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DORIS B. GATES, Editor

EARL W. GLANDON, Assistant Editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Birds Through The Years

Carrie E. Ludden*

In Kearney we think we have some distinct advantages for the students of birds and many special attractions for birds themselves.

First, a little about our locality, then something about the changes on our college campus and about their effects on bird life over a 10-year period.

As you probably know we are the Midway City of the Nation. For years the old 1733 Ranch five miles west on Highway 30 had a sign, "1733 miles to New York" on the east and "1733 miles to San Francisco" on the west. Probably the birds did not read the sign but it was an indicator to many bird students, of birds which were common east or west of this area.

On the south we have the Platte River with its many channels and back waters, sand pits, sand bars and old and young trees, shrubs and vines; then the Platte Valley has its marsh lands, hay meadows, grasslands and cultivated fields, many native trees and shrubs are found in this area. The city of Kearney has its parks and public institutions with well landscaped yards and water supply, and many fine homes.

On the north is the fertile Wood River Valley. Wood River, a shallow, muddy stream has steep banks and many trees and shrubs that attract birds. In the flat fields along Wood River, during a rainy spell, I have seen as many as 11 Black-crowned Night Herons at one time standing in the mud eating insects and crayfish. Ducks also nest along this stream. Cardinals, Eastern Bluebirds, Lark and Indigo Buntings, Grosbeaks and once in a while a Painted Bunting are found.

For a period of 10 years, with the aid of college students, I have conducted a survey on the college campus of the bird life and nesting habits and the effect of civilization, so to speak, as it moved in and made changes to the layout on the campus. There are 43 acres in the campus. On the north is Lake Kearney, which is fed by a canal 16 miles long with the head gates near Elm Creek. From the lake the water runs over a spillway and into the tail race along the west side of the campus. This affords a good water supply. The city of Kearney granted water rights to the college when it was located here. Even in times of drouth there is water. At times, sprays were operated on the south side in the morning and on the north in the afternoon. The birds learned rapidly and they sat in circles under one spray in the morning and moved to the other one in the afternoon. It was not unusual to see 100 Yellow-headed Blackbirds at one time, and these birds are not common in town as a rule.

Due to the foresight of Dr. A. O. Thomas, first president of the college, there are many large trees on the campus. There are 1800 trees and some 600 shrubs and vines. A planted walnut grove back of Vets Village and the steep banks of the tail race attract many Kingfishers, Barn Owls, Ovenbirds, Eastern Phoebes, Eastern Wood Pewees, many kinds of swallows, sparrows, warblers, and vireos. Twice during the last few years Highway 30 has been widened on the south side, and the bridge over the canal was

*Paper read at the annual NOU meeting in Kearney, May 4, 1956.

replaced. We had started our study of nesting birds before the heavy machines used in paving began their work. The number of nests was normal; robins, doves, and grackles were common and a few woodpeckers. The phoebe had nested under the bridge. Soon the traffic was routed along the tail-race road and down the west side of the campus, places that had had little traffic before. The noise from the machines began and the birds were disturbed. They left their nests and moved to the center of the campus from the south side; on the north, the birds moved to the yards back of the dormitories and began nesting anew, using the fire escapes as well as trees and shrubs.

Birds have many hazards. On the campus was a very nice orchard of cherry, apple, peach and plum trees. It was a lovely home for birds. A new building was needed and down came the orchard and up went the long, long new Industrial Arts Building. In a trip through that area this week, we found no nests and few birds. Perhaps in time this will be more attractive to birds as a nesting region.

On the west side of the campus the birds seem very much at home. There is good grass and alfalfa and ground birds build there. Pheasant, quail, Horned Lark, Meadowlark, Bob-o-link, sparrow and Killdeer are often found.

TV aerials, wire, and poles are death traps to birds. Many Robins, Cardinals and woodpeckers are injured at plate-glass windows where they see their own reflections. A very tall smoke stack on the campus, now removed, proved to be a great hazard to the birds at all seasons.

When the spraying with DDT was carried on to aid in insect control, many were fearful of its effect on birds. We made a very careful study of all the dead birds we found on the campus at that time and found no ill effect from the spray. The orchard was sprayed several times, but more birds were nesting there than before and all dead birds found had injuries. Those that visited the orchard included the Robin, dove, kingbird, Dickcissel, Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoos, shrike, wren, Yellow-breasted Chat, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Cardinal, Bluebird, Scarlet Tanager, grosbeak, warblers, Goldfinch and one Redstart.

