Dr. S. W. Keck, Huron, S. D.**

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MEADOWLARKS AT ELK POINT, S. E. SO. DAK.—In Union County, 2 miles west of Elk Point, the prairie grasses stand tall and dry along the railroad track. Here, on January 7, 1952, we flushed 8 Western Meadowlarks. It was a thrilling sight to identify the yellow throat and black V, against the snow-covered ground, as one perched on a fencepost. Those grasses undoubtedly provided cover against the weather and seeds for food. In "Birds of South Dakota" by Over and Thoms we read: "While a few remain in the southern part of the state during the winter, which are probably birds reared in Canada, it is, strictly speaking, a migratory bird. They arrive here in March and linger in small flocks in the fall until a severe storm drives them southward." Whether these birds remained behind from the summer population reared here or are of those which have come from Canada during the fall migration, provokes a challenge.—**Adelene W. Siljenberg, Vermillion, S. D.**

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NORTHERN ROBINS, AGAIN—The note in the December issue of Bird Notes has evoked some comment by out-of-state ornithologists. One suggests a material difference between the Western Robins which predominate at the lower levels and those which were found at higher altitudes. Another, who suspects a difference between the migrating birds and the nesting birds in his area, suggests that to avoid misleading comparisons the specimens which may be examined should be collected in known breeding areas at the same time of the year.—HFC

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SHOREBIRDS IN WAUBAY-WEBSTER AREA—On June 3, 1951, between Webster and Waubay we saw flocks of Ruddy Turnstones, also of Red-backed Sandpipers. They were beautiful in their spring plumage, and I was glad to add them to my list.—**Mrs. S. W. Keck, Huron, S. D.**

Short Tales

When one sees a male Marsh Hawk doing loop-the-loops, barrel rolls and other aerial stunts for the edification of a mate, present or prospective, it becomes clear why scientists named it "Circus hudsonius." Other spectacular avian performances, high in the air, on or near the ground, and on the water, all motivated by what some call "the ecstacy of spring" will be going on in our South Dakota bird-world by the time this is being read. Are you watching for them? Do you recognize them? Ain't Nature wonderful?

E. B. Harding promoted competition in bird-feeding at Brookings which resulted in a lot of fun, some verse and more food for birds. A neighbor boy swept the snow from a patch of ground and threw out some crumbs. Harding fastened a cigar box to a post, with a sign, "This bread is fresher." Then another neighbor got into it; his sign read "Harding's bread has worms." (Perhaps the birds did not care!) Then the doggerel fight really started. The people had fun and the birds got fat.

The North Dakotan, published by Greater North Dakota Assn., in the November, 1951, issue, carried an article, "Recommend Birding as Versatile Sport," about Dr. and Mrs. R. T. Gammell, of Kenmare, N. D. They are SDOU members, also Season Editors, Northern Great Plains Region, for Audubon Field Notes. The story was illustrated with a fine picture of the Gammells in the field.

Hattie Washburn, who lives near Goodwin, S. D., is a new member of SDOU. Her nephew, Gardner Washburn, now 14, is a bird-watcher, too. Together they keep a list of birds they identify each year, and one year they listed 103.

Minneapolis Bird Club members made a trip to Sand Lake near Aberdeen, S. D., May 26-27, 1950, according to report in The Flicker of Dec. 1951. A few miles east of the Lake they spotted an Osprey, "which is considered uncommon in South Dakota." Between there and Sisseton a Swainson's Hawk was identified, too. At the lake they observed Baird's Sandpipers and Ruddy Turnstones.

Mrs. Ada Smith, Fairburn, writes: "I raised a few tame sunflowers just to have the seed for my feeding station. I also use suet, pork rinds, bread crumbs and cracked grain. It is astonishing how much the birds eat. The Hairy Woodpeckers are the dominant ones at my station."

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union will hold its annual meeting at Hastings May 9 and 10. There is a wonderful Museum there. Iowa Ornithologists' Union will meet in annual session at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, on May 10 and 11. Those Nebraskans and Iowans are wonderful hosts and "right smart birders."

For 17 seasons Wheaton College of Wheaton, Ill., has operated a summer camp in the Black Hills, known as Wheaton College Science Station. Nearly every summer their students of birds at the Station have visited the Behrens Ranch near Rapid City, to examine the collection of mounted specimens referred to in Bird Notes of Sept. 1951. The permanent camp is at Big Bend, 13 miles west of Rapid City, on the Rim Rock Highway.