

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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Whole No. 66



Sharp-tailed Grouse — Study in
Prairie Camouflage

—F. W. Kent

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President's Page

PARTS of Roger Tory Peterson's banquet speech at Sylvan Lake come bouncing back with disturbing clarity: "I am pessimistic. We must have fighting forces to save what is left of our natural environment. Due to insecticides we have no kingfishers on the Connecticut River. There were 150 osprey nests when we first moved to Connecticut, now very few are hatched here. The birds lay eggs but they do not hatch and we are down to 13 nests. In the old days there were 500 eagle aeries in the Appalachians, today not one. The birds at the end of the food chain, fish eaters, do not have a chance. Rachel Carson gave us the truth but the furor is dying down. Man is the most dangerous animal ever introduced on this planet, with the power to destroy himself."



While we destroy with incredible rapidity the last vestiges of habitat suitable for our wildlife, we poison with lavish the world around us, polluting our streams with everything from simple filth to the whole catalog of poisons.

The chemical industry, as well as public officials who know better and whose words carry weight with the uninformed, speak with one voice in patronizing tones. Their present trick is to combine fertilizers with lethal poisons and call them "agricultural chemicals." Nobody pretends that these chemicals have been adequately tested for other than their gross effects, but

we are given the "hard sell" that we cannot do without them.

Thus their main purpose is to fog the issue, confuse the discussion. No one can have much against fertilizer for farm or garden crops. We all use it, no doubt should use more. But, to tie it into a discussion of the continually extending list of biocides, each under many confusing trade names, each a chemical heretofore unknown, never found in nature, of unknown potentialities, is simple trickery and should be a warning that the discussion is no longer hampered by facts. It is in the category with yesterday's "snake oil pitch."

The snake oil usually did little harm other than financial to the gullible buyer; the product of the current pitchmen is often death to our wildlife, and no one yet knows the ultimate harm to our domestic animals and ourselves.

In our urge for a "fast buck" we have already exterminated 24 birds and 12 mammals native to our country. Secretary of the Interior Udall says: "They will be joined by 35 mammals and 30 to 40 more birds unless we acquire and maintain sufficient habitat for them."

We may feel we are too few to accomplish anything useful against the hordes of unthinking selfishness. But only a few informed people are ever needed to direct worthwhile events. It does take individual responsibility, however.

Purposeful elements found a way to save the few remaining coyotes in the

(Continued on page 58)

On the Lighter Side of Bird Work

William Youngworth

WHEN ye old naturalist thinks back about all the fine experiences he has had with the flora and fauna in the great Upper Missouri River Valley he naturally thinks of the good men who made it all possible for him. One of these men was Professor Wesley Frank Kubichek. At the time of these anecdotes Mr. Kubichek was professor of biology and curator of the museum at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

To do justice to a man in any situation one must go back and dig out some of his talents, abilities and accomplishments, as often too few people know much about a modest man. Kubichek's father was a gunsmith in Cedar Rapids and Wesley learned early in life to handle guns and shoot them. He was one of the best wing shots I have ever seen, as I will bring out later. He learned to use his hands on delicate gun parts and this dexterity stayed with him and when a bit later in life he took up taxidermy his finished birdskins were beautiful to behold. His mechanical skill was another of his many facets and he could fix anything. One of his automobiles was a marvel of built-in trunks and lockers. It was before the day of trunks built into automobiles and he had ingeniously built shallow lockers over and under the running boards, on top of bumpers and fenders and also inside the car. Each was for some part of his equipment, as guns, cameras, supplies, camping apparatus etc.

Few people probably now remember his ability as a driver of any kind of vehicle. In his youth he had won the crown as champion motorcycle rider of Iowa. As a young man he had great



W. F. Kubichek

From a Halftone, Original Photograph
by F. W. Kent

talent as a musician and he told me he had played in bands for years and had almost made a career of music.

His interest in nature naturally led him into photography and here again he excelled. I think many of his documentary films on the home life of the Western Grebe, Eared Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Upland Plover, Willet, Marbled Godwit and many of the ducks are some of the best ever made in black and white film. This talent of taking moving pictures of nature later led him into a position as a photographer for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Another forte of Kubichek's was cooking. He was a splendid cook and a thrifty one as I will relate later. This writer still blushes when he thinks back

about the time when with typical youthful rebellion, he chided Mr. Kubichek for always serving up hot cereal every morning and not serving dry breakfast foods for variety. Kubichek, with great patience, kept quiet, but on the next trip to Webster he bought the biggest box of corn flakes he could find and presented them to me on his return without a word. The ability to use his hands played an important part in Wesley Kubichek's first monetary stake in life. In his youth he was stationed in an army camp at Demming, New Mexico, and he soon noticed that the officers were having so much trouble keeping the buttons on their uniforms or finding someone to alter or clean their clothes that they were almost desperate. He offered to do some of the work on off hours and as word got around his tailor business outgrew his quarters and the grateful officers saw to it that he had part of a building to work in. He told me that at even the reasonable prices he was charging he soon had built up a fat bank account.

Once, when Dr. T. C. Stephens and I visited Kubichek in his Cedar Rapids home, he insisted we stay for lunch, but, before he would let us eat, we had to see his place. That trip through the house and yard will always remain with me, because I more than ever appreciated the capableness of this man. The cabinet work and some of the hand-made furniture he had in that house was flawless. The bird feeders and bird houses were some of the most ingenious I have ever seen and the automatic electric locks which he had built into the doors to discourage burglars left Dr. Stephens and me almost too dizzy to eat lunch.

It would be futile to attempt to elucidate on all the talents of Professor Kubichek, but I will give an account of just one more, diplomacy. Often this

writer had been refused permission to collect specimens on a given farm or wood lot, even though permission had been asked in the politest manner. Not so with Kubichek, for time after time, we drove into a farm yard where the owner was obviously hostile at seeing a carload of college boys and before we knew it, out would come cigars for the husband and a box of candy for the wife and children. Often as not, as we drove off with permission to collect, the farmer would call after us and invite us to stop for lunch on the way out. Such was the science of diplomacy as practiced by Wesley Kubichek.

