SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Official Publication
of
SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION
(Organized 1949)

Vol. X, No. 1 **MARCH, 1958** **Whole No. 36**

South Dakota Bird Notes, the Organ of South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, is sent to all members whose dues are paid for the current year. Adults, $3.00; Juniors (12-16) $1.00 per year. Subscription rate (for non-members) $4.00 per year, single copies $1.00. Published Quarterly.

Volume X, No. 1 **South Dakota Bird Notes** **Whole No. 36**

In This Number . . .

South Dakota Ornithologists' Union

OFFICERS 1957-58

President ..... **Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls**
Vice President ..... **N. R. Whitney, Jr., Rapid City**
Secretary ..... **J. O. Johnson, 112 7th St. S. E., Watertown**
Treasurer ..... **L. J. Moriarty, Watertown**
Editor ..... **J. S. Findley, 1201 S. Center Ave., Sioux Falls**
Membership Chairman ..... **H. F. Chapman, 516 Security Bank Bldg., Sioux Falls**

DIRECTORS

For Term Expiring 1960: Harry C. Behrens, Rapid City; Ruth Habeger, Madison; J. W. Johnson, Huron; J. O. Johnson, Watertown; Kenneth Krumm, Martin.

For Term Expiring 1958: C. P. Crutchett, Armour; W. R. Felton, Jr., Jefferson; J. S. Findley, Sioux Falls; L. J. Moriarty, Watertown; Mrs. H. B. Stevens, Hot Springs.

For Term Expiring 1959: Herman Chilson, Webster; Willis Hall, Yankton; Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls; G. B. Spawn, Brookings; N. E. Whitney, Jr., Rapid City.

President's Page

IN THIS, my last "page", I should like to congratulate the membership of SDOU on its increasing awareness of the need for the greatest possible care in making observations and in recording them. Along with our enthusiasm for bird watching and reporting must go a virile respect for accuracy, not only in what we see but also in how we record what we do see. Time, locality, weather conditions, behavior, habitat in which the species is observed . . . these should be as carefully listed as the exact identification of the bird itself.

Of all activities, the accurate and unquestionable identification of the species, especially during periods of migration, cannot be over-emphasized. In addition to noting exactly what one sees, one must check his observation with those of others, such as Peterson or Pough; and SDOU check-list in BIRD NOTES ought not to be neglected. It is wiser perhaps to withhold a vague or uncertain recognition than to rush into print with a doubtful report. Where uncommon varieties, winter visitants and migrants are concerned, the utmost vigilance must be exercised. For instance, apparently rather dull-colored wintering Tree Sparrows without a breast-spot are often reported without reservation as Chipping Sparrows.

True, sometimes the observer is sure of his identification even when the species is uncommon or far from its usual haunts or out of season. Such a report can be valuable indeed, especially if the observer describes exactly what he saw, suggests that this is what the bird seems to have been and permits the reader or researcher to draw his own conclusion. If the reporter, whether individual or group, has a reputation for accuracy in reporting, such a record will go far toward gaining acceptance in future studies. On the other hand, if the reporter, group or individual, is suspected of lack of objectivity or accuracy, or if the report is written in positive or absolute terms, the report will probably fail to gain recognition and the journal publishing it may suffer in consequence.

Personally, before I report an uncommon species, I feel I must have the corroboration of at least one other individual. I'd like to suggest that any group or organization which regularly reports data to national organizations or publishes data in its own journal appoint a committee of at least three competent observers to assist the compiler or editor in deciding the status of rareties, uncommon species, unusual migrants and such matters as wintering birds out of their ranges.

I am grateful for the cooperation and consideration of many people in and out of SDOU for keeping me and the record straight.

—Herbert Krause

Birding in the Black Hills

by Whitney and Karen Eastman

WOULD you like to go birding in a new and different place where you can add some new ones to your life list, see new plants and animals and exercise your camera on some breathtaking mountain scenery? If the answer is yes, but my vacation isn't long enough, or I can't afford a long trip, give a thought to the Black Hills.

Hill City in the heart of the Black Hills is just under 600 miles from the Twin Cities, and if you are one of these tourists who like to rise up at 3 a. m. and make distance, you can get there in a day, but you'll have a lot more fun and arrive safely and rested if you take two days. If you are really a dyed-in-the-wool birder, you won't be able to resist stopping for a look around as the terrain, flora and fauna gradually change from the familiar to the different and exciting.

Either Route 14 or 16 across South Dakota is a good choice, particularly if you go in June or July when birds are nesting and singing. If you have a little extra time to spare and are making the trip around Labor Day, or if you start from farther north in Minnesota, Route 103 along Big Stone Lake on the Minnesota side from Ortonville to Browns Valley is a fine country road for observing fall migrants. Cross over into South Dakota near Browns Valley and take South Dakota No. 10 to Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge for a look at geese, ducks, shorebirds, and those gorgeous western grebes and white pelicans.