A large tree was cut down; the Yellow-shafted Flicker had nested in it. The janitor brought in a family of seven little flickers. We undertook the raising of a woodpecker family. If you want something interesting in work, try feeding young flickers. Not only do they want food, but they want you to hold them and force the food down their throats. Two died, but we raised five until they could fly and then we set them free. We did not find dead woodpeckers in the area so concluded they were able to care for themselves. We fed them hundreds of worms and grubs and soaked bread in milk or water. They could eat a loaf of bread every three or four hours. Their food habits led us to study the number of grubs a single flicker would dig and eat if not disturbed. Students brought in the shells of 35 to 40 beetle grubs left by each flicker. In addition the flicker eats many ants.

In 1950 you may remember we had severe storms. After the heavy rain or hail or high wind, we picked up the eggs and many young of doves, goldfinches and other small birds. The doves rebuilt almost at once, but

the other birds seemed to leave the place where their nests had been.

Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, and Mockingbirds build in the hedges on the campus. Cats and squirrels are their worst enemies.

During the years we have had many foreign students and when they would enroll for bird study, their main idea seemed to be to bring the nests and eggs and young birds to the class room for study. It was difficult to set them straight and have them study birds in the field. The first nest of a Nighthawk we found on the campus was brought in by a boy who thought we wanted to study it.

English Sparrows are not included in the campus count of birds, but we carried on a special project with the sparrows in the vines which covered the front of the administration building. There were so many sparrows and they carried so many lice, every window-sill on the east was crawling with lice. A group of four husky fellows offered to help clean out the vines. With ropes and ladders, they pulled down 60 nests the first day, working about three hours. Before they could collect the nesting material, the birds were carrying it back and making new nests. We tore out about 600 nests per week for 12 weeks. The nests averaged 5 eggs per nest so we destroyed a considerable number of potential sparrows. The next year the vines were cut down to the ground and the sparrows scattered to other parts of the campus.

We watched one male sparrow, who apparently had seven wives, as seven different females laid eggs in a box over which he stood guard. He had but one leg. We removed the eggs each day with a spoon and for many days, seven eggs were laid in the box.

When we opened the Purple Martin houses in the spring, the sparrows moved in, but when the martins arrived there were many battles and the martins were regular dive bombers and carried the sparrows to the ground and exterminated them. Our earliest date for the arrival of the martins is March 19. They were later this year.

We have a beautiful athletic field and it is a fine summer home for many birds. There are large trees on the south end and a tamarisk hedge on the east; the north end is just below the edge of Lake Kearney. Birds are not disturbed here in the summer. Often you can find four nests in one tree. Birds nest on the bleachers, and under them, and in the hedges and on the ledges of the buildings. Kingbirds, Robins, Meadowlarks, Killdeers, Redwings, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, cuckoos, wrens, doves, and a few swallows are found. From this field, in the spring, we can also study the flight of the Sandhill Cranes, ducks and geese. About April 14 White Pelicans are observed resting on the lake, and hundreds of gulls are found. Ducks, coots, and grebes live here all summer. Also we see sandpipers, bitterns, Avocets and once in a while, a snipe. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird has nested over a patch of poison ivy several years.

We have many birds in winter; 55 species have been observed between Christmas and New Years. Large flocks of Robins remain in Kearney all year and they feed on the hackberry fruits which are found throughout the town. They also visit the many feeding tables. Among our winter birds are Chickadees, nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Blue Jays, Tufted Titmice, Cedar and Bohemian Waxwing, many kinds of sparrows, Pine Siskins,

quail, pheasant, Downey and Hairy Woodpeckers, Flickers, Screech Owls, and once in a while the Snowy Owl, Crows, Meadowlarks, Horned Larks, juncos, shrikes, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Cardinals, two reports in 1956 of the Evening Grosbeak, Mountain Bluebirds and ducks and geese where the water is open. Our Eastern Bluebird stays until December 19 and often returns by January 19. In March we see the Crossbills, Redpolls and Purple Finches.

The number of nests per year varied from 200 to 600, depending on disturbance in building, tree trimming and the like. The largest number of species observed nesting on the campus in one year was 81. Usually 50 to 60 species nest, not counting the English Sparrow. Doves, Robins, Crows and Bronzed Grackles lead in number of nests. Robins led all but four of the ten years when there were more doves. Cardinals have increased very rapidly in 10 years on the campus and also in the city.