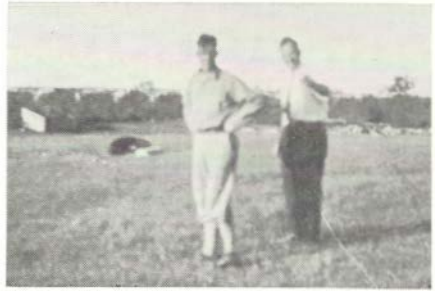
Since all expeditions must have a base of operations, full credit must be given to Arthur Lundquist of Webster, South Dakota for obtaining such fine quarters for Professor Kubichek on Rush Lake near Waubay, South Dakota. Art was then laboratory technician at Peabody Hospital in Webster and we were all glad to see him drive up on week-ends to act as our guide. He had prevailed on some friends to allow Kubichek to use their comfortable lodge, complete with big stone fireplace, leather covered furniture and completely equipped down to the duck boats. Here during June of 1929, 1930, and 1931, I had the privilege and honor of being a guest and co-worker in the field.

The Gray-cheeked Tern

On June 7, 1930, Kubichek and I went out on Rush Lake to collect specimens. When we were near the Black Tern colony we saw two or three terns with white foreheads and nuchal collars. A closer look showed black auriculars and gray cheeks. These striking terns were Black Terns still in winter dress. Mr. Kubichek said we should collect one and try to fool Stolba. A specimen was taken and put in the carrying case.

Stanley Stolba was a college boy

from Coe College, who had come out with Mr. Kubichek and was quite expert at making up birdskins. He spent a great deal of his day making up the specimens collected by the others. On our return to the shore, Stolba came from the work room to ask if we had anything good. Kubichek told him that we had collected a rare Gray-cheeked Tern. Stolba was skeptical from the first and we never did succeed in convincing him that the tern was anything other than a seasonal change in the Black Tern.



Stolba and Lundquist
at Fort Sisseton

Marksmanship

Two other students who came out with Kubichek to study birds were George A. Ammann of Iowa City, Iowa, and Charles E. Friley, Jr., of Ames, Iowa. Ammann was quite handy with a bow and arrow and was never bashful about his prowess. One day a small flock of ducks flew over and Ammann let fly with an arrow and down came a duck. From then on Mr. Kubichek was politely taunted by young Ammann to equal such shooting. Sometimes in the early evening we would amuse ourselves by throwing up our caps or tin cans and watching Mr. Kubichek shoot holes through the targets with a .22 caliber rifle. One evening this brought up the usual challenge from Ammann and Mr. Kubichek watched a loose flock of Franklin Gulls come toward him and when they came in range he lined up on one gull and pulled the trigger. Now the writer knew Mr. Kubichek's ability as a marksman and wasn't too surprised when the bird came tumbling down. I think some of the college boys were a bit taken back and we never heard another word about marksmanship again. The final portion of this episode was that Mr. Kubichek made that gull into a beautiful specimen and I still have it in my collection.

Turkey, Owl and Pheasant

Young, Messrs. Ammann and Friley buzzed around the countryside in an open topped Model A Ford and often collided with flying pheasants which in those early years were so plentiful that farmers often begged the South Dakota Game Commission to kill them off. Mr. Kubichek stopped and picked up one of these pheasants and later dressed it out. Un-be-known to the boys he also dressed out a Short-eared Owl, which had been taken as a specimen, and cooked the two birds together. He told me afterwards that the pressure cooker had done such a fine job that the boys just dug in and ate everything. They never knew until later that they had eaten boiled owl.

The sequel to this story came a bit later when the writer riding with Mr. Kubichek, with the outriders Ammann and Friley in the lead as usual. We had passed a farm and ahead we saw a great cloud of feathers. The boys had collided with a full grown turkey. Mr. Kubichek drove up and remarked that there was a lot of fine meat to be had and we retrieved the turkey. Later on



Viewing Double Crested Cormorant Colony on East Island in South Waubay Lake—Early 1930's

—Courtesy Wilson Bulletin

in the day a pheasant was killed by a car and was also gathered in.

The pressure cooker, which was a huge affair, was gotten out and Mr. Kubichek brought into play his knowledge of cooking. He prepared the fowl and added sundry potatoes, onions, carrots and the proper seasonings and what a meal we had that evening. This writer feels very strongly, as did Professor Kubichek that food should never be wasted if it can be helped.

Ammann and the Trot-lines

To vary our bill of fare, Kubichek set out long trot-lines in Rush Lake and we often enjoyed fresh fish. Rush Lake was then high and teeming with bullheads. The water near shore, however was too shallow to set the lines, so a boat was used to tie the lines out several hundred yards to some old

duck blinds. One evening Mr. Kubichek said the lines should be checked, but we discovered all the boats were down the lake. Nobody made a move to walk down and row one back, so George Ammann said he would swim out. Now, Ammann, who had been one of the best breast stroke swimmers at the University of Iowa was about to need all his skill and endurance. He waded out into the water and soon was covered with mud, but still not far enough out to be able to swim. He plodded on and finally reached swimming depth. He swam on to the duck blinds and gathered in one trot-line after another, but how can you swim with fish lines flopping with fat bullheads. There was only one answer and Ammann had it. He simply put the ends of the trot-lines between his teeth and with his powerful breast stroke

headed for home. When he emerged from the water he was covered with slim and decayed vegetation and, in the light of the setting sun, looked for all the world like something from another planet. It had been a heroic struggle to plough back through the deep mud to shore but he finally made it triumphant, but pretty well exhausted.

The Indian Chief at Cepka Bay

Stanley Stolba was a typical college boy of his era, the sweatshirt period. Stolba lived in a soiled sweatshirt and refused to even clean up on Sunday, so Mr. Kubichek tried to shame him into cleaning up just one Sunday at least. He told Stolba that he was taking Arthur Lundquist and me with him to visit the chief at Cepka Bay on Pickarel Lake and that he, Stolba, could go