Drop down to Route 212 somewhere along the way and go to Belle Fourche, thence south to Spearfish and the Black Hills. If you are lucky, you will see sage hens on this route, but if your luck isn't that good, and you really want to see them, take a few extra hours to follow No. 212 northwest from Belle Fourche into Wyoming and Montana. Sage hens are positively guaranteed for all following this procedure. Then you can proceed down Spearfish Canyon to Hill City—but more about Spearfish Canyon later.

Let's assume this is your first trip west, you are making it in June or July, and you choose Route 16, entering South Dakota just west of Worthington. The western meadowlark with his melodious song is the most conspicuous bird. The first new "life lister" is soon spied as a sparrow-sized black bird with flashing white wing patches darts across the road. You have seen your first male lark bunting, and they become increasingly abundant, together with their more soberly dressed wives and children. As you pass a clover or alfalfa patch, you are pretty sure to hear a cheery "dick dick cissel" from the wires as this miniature edition of the meadowlark calls his name. South Dakota's state bird, the pheasant, brightens the landscape, and in the marshes you will find ducks, grebes, herons and rails if you take the time to seek them out. The eastern kingbird is a common roadside bird all across the state. In fact, it occurs all the way to the Pacific Coast. However, as you proceed west you will find more and more western kingbirds as well.

After crossing the Missouri River at Chamberlain and rising up to the Missouri Plateau, the land takes on a more western flavor, with large herds of grazing cattle, wide open spaces and bigger hills, interspersed with wooded coulees, where concentrations of birds are found. Hawks are less common on the plains than they used to be, due, no doubt, to the persecution they have been subjected to. However, you will see Swainson's hawk, with his beautiful brown bib, sitting confidingly on a fence post. Look for golden eagles soaring overhead. By now you should

have spotted the flashy black and white magpies with their long glossy tail streamers.

Stop at Kadoka Junction long enough to go out back of the Phillips 66 station to see the burrowing owl and prairie dog colony. It's quite a show.

By all means take Alternate 14 and 16 for the loop through the Badlands where Mother Nature has gone all out to produce the fantastic and bizarre. Bird life is not abundant, but interesting. If you haven't already found the spotted towhee in some wooded coulee, you are sure to find him here. He seems always to be singing from some juniper thicket no matter how hot it is—and it is apt to be hot. Here you will perhaps get your first glimpse of the rock wren and Say's phoebe.

Another interesting stop is Wasta on Routes 14 and 16 where you can take the road to the right by the Tourist Station just east of town. It is best to park your car here and proceed on foot up into the hills. Great horned owls are apt to be hunting on the hillside, and the blue grosbeak, black-headed grosbeak, spotted towhee and Bullock's oriole provide a feast for eastern eyes.

Route 16 and Alternate 85 will take you to Hill City, and Palmer Gulch Lodge, where we stop, is just over three miles away. There is a lot to see right around the lodge. First, you will notice the familiar robin. But, take a closer look. There are both eastern and western robins here because this is the overlapping zone for eastern and western birds. The eastern robin such as we have in Minnesota has white in his tail. His western cousin has an all-black tail and appears to be a somewhat shyer bird. The white-winged junco is a common resident. At first glance he looks pretty much like our slate-colored junco, but look for that white line through his wings. Take a good look at the flickers. You have both yellow-shafted and red-shafted here as well as hybrids. You may even see a bird that is yellow-shafted on one side and red on the other. The noisy magpie will be scolding from the pines or flying across the meadow.

The western wood peewee looks pretty much like the eastern, but listen to him. He has a rather low "pee-ur" call instead of the familiar "pee-a-wee." His nest is apt to be found on a horizontal pine branch. Replacing our familiar myrtle warbler is Audubon's warbler with a yellow throat instead of white. The chipping sparrow is a common nester in the pines as is the plumbeous vireo, western counterpart of the blue-headed vireo.

Across the meadow from the lodge is a beautiful view of Harney Peak, highest point east of the Rockies, 7,242 feet. Occasionally a golden eagle can be seen soaring above it. To the left are the jagged spires of Mt. Elkhorn, and closer at hand, just across the meadow, is an inviting trail leading into the forest and up to the peaks. As the shadows lengthen and dusk settles over the hills, the timid deer may come out and graze in the meadow, and the great horned owls start talking to each other across the valley.

The Black Hills are friendly mountains, green and wooded with wellmarked trails and gentle slopes for the novice mountain climber as well as rougher terrain for the more enterprising. There are no poisonous snakes, poison ivy or dangerous animals to be encountered in Palmer Gulch. So you can start off for a day's or a half-day's ramble with nothing to fear. The trail following the water pipeline up a canyon along a series of beaver ponds, gradually increasing in elevation with corresponding changes in plant and bird life, is a good way to begin exploring the Hills. In the low shrubbery on either side of the trail yellowthroats and MacGillivary's warbler, western relative of our mourning warbler, are nesting. At a beaver pond with dead trees standing in the water you will find the

(Continued on page 77)

The American Redstart in Rapid City

by Goldie Burton

STANDING at the top of our wood warblers is the American Redstart with its beauty of form and color and its grace as it flits about feeding on insects on the wing. It is a small bird 4½ to 5½ inches in length. The male is black with white underparts and orange-red patches on sides, wings and tail. When the tail is spread in flight these patches are large and fan-shaped. The female is smaller, olive brown in color with yellow wing and tail patches.

