

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Official Publication

of

SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

*(Organized 1949)*

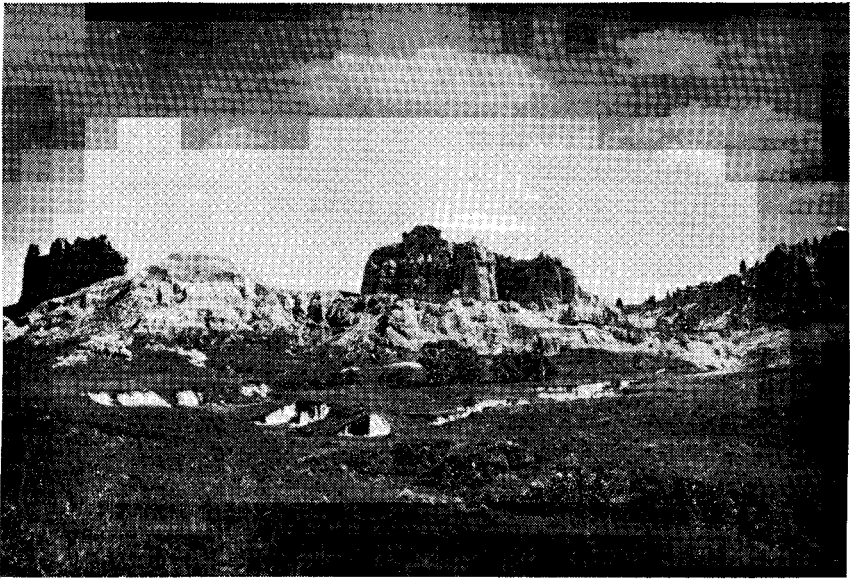
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Vol. XXII, No. 1

MARCH, 1970

Whole No. 84

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Slim Buttes

—L. M. Baylor

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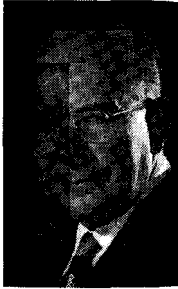
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## President's Page

ONE urgent task of SDOU now is the annotated check-list of South Dakota birds, probably to be called **Birds of South Dakota**. As members of the check-list committee work over the data on the nearly 400 species of birds we may see in the state, all too little of it has yet been gathered. Every species we consider, we end with an estimate based on a few recorded observations, widely scattered in time and usually in location as well. To form this into a general picture of where and when a species might be expected and commit it to type in a book calls for qualities we all wish were in better supply. And we wish time had permitted more field work, and foresight had led to fuller records, that observations had been sharper or more persistent, knowledge earlier acquired, that better success had attended our efforts to interest others in helping. And, above all, that we had more confidence in our instinct for clothing scattered and often conflicting data with an envelope of generality.

In the hope that someone's bit of knowledge or idea might happily fill another's blank, we confer as often as practical over our separate parts of the overall task and exchange manuscripts for checking. Of course it all helps, sometimes with needed data, more often from mere shared responsibility, and a feeling that the result of pooled inferences will be a better inference.



But this makeshift we can never do without is no good substitute for the information we need.

Yet, the particular regret that is a part of every consideration of the work is that, no matter how long delayed, the book will still be obsolete before it is in print. Its existence will call attention to its shortcomings, remind people of material no one has been able to elicit from them earlier. Sources not known or adequately considered will be found.

In spite of all this human nature, there are still good arguments for going to press early. These include the above calling out of existing material. But, of more consequence, it would give us all a better basis for future work. We would have a sound picture of what is well known, what is lacking, what is most needed. It would give us blanks to fill out, missing items of information to look for instead of just wandering around looking for "birds" to list, file—and, all too often, forget. It should help to reduce the frustrating discoveries by future workers that the observations they have made were quite unusual but have largely lost their value for lack of proper records and reporting. That has happened to all of us. We didn't know there was no known record of what we saw and, because we were inexperienced, assumed no new discoveries could be ours.

With the new **Birds of South Dakota** in print, we can see at once if our observation fits, if the bird has any right to be where we see it.

But, if this benefit is to hold, we must avoid too easily discounting an

(Continued on Page 55)

# *Summer Birds of Harding County,*

## **South Dakota: 1967-1969**

by L. M. Baylor and Willard Rosine

**T**HE late S. S. Visher (1914) provided a significant record of the birds of Harding County, South Dakota, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In compiling his material, Visher, a naturalist for the South Dakota Geological and Natural History Survey, drew upon his field work in the county for the periods of July 7 - September 4, 1910; June 6-20, 1911; and August 1-9, August 30-September 11, 1912. In addition, Visher utilized the published records of G. B. Grinnell and A. A. Saunders. Grinnell, with the Custer Expedition of 1874, passed through Harding County during July 9-16 and August 17-29, 1874. Saunders spent November and December, 1909, in the county as an employee of the United States Forest Service. Visher also drew heavily on the bird lore acquired by Sol Catron who settled along the Little Missouri River near Camp Crook in 1883. Thus, Visher's report covers all seasons of the year and records 165 species in Harding County, if one includes his tentatively identified Forster's Tern. Of these 165 species, about 100, we judge, were known or probable breeding species within the county.

Preliminary reports of Visher's information were published in *The Auk*, January 1911, January 1912, and April 1913. Subsequently, his combined records appeared in the *South Dakota Geological Survey, Bulletin Number Six* (1914). The latter publication is the principal reference for this paper. Following Visher's 1910-12 study, field ornithology in Harding County was minimal. In late July 1967 and mid-

June 1968 and 1969, we had the opportunity to do bird study in Harding County. The present report thus offers some contemporary information about summer birds in Harding County and comparative data with respect to the species that Visher recorded. Our observations yielded 108 species as summer residents, plus observations of four additional species provided by reliable associates. Of the 112 species thus reported in this paper, nearly all are known or very likely breeding birds in Harding County, with probable exceptions for the Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, and Baird's Sandpiper. Our species list for 1967-69 includes 15 species that Visher did not observe, and we did not observe a number of species that he recorded.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

For many years Mr. and Mrs. Herman F. Chapman have expressed keen interest in the birds of Harding County. Their encouragement largely motivated our efforts, and we hope our report brings them special satisfaction, even though we cannot offer a rewarding answer to Herman's repeated question: "Does the McCown's Longspur still nest in Harding County?"

Many Harding County residents, too numerous to mention individually, were gracious to us with their Harding County hospitality that exceeds the traditional western hospitality. To all of them, we express our appreciation. For special kindnesses and assistance, we are particularly indebted to Millie, Marjorie, and Paul Evenson; Mr. and Mrs. Joe Dunn; Rex Burghduff; and Timothy S. Burns, Chief

**SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES**

Ranger, Custer National Forest, Camp Crook.

Don Adolphson, B. J. Rose, and Dr. Paul Springer shared their field notes on birds in Harding County, and we are privileged to include some of their records in this report.

Augustana College, Department of Biology, Sioux Falls, and Research Corporation, New York, provided extensive financial support for our project, and we gratefully acknowledge this assistance.

The authors also wish to express their gratitude to Mr. Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls, for reading the manuscript and for his comments and helpful suggestions.

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

The species accounts represent a cumulative list of birds we observed in Harding County during the summers of 1967-69, except that we did not see the four species marked with an asterisk—goshawk, turkey, chukar, and long-eared owl. These previously unpublished observations were provided by B. J. Rose and Don Adolphson. Normally, one should expect to find chukars and a few turkeys during the breeding season in Harding County, and one might expect to find an occasional nesting goshawk or long-eared owl. All four species occur in nearby areas or in suitable habitats of western South Dakota during the breeding season. For ready comparison the account of each species ends with a summary of Visher's remarks on the species or an indication that Visher did not list the species.

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps caspicus*). Three in the northwest quarter of the county, 6|12|68; a pair in the southwest quarter, 6|12|69; and a pair in the northwest quarter, 6|13|69. Visher: occasional migrant along the Little Missouri River.

Mallard (*Anas platyrynchos*). Fairly common at stock ponds and marshes all

three summers. July, 1967, four hens with broods; June, 1968, two hens with broods; June, 1969, four hens with broods. Visher: abundant migrant; reported by Grinnell, Catron, and others to nest during wet summers.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). A few at stock ponds and marshes all three summers. Two hens with broods, July, 1967. Visher: species not recorded.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*). A few at stock ponds and marshes in 1967 and 1968; somewhat more numerous in 1969. Two hens with broods, 7|22|67; a hen with brood of nine, 6|9|68; a hen with brood of four, 6|14|69. Visher: abundant breeder on artificial ponds and along the Grand River.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*). In the northwest quarter of the county, one male, 6|9|68; two males and one female, 6|11|68. One male at a pond along Harding County Road 867, 6|12|69; two males in the northwest quarter of the county, 6|13|69; three males northeast of North Cave Hills, 6|14|69; and one male in the northeast quarter of the county, 6|15|69. Visher: breeds wherever possible; six broods during the 1910-12 survey.