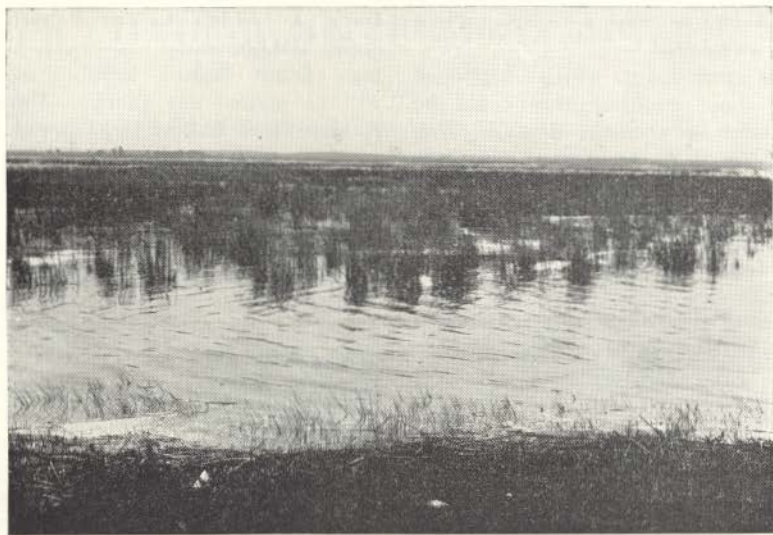
along if he put on a clean white shirt and a necktie. When we assembled at the car there was Stanley in his dirty sweatshirt. All the rest of us, neat in our shirts and ties at once started to berate Stolba for his appearance. Kubichek remarked that the Chief always dressed up for church on Sunday and would probably resent the way Stanley was dressed.

As the miles went by, the more we chided Stolba, and the angrier he became. We finally drove up to the Chief's house and Kubichek marched stiffly to the door, bearing a gift for the Chief. Several knocks produced no results and Mr. Kubichek came back to the car. Secretly I think he was greatly relieved that no one had answered that door, because secretly we three probably knew that the Chief



Adult Cormorants in Same Colony as Shown on Previous Page.—Photo by F. W. Kubichek

—Courtesy Wilson Bulletin



Rush Lake, Home of the Western Grebe

--Courtesy Wilson Bulletin



On the Shore of Bitter Lake . . .
Kubichek and His Dog, Jeff

--Courtesy Wilson Bulletin

would be polite enough to shake the hand of one wearing a white shirt or even a sweatshirt.

Other anecdotes which happened during those exciting days could be told, as for instance the time Mr. Walter Thietje, now Director of the State Museum, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, needed a pelican to complete a display. Mr. Thietje was a guest of Professor Kubichek and we were collecting on a tiny spit of mud on the east end of the island in Rush Lake. A White Pelican came toward us and Thietje fired and the bird began to fall in a flopping end over end fashion. We saw it was going to hit us and we both started a dancing, dodging act all the time trying to keep out of the water. Suddenly the huge windmilling bird was there and as Thietje raised his arm to protect his face the pelican struck his arm with a sharp blow. Such were the full days for those fortunate enough to be asked by Professor Wesley Frank Kubichek to be his guests in a late chapter of ornithological history in South Dakota.—Sioux City, Iowa.

The cover and the first two half-tones accompanying his article are gifts of William Youngworth.

* * * *

ALTAMONT PRAIRIE—South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota 57007—Dedication of the Altamont Prairie is to be held on Sept. 17, 1965 in the Christy Ballroom of the Pugsley Union at South Dakota State University. The program includes registration, a paper session, a noon luncheon featuring a noted authority on prairies, a tour of local prairies and dedication ceremonies on the Altamont Prairie. The meeting will start at 9 a. m. and end at about 5 p. m. Plan now to attend. If

you wish more information please write David J. Holden, Botany Department, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota 57007. Programs will be mailed out shortly.—David J. Holden, Head Botany Department.

* * * *

President's Page

(Continued from page 51)

hills near Pasadena this spring as described by the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society publication, *Phainopepia*. They took the trouble to learn the facts, present them adequately to the public officials who had power and responsibility in the matter—and to the general public. Importantly, they would not stand mute in their disgust before the loud voices of ignorance and greed.

They won—with favorable comments from public officials for their “much-to-the-point” letters. Note. None of this “little feathered friends” stuff that is more harmful to sound conservation than any other one thing.—Herman P. Chilson.

* * * *

NEST CARD PROGRAM—The North American Nest Card Program is winding up the 1965 nesting season, and many cards have already been returned. There are still many cards in the hands of the individual recorders, however, and these should be returned to us as quickly as they are completed. We are preparing the data for transferral onto IBM cards, and a large bulk of material is needed for the first run, to be started soon.

Regional Centers may determine for their members whether their cooperators should return the cards to the center first, in order to complete local records, or whether they may be sent directly to us as they are completed.—Laboratory of Ornithology, 33 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, N. Y.

Birds' Nests of South Dakota

L. J. Moriarty

A. O. U. #687 AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*)

THE Redstart nests commonly in the thick second growth along the Missouri River, the foothill streams of the Black Hills and the Sioux and James Rivers. The eggs are usually laid in early June in our area.

The nest is usually placed from four to 20 feet above ground and against the trunk at its juncture with a small limb. It is exquisitely constructed of light colored materials, such as milkweed down, pussy willow, dandelion down, or spider webs covering the main structure which is made of fine grasses, rootlets, and tendrils. Those I have found measure about three inches across and two to three inches deep outside. Inside measurements are about 1.5 inches across by 1.75 inches deep. Both the male and female work at nest building.

The eggs are usually four, white thickly spotted with shades of brown and lilac over all but more thickly at the larger end. They are ovate in shape and measure about .60" x .50".

Surprisingly, the male is brave in defense of this lovely little nest and will fly at one investigating.

This bird is one of those most parasitised by the cowbird.

A. O. U. #766 EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialia sialia*)

As a boy in Spink County (Redfield) I could always find three or four nests right in town, always in hollow fence posts. I knew where there were square hollow posts in yard fences, made of 1" x 6" boards with caps on top and

woodpecker or knot holes that served for openings. I found them also in rotten fence posts with woodpecker holes in the sides, or rotted in the center top so one could look directly into the nest from above.

The eggs are three to five, pale blue with no spots. They are about .85" x .70," rather roundish ovate and not much pointed at the small end.

In the last 20 years I have found only two nests, both much higher than in earlier times. One was in an old woodpecker hole in a cottonwood at Lake Kampeska and one at Hidden Valley Ranch in a woodpecker hole about 20 feet above ground in an oak. I saw the birds going in and out in June but could not check for actual nesting.

The Starling and the English Sparrow, particularly the former, have taken over possible bluebird cavities. I do not believe the Eastern Kingbird is nearly as plentiful in eastern South Dakota as it was 40 years ago. Lowry Elliott of Milbank agrees in this as they seldom use his nest boxes as they did some years ago.

