

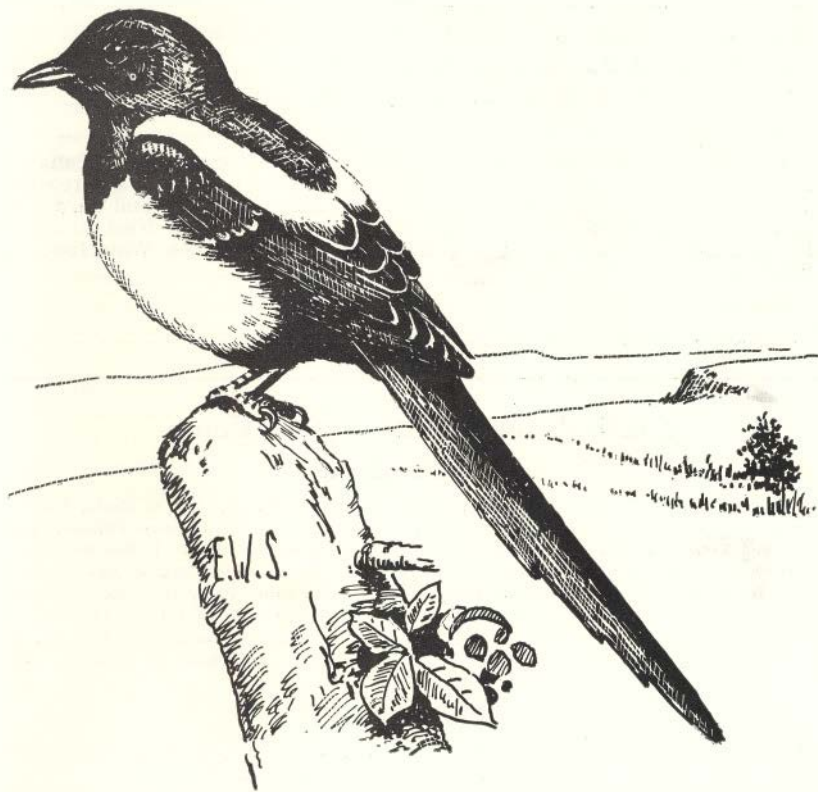
# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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

Vol. XVI, No. 3

SEPTEMBER, 1964

Whole No. 62



Black-billed Magpie

—Courtesy E. W. Steffen

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September, 1964

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## President's Page

FROM the questions I heard asked and the remarks that were made, I feel that almost every member of SDOU who attended the May meeting at Pierre was profoundly impressed by what happened to Farm Island. Any person at all interested in the future of our wildlife habitat and our natural scenic and historical resources must be deeply concerned at the disturbance he finds on this Missouri River island, this wooded island where the early explorers up the river probably stopped as early as the 1790's and which we know Lewis and Clark observed on their expedition September 24, 1804. The words I heard over and over were: I didn't know they were going to do this. Why did it happen?

The road the SDOUers followed from north to south on the island traversed almost tragic contrasts in ecological potentials. The northern portion, the smaller, was all green lushness and cool leafiness with birdsong weaving a tapestry of sound. Time and again I heard SDOUers say, "I've never heard so much singing in my life." Among other birds there were Yellowthroat, Chat, Redstart, Ovenbird, Bell's and Red-eyed Vireo, Robin, Wild Turkey, a Black-and-White Warbler, a Bullock's Oriole, two Turkey Vultures, three Great Horned Owls, a Wood Thrush, White-tailed Deer and squirrels were seen. Varied habitats are there: the edges of shoreline and meadow-like places, open areas under trees, bushy areas, the understories and the high trees dominated by cottonwood. Floral communities flourish here which are seldom if ever encountered elsewhere in prairie country. From one end to the

other this is the Farm Island SDOUers remember from past field trips. And again the questions: Can the economic advantages said to be derived from the destruction of these historical and ecological resources be justified? Were the consequences of these changes presented clearly to the people of South Dakota and the neighboring states?

Abruptly leaf shade and birdsong ended. We stepped into sun glare. Before us lay the rest of the island, the larger part, denuded all its length, skinned of grass, bulldozed into sandy emptiness, pitted with bomb craters where trees had been ripped from the soil. A few Rough-winged Swallows moved toward the mainland; a Marsh Hawk winged along the shore, then flew back where open areas were willow-lined; a Killdeer called from a sandy flat. The dust-whipped wind rattled in our ears. Back of us was cool shade, moisture and birdsong. Ahead of us was the area, now cleared almost completely of its trees and bushes, birds and mammals, soon to be flooded by the impounded waters of the Big Bend Reservoir.

What of the vegetation-covered area back of us? Soon, we understood, bush and tree, bird song and deer's snort, turkey gobble and owl hoot too would vanish under the bulldozer's blade. Fallow as if salt-strewn, it would wait for the flooding waters. Or if left unflooded, it now would offer few habitats suitable for bird or mammal. Again the queries: did our elected representatives objectively, disinterestedly consider whether the advantages of impoundments outweighed the advantages of

(Continued on Page 68)

# Gray Robins

Gerald Ray Kensler

**P**RELIMINARY investigation has begun in an effort to determine the proper taxonomic status of certain birds which display a marked variation in plumage color from the general standard known to be indicative of the Robin, *Turdus migratorius*, or any of its accepted subspecies. These birds have been termed "gray robins," a name derived from the steel gray appearance of the breast. The following subspecies of *Turdus migratorius* are given in the *A. O. U. Check-list of North American Birds*, Fifth Edition, 1957:

*T. migratorius migratorius*, Eastern Robin

*T. migratorius nigrideus*, Black-backed Robin

*T. migratorius achrusterus*, Southern Robin

*T. migratorius propinquus*, Western Robin

*T. migratorius caurinus*, Alaska Robin.<sup>1</sup>

Serious observation of the gray robins was begun on October 1, 1960, at Huron, South Dakota (44° 23' N., 98° 13' W., Beadle County) while banding robins with mist nets on the east bank of the James River, one-half mile south of the James River Bridge (elevation approximately 1240 ft.). On that occasion, ten grays were recorded of a total of twenty-one.

Alfred M. Bailey, Director, Denver Museum of Natural History, was present and remarked about these being much the same as the light colored robins that came through Denver as late fall migrants.

It was soon noted that a considerable variety of color existed among these

birds that were called gray as a convenient and non-committal term for the records. Unfortunately time was not available for the detailed study that later observation indicated. And, by the time it appeared that the most interesting variation, the birds that had appeared when Dr. Bailey was present, were in fact sharply differentiated by color, behavior, time of appearance, and condition from all others, the summer of 1963 had arrived.