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*). Curiously, none during the wet 1967 season, but fairly common in 1968 and



Upland Plover

—L. M. Baylor

1969. Saw no broods, but did see a few apparently mated pairs. Visher: as abundant as the Green-winged Teal.

Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*). One male at a small pond in the northwest quarter of the county along Harding County Road 867, 6|9|68; and one male also in the northwest quarter, 6|13|69. Visher: species not recorded.

American Widgeon (*Mareca americana*). None in 1967, but a few, particularly in the northwest quarter of the county, in 1968 and 1969. No broods, but a few possibly mated pairs. Visher: common migrant (Catron); breeding species in 1874, according to Grinnell. Apparently, Visher did not see this species during his study.

Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*). None in 1967, but a scattered few in the northwest quarter of the county, June, 1968; and in all other quarters, June, 1969. No broods observed. Visher: common migrant; one brood observed.

Redhead (*Aythya americana*). Two males east of Ludlow, 6|14|69. Visher: fairly abundant during migrations (Catron).

Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*). Six hens with small broods in the northwest quarter of the county, 6|22|67; one hen with a brood of four, 6|11|68. No males observed in these two seasons, and species not found in 1969. Visher: uncommon during migrations (Catron).

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*). Five males and one female in the northwest quarter of the county, 6|13|69. Don Adolphson reported two on his Breeding Bird Survey, southwest Harding County, 6|9|68. Visher: common migrant (Catron).

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). Four individuals along the North End Road, north of Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 6|15|69. From Dr. Paul Springer: one at Slim Buttes, 5|23|64. Visher: tolerably abundant summer resident about

the higher buttes, especially in the Slim Buttes.

\*Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). From B. J. Rose: one immature goshawk observed about five miles west of Buffalo, 10|24|68. Visher: one in Cave Hills, August 12; one reported by Saunders, near Harding, November 7.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). Breeding resident in small numbers. Nest, 6|10|68; nest with two downy young, 6|12|68; nest with three small young, 6|14|69. Visher: common summer resident throughout the area.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). One individual west of Slim Buttes, 7|27|67; another north of Redig, 6|8|68. From Don Adolphson: successful nest in the Redig vicinity in 1968; same nest had three young about a week old, 7|2|69, with only two feathered young remaining, 7|17|69. Visher: Abundant summer resident.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). Breeding resident in numbers somewhat above those of the red-tailed hawk, 1967-1968. Fewer individuals in 1969: Nest, 6|13|68, with three well-feathered young, banded by Don Adolphson, who also banded two young about ready to fledge, 7|2|69. Visher: quite abundant on the plains; also breeds in the buttes.



Farruginous Hawk Nest

—L. M. Baylor

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Fairly common in modest numbers throughout the county. Adult flushed from nest, 6|10|68; nest with two young, 6|13|68; two young in the same nest, 6|15|69. Visher: common resident about the higher buttes.

Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*). Fairly common in modest numbers all three years. In the northwest quarter of the county, 6|11|68, female flushed from nest containing six eggs. Visher: common summer resident on the plains.

Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). A few breeding birds still present in the county. Nest with three half-grown young, 6|12|68; nest with three downy young, 6|13|69. Visher, abundant summer resident.

Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*). Fairly common all three summers. No nests, but observed a few instances of apparently copulating pairs. Visher: abundant summer resident on the plains.

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Pedioecetus phasianellus*). One individual in an alfalfa field north of Camp Crook, 6|8|68. From Dr. Paul Springer: eight sharp-tailed grouse at Slim Buttes, 3|26|64. Visher: very abundant resident along permanent streams, in park areas of higher buttes, and near their base.

Sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). Species still present in sufficient numbers for controlled hunting. One female with eight young, 7|22|67; female with five young, 7|26|67; female with seven young, 6|13|69. Visher: abundant resident, but Visher writes at length about the declining numbers of sage grouse and gloomily comments, "In a very few years they will occur in South Dakota only as a rare winter straggler from Montana."

Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*). One rooster near the Little Missouri River, 6|12|68; two roosters a few miles east of Ludlow, 6|14|69. Matt

Smolnikar, long-time resident north of Ralph, reports the pheasant population in recent years has been nearly nil. Visher: species not recorded; this species introduced in eastern South Dakota in the early 1900's, apparently had not moved as far west as Harding County by the time of Visher's study.

\*Chukar (*Alectoris graeca*). According to B. J. Rose, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks released nearly 200 chukars near the Cave Hills in 1960-61. Small populations now provide conditions for controlled hunting. Rose saw about 40 chukars, 10|24|68, west of Table Mountain. Visher: this introduced species not present during Visher's study.

Gray Partridge (*Perdix perdix*). Two flushed from sagebrush west of Table Mountain, 6|12|68; one south of Box Elder Creek, 6|12|69; two west of Ladner, 6|13|69. Paul Evenson reports the gray partridge frequently nested in former years on his ranch north of Camp Crook, but none recently. Visher: species introduced to western South Dakota many years after Visher's 1910-12 study.

\*Turkey (*Meleagris gallapavo*). From Don Adolphson: one tom and five hens at Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 4|17|69. According to B. J. Rose, turkeys move out of the Montana Long Pines, where they were introduced in 1955, and winter along the Little Missouri River. Visher: introduction of this species came after Visher's study.

American Coot (*Fulica americana*). An adult with a brood on a pond about 10 miles north of Buffalo, 7|21|67. A few scattered individuals in 1968, and none in 1969. Visher: rare because of almost total absence of suitable habitat.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*). Common to abundant species throughout the county all three summers. Small chicks in Joe Dunn's farm yard, 6|10|68; an adult with two young at

the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69; young killdeer in the road at North Cave Hills, 6|14|69. Visher: very abundant breeder in moist areas on the plains.

Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*). In 1968 and 1969, fairly common in modest numbers, particularly in the northwest quarter of the county. Visher: breeding species; frequently seen in sparsely settled western part of the county, rarely elsewhere.

Upland Plover (*Bartramia longicauda*). Fairly common in small numbers, particularly in the northwest quarter of the county near the Little Missouri River. Nest containing three newly hatched young, near the Little Missouri River, 6|13|69. Visher: breeds sparingly in the drier western half of the county and fairly abundant in the eastern half.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). A few noted each summer at the Little Missouri River Ford; also at a lake west of North Cave Hills. Visher: breeds sparingly; common migrant.

Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucus*). Three at a pond near Table Mountain, 7|22|67. Visher: a pair at the Little Missouri River, July 19; regular migrant (Catron).

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Erolia melanotos*). Two adults and three juveniles at a slough in the northwest quarter of the county, 7|22|67; probably bred in this area. Visher: recorded this species as a common migrant only.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Erolia bairdii*). One individual at a slough in the northwest quarter of the county, 7|22|67. Undoubtedly a nonbreeder that did not go north to the arctic breeding area. Visher: reports only that several were seen on artificial ponds.

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*). Two at a lake west of North Cave Hills, 6|13|69. From Don Adolphson: one on his Breeding Bird Survey in southwestern Harding County,

6|9|68. Visher: ten observed 8|23|10; fairly abundant in migration (Catron).

Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*). Fairly common in marsh areas all three summers; most numerous shore bird after the killdeer. Visher: species not recorded in Visher's study.

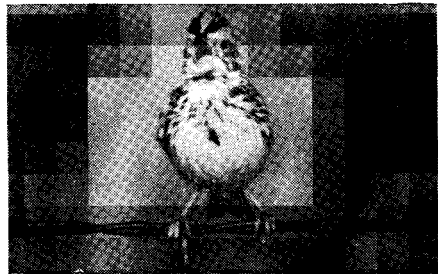
Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). One individual in subadult plumage at Gardner Lake, 7|22|67. Visher: one taken by Grinnell on the Little Missouri River, July, 1874.

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*). Three flying over Buffalo, 6|8|68. Visher: species not recorded.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*). About 60 at a lake west of North Cave Hills, 7|22|67; one individual at the same lake, 6|13|69; and about 24, east of Ludlow, 6|14|69. From Don Adolphson: three on his Breeding Bird Survey, 6|1|67. Visher: fairly common migrant through the county.

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*). A few in the mesa-badlands area of North Cave Hills, 6|12|68 and 6|14|69. From Dr. Paul Springer: eight at Slim Buttes, 3|26|64. Visher: species not recorded.

Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*). Common throughout the county all three summers. Nest containing two downy young, near the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69. Visher: common breeder in groves along streams



Baird's Sparrow

—B. J. Rose

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES



but rarely seen in driving about the country; plentiful in autumn.

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*). One at Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 7|23|67; one a few miles north of Cedar Canyon Pass, Slim Buttes, 6|13|68. Visher: one in North Dakota just north of Harding County and near the Montana border, 7|11|10.

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*). Two adults and two immature birds about eight weeks old, at North Cave Hills, 6|12|68; three young birds capable of sustained flight, North Cave Hills, 6|13|69. Visher: abundant resident in the badlands about the steeper buttes.

Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*). One perched on a telephone pole and a dead one on the highway, southeast of Buffalo, 7|26|67; a dead one hanging on a fence about three miles east of Redig, 7|26|67; one perched on a haystack north of Camp Crook, 6|8|68. Visher: abundant in some of the prairie-dog towns.