Although its range is given as eastern United States and diagonally northwest through Colorado and northern Utah to eastern Oregon and Washington as far north as British Columbia, the Redstart is found in the Black Hills. Last June (1957) when a field trip was made to Jackson Boulevard a number of Redstarts were seen and a pair has nested in my yard the last three summers.

Last year the male appeared on May 27 with the female coming a few days later. About four days after her arrival she began building the nest which seemed to be her chore exclusively. It was built in a three-pronged crotch about 9 feet from the ground in the same lilac shrub that the redstarts had used the two previous summers. This bush was only 8 feet from the walk leading to my kitchen door which I used many times daily. The nests distintegrate during the storms of winter as a rule so a new one must be built each spring.

The Wilson Bulletin tells us the materials used in building the nest are bark, plant fibres, feathers, grasses, hair and spider web. Each spring I place pieces of cotton on the bushes and the mother Redstart always used them to finish off the outside of her nest. The nest built in 1957 measured 2 7/8 inches in diameter, 2¾ inches outside depth and 1½ inches inside depth. It took the redstart about 3 days to complete the nest.

Although the male Redstart did not help with the nest building nor with the incubation, he did sing almost constantly from a tall tree nearby. I say "sing" but the song of the Redstart is not very melodious being mainly a repetition of two notes.

In addition to singing the male brings food to the female and protects his territorial boundaries. I did not observe other Redstarts or other bids trying to intrude except once while the nest was being built. Then a House Wren which was also nesting in my yard came and perched on the Redstart's nest looking into it until the female Redstart chased it away. Later the wren returned but was quickly routed.

The female Redstart began incubating the eggs about June 11 and 13 days later, on June 24, they hatched 3 little Redstarts which grew to maturity.

The male helped to feed the young and to keep the nest clean. Both the male and female were active and untiring hunters of insects, almost constantly on the wing.

Their nest was so high that I could not observe the growth of the young until I caught a glimpse of their heads over the edge of the nest and of their mouths opening for insects. From then on I could almost see them grow in size and strength until they were able to sit up on the edge of the nest.

On the 9th day toward evening they left the shelter and protection of the family home. I had been keeping an eye on them all day hoping to see them leave the nest, but just about dusk while I was in the house having supper they tried their wings. I searched everywhere for them, to the great distress of their parents, and finally dis-

(Continued on page 80)

Personal Experiences of a Bird-watcher in Europe

by Ruth Habeger

A four-month tour of Europe is a bird-watcher's delight. But locating the bird habitats is not as easy as locating historic points of interest.

I set out last spring with a copy of Roger Tory Peterson's Field Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe under my arm and a Brownie movie camera slung over my shoulder. At the end of four months I had toured the Canary Islands, Portugal, Paris, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, and Scotland and had added 72 new birds to my life list.

The movie camera could have been very useful, but since I was very inexperienced in that phase of photography, I was greatly disappointed in the results. However, the bird book was something that I knew how to use and it was valuable. That book and the personal contacts which I made were my only sources of information about birds and where to look for them in Europe. The guides which one hires on regular tours are little or no help.

In the Canary Islands, we met a Spaniard named Diomeico Peres who knew a great deal about the birds of the islands. He knew very little English but gave the Latin names of the plants in the garden. I asked him about birds and he became very excited. He communicated by imitating the bird sounds and showing with hand motion what the bird did. When I showed him a picture of the bird I thought he was describing, he cried, 'Si! Si!" I handed him my bird book and he checked the birds that I could expect to find in the Canary Islands, and we made an appointment to have him show us where to see them. He was a great help in locating the 21 species that I did see on the Island.

After taking a steamer from the Islands to Portugal via the Madeira Islands, we flew to Paris. During the week we were there we stayed with friends who lived two blocks from the Bois de Boulogne and I was able to go out and study birds almost every morning I located many of the species of birds which I had previously seen in the Canary Islands; but new to me were the nightingale, wood dove, great and coal tit, carrion crow, jay and wren.

From Paris we went to Switzerland. There I saw the house martin, Alpine chough, tree creeper and bullfinch. It was in Holland that I was most successful in locating different species of birds. A native professor whom we met on the electric train gave me considerable information concerning bird refuges in the North Sea, and an information bureau in Amsterdam also proved helpful. After a trip by both street car and bus, I finally reached Naarden, where I learned that I could not possibly visit the bird refuge there without an entrance ticket which should have been secured in Amsterdam. However, a phone call to the president of the organization resulted in a verbal permit for me, given to the caretaker of the refuge. I took a taxi to his home and secured an English-speaking guide with a boat, who rowed me over the lake for three hours. During this time. I saw 30 species of birds, 12 of them new to me.