We have many more birds on the campus today than we had 10 years ago, even though they are upset at nesting time. There is protection in a place like the campus, for here is water and food and many choice building sites for birds.—*Kearney*

Notes On The Development Of A Young Swainson's Hawk

by Ray S. Wycoff, M. D.

A young Swainson's Hawk was discovered by a friend of mine about the 30th of June. On July 4th I went to the location of the nest in the hill pasture about ten miles north of Lexington and made my first observations. The nest, a most interesting structure, had been built on top of an abandoned Magpie's nest. It was built in one of three wild plum trees which formed a cluster, less than ten feet high. The nest itself was rather flat, the center being about one or two inches lower than the rim. It measured thirty inches across and was located ninety-four inches above the ground. Construction was of coarse sticks up to one quarter inch in diameter with quantities of fine grass and dead leaves lining the central depression.

On the date of my first observation the young bird was about the size of a three weeks old chicken. I estimated that it was a week old at that time. It was covered with a white, fluffy down, above which showed the ends of some tiny white hairs. The hairs were so thickly placed that they gave the effect of a halo, particularly when the bird was viewed against the light. About the neck, on the shoulders and along the outer part of the thighs there was a tawny tinge. The base of the upper mandible was a smooth, greenish-yellow color, as was the skin on the legs and feet.

It did not, on this occasion, seem to be particularly frightened by my approach. The old birds showed great alarm, screaming and flying about at considerable distance, never coming closer to my car than three hundred feet.

The nest was visited again on the tenth of July. At that time the bird had approximately doubled in size. It was now beginning to show the dark blue shafts of the pinfeathers on both the tail and the wings. It was also much more active, making attempts to work its way out of the nest. At one

Young Swainson's Hawk.—Photo by Ray S. Wycoff

time it did get to the edge of the nest opposite the camera, which I had set up on the rear deck of my car a few feet from the nest.

On the seventeenth of July the bird was about the size of a three-quarter-grown chicken with feathers covering the wings and back. Most of the feathers were black or nearly black with a narrow brownish margin two or three millimeters wide around the edge of each. This time the bird did not seem particularly alarmed, but became tired during the two hours I had it under observation. The heat of the day could have caused its apparent exhaustion.

I again noted the greenish-yellow color at the base of the upper mandible and the skin on the legs and feet. The under parts and the thighs were still covered with the white down with the feathers just beginning to show in these areas. The old birds remained in the vicinity all of the time and their cries could be heard every few minutes. Several times the young bird gave an imitation of the parents' call but it was much weaker. These notes were apparently a protest to being prepared to have its picture taken.

On the twenty-fourth I found the young bird well feathered out, but with a lot of down on the under parts still showing. Growth was progressing rapidly. Almost every time I visited the nest fresh green twigs were present. This time the leaves of the cottonwood were easily identified. It seems that the parent birds bring in new leaves or twigs quite often.

I visited the site again on the 28th and found everything as before except that the young bird was much stronger. I found it hanging over the side of the nest from which I always watched it, as if it were ready to take off. It was very quiet and did not act in a threatening manner as on previous occasions. Neither did it seen inclined to move about the nest much. I used a long handled butterfly net to get it posed for photographing but that did not disturb it much. The parent birds came much closer this time and when I left, followed me for a great distance. On this occasion was the first time I had seen either parent leave the nest, which happened when I came in sight of the nest. The other parent, directly over me in the air, began screaming at me as the one left the nest.

On July 31st when I went to the nest again, I was unable to see the young bird from a distance as I had on previous visits, even with binoculars. However the parents were crying their calls from the air. This made me sure the young bird was there. A search disclosed that it was in the thick part of the group of wild plums where the nest was located. It flew out when I touched the trees. This was the first time I had seen it out of the nest.

It now flew in a straight line over a little hill just north of the nesting place, a distance of three or four hundred yards, and then dropped out of sight. I drove to the shade of some trees just east of the little hill, then started out on foot to look for the bird. I discovered it in a hayfield. When approached to within about two feet, it threw back its head and opened its mouth in a threatening manner. Finally my grandson, who was with me, tried to get it to strike at him so that I might get a few pictures of that action, but we were unsuccessful.

While eating our lunch in the car we saw one of the parent birds perched on a post about a quarter mile east of our location. Much of the time both parents were in the air circling about uttering their worried cries. After lunch we went back to find the young bird but it was not where we had last seen it. However we soon located it on a haystack about one hundred fifty yards away. Apparently it had rested and had flown across an intervening gully to the haystack.