\*Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*). From B. J. Rose: one long-eared owl in the southern portion of Slim Buttes, 9|24|68. Visher: species not recorded.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*). One perched on a fence post about one-half mile south of Buffalo, 7|21|67. Visher: several in the Little Missouri River valley (Grinnell, 1874); in Visher's 1910-12 study, species found chiefly east of Slim Buttes and in Perkins County.

Poor-Will (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*). Common at North Cave Hills (readily heard at dusk at Picnic Springs Campground) all three summers; occasionally observed elsewhere in the county; one found dead on the road north of Camp Crook, 6|10|68. Visher: frequent breeder in the high buttes.

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). Common at North Cave Hills, all three summers, and a few observed elsewhere about the buttes and plains

of the county. Visher: common breeder in the plains.

White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*). Fairly numerous at the south end of the East Short Pines, 6|10|68; common at Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 6|13|68; abundant at Reva Gap, 6|15|69. Visher: several pairs nested in the higher Slim Buttes, and a few at the north end of the East Shore Pines.

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*). Two in the vicinity of the Little Missouri River, 6|9|68. Visher: a few pairs nested along the Little Missouri River, and one on the largest stream of Cave Hills.

Yellow-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). One at North Cave Hills, 7|21|67; one at the East Shore Pines, 6|10|68; one at North Cave Hills, 6|12|68; one south of Camp Crook, 6|12|69. From Don Adolphson: one recorded on his Breeding Bird Survey, 6|20|69. Visher: breeds more frequently east of the Little Missouri River than west of it.

Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes cafer*). More commonly noted in small numbers in 1968 and 1969 than in 1967. Occurred primarily in the Little Missouri River valley, but also noted as far east as Reva Gap, 6|15|69. On examination of specimens, probably most flickers in Harding County would show traits of cross-breeding, as is the case with flickers elsewhere in western South Dakota. Visher: common summer resident in and west of the Little Missouri River valley; more rare to the eastward.

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). Two at Camp Crook, 7|22|67; one in the sagebrush hills near the "Jump Off" east of Camp Crook (no trees visible in any direction), 6|8|68; two at Camp Crook, 6|8|68; two at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|9|68; one at the Long Pines west of Camp Crook, 6|10|68; one at the East Short Pines, 6|10|68; two at the Little



## McCown's Longspur —Colorado

—B. J. Rose

Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69. Comments from two different residents of the northeast quarter of the county: "We do not see woodpeckers in this area." Visher: abundant summer resident in the groves of the Little Missouri River valley and sparingly in the buttes.

Downy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos pubescens*). One individual at North Cave Hills, 7|22|67. Visher: much more frequently seen than the hairy woodpecker; specimen collected near Willet.

Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*). A very common resident throughout the county all three summers. Visher: nests sparingly, usually in box-elder trees.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*). Fairly common in small numbers (far fewer observed in comparison to the eastern kingbird) all three summers. Seen particularly in the northwest quarter of the county. Visher: species regarded as rare in Harding County, but three nesting records indicated.

Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*). One individual observed in the East Short Pines, 6|10|68. (Frequent breeding species at the Alfred Hinds ranch in southwestern Perkins County, Hinds, 1968:54.) Visher: species not recorded.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). Fairly common in rather small numbers throughout the county, all three sum-

mers. Characteristically associated with bridges, abandoned buildings, and out buildings of occupied farms. A nesting pair at a ranch south of Ralph, 6|15|69. Paul Evenson reports Say's Phoebe frequently nests at his ranch in the northwest quarter of the county. Visher: abundant summer resident in cliffs of badlands.

Empidonax Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii?*). One individual at Camp Crook, 6|6|68 and 6|9|68; another at Camp Crook, 6|12|69; and one at Paul Evenson's ranch, 6|13|69. No calls heard on any occasion, but our best assumption is Traill's Flycatcher. Visher: Alder (Traill's) Flycatcher nests along the Little Missouri River and in canyons of forested buttes; Least Flycatcher—a pair nested in Cave Hills.

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). Very abundant in the plains throughout the county, all three summers; numerous juveniles observed. Visher: one of the four most numerous residents on the plains; estimated 25 adults per section.

Violet-Green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*). A few at Harding village, 6|10|68; fairly common at the East Short Pines, 6|10|68, and at Cedar Canyon Pass, 6|13|68; fairly abundant at Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 6|15|69. Visher: species not recorded.

Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*). A few at Harding village, 6|10|68, and at Paul Evenson's ranch, 6|11|68; two at a pond in the southwest quarter of the county and one in the northwest quarter, 6|12|69. Visher: species not recorded.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). Common throughout the county, particularly on the plains, all three summers. Juveniles observed on a number of occasions. Visher: apparently not overly common, 1910-12; a few nested around sheds of old ranches and at Camp Crook.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrho-*

nota). Abundant throughout the county, all three summers. The most abundant swallow in Harding County. Many active nests at North Cave Hills and under major bridges, such as the Box Elder Creek Bridge. Visher: abundant nester on cliffs of badlands and along streams wherever cliffs occur; the only swallow frequently seen.

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*). Fairly common in small numbers throughout the western half of the county and at the Slim Buttes, all three summers. Visher: common resident in groves of the Little Missouri valley and in canyons of the buttes.

Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). A few in the vicinity of the East Short Pines, 6/10/68, and three near the South side of the West Short Pines, 6/12/69. From Don Adolphson: four, 6/1/67; two, 6/9/68; and one, 6/20/69, on his Breeding Bird Survey. Visher: a common migrant, with a few nesting near Camp Crook.

Pinon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephala*). Two at the East Short Pines, 6/10/68; 11 at the West Short Pines, 6/12/69. Joe Dunn reported this species appears regularly each spring at his ranch adjacent to the East Short Pines. Timothy J. Burns, ranger at the Custer National Forest headquarters, found Pinon Jays at Summit Springs, Slim Buttes, in the summer of 1968. He also saw six at the same location, 10/30/68. From Dr. Paul Springer: about 60 at North Cave Hills, 8/26/64. Visher: species in North Cave Hills, summer of 1910; Slim Buttes, fall, 1910; and Short Pine Hills, summer, 1911.

Black capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*). A few at Camp Crook, 7/22/67; a few at North Cave Hills, 6/12/68, and at Reva Gap, 6/13/68. Visher: breeds abundantly in forests of the buttes.

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*). Common in modest numbers, all three summers, in deciduous areas such as the Little Missouri River valley (Camp

Crook), North Cave Hills, and Slim Buttes (Cedar Canyon Pass). Visher: nests abundantly in forested portions of Little Missouri River valley and in pine forests of high buttes.

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*). Fairly abundant at North Cave Hills and Slim Buttes, June, 1968 and 1969. Visher: breeds abundantly in badlands and cliffs of steep-sided buttes.

Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*). Only one observed at Camp Crook, 6/9/68. Visher: species not common but found in groves along streams.

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*). Present in small numbers in the deciduous areas of the Little Missouri River valley, at North Cave Hills and Slim Buttes, June, 1968 and 1969. Visher: more numerous than catbird in same habitat.

Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). Fairly common all three summers in all parts of the county, except in the northeast quarter. Two residents reported they see few robins in the latter area, and in 1969, Mrs. Matt Smolnikar noted the first nesting robins at her farm near Ralph in perhaps 20 years. Visher: nested quite plentifully in the Short Pines, 1911.

Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). A nesting pair at Picnic Springs Campground, North Cave Hills, 6/12/68; a male-female pair perched on a power line near the Sky Ranch for Boys, south of Camp Crook, 6/12/69. Visher: common breeder in pines of higher buttes.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). A female at Reva Gap, 7/23/67; a few, including a male-female pair, at the Long Pines, 6/10/68; an apparently mated pair (male carrying food) at North Cave Hills; 6/12/68, a few at Reva Gap, 6/13/68; fairly numerous in the area north of Cedar Canyon Pass, 6/13/68; and a pair at North Cave Hills, 6/13/69. From Dr. Paul Springer: a pair at Cedar Canyon Pass, 3/26/64. Visher:

two nesting records in the Short Pine Hills, one of them by Grinnell in 1874.

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). A few in Buffalo, 6|8|69. Rex Burghduff reported an "invasion" of cedar waxwings in Buffalo, 6|6|68. Visher: common summer resident in pine forests of buttes.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Larius ludovicianus*). Fairly common in modest numbers throughout the county all three summers. Nest with four newly hatched young at Tipperary Roadside Park, Buffalo, 6|13|68. Visher: abundant summer resident of the plains; nests in scattered trees along the intermittent creeks.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Present in modest numbers about the towns and villages and in woodlands of the Little Missouri River valley all three summers. Visher: species not recorded.

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*). A few at Buffalo, 6|8|68; one at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|9|68; and a few in the general area of Cedar Canyon Pass, 6|13|68. Visher: not a rare nester in the wooded canyons of Slim Buttes.