The present investigation was then undertaken for the purpose of gathering data as the robins were trapped. While the grays of particular interest had been late migrants (September and October generally) it was felt necessary to examine others as they appeared in order to have an adequate foundation when the "real gray" birds arrived.

In addition to the steel gray breast of these latter, many had pronounced areas of buff or light tan on the sides of the head and neck. But no less outstanding was their physical condition when in the hand for banding: Plump, solid of flesh, bright, glossy plumage, plainly much better fed than the general run of other robins. The fact that these birds were never seen about town was not appreciated until the point was found discussed in *Birds of the Saskatchewan River*.

But these particular birds were not seen at Huron in the fall of 1963. Possibly it was due to a shift in migration routes, passing at times which allowed avoiding the community roost, or during periods when trapping and banding was not being done.

As a result this work failed of its

main purpose, at least for the present. The birds taken were not of the variation of our special interest.

Unfortunately no records separating them from the other more or less "gray" were kept because of lack of realization of the many sharply divided groups passing. No doubt also, in many of the birds noted "gray" in the banding records, the color was of feather tips and edges that would wear off before spring.

With all these short comings, it is still considered that the data yet warrants publication in anticipation of later work here or elsewhere, together with study of data already collected but so far unknown to the author.

This in spite of the discouraging fact that the community roost that made possible the mass banding project has been abandoned, at least by the local population, after the spring of 1964.

Several birds were collected for the purpose of preparing study skins. Plumage descriptions are recorded in the chart. The birds were killed with cyanide gas (prussic acid) and frozen prior to preparation of the skins. Plumage features were recorded immediately after death.

The gray robins have been observed migrating in the following places<sup>2</sup>:

Huron, South Dakota

Britton, South Dakota (approximately 120 miles north of Huron)

Ft. William, Ontario, Canada

Great Bear Lake (southeast corner), Northwest Territories, Canada

Denver, Colorado

Boulder, Colorado<sup>3</sup>

They seem to arrive at the nesting sites of local populations considerably late. In the final analysis, their nesting grounds may be very far north in Canada or possibly Alaska.

A small population of the European Fieldfare, *Turdus pilaris*, was accidentally blown by a storm from its migrating

course in 1937, and ended up in Greenland. It is expected that this bird will expand its range from the now established population on the southern coast of Greenland into Canada and the United States. It is possible (but, it should be noted, very unlikely) that some crossing of these birds with the North American robins may have occurred. Such an event is indeed relatively rare, but the birds are generically related, fertile offspring could occur, and the Fieldfare is out of its previous element. These hypothetical offspring could be gray robins but they could also of course, express almost any plumage color and pattern.

The most striking thing about the plumage of the collected birds was the extreme variation present. A comparison using seasonal plumage and geographical plumage would seem to be the best approach to the study of these birds. None of the birds collected was of the extreme gray noted here in prior years.

A case is known of a robin in normal plumage being banded and, upon re-trapping two years later, was partially albinistic. Considering the temperature sensitivity of the enzyme system responsible for pigmentation, the possible extreme northern breeding grounds and other variables, it may be that physiological as well as purely hereditary factors are involved.

Robins are best identified as to sex during periods of gonadal recrudescence (i. e., in the spring). Since they were collected while the gonads were in regression, determination was difficult and some remain unknown. Through an unfortunate and unavoidable electrical failure, five of the birds were destroyed beyond usefulness. A chart of vital statistics of the prepared birds is given here<sup>4</sup>. The skins are now at Huron College.

## PLUMAGE DESCRIPTIONS OF COLLECTED BIRDS

#	Sex	Breast	Side	Eye ring	Throat
1	F	Buffy Gray	Buffy gray	Closed above	Spotted-black on white
2	F	Heavy gray-little red	Less gray than breast	Open above	Heavy spots
3	F	Heavy gray-heavy red	Less gray than breast	Closed above	Heavy spots
4	F	Buffy with little gray	Buffy with little gray	Closed above	Heavy spots
5	M	Red tipped with gray	Red-little gray	Closed above-pure white	Spotted-black on white
6	M	Dark silver gray Lighter toward tail	Heavy red	Closed above	Medium black streaks
7	M	Dark gray-little red	Silver-little red	Open above	Heavy black spots
8	F	Light gray	Light red	Partly open above	Heavy black spots
9	?	Very light buff White at tips	Very light buff White at tips	Closed above	Medium black streaks
10	M	Heavy gray-heavy red	Less gray than breast	Open above	Small black spots
*11	?	Gray spots White streaks	Buff and white	Closed above	Heavy spots on sides
12	?	Bright red	Bright red	Open above	Very heavy spots
13	?	Red tipped with gray	Heavy red	Partly open above	Heavy black spots
14	?	Spotted light gray	Heavy red	Closed above	Heavy black streaks
15	?	Light red tipped with gray	Gray-little white	Closed above	Spotted on sides
16	?	Light gray	Light red	Partly open above	Heavy black spots
"17	?	Light gray	Buff and white	Buff-closed	Light black spots

\*Banded before chosen for collection (#642-21630)

"Retrap (#622-74177)

# Specific Data on Prepared Specimens

Bird #	Date		Weight	Body	Wing	Length			Sex
	Collected					Tail	Bill	Tarsus	
1	9 23 63		73.38	236	120	103	18	35	F
	9 23 63		71.60	237	126	98	20	35	F
3 <sup>5</sup>	9 23 63		73.22	245	134	99	21	35	F
4	9 23 63		78.84	237	130	95	20	32	F
5 <sup>5</sup>	9 23 63		77.04	244	130	92	18	32	M
6	9 24 63		72.65	234	124	104	21	33	M
7 <sup>5, 6</sup>	9 25 63		81.46	225	134	98	23	33	M
8 <sup>6</sup>	9 25 63		79.63	230	127	88	21	30	F
9	9 24 63		70.14	226	127	86	23	33	?
10 <sup>7</sup>	9 23 63		73.05	270	135	100	24	32	M
11	9 25 63		80.70	245	128	89	21	33	?

## NOTES . . .

1 The Check-list also offers the following in the hypothetical list: *Turdus græi tamaulipensis*. (Nelson), Clay-colored Robin.

2 A skin was prepared of one which was found in an emaciated condition on October 5, 1963, at Rapid City, South Dakota, which has subsequently been identified as a western Robin, *T. m. propinquus*.