Outstanding was a rookery of about 2000 cormorants (Phalacrocorax carbo) of the species which is common on the eastern coast of North America. The adult cormorant has a light-yellow chin patch and a white "pocket" on the flanks in spring. The immature has a whitish head and underparts.

The grebe has always been a favorite of mine, and that eventful day at the Naarden refuge I secured a fine view of several great-crested grebes. This

nineteen-inch bird, largest of all grebes, has a blackish eartuft and a prominent chestnut-and-black frill on the side of the head. Its underparts are gleaming white. It is indeed a handsome bird.

Seeing the spoon bill at Lake Naarden was a special treat. This is a large bird thirty-four inches long with snow-white plumage and a long spoon bill. In flocks of three, four, and six the spoonbills took off in slow regular flight, gliding and soaring in single file.

The lapwings were tame and easy to see resting in groups in low marshy areas near the railroad tracks, and were interesting and easy to spot when in flight. The lapwing is a very large plover, black and white, with a chest crossed by one very wide black band. The bird has a white tail with a broad black band, a head with a long wispy crest, and rounded wings. It flies with a slow flapping action.

After an interesting stay in Holland we flew to Hamburg, where we spent a month with relatives. I took many bird walks alone and with relatives to the woods along the Elbe and found birding very good. Especially interesting were the Ictering warbler, whitethroat and, song thrush.

Every morning and evening we could hear the cuckoos in the woods not far from our bedroom. Often I went out to try to find them but, like the American cuckoos, they are very elusive. It was only toward the end of our stay, with much persistence, that I finally obtained a look at both the male and female cuckoo.

On the island of Sylt in northern Germany is a rather famous summer resort. We spent several days there and visited the bird refuge at Voyelkiji, an old hunting preserve of royalty. Remnants of traps and lures once used to catch waterfowl may be seen there. Rather primitive canals lead into a covered shed. From 1767 until 1926, birds were chased through the outlet and batted with clubs. In one year alone 40,000 mallards were caught to be sold for food. The species dwindled so much that this practice was discontinued. The mallards and shovelers are the same species that we have in this country. The waterfowl new to me were the shelduck, goosander, and redshank.

It was Ostenfeld, Germany, the home of my great-grandfather, that I had my experience with the storks. The white stork is now very rare in Europe. While in northern Germany I saw only four stork nests, all of them on thatched roofs. I saw only five adult birds and three young. The white stork, a forty-inch bird, is the largest bird I have ever seen in the wild. It has white plumage with jet-black flight feathers and a long bright-red bill and legs. I took a movie of a family on a thatched roof. In the large mess of sticks called a nest were the young, the female standin above them. The male, not the least bit concerned about the people so near, stood on one leg on the smoking chimney. Storks seem to be as friendly as dogs are here, and are as much a part of the household where they chose to build. The natives feel that storks bring them good luck.

A nine day trip around the southern part of Norway on a slow freighter was ideal for bird study. There was always a flock of gulls following the boat after meals. They seemed to know to be near when the garbage was dumped. Often times the route of the freighter carried us in very narrow passages where we could study nesting areas of birds on the rocky shores. Our progress had to be slow in and out of these long fjords and this also made good bird observation possible. The captain of our freighter soon discovered my interest in birds and he was a great help to me. Of course, he knew only the Scandanavian names for these birds but Peterson gives those in his descriptions. One time he called me to the bridge and when we got to a certain rocky area he blew the whistle and flushed herons from their nests. I had seen them in Holland but it was unusual to find them

in this habitat. Again and again he called me to come up to see the Eider with her young. The oyster catcher which is as striking and unsual as our avocet could often be seen working its way along that rocky coast.

We flew to Scotland, where we stayed only a short time. Wherever we went, innkeepers took time to show us the birds. Other people too were interested in and familiar with the birds. Of course, we had no language barrier in Scotland .

It was interesting to note that twelve of the species of birds I saw are found in the United States—mallard, shoveler, osprey, black tern, common tern, herring gull, house sparrow, starling, raven magpie, shelduck, cormorant, and lapwing. The last three were new to me. Concerning this, Peterson says, "More birds have flown from America to Europe than have reached us from the other side. The prevailing winds are in favor of our birds, as they were in favor of American aviators when the first transatlantic flights were made. The few European species that have reached us are strong fliers, mostly waterfowl."

In order to help other bird-watchers who are going to Europe, I might suggest that they try to stay in one place long enough to tramp through the country since the birds will often be found off the beaten path. One can see birds quite well from the car windows in first-class coaches on the electric railroad, especially in Holland, where the dikes and the water are close at hand; but there is little opportunity to observe birds when traveling rapidly through the mountains, and there is too much traffic along the Rhine. Then, too, one must allow for the language barrier in many countries. Whenever possible the bird-watcher should inquire at information bureaus concerning the nearest bird refuge, and a copy of Peterson's Field Guide is indispensable.