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). A few at Buffalo, 6|8|68; two at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|9|68; two south of Camp Crook and one at Camp Crook, 6|12|69; one at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69. Visher: common nester along the Little Missouri River and in wooded canyons of buttes.

Audubon's Warbler (*Dendroica auduboni*). Two at North Cave Hills, 7|22|67; a few, including a female on a nest in a Ponderosa, at North Cave Hills, 6|12|68; one at Reva Gap, 6|13|68; and two at North Cave Hills, 6|13|69. Visher: fairly common; nests in pine forests of higher buttes.

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*). One at the East Short Pines, 6|10|68; a pair engaging in courtship activities at Reva Gap, 6|15|69; and one in the Slim Buttes north of Reva Gap, 6|15|69. Visher:

nests in the Short Pine Hills; fledglings observed in the Long Pines.

Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*). Present in small numbers, all three summers, in the Little Missouri valley (Camp Crook), North Cave Hills, Long Pines, and Slim Buttes. Visher: breeds commonly along the permanent streams.

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*). One at North Cave Hills, 6|14|69; a few at Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, 6|15|69. Visher: nested abundantly in most wooded portions of the Little Missouri floodplain.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). Fairly common at Buffalo and Camp Crook and near most farm buildings. Visher: abundant in the only large town, Camp Crook, even when there was no railroad nearer than 80 miles.

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*). A single adult male in typical habitat, northeast of Ralph and about two miles west of the Perkins County line, 6|15|69. Visher: rare summer resident along the Moreau River.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*). Very abundant throughout the county all three summers. Visher: abundant nester on plains and mesas of higher buttes; estimated 10 pairs per section.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*). One in grasslands east of Redig, 7|26|67; a female being hazed by a brown-headed cowbird at Harding village, 6|10|68; three males and one female in the northeast quarter of the county, east of Ludlow, 6|14|69. Visher: an occasional migrant only, because of absence of reedy marshes.

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Common in the open country throughout the county all three summers; somewhat more numerous in the northeast quarter of the county; juveniles noted occasionally. Visher: common migrant; a few pairs nested at a tiny

marsh in the North Cave Hills.

Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*). A male-female pair at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|9|68 and 6|12|68; a male-female pair at the same location, 6|13|69. Visher: species not recorded.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). An adult male at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69. Visher: a pair nested in the Little Missouri River valley July 20.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). Two near a lake west of North Cave Hills, 7|22|67; four males and three females north of the Evenson Ranch, 6|9|68; about 20 near Cedar Canyon Pass, 6|13|68. Nine, including a pair carrying food, south of Camp Crook, and one individual north of Camp Crook, 6|12|69. One near the Little Missouri River Ford and a dozen near Table Mountain, 6|13|69. Visher: abundant breeder.

Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*). Common in modest numbers throughout the county, but particularly in the Little Missouri valley, all three summers. A few nests at the Little Missouri River Ford, 6|13|69. Visher: records only that several (bronzed grackles) nested near Reva in 1911.

Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). Fairly common throughout the county all three summers. Visher: numerous in 1874 (Grinnell); rare in 1910, but frequent in 1911 and 1912.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). One or two males near the Little Missouri River Ford—individuals observed at two different places, could have been the same bird or different birds, 6|13|69. Visher: abundant nester in cottonwood groves of the Little Missouri valley.

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*). One at Paul Evenson's ranch, 6|11|68. Visher: species not recorded.

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*). Flock of about 20 feeding in dandelions at Buffalo, 6|8|68. Visher: a small flock ob-

served in early September.

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*). Common in modest numbers at or near North Cave Hills all three summers, and a scattered few elsewhere in the county, particularly in the Little Missouri valley. Visher: not uncommon during the summer.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*). A few at the East Short Pines, 6|10|68. Visher: a frequent summer resident wherever trees are plentiful.

Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). Present in small numbers, all three summers, at North Cave Hills, Slim Buttes, and the Long Pines. Visher: abundant breeder (arctic towhee) wherever trees occur.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melancorys*). Very abundant on the plains throughout the county all three summers. Numerous juveniles noted. Visher: one of the most numerous summer residents of the plain.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). A pair apparently near a nest, for they were distressed by our presence; a single bird noted elsewhere, 6|15|69; both observations in rather tall, ungrazed grasslands in the northeast quarter of the county. Visher: observed only in early September, but expected to nest in the county.

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*). Abundant in late July, 1967, in the open country throughout the county, with a number of juveniles noted and many adults carrying food. Fairly common in mid-June, 1968 and 1969. Visher: nests in the moister blue-stem swales of the eastern part of the area.

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*). Two males singing on territory in the extreme northwest corner of the county, 6|9|68, in low areas of ungrazed native grass. Species known to nest due east in Perkins County, Lemmon area (1967). From B. J. Rose: a single male singing near North Cave Hills, 7|6|68.

Visher: breeds rarely in the moister draws of the steppe; common migrant late August and early September.

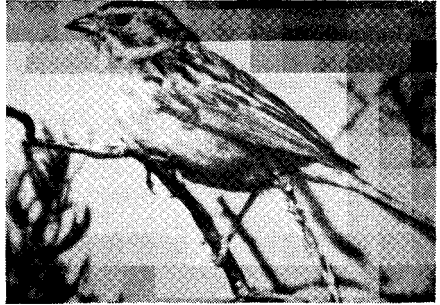
Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*). Only a few noted in late July, 1967, Cave Hills area and east of Redig. Fairly common in the northwest quarter of the county, June, 1968; and somewhat more numerous in the same area, June, 1969. Visher: common summer resident on the plains.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). Common to abundant at North Cave Hills, 7/21/67; a few near Camp Crook, 7/22/67, and at the S.D.S.U. Experiment Farm west of Slim Buttes, 7/26/67. Fairly common at the Long Pines and East Short Pines, 6/10/68, and at Reva Gap, 6/13/68. Fairly common at Camp Crook and North Cave Hills, 6/13/69, with a scattered few elsewhere in the northwest quarter of the county. Visher: common breeder in groves along the streams.

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*). Common in Ponderosas of North Cave Hills, Slim Buttes, and East Short Pines, all three summers. Visher: rare along the Little Missouri and numerous in the Slim Buttes in late August.

Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*). One adult east of Redig, 7/26/67, carrying food and very disturbed by our presence; apparently had young nearby but would not go to feed them in our presence. Two individuals in the northwest quarter of the county, 6/9/68 and 6/11/68. One north of Camp Crook, 6/12/69; one near the Little Missouri River Ford, 6/13/69; and five northwest of Table Mountain, 6/13/69. Species known to nest in Butte County (Serr, 1967:69). Visher: species not recorded in Harding County.

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*). A pair near Reva Gap, Slim Buttes, in a coulee containing a few small box-elder trees and considerable coralberry, 6/15/69. Apparently near a nest, for one bird carried food and flitted about



## Brewer's Sparrow

—B. J. Rose

elusively; other bird sang a few times. Visher: not uncommon on the foothills of the higher buttes.

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). A single individual observed northeast of Ralph, 6/15/69. Visher: nests in suitable localities about the buttes; common migrant after August 21.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*). A few west of North Cave Hills and at Gardner Lake, west of Buffalo, 7/22/67; nest with four eggs in sparse grassland at Gardner Lake. Common to abundant in the open country throughout the county, mid-June, 1968. Nest with three eggs, in rather sparse grassland on the Evenson Ranch, 6/11/68. Abundant throughout the county, mid-June, 1969. Visher: abundant breeder on the plains in the eastern part of the county; less numerous westward. Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs outnumbered Horned Larks (1910-1912).

## DISCUSSION

Harding County, representing an area of 2,682 square miles, is the extreme northwest county in South Dakota. Early settlement was sparse and involved vast land use by cattle-grazing groups from Texas and Oklahoma. The subsequent homestead period between 1907 and 1914 temporarily changed a small part of the area of smaller farming units. But small farms were not par-

ticularly practical because soil conditions and the modest annual precipitation of about 13 inches were not conducive to productive cultivation throughout most of the county. Today, scattered areas, particularly in the northeastern part of the county, support grain farming, while most of the county has evolved to larger ranching operations supporting cattle and sheep on native grass and domestic hay.

In many respects Harding County's ecological conditions probably have not suffered the drastic changes usually associated with human settlement and land use. The principal land use continues in animal grazing as it was in Visher's time. Limited cultivation probably has meant less use of pesticides and other harmful chemicals than in the more easterly counties of the state. Further, the county's modest population (2,371 in the 1960 census as compared to 4,228 in 1910) may provide circumstances under which there is less human demand upon the land with consequently less disturbance of the natural environment. Notable exceptions involve the heavier grazing activities within fenced ranch areas, the ravaging of areas in the Cave Hills by uranium explorations, and possible disturbances by scattered oil explorations.

One change in physical conditions of Harding County may have been particularly significant for bird life. Aside from the habitats associated with the permanent streams, Visher found few natural ponds and related marshes. During and since the 1930's, continuous development of stock dams and dugouts has provided many more permanent water resources with the ensuing emergent vegetation suitable for certain avian species.