3 It has been suggested that the ones seen in Colorado are also western robins.

4 One bird has not been prepared. The weights are in grams and the lengths are in millimeters.

5 Portion of rectrices (tail feathers) lost in handling.

6 Skin prepared by degreasing in benzene-alcohol solution.

7 Skin unusually thin and watery; very easily torn and very difficult to prepare.

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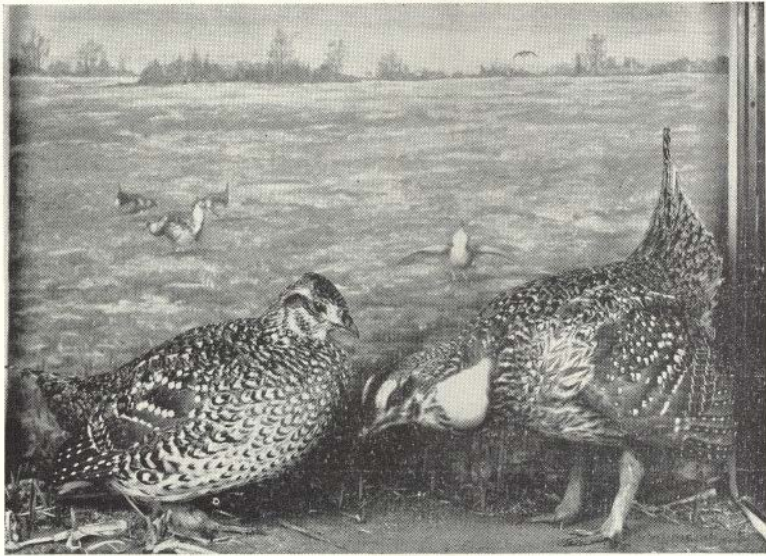
### Periodicals

The Flicker, Vol. 35, No. 3, quarterly publication of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, Minneapolis, September, 1963.

Correspondence is anticipated with persons who have made studies of robins who can possibly throw light on this topic. It is hoped that time will permit the examination of specimens from a variety of sources in an attempt to elucidate a satisfactory type for this bird.

Miss Patsy Schumacher, student at Huron College, aided in the preparation of the skins.

The indulgence of the reader is asked if an excess of conjecture is seen in this report. More information should be forthcoming.—Huron College.



### Dance of the Sharp-tails

—Courtesy Wilson Bulletin



# Nesting Birds of Roberts County

Bruce Harris

THIS material covers mainly the period from 1938 through 1946, with occasional records based on more recent years. I regret that my records were not as inclusive as they should have been. You will note that I have definite records for 54 species. The second group, of 21 birds, surely nest in the County, but I neglected to make a record of the fact when the young or nest was observed. The third group of 31 species are assumed to nest in Rob-

erts County but I have no personal knowledge to back up the assumption—they occur regularly during the breeding season, however.

This list of 105 nesting species is not intended to be complete. I am sure a number of birds have been overlooked "and" it's not unlikely that I am in error in some cases. But if this list gets something started so that more intensive work is done in the future, it will have served its purpose.

## Group 1—Personal Records

Pied-billed Grebe  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Mallard  
Pintail  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Sparrow Hawk  
Gray Partridge  
Ring-necked Pheasant  
Coot, American  
Upland Plover  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Mourning Dove  
Black-billed Cuckoo  
Great Horned Owl  
Flicker  
Eastern Kingbird  
Western Kingbird  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Eastern Phoebe  
Least Flycatcher  
Eastern Wood Pewee  
Horned Lark  
Bank Swallow  
Rough-winged Swallow  
Barn Swallow

Cliff Swallow  
Blue Jay  
Common Crow  
House Wren  
Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Robin  
Veery  
Eastern Bluebird  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Starling  
Yellow-throated Vireo  
Warbling Vireo  
Yellow Warbler  
Redstart  
English Sparrow  
Western Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Baltimore Oriole  
Common Grackle  
Cowbird  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Vesper Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Field Sparrow

### Group 2—Personal Knowledge

American Bittern  
Blue-winged Teal  
Redhead  
Marsh Hawk  
Ruddy Duck  
Killdeer  
Franklin's Gull  
Forster's Tern  
Black Tern  
Burrowing Owl  
Common Nighthawk

Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Purple Martin  
Long-billed Marsh Wren  
Cedar Waxwing  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Bobolink  
Orchard Oriole  
Goldfinch, American

### Group 3—Assumed To Nest In County

Great Blue Heron  
Green Heron  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
Gadwall  
Shoveler  
Canvasback  
Sora  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Willet  
Marbled Godwit  
Ring-billed Gull  
Common Tern  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Short-eared Owl  
Chimney Swift  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker

Alder Flycatcher  
Tree Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown-Creeper  
Short-billed Marsh Wren  
Yellowthroat  
Scarlet Tanager  
Dickcissel  
Savannah Sparrow  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Clay-colored Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Song Sparrow.—1812, Alabama,  
Silver City, New Mexico.

### Help!

When the June issue went to press it was found that the supply of Adrian Larson's: **Birds of McKenzie County, North Dakota** was shorter than supposed. Accordingly, it was only applied to members' copies of **Bird Notes** . . . while it lasted.

Requests for the June issue, complete with the pamphlet have come in from the members of the Larson family and others.

If you do not keep a file of Bird Notes, it would be appreciated if you would mail the June, 1964 number back to Herman Chilson, Webster. Also, anyone having other copies, or knowledge or the location, of a further supply of the Larson pamphlet, should let Herman know so arrangements can be made to fill as many requests as possible.

# Log of a Black Hills Trip

Ray Glassel, R. L. Huber and H. E. Huber

June 25, 1964

**Highmore (dawn):** Lark Buntings very abundant, outnumber even the meadowlarks.

**6 mi. E. Pierre:** Burrowing Owl, hovering like Sparrow Hawk. Lark Buntings abundant.

**Fl. Pierre to Hayes:** Sharp-tailed Grouse picking gravel; Chestnut-collared Longspur about 3 miles E. of Hayes; Lark Buntings abundant.

**Hayes to Midland:** Sharp-tailed Grouse on fence-post; Chestnut collared Longspur; Lesser Yellowlegs; Lark Buntings abundant.

**Midland:** Blue Grosbeak; Lark Sparrow; Orchard Oriole; Longhorn beetles & Blister beetles taken.

**14 mi. E. Kadoka:** Burrowing Owl on fence post; Lark Buntings abundant.

**Kadoka:** One hundred or more Prairie Dogs in town; at least 15 Burrowing Owls standing and flying around the Prairie Dog town; two adult owls were tending two young out of nest; one of these adults was very whitish, almost like a partial albino; pair of Say's Phoebes had a nest on nearby shed, with two young.