Birding In The Black Hills

(Continued from page 73)

Dakota song sparrow, singing like a hoarse eastern song sparrow; pine siskins; Traill's flycatcher, a western member of the Empidonax group; and with just a little luck and persistence —the Arctic three-toed woodpecker with his patent leather back and jaunty yellow cap.

Climb a little higher among the rock outcroppings and pines, and a group of gray jays will probably come down to investigate the intruder on their domain. A little sqeaking will bring them very close. The red-naped sapsucker, close relatives of our yellow-bellied sapsucker, but with a little different arrangement of red on his head and nape, is here, as are the hairy woodpecker, brown creeper, kinglets, red-breasted nuthatch and red crossbills.

When you reach the proper elevation, Townsend's solitaire will serenade you with his incomparable song. Come back in September, and you will find flocks of them down at the lodge eating berries, but they like privacy and a more rarified atmosphere for their nesting activities.

The western tanager is one of the prize birds of the Hills, quite common and not shy.

A rocky canyon will produce a pair of nesting western flycatchers, little yellow-bellied members of that puzzling Empidonax group. It is also home to a family of canyon wrens whose song is described by Peterson as "a gushing cadence of clear curved notes tripping down the scale." Enhanced by the echoing canyon walls it is one of the most memorable bird songs one is apt to hear. The russet-backed thrush, western counterpart of the eastern olive-backed, nests near by. A gray ruffed grouse hen explodes out of a thicket to distract you from her half-grown chicks.

The next day, a little leg-weary from unaccustomed climbing, you will prob-

ably decide to do your sight-seeing by car. Spectacular mountain scenery will be found along the Needles Highway. The rather forbidding terrain of the Needles and Cathedral Spires is not conducive to abundant bird life, but look for turkey vultures, duck hawks and red-tailed hawks soaring about the peaks. You may spy a mountain goat perched on a rocky pedestal above the road.

Of course, you will visit the Shrine of Democracy, that monumental piece of sculpture which occupied Gutzum Borglum for fourteen years. The faces are visible for sixty miles, and Lincoln's face is sixty feet from hairline to chin. Particularly interesting from the birder's viewpoint are the white-throated swifts gliding back and forth before the faces, busily catching insects for their hungry broods in the rocks.

Crystal-clear Sylvan Lake is one of the beauty spots of the Hills in its rocky setting. It is a man-made lake, very deep and clear, and, therefore not very hospitable to birds. A steep trail has been carved out of the granite down Sunday Gulch behind the lake. There in the evergreens you will find golden-crowned kinglets and other common Hills birds, but, remember, it's easier going down than coming up.

On a trip to Hill City you are sure to find the heavenly-hued mountain bluebird and the equally dazzling violet-green swallow. The sight of thirty of these little swallows basking on a sloping barn roof in the westering sun, stretching and displaying their grass-green, violet and sparkling white plumage, is one of our treasured memories of the Hills. Yellow-headed, Brewer's and red-winged blackbirds are frequently seen in the streets of Hill City where they have come from their houses in the nearby marsh or meadow, seeking gravel or bits of food.

From Hill City continue on the gravel road towards Mystic, and you will come to a huge burned-over area that looks like the Inferno with the fire put out. The earth is scorched right down to the granite, and blackened tree stumps rise to varying heights up to the full height of the original tree. It is a sad sight, but "It's an ill wind that blows nobody some good." The woodpeckers have taken over. Red-heads are abundant, but the fellow you have come to see is Lewis's woodpecker, a little larged than a hairy, magnificently attired in a black coat, old rose vest, and gray collar. We counted twenty on a hillside one day in early July. Look for nesting sparrow hawks, too.

There are lots of good birding spots near Rapid City. The most spectacular man-made attraction is at Dinosaur Park above the city where five life-sized concrete and steel replicas of prehistoric animals have been constructed. There you may get a look at the wild life of the Hills 135,000,000 years ago. Nesting unconcernedly at the feet of the giants is the little lark sparrow. Skirting Dinosaur Park is the Skyline Drive and Hangman's Hill where pinyon jays can be found. We also found a flock of about twenty-five drinking at a watering trough in Spring Valley, between Hill City and Rapid City. The pinyon jay is one of the clowns of the bird world, dull blue, with a long, sharp bill, short tail and waddling gait, not unlike the starling.

In the open country near Rapid City you will find the long-billed curlew and upland plover, and in the rocky outcroppings the rock wren makes his home. Look and listen for the blue grosbeak in brushy places along stream beds.