As we reflect on our bird observations in Harding County in comparison with Visher's records, we are impressed by both the similarities and differences. Visher found the very abundant prairie

species were the McCown's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Horned Lark, and Lark Bunting. Nearly 60 years later we encountered the Western Meadowlark, Horned Lark, and Lark Bunting as the most abundant prairie species. Apparently, the status of the Horned Lark and Lark Bunting has not significantly changed. Meadowlark numbers appear to have increased, and while still relatively abundant, the Chestnut-collared Longspur may not be as numerous today.

Absence of the McCown's Longspur represents a drastic and perplexing change. The bird seems to have disappeared from Harding County since Visher's study. But it should be present at least in very small numbers, for in a personal communication Dr. Paul Springer advised us that Robert Stewart recently located small groups of McCown's during the breeding season in native grassland and stubble and fallow fields near the Little Missouri River seven to 10 miles north of Harding County in Bowman County, North Dakota. Despite our walking many miles of similar habitat in Harding County, we could not find a McCown's Longspur.

Krause (1968: 6-11) examined various possibilities for the decline of this species in the prairie states: response to indiscernable environmental or climatic changes, absence of prairie fires to regenerate the grasslands' environment, and disturbance of suitable habitats through intensive cultivation or grazing. While any one or a combination of these factors may be involved in the McCown's Longspur's changing status, we wonder about another possible contributing condition. Early records indicate the McCown's was associated with the sparse but relatively undisturbed prairie short grasses. With the encroachment upon such habitat by farming and fence-enclosed intensive grazing, was there a deficiency in

the McCown's itself so that it could not readily adapt to related or somewhat different environments? Rather than establish adaptations to the local circumstances, the species seems to have moved northward to new but characteristically preferred grassland environments. The McCown's Longspur simply may have followed an evolutionary blind alley into a restricted ecological niche so that declining numbers and absence of the species from an area were inevitable as the suitable habitats disappeared. But perhaps to offset this idea of evolutionary unadaptiveness by McCown's, we have Stewart's indication that the species does occur in stubble and fallow fields of southwestern North Dakota. In any event, we hope someone eventually will find this longspur nesting in Harding County again, even though not in the abundance that Visher found.

The meeting of East and West for some North American birds still prevails in Harding County, as it did in Visher's time, with the occurrence of certain characteristically eastern species near the western extreme of their range and, conversely, some typically western species near the eastern limits of their range. As did Visher, we noted such eastern species as Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, Ovenbird, and Bobolink; and we were privileged to observe the Eastern Phoebe, which Visher did not record. Among western species we found, as did Visher, Poor-Will, Say's Phoebe, Pinon Jay, and Rock Wren, and added Cinnamon Teal and Violet-green Swallow. The relatively high number of the latter species represents a rather drastic change, and we cannot account for its current status as compared to its absence in the early 1900's.

The present occurrence in Harding County of a few other species marks a distinctive contrast with Visher's time.

The known or apparent nesting by the Gadwall, American Widgeon, Canvasback, American Coot, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and Black Tern probably is related to the development of stock dams and dugouts and to seasonal differences in precipitation. We noted an abundance of waterfowl and shore birds, for example, during the very wet late spring and early summer of 1967. But even in the drier 1968 and 1969 breeding seasons, most of these species were relatively common near the permanent water resources.

In the species account earlier in this paper, we recorded Visher's dire prediction as to the fate of the Sage Grouse. Surely, he would be pleased to know this species has persisted quite well, as have the subsequently introduced gallinaceous species. Unfortunately, the Sharp-tailed Grouse does not seem to be as plentiful today as it was during Visher's study. Overall, we noted with interest and satisfaction that most of the non-game species in Harding County today have maintained an apparently stable status. We are disturbed, however, by the seemingly significant decline in the numbers of buteos, falcons, and woodpeckers.

No doubt, in a limited effort such as ours, we overlooked or otherwise missed some species that we should have observed. We were disappointed in being unable to see certain species that we confidently expected or hoped to find: Mountain Plover, Hairy Woodpecker, Bank Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Sage Thrasher, Sprague's Pipit, Warbling Vireo, Indigo Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, White-winged Junco, and McCown's Longspur. Sprague's Pipit, for example, we know nested in Perkins County west of Lemmon in 1967. Some years ago, Whitney (1957: 39) recorded the following Harding County species that we were unable to locate: Barn Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Canyon Wren, Mac-

(Continued on Page 57)



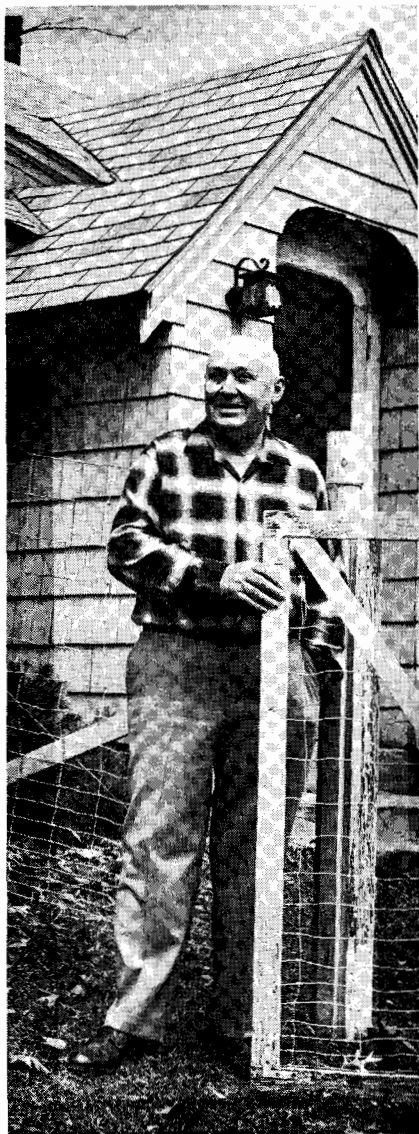
# The Birds and I

by Earnest William Steffen

**I**T IS the consensus of opinion among those who knew my parents and myself that my interest in birds came about because of a misappropriation of family funds by my father. However that may be, there came a time when my mother felt that her first born should have a baby carriage. She must have had that in mind for some time for by self-denial and skimping and saving, she had accumulated \$10, which in those early days was enough for the purchase of a baby carriage.

Thus it came about that father was delegated to hitch a team to a wagon and make a trip to town to buy the baby carriage. At that time my parents lived on a farm which was eight miles northeast from the town where they were accustomed to trade. This meant that it would take all day to make the trip there and back. He then was given the \$10 and urged to hurry as mother knew well enough that father was prone to visit considerably when he got to town and would either have mail awaiting him or would buy some reading matter and read all the way home instead of urging the horses to greater speed than their normal slow plodding walk.

Whether he read or whether he worried all the way home, I don't really know, for when he did finally arrive he had neither the baby carriage nor the \$10. Instead he brought home with him "Ridgeway's Manual of North American Birds." Thus it was that I missed the pleasure of being perambu-



(EDITOR'S NOTE—Mr. Steffen has furnished covers and etchings for "South Dakota Bird Notes" for the past 10 years for a total of 10 covers and 49 species. Accompanying his picture he commented that he didn't look like an artist since he didn't have hair like a beetle, a beard like a beatnik or the slim profile associated with a struggling artist, but we felt the picture showed a man we would all like to have for a friend and neighbor.)

lated but did, I presume, get an early start in the study of birds.

I suppose my father got a good scolding for his waywardness with no words spared and no punches pulled for he never lived down that incident. But when the first-born got old enough to become interested in books this manual, strangely enough, had a great attraction for me. I poured over the graphs of the parts of birds and pondered over the scientific names and the descriptions of the birds therein contained. If one were to see this volume, he would wonder what a boy, barely able to read, could see in such a book that would interest him so completely. Perhaps I even learned to read somewhat as a result of having this book to look at.

At any rate it inspired me to set myself a project of drawing one bird from each genus that appeared in the book. My parents bought me a five cent tablet containing ruled paper that seemed to be made of straw and two or three penny pencils and let me draw to my heart's content. Perhaps later I made some remarks about being handicapped when I felt that the birds that I drew might look better if they were colored. Anyway one Christmas morning I found awaiting me a set of wax crayons, the first on the market and thus very poor. This gift came fairly late for by the time I received it, my project was almost finished. I drew these birds mostly from imagination, except the common birds that one would see around a farm, and from the descriptions that I gleaned from the manual. I finished this project at the age of 12 and fortunately was able to save it from getting lost or destroyed. Also I still have the manual that inspired my first piece of work.

I learned to identify the birds readily enough and quite early I even found out that there were different kinds of hawks than "Chicken Hawks" and different kinds of owls than "Hoot Owls."

There followed a long period during which I received an education and then experienced, of necessity, considerable orientation and adjustment. And then came the Great Depression!

I painted in oil at first because I had a supply of oil paints. I worked steadily until I had a hundred or more of these paintings finished when I became dissatisfied with them. In art school I had worked for the most part in landscape and still life, and I finally decided that the paintings that I had done were not bird paintings at all, but landscapes with a bird in each one. I realized then that I needed to make my backgrounds secondary.