**Cedar Pass (Badlands):** Rock Wren; Mountain Bluebird; Baltimore Oriole (hybrid?); Cliff Swallows; Swainson's Hawk; Rocky Mountain Toad taken; Tenebrionid beetle, *Eleodes suturalis*, taken.

**Wall:** Orchard Oriole.

**Rapid City: (Dinosaur Park)** Tohee (arcticus); Lewis' Woodpecker; Violet-green Swallow; Yellow-bellied Racer DOR, specimen preserved.

**Rockerville:** Lazuli Bunting, Eastern Bluebird.

**Mt. Rushmore:** White-throated Swift, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-bellied Marmot.

**Horsethief Lake (camped overnight):** Western Wood Pewee; Audubon's Warbler; Western Tanager, a pair; Black-capped Chickadee; Warbling Vireo; Swainson's Thrush; Belted Kingfisher; Ovenbird; Red Crossbills; Western Smooth Green Snake, preserved; rocky beetle, *Cicindela longilabris*. Rocky Mountain Toad calling all night.

June 26, 1964

**Custer State Park:** Red-shafted Flicker; Black-headed Grosbeak, a pair; Lazuli-Indigo Bunting hybrid, blue all over, but very whitish-blue, like Lazuli dorsal coloration; Canyon Wren; pair of Black-billed Magpies with 2 short-tailed but flying young; Bison, Antelope.

**Wind Cave Nat'l Park:** Magpie; Lark Buntings seen again; Bison, Antelope, Prairie Dogs; tiger beetle, *Cicindela tranquebarica*, taken; Scarab beetle, *Canthon laevis*, taken.

**Pringle:** Say's Phoebe.

**Newcastle, Wyoming:** Buprestid beetle, probably *Chalcophora virginienis*; Longhorn beetle, probably *Monochamus titillator*, both taken; Boreal Chorus Frog taken, had leg characters of Western Chorus Frog (tibia as long as tarsus).

**Deadhorse Gulch, South Dakota (13 mi. S. Cheyenne Xing):** Dusky Flycatcher; Western Tanager; Audubon's Warbler; buprestid beetle, probably *Chalcophora virginienis*; tiger beetle, *Cicindela longilabris*.

**Roughlock Falls:** Redstart; Yellowthroat; Black-headed Grosbeak; Dipper feeding 2 young in nest.

**Tinton (Little Denova Pass):** Western Tanager; Townsend's Solitaire; two tiger beetles, *Cicindela longilabris* and *Cicindela hirticollis*.

**Rapid City:** Nighthawk (after dark) and Dr. Nathaniel Whitney.

**12 mi. S. Nemo:** Dr. Whitney took us to a spot where we heard Poorwill calling.

**4 mi. S. Nemo:** We overshot Steamboat Rock camp grounds, where we were to spend night; as we made a U-turn at entrance to Ox-Yoke Ranch, we flushed Poorwill from driveway, in our headlights.

June 27, 1964

**Steamboat Rock Campground:** Black-billed Magpie; Audubon's Warbler; Western Flycatcher (noted yellow belly, heard song); tiger beetle, *Cicindela tranquebarica*.

**20 mi. N. Belle Fourche:** Two adult Sage Grouse with 7 young; Barn Swallow nest with 5 eggs; 3 Ring-billed Gulls; Chestnut-collared Longspurs again; Lark Buntings again.

**2 mi. S. Buffalo:** Prairie White-footed Mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus bairdi*, DOR.

**10 mi. SE Meadow, Perkins Co.,** caught and released 5-foot Bullsnake.

**Glenham, Walworth Co.,** only Prairie Dog Town we saw east of Missouri River.

**Craven, Edmunds Co.:** Burrowing Owl, hovering like Sparrow Hawk. Darkness overtook us here.

Chestnut-collared Longspur were noted sporadically in most of the open country; we noted them in the following counties: Stanley, Haakon, Butte, Harding, Perkins, Ziebach, Dewey, Cor-

son, Walworth and Edmunds. They may have occurred in more counties, but these were the only counties we penetrated during daylight hours. Lark Buntings were by far the most abundant bird of the trip, we recorded them in all of the above counties listed for the Longspur, plus these others: Hyde, Hughes, Jackson, Pennington and Custer. Again, they undoubtedly occurred elsewhere, had we covered more territory during daylight hours.

One thing which caught our attention was the fact that most of the birds (open country species excepted) were active and singing before dawn, but by about 8 a. m. they had ceased almost all activity. This is quite a contrast to the situation in the northern Minnesota bogs, where birds are active all day long during cool, overcast weather. Temperature and humidity would seem to be the influencing factors. Strangely enough, we missed three species which are supposed to be somewhat common: Bullock's Oriole, Pinyon Jay and the White-winged Junco.—**Ronald L. Huber, RR & Whse Comm., 480 State Ofc. Bldg., St. Paul, Minn. 55101.**

\* \* \* \*

## President's Page

(Continued From Page 59)

having these floral and faunal resources last? Were the best interests of all people in the state considered? How were the final decisions made—by democratic processes or perhaps by bureaucratic, demagogic manipulation? And South Dakotans themselves—did they care enough to ask for clarification, to demand objective presentation of facts, to inquire about possible consequences? Back of these questions apparently lay an ominous query: must we have the case of Farm Island on every stream in South Dakota?—**Herbert Krause.**

# Birds' Nests of South Dakota

L. J. Moriarty

## A. O. U. #560, CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*)

THIS little bird prefers low evergreens in town and farmsteads for nesting. The nest is usually only two to five feet above the ground, well hidden, toward the center of the tree or bush. Well built of rootlets and lined with hair, its cup about two inches across and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches deep, it is thin throughout but well constructed and circularly woven.

One nest I photographed was found May 17 in Milbank, contained three eggs when Lowry Elliott first found it, a few days later four, and on May 22 when I photographed it, contained only two. They were ovoid, of pretty greenish blue with brown spots, chiefly around the larger end.

The little bird stayed on the nest until the limbs were parted and my eyes were within a foot of her, when she jumped to the ground and scolded from a distance of three to four feet. When I moved a few feet away she immediately returned to the nest.

The eggs take about 11 days to hatch, and the young leave the nest in about 11 more days. Most authors find them to be parasitized by cowbirds. No reason for the eggs disappearing being evident, I suspect the Cowbird.