The roads through both Dark and South Canyons where Rapid City residents have constructed summer cottages are very interesting from an ornithological standpoint. The sheer canyon walls harbor white-throated swifts, canyon wrens, duck hawks and prairie falcons. On a rock in the middle of the fast-flowing stream a water ouzel is apt to be bobbing and then walking right down into the water in

his search for the marine life that constitutes his diet. He may even favor you with a song if he is in the mood, and if he does, you are in for a rare treat. The spotted towhee, redstart, Bullock's oriole, black-headed grosbeak, and long-tailed chat, western counterpart of our yellow-breasted chat, are to be found in these canyons. Here, too, is the dainty lazuli bunting as well as his eastern cousin, the indigo bunting.

Pettingill says, "Unquestionably the best place for bird finding, if not for sightseeing, in the Black Hills is Spearfish Canyon." It is like Dark and South Canyons, but there is more of it, and the forest growth is much more extensive. Most of the birds mentioned thus far will be found here and many more. The water ouzels, to us, are the outstanding attraction. Be sure to stop at Roughlock Falls where water ouzels nest every year. This waterfall is more accessible than some of the more spectacular which you will see from the road.

No trip to the Black Hills is complete without a jaunt down to Custer State Park and Wind Cave National Park or both to see the buffalo herds. We have had better luck finding the buffalo in Wind Cave Park, not far from headquarters. These are the animals which appeared in Walt Disney's "Vanishing Prairie", and if you have seen this excellent movie, you will be much interested to see its star performers in the flesh. The buffalo were estimated to be 50 to 75 million strong once, but by 1889 they were down to less than 1,000. They are thriving under protection now. The Custer herd numbers about 1,200. In fact, they slaughter large numbers of the great beasts each year to keep the herds down to the size the range will support. They range free and live on grass just as their ancestors did. Custer State Park sells about $75,000 worth of meat a year. You might sample some of it in a buffaloburger at some wayside restaurant. It is quite tasty.

Other animals are also thriving in a semi-wild state in the parks. You will find bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope. Don't let those donkeys get their heads in your car windows or you will have quite a problem getting them out again. Tourists have given them so many handouts, they try to exact tribute from any car that even slows down. A prairie dog colony is an interesting place to while away some time, and a huge billboard on the spot portrays the little animal's niche in nature's scheme.

Bird life on the prairie includes horned larks, Brewer's blackbirds and western meadowlarks. In the wooded coulees near Wind Cave headquarters the long-tailed chat is pretty sure to be scolding. Say's phoebe was nesting over the exit from Wind Cave at the time of our visit, and canyon wrens had set up housekeeping under a highway bridge over a near-by stream.

If time permits an extension of your trip to another section of the Black Hills; i. e., Devil's Tower National Monument, Wyoming, that imposing chunk of rock is well worth a visit. It rises up out of the prairie like a giant tree stump, 1,280 feet from the level of the stream below it, 865 feet from its apparent base at the foot of its regular columns. Geologists are not entirely certain of its origin but generally agree that at one time it was molten and was forced upward, cooled beneath the earth's surface, and the surrounding material gradually eroded away. They attribute the symmetrical columns to regularly arranged cracks due to the contraction of the cooling mass. They estimate its age at 50,000,000 years and believe it was uncovered fairly recently during the last million or two years.

There is about an acre and a half of apparently level land at the top of the tower. Prairie falcons and duck hawks have both nested in the rocks near the summit. The four and one-half miles of wooded nature trail through the grounds at the base of the

tower provide good birding. You probably won't find anything you haven't already seen in the Hills, but lots of old friends. We were impressed with the abundance of singing ovenbirds. The superintendent and his wife are interested in birds and keep records, so be sure to have a chat with them as they may have something to show you.

The prairie dog colony near Devil's Tower is a particularly tame one, and if you enjoy feeding small animals by hand, we found them very fond of fig bars, but they enjoy a varied diet of tourist offerings.

When the time comes to say goodbye to the Black Hills, we feel sure you will agree that this is a perfect vacation spot for a Minnesota birder anxious to explore new birding fields with a minimum expenditure of time and money.

* * *

Redstart In Rapid City

(Continued from page 74)

covered all three young redstarts high in the lilac.

During the incubation period the male did not sing as much as earlier in the season and I seldom saw him, but after the young left the nest he seemed to be just as concerned with their care as the female.

The little Redstarts stayed in my yard all summer and it was interesting to watch their maturing and change of plumage. Although immature males are colored much like females, it was not long until I could detect a tinge of red in their color patches.

All singing ceased in early August and though I saw the young Redstarts frequently, only occaacionally did I catch a glimpse of an adult male flitting about or taking a dip in the birdbath. I hoped it was my father Redstart.

* * *

On January 29, 1958, Rev. H. W. Wagar, had a real close-up look at a Carolina Wren on his lot in Winner.

Editorial Comment . . .

Mr. and Mrs. Whitney Eastman, Minneapolis, have made many trips to the Black Hills and can speak of birding there with equal authority to any born-and-bred-there Hillman. They submitted their article on Birding in the Black Hills to Bird Notes and also to The Flicker, the fine magazine of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, in which it appeared recently. It is a big addition to our from-time-to-time series on Bird Finding In South Dakota.