A. O. U. #596a BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

(*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

The Black-Headed Grosbeak, being a western species, does not often nest east of the Missouri River in South Dakota. However, it does nest plentifully along the bottoms of that River (before they were inundated) and along its western tributaries. In low areas I find the nests from two to six feet above ground in plum trees and wild grape

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Book Review

J. W. Johnson

THE Bird Watcher's America. Edited by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. Illustrated by John Henry Dick. McGraw-Hill. 1965: 442 pages, including index, 5½ x 8½. \$7.50.

The list of authors whose work has been selected for this book reads like a Who's Who in U. S. and Canadian Ornithology: Sutton, Peterson, Herbert Krause, Cruickshank, Sprunt, Gabrielson, and 38 others of known competence but, perhaps, less popular renown. Everyone in SDOU has read something of several of these authors and all will be enthralled with such a collection within the covers of a single volume. With Dr. Pettingill selecting from each of these writers, the result cannot but be a book to treasure or present to a certain friend or young (but not too young) relative.

The writings are arranged by localities: Atlantic Coast and Coastal Islands, Eastern Mountains and Foothills, Alaskan Islands, the North Country, and others. They are also divided by type of habitat: Wetlands, Prairies, Deserts, and Canyons, a category of Migration Spectacles and another of Avian Specialities. All are by dedicated people who believe in what they are doing and have to say.

Heading each article is a page or more of biography of the author. These make a picture of the work of this group of leaders in the development of ideas of conservation, a synopsis of a war that is still going on, may yet be lost. These people have long been concerned with both education and practical methods for saving a part of the natural resources of the continent, not

the least of which is its wildlife. Their writings tell of their objectives, their feelings, their hopes, their fears—as well as the things they see. Their biographies tell of their actual accomplishments to date.

Ira Gabrielson tells of the incredible magnitude of the wildlife populations that used to inhabit Malheur Lake in Oregon, the loss of the Lake—and how it is being rewon. Errington tells of an Iowa marsh, its birds and its animals, its population dynamics. We remember that he first learned about marshes in South Dakota; his home was near Bruce.

Peterson describes the Pribiloffs, their seals and birds. Sutton takes you through the Balck Mesa country of Oklahoma. Luther Goldman makes you aware of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Herbert Krause describes the spectacle of the geese along the Missouri. Alfred M. Bailey shows you Colorado—the Land of the Long Spring. And so on for a total of forty-six articles by forty-four authors.

If this book can be said to have a fault, it must lie in the nearly unrelieved richness of its language, its store of information, its writings that escapes functional severity because the feelings of its authors will not be concealed.

One reviewing a book is expected to quote short passages to give an idea of its flavor. What to do when every line is quotable? The choice can only be arbitrary. We all know Herb Krause and we have seen the geese he describes.

(Continued on page 62)

South Dakota Wintering Eagle Inventories

G. M. Jonkel

SINCE 1961 eagle inventories have been made in South Dakota in conjunction with the mid-winter waterfowl inventory. During the different years, observers included District Game Managers, South Dakota State Wardens and personnel from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

In this inventory (Table 1) most of the Bald Eagles observed were along the Missouri River, but Golden Eagles inventoried since 1962 were more widely scattered from the James River Valley west and likely many were not located.

The Bald Eagles concentrate along the Missouri River and this count should represent nearly our total wintering population.

During 1963, the majority of the eagles observed were concentrated along the Missouri River between Oahe Dam and Gavins Point. In 1964 over half of the eagles observed were concentrated along the Missouri River between Fort Randall Dam and Sioux City, Iowa.

During the 1965 inventory almost half of the eagles were observed in the tail-waters below the Fort Randall and

Gavins Point Dams. Of these 90, 66 were concentrated in the isolated stretch of open water a few miles below Fort Randall Dam.

Mr. Alexander Sprunt of Tavenier, Florida has inventoried Bald Eagles along the Missouri River for the National Audubon Society (Table 2). During 1963 he flew only as far as Lake Andes but in 1964 and 1965 he went up to Oahe Dam above Pierre, South Dakota.

Mr. Sprunt's flight dates were in late January and early February and probably averaged three weeks later than the waterfowl inventory dates. On the same flight area and comparing his observations to the waterfowl inventory data, Mr. Sprunt observed fewer Bald Eagles in 1964 but more in 1965. Probably the largest figure during any one year would closer represent our wintering population for that year. On some days, due to weather or other factors, most wintering Bald Eagles might be on the Missouri River but on other days more eagles may be away from the river. The time of peak population numbers is not known.—Huron.

—TABLE ONE—
Summary of Eagles Inventoried

Year	BALD			GOLDEN			
	Adult	Imma- ture	Total	Adult	Imma- ture	Total	Grand Total
1961	142	84	226	—	—	—	226
1962	173	100	273	64	3	67	340
1963 (Jan. 6)	129	39	168	81	11	92	260
1964 (Jan. 7)	326	92	418	84	21	105	523
1965 (Jan. 4)	156	38	194	128	23	151	345

—TABLE TWO—

National Audubon Society Missouri River Aerial Bald Eagle Counts

	Feb. 7, 1963			Jan. 29, 1964			Jan. 24, 1965		
	Adult	Imm.	Total	Adult	Imm.	Total	Adult	Imm.	Total
Vermillion to Gavins Point Dam	33	9	42	43	21	64	30	22	52
Gavins Point Dam to Ft. Randall Dam	89	31	120	46	43	89	105	59	164
Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge	0	0	0	3	3	6	0	0	0
Ft. Randall Dam to Ft. Thompson Dam	—	—	—	32	13	45	27	9	36
Ft. Thompson Dam to Kahe Dam	—	—	—	24	14	38	22	8	30
TOTALS	122	40	162	148	94	242	184	98	282

Book Review

(Continued from page 60)

For us they fly again when we recall his words.

“And I remember a Sunday in early April. On the banks of the Missouri near Elk Point I watched the geese drive in, rank on crescent rank. Sand bars and islands were a patchwork of gray and white concentrations. Above them more flights came in. As I looked across the river, I saw steps of geese slanting from the skyline of the hills down to the sand bars. Against the green of dwarf cedars on the Nebraska breaks opposite, they were clearly etched. Above them a crescent was beginning to break into segments of descending geese. Above these were strings and V's, their flight appearing slower with the deceptiveness of distance; higher above, moving even more slowly, tangles and broken curls of birds; higher still, imperfect M's and N's, broken letters moving across the sky; and black against a popcorn cloud, rows and chevrons in motion, orderly, precise, tiny at that great height; layer on layer they came in, each layer maintaining its direction. As I looked up, I was almost dizzied by the tracery of geese in motion, line moving against

line, a flowing crisscross of birds. The highest often floated past and circled back before they began to break order, sideslipping, zigzagging, plummeting with rigid wings until they reached the lower flights, when they seemed to check momentum and joined the sedately descending thousands.”