Mid-May appears to be the nesting time in eastern South Dakota.

## A. O. U. #561, CLAY-COLORED SPARROW

(*Spizella Pallida*)

This little sparrow nests plentifully in eastern South Dakota. Although not colonial nesters they can yet be found in the shrubbery edge rows of young shelter belts, apparently preferring to nest in the base willow shoots near the ground. I usually find them with eggs about June 10. When one is found, often more can be found in the same area in like situations.

They are generally found a few inches from the ground in a multiple fork of willow shoots or other small bushes. Watch for the singing male on a bush and look for the female to flush near the same bush, practically on the ground. The incubating bird flies low from the nest to nearby grass or shrubs, into concealment, never up to the tops of trees or bushes.

The nest is built of fine grass stems circularly placed and lined with finer grasses, rootlets, and at times, hair. The nest is about three inches across and two inches deep. The cup is about two inches across by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep.

The usual clutch is four beautiful light green eggs sparsely spotted with rich brown, often confined about the larger end in a band or wreath. The eggs are ovate, measuring about .65" x .50".

I have found cowbird eggs in many of the nests, usually only one, with three of the sparrow's.

# List of Bird Species Observed

by Members of South Dakota Ornithologists' Union

Pierre, South Dakota

May 16 and 17, 1964

Horned Grebe	Crested Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler
Eared Grebe	(banded)	(banded)
Western Grebe	Trail's Flycatcher	Black-poll Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	(banded)	(banded)
Double-crested Cormorant	Least Flycatcher (banded)	Palm Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Western Flycatcher	Ovenbird (banded)
Canada Goose	(banded)	Mourning Warbler
Mallard	Eastern Wood Pewee	Yellow-throat (banded)
Gadwall	Western Wood Pewee	Yellow-breasted Chat
Pintail	Horned Lark	(banded)
American Widgeon	Bank Swallow (injured	Pileolated Warbler
Green-winged Teal	bird found on La Fram-	(banded)
Blue-winged Teal	boise Island was band-	American Redstart
Shoveler	ed)	(banded)
Wood Duck	Rough-winged Swallow	House Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Barn Swallow	Western Meadowlark
Common Merganser	Cliff Swallow	Red-winged Blackbird
Turkey Vulture	Blue Jay (banded)	Orchard Oriole
Red-tailed Hawk	Black-billed Magpie	Baltimore Oriole (banded)
Swainson's Hawk	Common Crow	Bullock's Oriole (banded)
Golden Eagle	Black-capped Chickadee	Common Grackle
Sparrow Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch	Common Cowbird
Ring-necked Pheasant	House Wren	(banded)
Turkey	Mockingbird	Scarlet Tanager (banded)
American Coot	Catbird (banded)	Cardinal (banded)
Piping Plover	Brown Thrasher (banded)	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Killdeer	Robin	Black-headed Grosbeak
Spotted Sandpiper	Wood Thrush (banded)	(banded)
White-rumped Sandpiper	Swainson's Thrush	Blue Grosbeak
Ring-billed Gull	(banded)	Indigo Bunting
Franklin's Gull	Gray-cheeked Thrush	Lazuli Bunting (banded)
Common Tern	(banded)	Pine Siskin
Black Tern	Eastern Bluebird	Common Goldfinch
Mourning Dove	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	(banded)
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Loggerhead Shrike	Red Crossbill
Great Horned Owl	Starling	Rufous-sided Towhee
Chimney Swift	Bell's Vireo (banded)	(banded)
Belted Kingfisher	Red-eyed Vireo (banded)	Lark Bunting
Yellow-shafted Flicker	Philadelphia Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
(banded)	(banded)	Vesper Sparrow
Hybrid flicker (banded)	Warbling Vireo (banded)	Lark Sparrow
Red-headed Woodpecker	Black and White Warbler	Chipping Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	(banded)	Clay-colored Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Tennessee Warbler	Field Sparrow
Eastern Kingbird	Yellow Warbler (banded)	Harris' Sparrow
Western Kingbird	Myrtle Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow

Areas covered were primarily on Farm Island. About fifteen observers spent two hours on La Framboise Island the morning of May 17. The contrast between the two areas was extremely interesting, with Farm Island showing fairly widely-spaced trees with dense undergrowth, and La Framboise Island showing a dense stand of tall even-aged cottonwoods, and almost no undergrowth. All birds banded (except Bank Swallow) were on Farm Island, and were caught by mist nets set in particularly thick brush.

## Christmas Count, 1963

	Brookings	Huron	Madison	Rapid City	Sioux Falls	Sturgis	Yankton
Canada Goose .....				2			
Mallard .....			4	702			1814
Gadwall .....				88			
Pintail .....							1
Green-winged Teal .....				2			
Wood Duck .....				1			
Lesser Scaup .....				1			
Common Goldeneye .....				28			120
Hooded Merganser .....				1			
Common Merganser .....				8			14
Cooper's Hawk .....	1		1				
Red-tailed Hawk .....				1	4		1
Rough-legged Hawk .....				11			
Golden Eagle .....				3			
Bald Eagle .....							5
Marsh Hawk .....	1			5			
Peregrine Falcon .....	1						
Sparrow Hawk .....	1	1		3	2	1	
Sharp-tailed Grouse .....				1			
Bobwhite .....					3		
Ring-neck Pheasant .....	41	936	90	14	23	43	11
American Coot .....				1			
Common Snipe .....				1			
Killdeer .....				2			
Mourning Dove .....		1			10		
Screech Owl .....		1			1		
Great Horned Owl .....	5	5	1		14		
Long-eared Owl .....	1						
Short-eared Owl .....	3	3					
Belted Kingfisher .....				4			
Red-headed Woodpecker .....					2	1	
Flicker, Yellow-shafted .....	14	2	1		31		1
Flicker, Red-shafted .....				2			
Red-bellied Woodpecker .....	2				14		
Hairy Woodpecker .....	12	4	4	6	34		
Downy Woodpecker .....	34	8	4	18	136		3

CHRISTMAS COUNT, 1963 (Continued)