When Miss Habeger's Notes From The Canary Islands appeared in Bird Notes (June 1957:20) there were calls for an encore and inquiries whether she would write more of her personal experiences as a bird-watcher in Europe. As always she graciously complied, and with an article that makes us yearn for a field trip over Europe.

Rapid City has an active bird club which holds frequent meetings and field trips. At a recent meeting Mrs. Burton read a paper on The Redstart, which other members of the club thought should be published in Bird Notes so other members of SDOU can read it. They sent it to the editor and he agrees with them.

Mr. William Youngworth's note, "Summer Tanager Comes To South Dakota", deserves special mention because that probably is a "first" in the State. We are fortunate that the observation was made by a competent fieldman with his fine reputation for care and accuracy.

* * *

THE COVER

The Cover shows another of Willis Hall's bird portraits, this time of a Dipper, or Water Ouzel, that he photographed in the Black Hills.

General Notes of Special Interest

A SUMMER TANAGER COMES TO SOUTH DAKOTA—On May 8, 1958, while on a field trip looking for early migrating warblers, I found the flight very poor except for a few Nashville Warblers. With plenty of time to go, I decided to look for birds in the McCook Lake area, and proceeded to the small patch of native timber still standing on the Blain Beavers farm.

Soon I heard the song of a tanager. When I got it in the field of my glasses I saw a fully plumaged Summer Tanager. It was sitting in the top of a dead tree and the view was the best. I listened to the song for several minutes and then, as I approached closer, it flew a short distance giving a harsh tanager-like call. From the next perch it gave a sort of rattling, or gargling, call.

I was completely satisfied that I was watching a Summer Tanager and identification by specimen would have been almost too easy. As one gets older the chore of getting out in the field among the clinging wood ticks becomes harder and it is only the hope that one occasionally will find a species rare to his area that keeps the few of us really active fieldmen coming back each year for more strenuous hiking.—**William Youngworth, Sioux City, Iowa**

* * * *

FOX SPARROW AT FREEMAN—A thrill came to me last Spring on May 18, 1957, when I saw a Fox Sparrow for the first time. Even then I nearly missed him, but his vigorous scratching among dry leaves made enough commotion to attract my attention. His large size and bright rufous-red tail could not be easily confused with any other sparrow.—**Katherine Kaufman, Freeman, S. D.**

BALD EAGLES NEAR YANKTON—On February 8, 1958, we were surprised and delighted to see two Bald Eagles on the southeast shore of Lewis and Clark Lake. They were walking about near the edge of the water with a flock of American Goldeneye ducks. One eagle was large and mature, with the white head and tail, while the other had the characteristic gray color of the immature. They both seemed quite unconcerned until we drove within a short distance of them and then they flapped lazily away—**Robert Bystrom, Yankton, S. D.**

* * * *

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON COMES TO TOWN—On April 15, 1958, I was walking through McKennan Park, Sioux Falls, past spruce trees which border one edge of the park, when I saw a large bird among the branches of a spruce. As I watched, it lifted its wings as if to fly but settled back again. I identified it as a Black-crowned Night Heron. This was a somewhat early date for the species, April 18 being the average date for Minnehaha County. (Larson, Wilson Bull. 1925:24)

Except for a certain wariness, this bird seemed to pay little attention to cars and trucks passing in the street or to pedestrians on the walk. It looked weary with drooping head and wings. After several minutes it arose, flapping slowly, lifting its head and letting its legs hang as if ready to perch in the next tree. But perhaps the cars and the pedestrians were too discouraging. It continued its flight though it seemed barely able to clear the tree tops as it passed out of sight.

This is my earliest record of the species in nine years of observing spring migrants. — **Herbert Krause, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

SNOWY OWL VS. MALLARD—Willis Hall, Yankton, quoted from a letter from his brother. "One day I could have taken a fine action picture if equipped for it. We were hunting just south of Sand Lake on the prairie which along with the frozen lake and nearby ponds was white with a light cover of snow. Occasionally great flocks of Mallards left a black mass on the lake and streamed over us. We fired often, bringing some down. On one shot two came down, one falling in front of me, the other sailing with the strong wind to land in the center of the snow covered pond where its dark back contrasted sharply with the snow. It took only a second or two to pick up the closer duck, but when I turned my attention to the one on the ice it had disappeared. As I approached the spot where it should have been I noticed what appeared to be a snow-covered bush or thistle. How a mallard could turn into a thistle puzzled me, so I kept my eye on it as I walked by about 10 feet away, and then, like magic, it turned into a great Snowy Owl with wings spread, completely hiding the mallard. Seeing it was recognized it soared into the air with the wounded mallard quacking and flapping its wings and with me in hot pursuit, yelling and waving my gun. Before I could decide whether to shoot, the owl reluctantly dropped his prey.

Since this event I've seen quite a few big Snowy Owls staying near the big flocks of ducks."