Hybrid Canada Goose

—Courtesy Wilson Bulletin

16 Years of Snowy Owl Records from S. Dak.

D. G. Adolphson and G. M. Jonkel

THE following is a compilation from the winter of 1949-50 through the winter of 1964-1965 of Snowy Owl observations from South Dakota Bird Notes, Audobon Field notes and other sources.

We have tried to interpret the data, keeping in mind the number of reports, the number of observers, and the amount of time and travel involved to obtain the observations so that some established order of types of migration flights could be assigned to the wintering owl populations. For some of the years, records are very complete because personnel of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks recorded observations, however during many years data were not reported.

The following order is given to the types of flights:

(1) Sparse flight—winter when owls are uncommon visitors. They are thinly scattered over the state and rarely seen;

(2) Occasional flight—winter when owls are casual visitors. There is a light dispersal in certain areas of the state;

(3) Light flight—winter when owls are common visitors. They are scattered over most of the state with small concentration in some areas, mainly around lakes and drainageways;

(4) Heavy flight—winter when owls are abundant visitors. They are seen over most of the state with heavy concentrations in areas where food is available.

Winter of 1949-1950 (Heavy flight). Probably the largest invasion of snowy owls ever recorded in South Dakota.

C. H. Rogge *Bird Notes* Vol. II:4 tabulated a total of 643 owls from 28 counties in every section of the state. Most of the reports were from game wardens. C. T. Rolling, Manager of Sand Lake Refuge, reported an estimated 18 owls per township or about 500 for Brown County and about 50 for Roberts County.

Winter of 1950-1951 (Light flight). A total of 89 owls were reported in the state and the invasion was heavier in some areas (southwestern part) than during the previous winter (*Kirsch Bird Notes* Vol III:29).

Winter of 1951-1962 (Occasional flight). Sixteen owls were reported from the James River Basin with Beadle County the farthest south observation.

Winter of 1952-1953 (Sparse flight). None reported.

Winter of 1953-1954 (Occasional to light flight). South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Biologists (B. A. Nelson *Bird Notes* Vol VI:10) and other observers reported 45 snowy owls. Most owls were seen in the James River Basin. A density of eight per township and five per township was estimated in Brown and Hanson Counties respectively. Many rough-legged hawks were also reported during the winter.

Winter of 1954-1955 (Light flight). This was the next largest flight of snowy owls reported during the 16 years of record. From 21 counties, a total of 65 owls were reported, (B. A. Nelson *Bird Notes* Vol. VII:57) mainly by Game Biologists from the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and

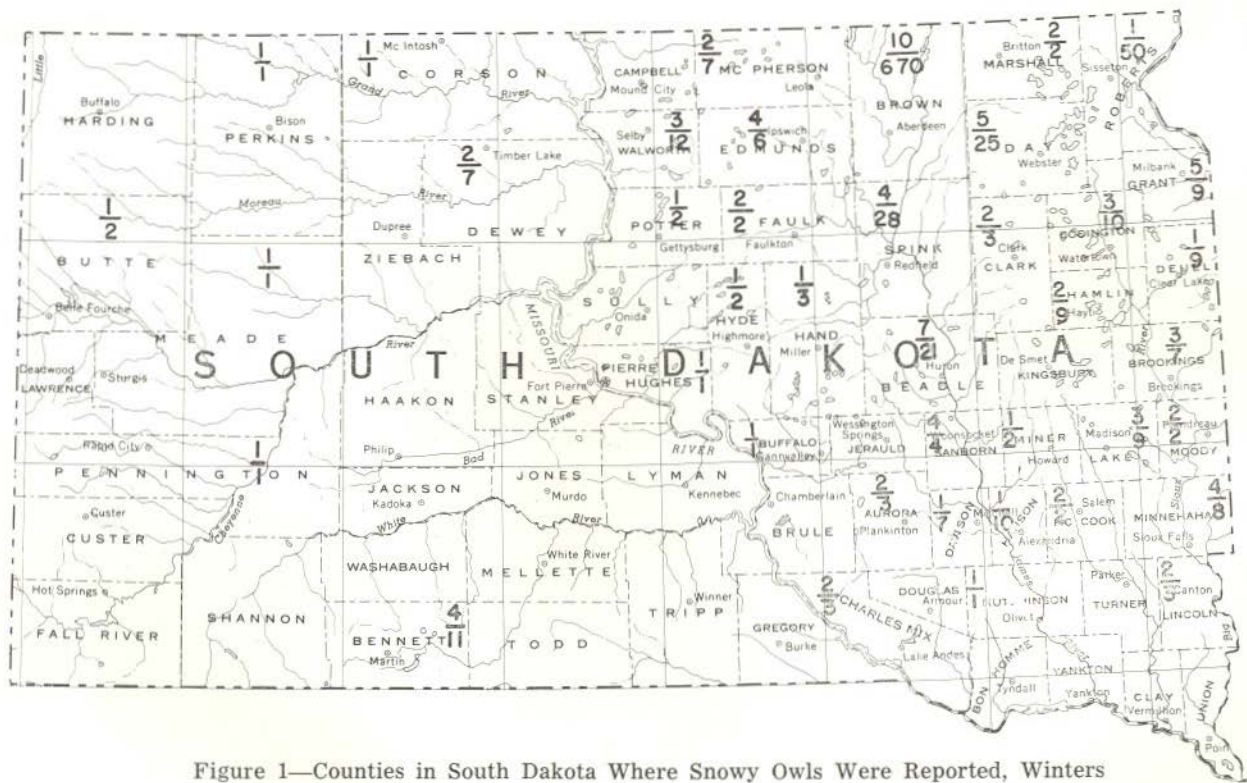


Figure 1—Counties in South Dakota Where Snowy Owls Were Reported, Winters of 1949-1950 through 1964-1965. Upper number of fraction indicates total number of years in which snowy owls were reported. Lower number indicates total number of snowy owls reported.