	Brookings	Huron	Madison	Rapid City	Sioux Falls	Sturgis	Yankton
Horned Lark .....	2	448		28	7		
Blue Jay .....	17	2	11	13	23	3	1
Black-billed Magpie .....				46		12	
Common Crow .....	41	17	10	8	343	2	12
Pinon Jay .....				126		15	
Black-capped Chickadee ..	91	23	13	149	653	6	9
White-breasted Nuthatch ..	17	9	2	12	93	2	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	4	4		8	10		
Brown Creeper .....	4	5		4	26	1	2
Dipper .....				1			
Winter Wren .....				1			
Canyon Wren .....				1			
Robin .....		24			2		
Golden-crowned Kinglet ....	2	1			3		
Townsend's Solitaire .....				6			
Bohemian Waxwing .....		12		25			
Cedar Waxwing .....					5		
Northern Shrike .....	1	1				1	1
Starling .....	14	152	351	463	515	4	70
House Sparrow .....	370	582	375	421	3844	111	213
Western Meadowlark .....		7	1				
Redwinged Blackbird .....	1	3			1		
Common Grackle .....	1	2	4		3		1
Cardinal .....	7	11	1		40		2
Evening Grosbeak .....				54	14	24	
Purple Finch .....	30	10		44	18		
Common Redpoll .....	55	42			3		
Pine Siskin .....		38		1	11		
American Goldfinch .....	47	26	1	53	25		39
Red Crossbill .....	13	22			45		
Rufus-sided Towhee .....		1					
White-winged Junco .....				327		2	
Slate-colored Junco .....	85	103	92	87	515		66
Oregon Junco .....	2	1		65	6		
Tree Sparrow .....	11	241	220	64	318		60
Harris' Sparrow .....	6	13			19		3
White-crowned Sparrow ...		2					
Song Sparrow .....				2	10		
Lincoln Sparrow .....		1					
Lapland Longspur .....		47			6		



## *General Notes of Special Interest*

**BALD EAGLES AT YANKTON**—Rumors had reached us about the Bald Eagles wintering near the Gavin's Point Dam, so on Feb. 29, Gladysce and I decided to visit the area. We were well repaid, indeed.

Not only did we observe at least 12 Bald Eagles but enjoyed the sight of thousands and thousands of Mallards resting on the sand bars, open water and edges of the ice below the dam, and on similar areas above the bridge at the city of Yankton.

To return to the eagles. We observed both adults with the beautiful white tail and head and young birds, with the dark brown feathers, sometimes mixed with white, especially on the underwings. These majestic birds were flying over the area, or gliding high overhead constantly as we observed late Saturday afternoon until dark and again Sunday morning until noon. Twice Sunday morning we were able to park the car directly under a tree in the Pearson ranch picnic area where a beautiful adult bird posed in the top-most branches. How we wished for a really powerful lens!

At one time we counted nine birds resting in trees across the water to the north of us, as we were parked on the sand spit directly below the dam. We estimated the proportion of young birds to mature adults at about two to one. Because it was impossible to keep track of individual birds as they flew over we listed our count as twelve individuals which we saw at one time. However there were probably twice that number seen, or more.

Once we observed a young bird flying over the water carrying a fish about some ten inches long in its talons. Im-

mediately an adult, with snow-white head and tail gave chase and caused the younger bird to drop the fish into the water below. The adult swooped low and retrieved it. The young bird gave chase and the fish was dropped again to be picked up by the younger eagle. This performance was repeated several more times, before both birds flew away from the area, leaving the dead fish behind in the water.

Now our question is, were they just playing a game "if I can't have it you can't either," or was the adult giving the young one a lesson in how to harass the osprey and rob him of his catch. Whatever their purpose they treated us to a rare show.

Besides the Bald Eagles and Mallards we observed more than one hundred American Mergansers. There were 69 in one group we counted on the edge of the ice directly above the dam on the Nebraska side of the lake. Several other groups of smaller numbers were seen both above and below the dam.

Ten American Golden-Eyes of both sexes were seen diving below the dam in the open water. We also saw a few Redhead ducks.

Other species observed in the day and one-half of birding included one Osprey, one Redtailed Hawk, one Sharp-shinned Hawk, several Sparrow Hawks and numerous Marsh Hawks.

Cardinals, Chickadees, Juncos, Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jay, many Horned Larks, Crows and Starlings were also observed.

It would be interesting to hear from some Yankton observers who have had more opportunity to watch these eagles and ducks this winter.—Charles H. Rogge.

**WESTERN TANAGER AT SAND LAKE**—On May 7, 1964, I saw a male Western Tanager, red head, black and yellow body, and all, along the east boundary of Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, about five miles south of Hecla. I have seen many of these birds in the Black Hills and know of no other bird remotely resembling it. I saw it flying at a distance of no more than 25 and am certain of the identification.—**Ray Hart, Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks.**

\* \* \* \*

**A FEW SPRING OBSERVATIONS—**

May 22, 1964: Three Western Grebes, Renziehausen Sl. (Near Claremont).

May 21, 1964: Three Western Grebes, White L. Reservoir (N. E. of Britton).

May 18, 1964: Two pairs Marbled Godwits, Bitter Lake area.

May 19, 1964: One pair Marbled Godwits, Bitter Lake area.

May 15, 1964: Black-bellied Plover, Bitter Lake area.

—**Larry F. Fredrickson, District Game Manager, Webster.**

\* \* \* \*

**PAY-BREASTED WARBLER STUDIED AT HIGHMORE**—On May 31, 1964 a Bay-breasted Warbler (male) flew against our kitchen window and temporarily knocked himself out. I brought him into the house for ten minutes of intensive observation by Lois and me. He had two white wing-bars, a black tail with white patches on the two outside feathers of each side, yellow and black striping on the upper part of the back, black on lower part, bay cap, forehead black, bill, eyes, and feet black, no eye-ring, bay on throat, upper breast, bay stripes on each side, huffy patch on each side of neck, belly fading from yellowish to white under tail.—**Nancy Harter, Highmore.**

\* \* \* \*

**RED CROSSBILLS AT MILBANK**—Almost daily from September 14, to

November 24, 1963, I saw small groups of Red Crossbills. They varied in number from two to 18 and included males, females and immatures. Some tall spruce trees in a neighbor's yard seemed to be the main attraction at that time. I could also tell from the difference in size and sounds that sometimes there were Pine Siskins with them. I never had a good enough look at the birds to be sure about the crossed bills but did feel quite certain that they were perhaps the Red Crossbills and not the White-winged variety.

In January and February, 1964, a number of people around town reported seeing tame-acting, red birds feeding on the ground. Unfortunately mine was not one of the favored yards.

On March 19, 1964, two males were easy to identify as they took refuge from a snow storm in Dr. George Kirchner's well-enclosed yard with its well-stocked feeder. At a distance of a few feet the crossed bills could be plainly seen and the birds' coloring compared to the Peterson illustration. Mrs. Kirchner reported that the two males and a female continued to feed in the yard until after the big wind of April 13. Sunflower seed seemed to be the most favored food at the Kirchner feeder.