* * * *

WINTER CATBIRD—Our most unusual patron last winter was a catbird. The first time I saw him he was eating apple near our bird bath on December 20, 1957. He was at the bath again on the 22nd and then on January 8, 10 and 15. Then I did not see him again until February 8 and that day the thermometer stood at 6 degrees below zero. He seemed to be wounded or sick. He almost let me pick him up but flew into a tree out of my reach. A couple of hours later we found him stiff in death.—**Chas. A. Nash, Platte, S. D.**

* * * *

A SPRING REPORT FROM RAPID CITY—It is snowing this morning April 15, 1958 and so its nice to divert our attention to some of the delights of last summer (1957).

First there was the male Indigo Bunting that delighted our vicinity for two months with his high sweet song. He seemed unafraid and came close to us, perching atop some high bushes or the telephone pole, but usually he sang from the bare branches of trees along Rim Rock highway about 400 feet from our yard. The song poured out from early morn till dusk but we never glimpsed the female.

Black-headed Grosbeaks were here, too, and gave generously of song for six weeks. They nested in the woods close by.

A Western Flycatcher nested on the perpendicular canyon wall above Rapid Creek near Rim Rock Road. It was interesting to watch the feeding of the young and the sanitation of the nest.

Then there was the Lark Sparrow's nest that we found near Pine Lawn Cemetery. It was in a dirt bank under a pine tree. Our attention was directed to the nest by the adult bird carrying food to the young.

There were lots of Pine Siskins in this locality all winter (1957-58). We had never seen them before during our 14 years residence here.—**Mrs. A. L. Hyde, Rapid City, S. D.**

* * *

KNOTS IN DEUEL COUNTY — On September 11, 1957, I found two American Knots in fall plumage at Fox Lake, east of Brandt, and was able to watch them closely in good light for a considerable time and to check them carefully with the descriptions in Peterson's Field Guide and also in Bent's Life Histories. All the characters seemed to agree with the books, in-

cluding Bent's comment that "In immature and winter plumage the best character is the absence of any conspicuous field mark."— **Alfred Peterson, Brandt, S. D.**

* * * *

WOOD THRUSH IN DAY COUNTY—Every year I observe several thrushes in our yard; the Olive-backed and the Gray-checked, the Veery or Wilson's Thrush, and occasionally the Hermit Thrush. Also there are two warblers frequently with the thrush, the Ovenbird and the Northern Water Thrush or Wag-tail as it is known locally. All of these usually are plentiful from about the 14th to the 24th of May.

On Sunday morning, May 18, 1957, a Wood Thrush was in our yard for the first time and also the first time I had ever seen one in Day County. It picked about on the ground not 20 feet from the house and gave good opportunity to see it so that I am positive of my identification.

Back in 1932 while vacationing in Lake Kampeska Park, Codington County, I saw several Wood Thrushes in the first part of June.—**Mrs. Ury Dahling, Webster, S. D.**

* * * *

BALTIMORE ORIOLES AT ROSLYN—One day last July I was attracted to our window that overlooks the highbush cranberry shrub by bird talk different from any I had ever heard before. It was soft peeping of young birds. The sound came from two dull colored fledglings that I could not identify. They continued with the constant "Teedeedee, Teedeedee". In a few moments I was thrilled to see a Baltimore Oriole fly into the shrub with a large green worm dangling from her beak. She perched a short distance from the young birds while she ate part of her food and let the rest drop to the ground. She then moved to the hungry babies, fed them, and dipped to the ground to pick up the choice morsel she had dropped.

I continued to watch these visitors for more than an hour. Part of the time my daughter and I stood at the open door, but the birds did not seem disturbed by our nearness. I wondered how the clumsy babies had gotten to the shrub and how they would get back safely to the nest. However, when I had to go out the door, I quickly realized my worries were needless. The instant the door began to open, the adult sounded a note of warning. In a split second both the young birds flew very skillfully to a tree about 35 feet distant where the old bird was waiting and watching.—**Mrs. Theo. Gilbertson, Roslyn, S. D.**

* * * *

ROBIN DISCIPLINE—One morning while we were eating breakfast, I became conscious of something different in the robin sounds outside. So I stepped to the window and saw a mother robin and her son, who was making a scene, it seemed.

In cleaning the bird bath, water had been dumped on the ground and had made some nice mud, just perfect for nest building which was the present activity of the mother bird. But that was the cause of all the trouble. As mother flew back for more nest material, junior was there and he was hungry. He told her about it. But she said nothing and went away with a beak full of mud. He became quite insistent in his demands with an abused tone in his voice. Several times as I watched, he opened his mouth and she put her beak filled with mud into it but she held the mud, then withdrew her beak, as much as to say, "See this is only mud."

Away she flew and when she returned for more mud junior was still insisting on a worm for breakfast. This was repeated several times with his voice becoming more demanding each time.

Finally came the time she returned, filled her beak with mud, junior opened his mouth and she filled it with mud.—**Mable H. Nelson, Sioux Falls, S. D.**