Parks. Owls were reported as far west as Pennington County and as far south as Charles Mix. Most owls sighted were in the James River Basin. A total of 10 owls were seen by five different observers on the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Winter of 1955-1956 (Sparse flight). None reported.

Winter of 1956-1957 (Sparse to Occasional flight). Five owls were seen in Brown County during the Christmas Count.

Winter of 1957-1958 (Occasional flight). Twenty owls were reported during the winter with 17 of these sighted in the James River Basin, however owls were noted in Minnehaha County in the southeastern and Bennett County in the southwestern parts of the state:

Winter of 1958-1959 (Sparse flight). None reported.

Winter of 1959-1960. (Sparse flight). None reported.

Winter of 1960-1961 (Sparse flight). One owl reported from Beadle County.

Winter of 1961-1962 (Occasional flight). Thirteen owls were reported from Brown, two from Bennett and one from Grant County.

Winter of 1962-1963 (Occasional flight). A total of 12 owls were reported from the James River Basin.

Winter of 1963-1964 (Sparse flight). One owl reported from Moody County.

Winter of 1964-1965 (Occasional flight). Data from the eastern part of the State shows that 27 of the 30 owls reported were seen in the James River Basin (Adolphson *Bird Notes* Vol. XVII:2. Additional data from Christmas Count and other sources show six more owls in the James River Basin.

The 16 years of record shows that there have been 957 Snowy Owls reported from 40 counties (figure 1) in the State. One percent of the owls were

sighted in October, 14 percent in November, 25 percent in December, 36 percent in January, 18 percent in February, six percent in March, and less than one percent in April (figure 2). The earliest date that an owl has been sighted is October 15th and the latest is April 28th. South Dakota probably does not have as many wintering Snowy Owls as do some northern and eastern states; however, heavy flights do occur in the State. In southern Canada and northern United States the

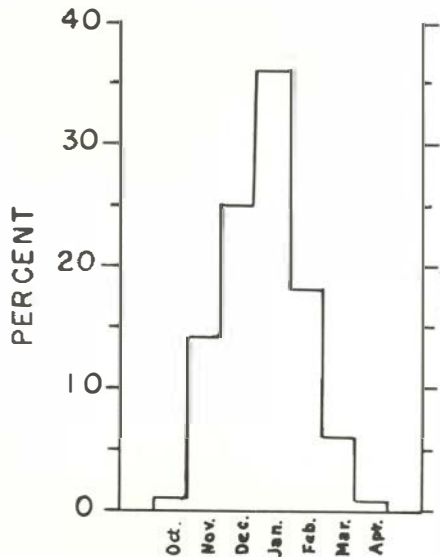


Figure 2—Percentage of Snowy Owls Reported in South Dakota by Months, Winters of 1949-1950 through 1964-1965.

main areas of concentrations are around the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River and the eastern sea coast. In South Dakota Snowy Owls seem to concentrate in the James River Basin and around lakes in the central and northeastern part of the state. Probably more food is available for them in these

areas. In Wisconsin Keith (1963) found that in order of preference Snowy Owls winter food was mice, muskrats and ducks. The food available to Snowy Owls in South Dakota is probably very similar to that found in Wisconsin.

Pheasant should be added to the list of foods because some observers (South Dakota Bird Notes) have seen Snowy Owls chase pheasants. Observers have also seen them take ducks, usually the injured that can't migrate but stay around lakes for the winter.

There has not been a heavy invasion of Snowy Owls in the State since the winter of 1954-1955. This is not unusual even though the major cyclic invasions tend to correspond to four year cycles simultaneous to the drop in population of lemmings. A. O. Gross (1927) reports that in a study from 1874 to 1926 the major cycles varied from two to eleven years.

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Birds' Nests

(Continued from page 59)

vines, in much the same situations that the Catbird and Brown Thrasher prefer but usually a little lower. They nest in the foothills of the Black Hills also.

The nest is rather loosely built on the outside, made of small twigs and weed stems, measuring about 6½ inches wide and about five inches deep. Well lined with circularly placed rootlets and bark on the inside, it is of rather dark color. The cup is rather shallow, about 1¾ inches deep and 3¾ inches in diameter.

The eggs are laid usually in late May and early June in our area. The commonest number I find to be three or four and they measure about 1" or slightly less by 0.7" and are ovate in shape, with a ground color of bluish green with irregular spots and blotches of various shades of brown, tending to be chocolate-colored, and a wreath of spots around the larger end.

Both the male and female incubate and care for the young. They hold until one approaches within five or 10 feet of the nest then fly a short distance away with no fuss. The male often sings while sitting a short distance away from the nest after being flushed from it.

I have never found a cowbird egg in the bird's nest. Either the grosbeak disposes of them or is too vigorous an adversary for the cowbird.—Watertown.

Winter Meeting at Huron, October 8-9-10, 1965

—TENTATIVE PROGRAM—

HEADQUARTERS: Plains Motel Banquet Room (Basement stairs at NE corner).

FRIDAY 8 p. m. Audubon Screen Tour, "Wild Europe," presented by Roger Tory Peterson. Senior High School Auditorium.

10 p. m. (or following above): Huron Bird Club's "In appreciation of Mr. Peterson" coffee for all. Plains Banquet Room.

SATURDAY (Plains Coffee Shop open 24 hours daily.)

8:30 a. m. Registration. (All advance registrations will be welcomed, even solicited.) Motel Banquet room.

9:00 a. m. Business Meeting. (If more time is needed, this will be continued right after lunch.)

10:00 Coffee break.

10:30 a. m. Paper Session. (These are subjects, not titles.) Paul Springer, Survey of flora and fauna on the Altamont prairie. Les Baylor, Some Black Hills habitat considerations. Nat Whitney, Plumage variations of the rough-legged hawk.

12 Noon. Lunch in the Plains Ball Room. \$2.00.

1:30 p. m. Afternoon Session. Banquet Room. Panel, Status of Biology in South Dakota, moderated by Dave Holden. This and the following discussion should fill the afternoon, with a coffee break in the middle somewhere.

Saturday Evening: Smorgasbord in Banquet Room, \$2.50, followed by: Mrs. Whitmus, "Birding Adventures." Mrs. Whitmus has some bird pictures of South Dakota she is pleased with and has offered to share.