This was my first sighting of crossbills and while I had no one to corroborate the identity of the birds I saw in the fall, I came to the conclusion that perhaps one small flock of Red Crossbills did "like Milbank" well enough to spend the winter with us. In checking South Dakota Bird Notes for other sightings of Red Crossbills in this part of the state I noted that they were reported by Mr. Chilson the fall of 1960 and Bruce Harris recorded seeing four Red Crossbills at Sodak Park May 22, 1961.—**Miss Louise Flett, 506 S. First, Milbank.**

**BLUE GROSBEAKS AND CARDINALS AT MILBANK**—After an early morning rain on May 17, 1964, while I was trying to see the Cardinal I could hear, I became aware of a bird-wave of mainly warblers and proceeded to see how many I could identify. The morning was cloudy and breezy. Some of the birds were ●live-backed Thrushes, Catbirds, Clay-colored Sparrows, Yellow Warblers, Yellowthroats, Mourning Warblers, one Black and White, one Blackpoll, Nashvilles, Redstarts, Hummingbirds and one Ovenbird. A bird on the clothes reel in a poor light I finally decided might be a Cowbird. The beak was large and it seemed to have a bluish tinge to the feathers toward the back but a female Blue Grosbeak as a possibility did not occur to me then.

About 4 p. m. I stood on a glassed-in back porch, a deep-blue, large bird

suddenly flew down on the ground about 10 feet away in full sunlight and I know without doubt that I was seeing my first adult male Blue Grosbeak. The brown wing bars and characteristic large bill could be plainly seen. It soon flew up and left the yard so I was able to watch it only long enough for identification. After comparison with Peterson's description I decided the bird I had seen in the morning might have been a female grosbeak.

A pair of Cardinals are being seen and heard about town and it is hoped are nesting here. I have never before known any to nest in town.

On May 20, Mrs. Karl Bleser reported that two Red Crossbills were still coming to eat sunflower seeds at her feeder where they have been coming since March.—Miss Louise Flett, Milbank, S. Dak.



Tennessee Warbler

—Drawing and Etching  
Courtesy E. W. Steffen

**BELLE FOURCHE NOTES**—Tree sparrows have long been regarded as part of the winter scene on our hill. As soon as the first cold weather sets in, here they come, and they stay until the first hint of spring. They like cold weather—the colder the better, apparently. Since they nest in northern Canada, this belt appears to be “going south for the winter” for them. Even here, the little fellows move out at every mild stretch that hangs on, and return when the cold drops down again. So responsive are they to weather changes that we regard them as a reliable forecaster.

Tree sparrows act as if they enjoyed snow and cold. They are the first birds to appear at the feeder in the morning and the last to leave at night. Their chestnut caps, pinkish wash on the side-breasts and black stickpin in a light gray breast make them a welcome touch of brightness on a cold day.

But this year, for the first time in our memories of birding, there have been no tree sparrows—aside from a small flock that appeared for a short stay in the cold snap before Christmas. So—regardless of what official weather records may say, we know this winter has been too mild for tree sparrows. And we’ve missed them. Even those who lump all small winter birds—snow buntings, redpolls, chickadees and juncos—as “snow birds” say they have missed the ones with the chestnut caps and black stickpin.

However, we have had sparrows this winter, other than English. A big flock of white throats and Gambels (all with black and white striped caps) have spent the winter on the hill, appearing with the regularity of the tree sparrows at the feeder. With them occasionally are the scattering of Harris sparrows, with black bib, face and cap and side breast streakings. This is the first time we ever have had these sparrows winter on our hill. However, unusual as they

are, they do not compensate for the happy flock of tree sparrows that never found a storm too rough for them.

The crocuses are in bloom. As the snow of late last week melted back, there they were as bright in their lavender, yellow and purple as they were before the cold. But we don’t expect the tree sparrows back. Crocus time is not their time. By now they probably are well on their way into Canada.

#### **Another Picture to File**

Throughout this April winter we have been having, a flock of about 20 robins has been flying around the vicinity, taking off and lighting more in the style of a waxwing flock than robins. However, there is no question even in flight that they are robins, so richly red are their breasts. When they settle in a tree their silhouette tells they are robins—robins in the cold. No creature can look more desolate than a robin in the snow.

The robin flock on arrival from the south, instead of dividing to settle near nesting sites, have held together as a flock and roamed the country. We have seen them in the past two wintry weeks in the trees along Redwater south of town, in Belleview and in the cottonwoods along the Belle Fourche River near Fruitdale. They perch and fly, perch and fly, in waxwing style, wherever they are.

One snowy Monday morning they came to our hill. They may have fed at the bird station with the grosbeaks, waxwings and white-crowned sparrows, but we did not see them feeding. We saw them as a picture we will remember and see again only in memory. They were perched in the blue spruce near the terrace. The tree was decorated in Christmas style with tufts of snow, and like Christmas lights were the robins, their feathers puffed out to form blobs of red among the white and blue-green. A human hand could not

have spread the spots of red more artistically.

The picture held only a few minutes—then, as if at a signal, off they flew.

Another bewildered flock of birds has been reported in the vicinity—mountain bluebirds (described as “lots of them”). They have been reported in the groves to the east of town. Their story is much like that of the robins—except that it's bright blue instead of red, in the trees, in the air and on the ground. The bluebirds probably reached their mountain meadow nesting site in the storm and are waiting it out in the foot-hills. This happens now and then. One year in an April snowstorm, a bluebird flock—must have been a hundred of them—waited out a storm on our hill, were here two days before they went on to their mountain home.

Robins and bluebirds are cousins—in the thrush family. No wonder they behave alike in a storm.

#### Call Them Natives

The evening grosbeak is becoming a familiar bird in this community—not so familiar as a robin or a red-headed woodpecker, of course, but close to it.

We first saw evening grosbeaks here about 15 years ago. It was then a roving flock that came late in February and came and went from then on into March. The visits were much the same for about 10 years. Then a few pairs began staying into the nesting season, the number increasing each year.

The big flock of around 20 birds that feeds regularly on our hill, we believe are grosbeaks which have been raised here and that all of them will nest in the vicinity. Already both old and young males appear to be pairing off—just in the past few days.