As a result of my self criticism I put these paintings away and decided to paint in watercolor. By this time I had gotten employment in the special education department in the public schools of Cedar Rapids, so I was able now to buy art supplies for myself.

I found that I had a lot to learn and as a result I had considerable trouble in transposing from oil to watercolor. That took time but after I finally learned how to use watercolor in a bird painting, I went at the task enthusiastically. I was working at this time with transparent watercolor and this medium poses more problems than does oil.

My first opportunity to exhibit my watercolor paintings came in 1946 when I was asked to exhibit at Joslyn Memorial in Omaha, Nebraska. That exhibit then went to Audubon House in New York. The most noteworthy event that happened to me as a result of that exhibit was that I learned about opaque watercolor which handles more like oil paints. Now I paint almost exclusively with this type of watercolor, tempera and casein paint or gouache.

By this time I had acquired binoculars which helped me immensely in my constant observation of birds, but I needed to know more about the birds that couldn't be seen in the immediate

vicinity. That is, we needed to travel. Not only did we need to travel but we also needed to camp, because the birds I wanted to paint were not those that we would see in motels. Anyway we didn't have the kind of money that would allow us to travel in state. We expected to be gone several weeks yearly in order to cover much territory.

Fortunately I have a wife who has no interest in being a parlor decoration and she was enthusiastic about traveling and camping. So we bought some camping equipment and started out on our bird research which took us several years and continues mildly even to this day. I needed to know first hand not only how the birds looked, their traits, their pose and posture, but I needed to know something about their habitat. As a result we have visited the national parks, many national monuments, most of the national forests and other places such as state parks in most of the 48 states. Furthermore I've kept records of all the yearly trips we've taken since 1941, which was our first experience, when we went to the Pacific Northwest. Since then we have criss-crossed the country from Acadia National Park in Maine to Bakersfield in California, from Key West in Florida to Crescent Lake in Olympic National Park, and from Canada to Gulf, carrying on my type of birding.

During May of 1960 I was asked to submit an exhibit of 30 paintings of birds to the Grout Historical Museum in Waterloo, Iowa. I mention this because that exhibit is in the nature of being a climax even though I had exhibited numerous times at various other places before and after this event. This particular exhibit was cited in "Museum News," published by the Association of American Museums, as one of the outstanding exhibits of the entire Middle West. That incident made me feel that my time and efforts had not been wasted.

**RETURNS AND RECOVERIES OF BIRDS BANDED FROM JUNE, 1965 TO 1969**—During my banding operation at Aberdeen, I banded 1,356 birds. The following returns and recoveries are from the four years at this Banding Station unless otherwise noted.

**BLUE JAY**—One banded on 4-18-67; found dead 7-11-69.

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**—One banded 9-20-65; returned to the station on 5-14-66.

**CATBIRD**—One banded 6-15-68 and one 7-3-68; both returned 5-28-69.

**BROWN THRASHER**—Two banded on 7-12-65; return dates are 5-12-68 and 5-22-68. Records show that there were three banded in the spring period and returned the next spring.

**ROBIN**—There are nine records for this species. The most interesting is the one of the bird banded on 9-4-65 and found dead on 5-8-66 in Minneapolis, Minn. There are two records for birds banded during the fall period and returned the next spring period, one banded in the spring and returned the next spring, and three banded in the fall returned the next fall. Two robins banded in the fall of 1965, one returned in the fall of 1967 and the other returned in the fall of 1968.

**CEDAR WAXWING**—One banded on 6-10-67 was found dead in Cuyoga Falls, Ohio on 3-27-68 and another banded on 6-10-67 was found dead at Waxachachie, Tex. on 12-11-68.

**COMMON GRACKLE**—Eighteen were banded during the spring period and returned the next year to the Banding Station. Three returned two years later and one returned three years later.

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE**—One banded 5-29-67; returned 5-20-68.

**CHIPPING SPARROW**—Three were banded in the fall period and returned the next spring and one banded on 9-29-65 returned on 4-30-66 and on 5-22-67.  
—Harold Wesley Wagar, Cresbard

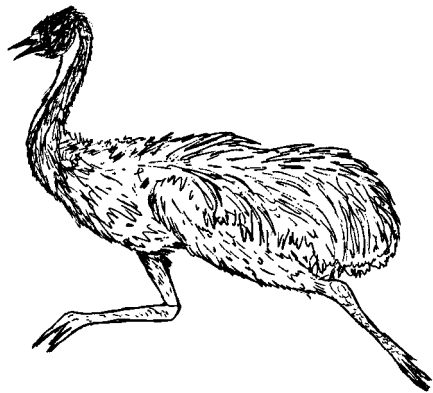
# A Tourists-Eye View of the Birds of Australia

Marion Hilpert

**M**AY I share with you some of the bird lore I picked up on an all-too-short five week trip last summer to the island continent? Probably the first Australian bird one thinks of is the Kookoburra or Laughing Jackass. This oversized Kingfisher has a song (?) that starts out as a loud squawking and becomes more and more intense until it breaks into raucous laughter, finally trailing off with a sardonic chuckle. Often many of the birds will join together to make a noisy chorus. In the Sidney area early settlers had many difficulties and one wrote "even the birds mock our misery." It would be easy to believe these birds were laughing at you as they perch overhead. One noon as our group sat on the ground to eat lunch a Kookoburra swooped down from a tree and almost got my sandwich. He hopped about in front of us and eyed that sandwich with fierce determination. What could I do but divide it with him? Other birds with unusual calls include the Whip bird, a crested ground-dweller found in heavy vegetation. The male seems to almost explode with noise that, from a distance, sounds like the crack of a whip, and this is followed quickly by a soft choo-choo from the female. If she doesn't answer the male finishes the call himself. The Bell Birds have a metallic sound like the ring of a bell. The most startling call, however, is made by the large Barking Owl, or Screaming Woman Bird. One bushman said he had a bad fright one night when one perched just above his tent. It sounded as if

"a number of women were being methodically murdered."

In size the Emu ranks first, standing between five and six feet high and having powerful legs that can deliver a lethal kick for defense or put on a great burst of speed. At least one was clocked at 35 miles per hour. At a sanctuary I was thrilled to find a clutch of nine eggs, each larger than a goose egg and a very dark green color, in a nest of vegetation scratched up into a scanty mound. The hen, after laying the eggs, leaves and apparently never again gives them a thought while the cock sits on the eggs and cares for the chicks after they hatch. At the sanctuary the birds were not afraid of people and I coaxed one up close with some bread. As I lifted my camera to focus, I looked right into the eye of the Emu. It was looking into the camera from the lens



Emu

—Ink Drawing by Gertrude Taylor

(EDITOR'S NOTE—Dr. Hilpert, Professor of Biology at Black Hills State College, spent five weeks last summer in Australia as part of the tour, "Australia for the Biologist" guided by Dr. Allen Keast of Queens College, Kingston, Ontario. Dr. Hilpert received her doctorate at the University of Minnesota.)

side. The bill looked large and strong and much too close for my comfort. As I tried to shoo the bird back I swear it growled at me!

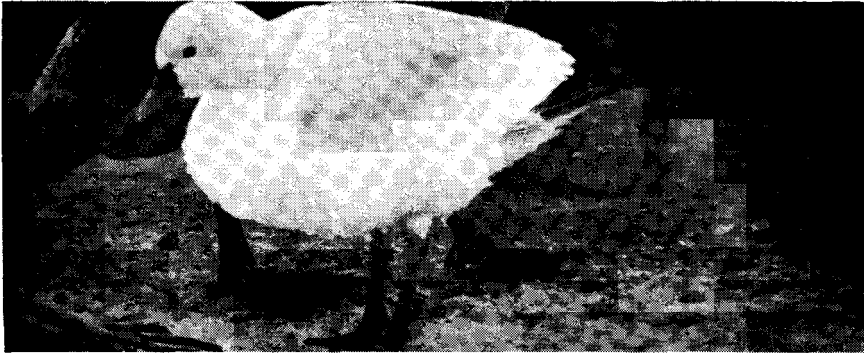
Many of the birds are brilliantly colored. The Parrot group reaches its greatest diversity in size, color, and form in Australia and the adjacent islands. On an early map Australia was named Land of Parrots. The best view we had of the large cockatoos with their great hooked beaks was in an aviary where the birds seemed very friendly and talkative. We got only a glimpse of the Gang Gang with his grey body and red crest and the large Black Cockatoo in the wild, but we were privileged to see great flocks of the lovely Galahs with their dove grey backs and rose pink on their breasts and under their wings. At dusk they came in to water at the stock tanks at a ranch where we were staying for the night. A friend and I got up at daylight to see them and found some clutching the telephone wire and seemingly having a whee of a time going round and round like trapeze artists. We were told that most birds of the Parrot group are good mimics but the Galahs are masters at it. Also in the interior flocks of thousands of the tiny Budgerigar, the little "Parakeet" of our pet shops, can be seen. Their color that is such a striking green in a cage is really good protection in the tree tops. The other colors in our pet birds are mutations that have been selected by man. The Lorikeets or Honey Parrots run larger than the Budgerigar and eat nectar and fruit. They are mainly green but often with patches of red, yellow and blue as is found in the Scaly Breasted and the Rainbow Lorikeet. In the wooded Blue Mountains of the east coast we were dazzled by the brilliant red bodies and bright blue wings of the Scarlet Rosella.