OPPORTUNITY! Bring along your best slides of the year . . . no more than 10, to give us all a chance! Anyone have some good ones of the Wilson meeting? Here is a conditioned captive audience and everyone knows they are scarce!

NOTE: As you may discern from the above we have the sole use of the banquet tables all day Saturday and Sunday, so if you have anything to display, please share with us. The only time we will use the tables for eating is Saturday night.

SUNDAY

9:00 a. m. Paper Session. Banquet room of Plains. Nelda Holden, Farm Island Banding. Open period for unusual or interesting banding reports or tips. Open period for short reports on current studies. (At the Wilson meeting it was again pointed out that there is a lack of communication which, if corrected, might lessen many a frustrating problem.)

11:30 a. m. Dinner in the Plains Dining Room, family style, \$1.75.

Sunday Afternoon will be open for the needs of the meeting be it business, birding or banding. The Plains is near the James River and Ravine Lake and there just might be an interesting migration awaiting the prepared. Near are also some "manicured" parks (with camping facilities) for those who can't scramble through the brambles.

NOTE: We would be most pleased to hear from you all if you can come. This is a lovely time of year and the fellowship of kindred souls, satisfying any time of year, in autumn is most pleasant. Be sure and let us know if you come by bus or plane so we can meet you and arrange transportation for you. We will furnish projectors and screen and if you have other problems (other than monetary, that is) we will try to be of help.—Jean Jonkel, 1722 Kansas S. E., Huron.

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The Convention City of South Dakota

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375 Dakota Avenue South, Phone 352-8731. Radios and television available. Air conditioning in some units. Coffee Shop, Cocktail Lounge, with lunches and dinners served, party and banquet rooms. Member of AAA.

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General Notes of Special Interest

WORM-EATING WARBLER BANDED AT FARM ISLAND, EAST OF PIERRE—Bird banding was very good at Farm Island State Park when a group of South Dakota banders met there on May 22 and 23, 1965. But the highlight of the trip for the Rogges was the capturing in a mist net and banding of a Worm-eating Warbler, *Helmitheros vermivorus*. This was a first on our life-time list and we certainly never expected to band one.

Fortunately for us there were many competent observers on hand to verify the identification. The bird was looked at, exclaimed over and photographed and finally reluctantly released.

Those present who saw the bird and confirmed the identification were James and Lucille Johnson, and Mrs. Carrie Pierce of Huron, Scott and Alma Findley of Sioux Falls, Dave and Nelda Holden of Brookings, and Gary Robinson of Madison.

The Worm-eating Warbler is not mentioned in *Birds of South Dakota, Revised Edition*, 1946, by Over and Thoms. However, the checklist of South Dakota Birds (Vol. VIII No. 1 of *Bird Notes*) lists it as an accidental. In Vol. VI No. 2 of *Bird Notes*, H. W. Wager of Milbank lists the Worm-eating Warbler as one he and his son Wesley sighted at Lake Farley near Milbank.

Bent gives the northern and western breeding ranges of the Worm-eating Warbler as northeastern Kansas, central southern Nebraska, south central Iowa, southern Wisconsin.

Peterson in *A Field Guide to the Birds* (Eastern) gives the northern and western ranges as northern Illinois and

southern Iowa. His *Western Guide* says it has been recorded in western Texas and northern Colorado. Griscom, in *Audubon's Birds of America*, says it breeds "in the southern and central states." In *Audubon Guides* by R. H. Pough, the breeding range, north and west, is listed as southeastern Minnesota, central Missouri and northeastern Kansas.

From Griscom and Sprunt's *The Warblers of America* its northern and western breeding range is described as "n. e. Kansas, s. e. Iowa, n. Illinois, s. Indiana . . ." In *Birds of America*, Garden City Publishing Co., 1942, we find the distribution as follows: "Eastern United States more common southerly, breeding northward to . . . southern Wisconsin (vicinity of Racine) etc. . . . "Also, 'he has been found fairly common as far north as southern New England, southern Michigan and Nebraska.' "

And so, our conclusion is that the Worm-eating Warbler is probably an accidental in South Dakota and we were lucky indeed to get one in our net. Our slides turned out very well, so we have a picture record also.—Charles and Gladys Rogge.

* * * * *

EARLY PARULA WARBLER NEAR BELVIDERE—Today (April 2, 1965) I found a Parula Warbler lying dead under a tree about 300 yards from our house. I checked it carefully with *Birds of America* and Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*. Then I placed it in the freezer.

The dead bird was under a tree which is frequently used as a look-out station

by the Great Horned Owl parent not on the nest. The owl nest itself is in a hollow branch of a cottonwood many feet above the ground. It is quite exposed, with no other branches around it. The tree where the other owl often sits in the daytime is smaller, ash or elm, with thick branches that serve as a screen.

I have looked many times for balls of hair, feathers and bones under the nesting tree, but without success. Today I decided to look under the other tree—where I was rewarded with quite a collection of balls. They contain an interesting array of bones, including the footbones of a smaller bird. I have them here and would be glad to make them available to anyone who is interested.

Although the Parula Warbler was actually lying among the regurgitated balls it was still quite limp and gave no evidence of having met a violent death. The owl wasn't around then, but I had seen a band of marauding crows pestering around the nest a few minutes earlier, so it may have been called to the defense of its family.

On May 1, I took the bird to Harry Behrens at Rapid City and he confirmed it as a Parula Warbler. He has made a study skin of it, and it will go to some institutional collection, as yet unknown.—**Velma DeVries, Belvidere.**

EDITOR'S NOTE: According to records (*Bird Notes*—VIII:18, IX:24, X:23, 31, 54, XI:75, XIII:53, 55, XIV:22) the Parula Warbler is a transient visitant, or migrant through the eastern part of the state. Locally we see or hear of one or more nearly every migration and have not made special note of it. (The Huron area.)

The location west of the Missouri and the date of April 2 make this find of more than casual interest, particularly when chance provides a specimen.

The bird was included in the Lacreek combined list of May 18-19, 1957 (*Bird Notes*, IX:24) however.—**J. W. Johnson.**

* * * *

GLOSSY IBIS AT CLEAR LAKE—On April 19, 1965, at 10:00 a. m., I slipped up on seven birds that appeared black in flight. A cold wind was blowing from the north. I was able to get close to them, about thirty feet, and no camera.