Now, why can't we say flatly that evening grosbeaks are native here, that they will continue to increase in numbers and will be year-around residents—like the bluejays, the juncos and

chickadees and various sparrows, for instance? The grosbeaks may fly out for the bitter cold, but they will return—return home after the winter snaps. That is what they have been doing several years. Surely, it has been long enough to establish them as residents.

For the past three years, we know, grosbeaks have nested on our hill. They have been seen daily in the summer, particularly at the spring where they come for a cool drink. This year we hope that we can keep them in the habit of stopping for a snack at our terrace feeding station. There is no food a grosbeak likes better than sunflower seeds. So we shall keep sunflower seeds on the tray throughout the summer, though we usually do not stock it then. We believe that birds prefer their natural foods and should be encouraged to depend upon them when available. The sunflower seeds will be, therefore, just a reason for a social call. And our hope is that this summer we will see a whole grosbeak family, including baby birds, lined up on our terrace feeder.—**Irma Weyler, Belle Fourche Daily Post.**

\* \* \* \*

**EARLY MOURNING DOVE NEST**—On May 7, 1964, two eggs of a mourning dove hatched in a nest in the headquarters area of Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Perhaps this is not extremely early for nestlings of this species but this is near the North Dakota line and the observation was definite. Jim Frates was present and also saw the birds.—**Ray S. Hart, Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks.**

(Editor's Note: How does this date compare with other early observations?)

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**BLUE GROSBEAK AT HURON**—On the morning of May 25, 1964, we clearly saw a male Blue Grosbeak on a wire



## Brown Thrasher

—Drawing and Etching  
Courtesy E. W. Steffen

crossing our back yard. We both examined it with 7x50 binoculars at a distance of some 60 feet in good sunlight. The blue color, the brown marks on the wings, the heavy beak were all plainly evident.

We are familiar with these birds, having seen them in the Missouri Valley and in Union County, as well as those in the Huron area a few years ago.

When the bird had retired into the thick brush, I had no doubt at all that

this was the same bird, probably the same individual, I had seen in a too brief view a few days earlier. Then it had been perched for a moment on a wire about two feet below the one used this morning. Then I had been unable to decide the species because of the poor light, except that its shape was that of a grosbeak.

We did not see the bird again, though we watched for it all during the early summer.—**J. W. and Lucille Johnson.**

COLD WEATHER TROUBLES WATERFOWL AT MADISON—The freezing temperatures of early April made it difficult for the migrating waterfowl of this area. Both Lake Madison and Lake Herman had few open places where, especially, diving ducks were trapped. These open places were often near the shore, making observation easy. The wary species which usually take off just as you get your glasses focused on them were cold and hungry and as tame as domestic fowl. While this made observers happy it was an unhappy situation for the birds, coots, which have no down to protect them from the cold, wandered along the road sides dazed and starved, and many died.

The Ruddy Ducks sat almost motionless with their heads tucked under their wings and were often found frozen into the newly formed ice in the morning. Also many Redheads were found dead there.

Never have I been able to observe such a congregation of ducks at close range. There were mostly Lesser Scaup, with a scattering of Redheads, Canvasback, Buffleheads, Goldeneye, Mergansers, and Ringnecks in the deeper water, Mallards, Pintails, and Shovelers, being dabblers, had less difficulty finding food in the shallow places. Only a few Teal, both Blue-winged and Green-winged, were seen.

Of course the Snow and the Blue Geese collected in great congregations. One evening we estimated over 4000 above Lake Herman at dusk in great V formations in the sky. Also the Canada and the White-Fronted Geese were located out there at various times. I had my first sight of two beautiful Whistling Swans on Lake Madison. They came near the shore at the end near the old sandpits. Their flight was a joy to watch. They stayed here at least

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two days. Other observers saw five in one group near Madison.

On April 12 the Pelicans came in great flocks feeding on carp at the slough on the west end of Lake Madison.

Eastern Bluebirds were at the entrance of Lake Herman State Park. All were males in dazzling blue. We seldom see bluebirds here and then only in migration.—Ruth Habeger.



~~Black-throated  
Green Warbler~~

—Drawing and Etching  
Courtesy E. W. Steffen

Blackburnian W.  
Paul F Sprunger '79

## Joint Meeting . . . 1965

In answer to questions about present planning for the 1965 Joint Meeting, Dr. N. R. Whitney, Jr., gives the status.

"The meeting is definitely scheduled for Sylvan Lake Lodge in the Black Hills, June 17 through 20, 1965. Preliminary program plans include an informal gathering on the evening of June 17, concurrently with a Board of Directors meeting of the Wilson Society. Scientific papers will take up all day of the 18th and 19th, but early morning field trips will be arranged in the Sylvan Lake region early in the mornings, Friday and Sunday. We plan to have a Sunday field trip to Spearfish Canyon.

In February, I will have to mail out a sheet for advance registration. Advance registration will definitely be necessary and we will have to know who plans to come by car. The room facilities at Sylvan Lake Lodge are limited and we will have to try to reserve these for some of the Wilson Society officers plus people who are not driving, as far as necessary. Beyond that, we may have to put some of the people who are driving at Custer or elsewhere. There will, of course, be some camping facilities available at Sylvan Lake."

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### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE Public Health Service

May 1, 1964

Dear Member:

A further step in the investigation of migratory birds as potential disseminators of arboviruses was undertaken in March and April by a field and laboratory team from the Arbovirus Unit of the USPHS Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, Georgia. With Walter P. Nickell of the Cranbrook Institute of Science as Consultant, the team, consisting of Rexford Lord, Herbert Maxfield, and Telford H. Work, set up initial operations in the Stann Creek Valley of British Honduras to net, band, bleed, feather mark, and release migrants in Stann Creek Valley from March 14 to April 3.

White feathers were attached to the backs of 1052 birds, predominately orchard orioles, catbirds, and indigo buntings, but including other species in small numbers.

On April 5, similar activity was initiated in the Delta Wildlife Refuge of Louisiana, where yellow feathers were used to mark 458 birds released.

One objective of the study is to make as many observations and/or recoveries of these marked birds in the United States as possible. If you observe any of these birds, your finding, including all the usual data on location, date, habitat, weather, etc., should be reported to the Arbovirus Unit, Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Georgia 30333 (telephone 404 634-5131). More important, if you learn of the whereabouts of a residential marked bird which might be investigated, immediate notification will be appreciated.

Your cooperation in notifying competent ornithologists (both amateur and professional) in your region of this study would likely increase greatly the probability of success for this project.

Thanking you in advance for your interest and aid in our program.

Sincerely yours,

Telford H. Work, M. D.

Chief, Virology Sector.