The Parrots were not the only colorful birds. The tiny wrens come in tech-

nicolor—red and black, blue and white, and various shades of intense blue. Most of the trees are pollinated by birds and have flowers with prominent stamens rather than petals. A number of the Honey Eaters, who inadvertently do the pollinating, are brightly colored. Several of the Pigeons have beautiful plumage. In the tropical north we saw the King Pigeon, green and bronze, with a purple breast. If those who introduced pigeons into our city parks had only brought in birds like this!

The behavior of some Australian birds is unique. The Jungle Fowl of the rain forest, a black bird about the size of a Leghorn chicken, the Brush Turkey of the eastern coast, and the Mallee Fowl of the interior build mounds of sand and rotting vegetation in which to incubate their eggs, using the heat of decomposition to provide the correct temperature. Some of these mounds are added to year after year and may reach a size of 30 feet across and six feet high. The male seems to be in charge of the mound, opening it up every four to eight days to receive the hen's egg, then carefully closing the nest. This goes on from spring through the summer and into the fall. The cock is kept busy checking the temperature. When the nest becomes too warm he scratches away some of the vegetation; when it cools down he builds the mound up higher. In summer when the sun's heat threatens to make the nest too warm, he covers it with a layer of sand for insulation. By autumn the heat of decomposition is about spent and the sun's rays are weaker, but Papa Mallee Fowl rises to the challenge by opening up the nest during the warmest part of the day and spreading sand over the ground to warm, then packing the heated sand into the mound and covering it up for the cool night. As the season gets cooler he can't keep the nest warm enough and he finally gives up and

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## Ross' Goose

—Picture by Richard McEntaffen

# Ross' Goose a Pierre Visitor

by R. V. Summerside

FIRST observed an adult Ross' goose on the morning of December 25, 1969, mingling with the Canada geese near the flowing artesian well on Capitol Lake, Pierre. At first glance and while at some distance it appeared to be a white Mallard but closer observation immediately gave me my first identification of a rare visitor to this state. Personnel who feed the wintering flock through the winter advised that the bird first appeared on December 20.

The little goose was quite wary and moved in amongst the big Canadas whenever I attempted to get close. The dense fog from the warm well water and our near zero temperatures, coupled with the goose's tendency to get lost amongst the larger geese, made it difficult to obtain good pictures. Mr. Richard McEntaffer of Pierre finally obtained the enclosed picture after some effort.

The slightly unkempt appearance of the plumage and a yellowish spot on the underparts near one leg, as if from drainage from a wound, led to the con-

clusion that the bird may have suffered a wound and this in turn may have accounted for the fact that it had dropped out of the normal migration path to California.

The bird was observed quite regularly as it frequented the warm foggy area near the well, probably the best substitute for its more customary California smog. It moved about quite freely as it showed up for the morning ration of shelled corn and was rapid in movement, more like a duck than an ordinary goose. When on shore it would almost immediately rest on the ground if not disturbed, head tucked back into the back feathers when not feeding.

The penalty for being rare is to stand a good chance of being shot or becoming a captive. My field observations ended January 11, 1970 as I learned later in the week that acquisitive visitors to the State Capitol from Minnaha County had appropriated the rare bird for the Sioux Falls zoo. Capitol Lake did not retain its distinguished visitor for long.

(EDITOR'S NOTE—One or two Ross' geese are usually observed during the fall at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Brown County. Whitney reports in the Check-List of South Dakota Birds that a specimen is now at the University of Minnesota taken at Sand Lake (SDBN, v. XVII, p. 80). One was reported on the 1965 Christmas count from Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge, Charles Mix County (SDBN, v. XVIII p. 36.)

## *General Notes of Special Interest*

**COMMON SCOTER IN SANBORN COUNTY**—On November 10, 1969 I flushed a group of mixed waterfowl from Twin Lakes, Sanborn County, eight miles southwest of Woonsocket. As they flew by me at a distance of about 80 yards I noted a large, dark colored duck among them. It did not have the appearance of a Black Duck and I guessed that it was a Scoter—it had no white wing stripe, thus eliminating the White-winged Scoter. I returned to the car for my binoculars, getting fairly good views of the duck in flight and on the water, but at distances of from 150 to 300 yards, and under rather poor light conditions. It acted like a "lost" bird; flying first to a small group of Mallards, it swam back and forth at a distance from them, then flying off to repeat this same performance with three Ruddy ducks. It seemed especially interested in the Ruddies, apparently wanting to join them but not having the nerve to do so. When the Ruddy ducks began swimming steadily toward it, the Scoter took wing. As the bird was never close enough for collection I decided to return later.

I was not able to get back to Twin Lakes until the 12th, when I returned with Warren Jackson and Charles Backlund, biologists with the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. We observed the Scoter through a 20-power telescope, resting on calm waters at a range of about 150 yards. Light conditions were ideal, and we all agreed at this time that there were no light spots on the cheek as are characteristic of the immature or female Surf Scoter—the cheeks were a solid color, distinctly lighter than the dark cap over

the crown and top of the head. Further attempts to collect the bird at this time were unsuccessful.

On the 13th I again returned to the lake, this time with Fisheries Biologist Bill Bradwisch. The Scoter was still present but we had only a distant view of the bird in flight. The weather was very cold, with a strong wind and spitting snow, making further attempts at collection impossible. I have observed all three species of Scoters on the California coast a number of times, so am quite sure of the identification of this bird. It was a sooty-black color, noticeably larger than the Scaup ducks with which it usually flew, but not extremely large—about the size of a Mallard. No wing-stripe was noted at any time. I did not observe it to dive, but its manner of taking flight from the water was that of a diving duck, and it flew with the many Scaups in the area whenever it was flushed with other species.

We have one other record for the Common Scoter in South Dakota. A bird was taken in McPherson County on October 22, 1968, and the specimen preserved (SDBN Vol. XX, p. 92)—**Bruce Harris, Woonsocket**

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### President's Page

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observation just because it is at variance with the book. Merely because something is in print doesn't make it a fact. A proverb points out that one swallow doesn't make a summer. But it could still bring up further studies that will tell us more about both swallows and summers.—**Huron**

**THIRD RECORD FOR THE BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN SOUTH DAKOTA**—On December 5, 1969 I was driving to Madison when I was surprised to see a lone gull flying over the snow-covered fields, parallel to the highway. This was unusual, for most lakes had been frozen over for more than 10 days. When I stopped the car and got out with field glasses the bird swung over me, not more than 40 yards away, and I was amazed to find an immature Black-Legged Kittiwake. I noted the slash mark on the neck, the triangular markings of the upper wings, and the band across the tail before the bird flew off in a southeasterly direction.

Checking the speedometer reading, and driving on towards Madison, one of my first questions was soon answered when I found that the bird had been observed at a location not over one-half mile north of Lake Herman, Lake County. I drove into Lake Herman State Park and contacted Parks Manager Jerry Sour, hearing from him what I had surmised by this time—that there were several fair-sized holes of open water on the lake. Jerry offered to show me these areas, and as we drove along I briefed him on the distinguishing marks for the Kittiwake, emphasizing the location of the slash mark on the neck of the bird, along with other field marks. At the first location, where open water was found coming right up to the rocky shore, the Kittiwake flew in toward us and circled the water several times. Sour was down on the shore at this time and could not see the dark markings on the back of the bird, but he clearly saw the slash mark on the neck, and the tail band. I had only a brief look at the bird on this occasion; it flew far out over the frozen lake and settled down on the ice. When it moved on down the lake we drove to the second area of open water, expecting to see the gull again, but we found only

a merganser and a golden-eye. We waited for about 15 minutes in a steadily-increasing snowfall and then returned to the first open hole, but did not see the Kittiwake again. Jerry promised to look for the bird the next day, and to guide anyone else who might be available to check on the bird. I called Ruth Habeger from the Park headquarters, and she said she would get out as soon as possible to try and verify my identification. I had no more time to spend looking for the bird this day, as I was enroute to Brookings for a meeting. It was snowing quite hard when I left the Park and I wondered if the Kittiwake would stay in the area with such weather moving in.

Ruth Habeger and several others checked the lake the following morning but were unable to find the gull.

The Black-legged Kittiwake is well-known as a cold weather bird; it is commonly called the "frost gull" by fishermen on the Grand Banks of the Atlantic Coast (Bent, p. 36). Late fall records might be expected on the larger lakes in eastern South Dakota, or on the Missouri River, where open water is found all winter.—**Bruce Harris, Woonsocket**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: It is interesting to note that the first specimen of this species (see the following article) was recovered away from the Missouri River where the first observation has been recorded.)