The birds were probing in the ground for food with their long downward curved bills, sometimes in the hard prairie sod.

They were waders, 22 to 25 inches long, with long legs and long decurved bills, dark brown in color with a greenish metallic sheen on head and wings. When seen at a distance, they appeared black.—**W. A. Rose, Clear Lake.**

* * * *

SNOWY EGRETS NEAR DE SMET—On June 30, 1965 three Snowy Egrets were located and identified in southeastern Kingsbury County, South Dakota. A single bird was sighted at about 10:30 a. m. feeding in a large slough approximately 150 feet from a town road. The bird was under observation for about five minutes during which it continued to feed while moving away from the observer's car. During this time the black legs and bill were carefully noted by the observer as well as the yellowish coloration on the lores. The bird was flushed and the yellow feet were noted in flight. This bird flew to the southeast and settled in the same slough but across the road from where it was first sighted. It joined two more birds of the same species that had been out of sight of the observer.

Later in the morning the three birds were again observed together. This sighting was at a distance of approximately 200 feet. Two of the three birds were successfully flushed so that the yellow feet could be seen.

The single bird was first sighted in

the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, section 16, T. 110 N., R. 55 W. The three Egrets were observed in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, section 15, T. 110 N., R. 55 W. The slough is a tapped Type III wetland and holds approximately six inches to two feet of water. It appears to have been plowed or disced in the fall of 1964. Aquatic vegetation is generally sparse with cattail, Carex (sp.) and polygonum (sp.) emerging.—Alan C. Bonsack, Huron.

* * * *



Horned Lark—See Below

—Kent Olson

NEST OF HORNED LARK FOUND NEAR RIFLE LAKE—"A Prairie Horned Lark atop a cow-chip scans photographer's blind before feeding young" describes the above photo. The nest was found April 19, 1965 by Tom Kuck of South Dakota State University, Brookings, on top of a grassy knoll in the Rifle Lake pheasant study area of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks.

On April 23, four days later, two eggs hatched. The third egg, possibly infertile, remained in the nest for several days, then disappeared.

Both adults carried food to the young and removed what apparently was fecal material. One adult exhibited a bright color pattern. The less conspicuous

SEPTEMBER, 1965

adult, probably the female, brooded the young during the hot part of the day. Feeding slackened considerably during the same period.

A Richardson's ground squirrel, approaching to within 20 feet of the nest, was vigorously attacked and driven off by one of adults. This defensive operation was repeated twice during a period of four hours on May 1.

During the morning of May 2, one young bird ventured forth a foot from the nest. By late afternoon both adults and young had disappeared.—Kent Olson, Huron.

* * * * *

NUMBERS OF WOOD DUCKS NEAR DEMPSTER—About September 15, 1964, I was told by Paul Williscroft, a farmer living two miles west of Dempster, that a large number of wood ducks were feeding on shelled corn in his hog yard almost every evening. The next day I arrived at the farm a little before sunset and Paul and I found a place where we could watch the ducks after they came in.

A few minutes after sunset the ducks began arriving in small flocks, landing in the hog yard which is located on the outer edge of the farm buildings. Some flocks had 10 to 15 birds while others had twice as many. They seemed to be coming from the vicinity of the Big Sioux River which is located about one mile east of the farm and also from Dry Lake area, two miles west.

A total of 90 to 100 Wood Ducks fed in the hog lot that evening. I was particularly amazed by their very rapid feeding habits. They seemed to scoot along the ground at a very rapid pace, picking up the shelled corn. In five to 10 minutes they would leave, usually in the direction from which they came.

They fed in this same lot several evenings, until the farmer quit feeding ear corn to his hogs.

I believe these Wood Ducks were
Note: Bruce Harris is sure these ducks were Wood duck. Says it is their habit to feed in fields in late evening & in feed lots. 4/7/68 JWW.

Note: AFC has no doubt these birds were actually Shovelers. He described a similar mistake he had known in past years. JWB 10-30-65

See Note P. 71

raised in the Sioux River-Dry Lake area and several wood duck houses were placed in that vicinity in March of 1965, in hopes of enhancing their reproduction.—Stanley H. Lundquist, State Game Warden, Estelline, S. Dak.

* * * *

WESTERN Tanager AT CACTUS HILLS — EAST EDGE OF SIOUX FALLS—On May 21, 1965, while conducting a Biology field trip through Cactus Hills, we identified a male Western Tanager. The red head, black and yellow body, and the wing bars made it easily identifiable in the field. Because of these markings it could not be mistaken for any other species. It was observed at a distance of about 75 feet for 10 minutes. As far as we know there has been no previous identification of said species this close to the Eastern South Dakota border.—Jan Schlueter, Tom Froiland, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.

* * * *

STARLING MIMIC AT ARMOUR—March 14, 1964, I left the drug store to take a short walk. About half a block from Main Street I heard a sweet little warble, something like a Goldfinch. The sound came from a cottonwood by the sidewalk. About twenty feet up sat a Starling, the only bird in sight.

As I searched the branches, the Starling gave a few soft little squeaks and grunts. Then I heard what sounded like a Killdeer a quarter mile away calling "Killdeer," six or seven times repeated. It was a good imitation of the call but uttered softly.

The Starling gave a few more squeaks, then a typical Baltimore Oriole warble, just once. Then, after a pause and a few little squeels, came the alarm note of a Meadowlark. Next the alarm

note of a Robin came, rather softly, and repeated several times.

Forty feet away, on the ground, a Robin hunting worms, paid no attention to the sound. I thought it was a good imitation, though only about half as loud as the robin makes it.

Coming back after walking three more blocks, I found the Starling still there. It soon gave a call that sounded like the alarm note of a Redwing. Then it switched to that of a meadowlark.

We have had starlings nesting near our back door for ten years or more but have never heard them do any real singing. Yet, half a block from my store, a strange Starling gave me a program of beautiful mimicry, far more realistic than any I have ever heard from mockingbirds or brown thrashers. Just another of those amazing surprises with which nature sometimes rewards bird-watchers.—Chas. P. Crutchett, Armour.

See Roger Tory Peterson's "Wild Europe" in Aberdeen October 7 or in Huron (Senior High School Auditorium 8:00 p. m. October 8, 1965 and come to the Winter Meeting of S. D. ●. U. October 9-10 in Huron. Page 67 for Program and 68 for hotels and motels.