\* \* \* \*

**WHISTLING SWAN SURVIVES CRASH WITH AUTOMOBILE**—Hard luck continues to dog a lone whistling swan at Canyon Lake, Rapid City, on January 24, 1970.

It was returned to the lake Sunday by Game, Fish and Parks Biologist B. J. Rose, apparently in satisfactory condition after flying into the windshield of a car on Jackson Boulevard.

The swan, a member of one of North America's two native species, was found



with its mate lingering at Sorum Dam in western Perkins County long after the southward fall migration.

They were obviously in trouble and one subsequently died presumably the victim of a load of shot from some hunter. The surviving mate refused to leave the area, however, and itself became weakened.

On January 3 Biologist Doug West and Game Warden John Hantz from Lemmon captured the whistler when it was confined to a four-by-10-foot patch of open water.

Brought to Canyon Lake's open water, the swan evidently regained its strength and tried its wings. That's when it smashed into the car on Jackson Boulevard last week and was hospitalized in Rose's garage until Sunday.

Swans pair for life but if one dies the survivors may take another mate.

With the somewhat larger trumpeter swan, the whistling swan came under extreme hunting pressure in the last century. Although classified as a game bird, the swans are generally protected.

The whistling swan can be identified by its straight, erect neck compared to the curved position of the imported European mute swan's neck while on the water.—**Rapid City Journal, Rapid City**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: As of January 31 the swan had flown down Rapid Creek and was last seen near the fair grounds at the east edge of the city.

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## Summer Birds

(Continued from Page 48)

Gillivray's Warbler, and White-crowned Sparrow.

After we concluded our field work in Harding County, we learned that Richard Grant, of Morris, Minnesota, has been studying Harding County birds for the past seven years. His extensive work should provide valuable comparisons with Visher's and our findings. We understand Grant has some remark-

able additions beyond the species we have reported here, and we look forward to his sharing his information on Harding County birds through an article in BIRD NOTES. In the meantime, SDOU members planning to attend the June 1970 meeting at Bison have an excellent opportunity to add to the knowledge of Harding and Perkins County birds, while at the same time experiencing the pleasures to be derived from this particularly interesting part of South Dakota.

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## Birds of Australia

(Continued from Page 53)

takes a well earned rest for the winter. The chicks may hatch as far as two feet below the surface and struggle up to the top. They can run within an hour, fly the next day and are on their own from then on.

The Bower Birds build a structure like a tunnel with the roof left off. The two walls are made of little sticks and dried grasses and sometimes measure a foot high. The Spotted Bower Bird of the dry interior may make his bower three feet long and decorate it with green berries and a paint made up of chewed-up grass and leaves. When the berries turn red he throws them away. Outside one end he has a collection of white and shiny objects—an unbelievable array of pebbles, sheep bones, shells, feathers, flower petals. There is a report that keys were stolen from a parked car and were later found in Spotty's bower, as silverware, jewelry and buttons have been. The Satin Bower Bird of the wooded areas, a handsome blue-black with red rims around his eyes, builds a shorter bower and prefers blue objects for his collection. It is amazing how many blue things he can find. We saw a piece of a blue bathing cap at one bower many miles from any place where people could swim. He paints his bower with mashed up charcoal mixed with saliva. The bower with its collection of bright objects is used to attract the female during the courting season yet it is kept in good repair all through the year. All the Bower birds mimic sounds to some extent but Spotty is the champion. Campers in the interior have been astonished by the wide variety of calls—sounds like a scream, a wire fence as a sheep crawls through, the creaking of rubbing branches and even the roll of thunder.

There are, of course, many more birds, each fascinating in its own way

—the water birds including the spectacular Black Swan, a duck with a blue bill, the Albatross and the many water birds that nest on the little coral islands of the Great Barrier Reef, mistletoe birds, and song birds of all kinds. I must not omit the omni-present Willie Wagtail, a saucy little fellow in black and white that twitches his tail impatiently from side to side and calls both day and night "sweet-pretty-creature." The Aborigines have many myths about him and represent him in their dances by hopping about and wiggling their derriers. I heartily recommend Australia as a place where nature does things differently and only wish it weren't so far away.

\* \* \* \*

**CLARK'S NUTCRACKER IN LYMAN COUNTY**—While checking goose concentrations on the Kiowa Public Shooting Area west of Chamberlain on November 24, 1969, I observed a Clark's Nutcracker. It flew past at a distance of about 150 yards, and was some distance below my position, so I was able to see the contrasting black, white and gray plumage pattern quite well with the aid of binoculars. The bird was moving steadily upstream over the "knobs" along the river, and there was no way of pursuing it for a better view. There are apparently no records for this species in South Dakota outside of the Black Hills.—Bruce Harris, Woonsocket



### McCown's Longspur

—E. W. Steffen

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

## Notes from Sparks' Mini-Ranch

**T**HIS must be the year of Audubon or am I just becoming more conscious of this pioneer birdman? "Books in Print" for 1969 lists 17 books either about him or by him and this list includes the oldie by Constance Rourke, "Audubon," published in 1936, which I am reading.

"Audubon, a Vision," by Robert Penn Warren, is a new one. This is a long, joined sequence of poems which uses Audubon as their focus. It is by no means a biography but dwells on the American frontier of which Audubon was a part, the nature of man and his world.

Another recent publication is "John James Audubon," a collection of writings by Audubon, selected, arranged and edited by Alice Ford which presents a profile of this famed painter.

Audubon is a natural for writers. The mystery of his birth gave rise to the theory that he was the lost Dauphin of France. Thought to be born in 1785 in Haiti and adopted during the French Revolution by Captain and Mrs. Audubon he was known by different names: Fougere, La Foret, Jean Jacques, Jean Rabin and finally John James Audubon. Largely self taught and working in a new field, the painting of birds in their natural habitat, he pioneered interest in the birds of America.

It is estimated that five out of every hundred people are bird watchers. If so we should be able to increase our membership in "Bird Notes" without half trying.

In an article, "Bird is a Verb" and I quote Margaret Cheney in the Janu-

ary, 1970 "Audubon," she says: "Anyone who thinks to birdwatch frivolously (as of course I did at the start) or desultorily, soon finds he has trifled with strong medicine. You cannot dabble in birds without becoming involved with their habits and habitats." Bird watching grows and grows and grows.

The same magazine has some beautiful pictures by George Laycock in his article, "Hawaiian Islands of Birds" and an excellent pre-publication condensation of the book, "Since Silent Spring" by Frank Graham Jr. which discusses Rachel Carson and the writing of her book and the affect the book has had. Also regarding Rachel Carson the Audubon Cause says, "The Hard pesticides are on their way out, and Rachel Carson has been vindicated."

Most of the news from the high country is snow. We haven't had our cars in the yard since the New Year's Eve storm. As fast as a path is shoveled wind and snow fill it in. We are getting quite adept at stumbling over the drifts to and from the highway where we park. But spring should be beautiful when all this moisture soaks into the softened earth, and a bountiful supply of grass, trees and flowers should be recompense for the long winter.

The snow plows are wonders in keeping the highway open and they are usually followed by sanding trucks to give tires a footing on curves and hills.

In our country groundhog day was dark and dreary. Dare we hope there will only be another six weeks of winter?

That's 30 for now.

# Spring Meeting at Bison Grand River REA Meeting Hall

## June 5, 6 and 7, 1970

### —PROGRAM—

#### Friday, June 5

7:00-9:30 p.m.—Registration and social time, REA meeting hall.

#### Saturday, June 6

All-day Field Trips in Perkins and Harding Counties.

8:00 to 10:30 a.m.—Late Registration, REA meeting hall.

6:00 p.m.—Banquet at REA meeting hall. Business meeting.

#### Sunday, June 7

Morning Field Trips.

12:00 Noon—Lunch at REA meeting hall. Check-List Call-Off. Hit the trail for home.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

AT BISON: Bison Hotel, Main Street .....	\$3.00 per person
AT LEMMON (42 miles northeast of Bison):	
Inn Towne Motel, Main Street .....	\$6.00-\$12.00
Kuilman's Motel, U.S. Highway 12 .....	\$6.00-\$12.00
Ray's Motel, U.S. Highway 12 .....	\$6.00-\$12.00

### Camping

AT BISON: Tent camping at city park (rest rooms one-half block away). Trailer camper spaces at Bryce White's Mobil Station on Highway 20, one-half mile north of Bison.

AT SHADEHILL RESERVOIR (12 miles south of Lemmon): Numerous nice camp sites; a few cabin units southwest of the dam.

AT REVA GAP, SLIM BUTTES (35 miles west of Bison): A dozen nice camp sites. May have to carry water from spring or nearby ranch.

### Cafes

AT BISON: Bison Cafe on Main Street; Highway Cafe at Mobil Station.

AT LEMMON: A steak house, truck-stop cafeteria and three cafes.

For the local committees planning, please indicate the number in your party. Write to ALFRED HINDS, Prairie City, S. Dak. 57649. For lodging reservations, write directly to the hotel or motel.