Approaching the haystack to within about ten feet I made a couple of exposures. I then prepared for a quick shot and had my grandson climb up the opposite side of the stack while I took a picture of the bird as it left. It flew about a quarter mile away where it made an attempt to light in a tall cottonwood tree. I watched it through my glasses and noted that it was so very clumsy that it failed to make a stable landing. We could see it dangling by one claw for sometime, making futile efforts to right itself on the branch. However it let go and took flight to a small clump of shrubby trees. When we arrived I found it perched about eight or ten feet high. I tried to get it to take flight again, but it refused to move, seeming very tired from this longer flight.

On August 4th I again went to the area. The parent birds were flying about but the young bird was not immediately located. In a few minutes it was observed on a haystack about a quarter mile away. I tried to approach the stack in a manner that would not excite the bird but it took flight as I rounded the side of the stack. This time it came to rest on a fence post at

the side of the road. I changed my direction of approach so as to come toward it more gradually and was able to approach within thirty or forty feet before it flew.

It was interesting to note that, in the short flights up to this time, the bird already showed the type of flight—a few short flaps then a sail and a soar—that is so characteristic of birds of this family. However it did not soar as much as the parent birds, but took frequent short spells of wing flapping. Flights were not prolonged as it did not stay in the air more than two or three minutes at any one time. It always lit in open ground or on some large object. Apparently it had learned a lesson in the flight when it attempted to settle in the tall cottonwood and missed the perch with everything but one claw.

Observations as to the food of the young bird were limited. The friend who had discovered the nest reported that part of a rabbit was lying in the nest when he first saw it. On two different occasions I saw portions of freshly killed striped ground squirrels in the nest. At another time a dead and partially-devoured garter snake was lying on the ground beneath the nest, having apparently been thrown out after the feeding of the young bird.—*Lexington*

Pintail Courtship

By Ray S. Wycoff, M. D.

Early in April, 1954, I approached the southeast corner of Johnson Lake where I noticed a flock of Pintails along the shore. Activities among the ducks indicated that a courtship was in progress. The flock consisted of one female and seven drakes, all milling about on the sand at the edge of the water. One withdrew and was not again observed after the first few minutes.

The male that seemed to be the favored suitor had a definite limp, so that it was easy to identify him. Throughout the entire period of observation there was much lunging of the drakes at one another, striking with bills and even pulling out of feathers. The favored one remained at the side of the female as she moved about slowly, usually at her left side. He was constantly lunging or striking at the other drakes as they kept advancing and retiring from her vicinity.

After a time, as if by a signal, the entire flock waded out into the shallow water a short distance from the shore. The drakes were continually trying to get the attention of the female, crowding near her whenever possible. Once the favored drake thrust his head under water, grabbed a toe or foot of one of his rivals and kept biting and twisting until he had to come up for air.

Now the whole flock came up out of the water and wandered along the beach. All the drakes continued to make attempts to get nearer the female but she seemed to be resting. As before her guard would lunge or strike at any of the other drakes that came near. An interesting variation from the previous activity pattern occurred about this time when one of the more persistant drakes began to make serious efforts to drive away all the other drakes except the favorite, who repaid him with savage

attacks. At intervals a male would wander away. Two of them did not return so that now there were only five of the original seven drakes present.

The flock would go into the water and after a short time would wander back on to the beach. This was repeated several times. All the time the males were trying to approach the female, but as before, being driven away by the lame drake, seemingly aided by a second drake. A car drove down to the lake shore and disturbed the ducks. They moved about fifty feet down the lake shore. Here the same activities as before were continued. Gradually the flock quieted down but with the favored and the female remaining together. Occasionally there were bursts of fighting among the males. At last all was quiet with the pair sitting peacefully together while the remaining drakes preened their feathers without apparent interest in the pair or each other.—*Lexington*

Some Observations On Immature Great Horned Owls

Donald W. Carter

On May 25, 1956, I was notified of the existence of the occupied nest of a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) on the Dick Kieffe property in southeast Dawes County, Nebraska. During the afternoon of the same day my daughter and I contacted Mrs. Kieffe at her home and were shown the location of the nest.

The nest site was located about one half mile east of the house and several miles from the nearest public road. It was situated about an equally short distance from the Niobrara River on the south and an irrigation ditch on the north. The nest was in a small cottonwood tree located at the bottom of a shallow depression in the center of an extensive pasture. There were three trees in the group surrounding the nesting area with no other trees closer than a hundred yards. The structure was located about 10 feet above the ground and placed against the southeast side of the trunk of the tree above a divided fork. It was a circular structure approximately 30 inches across and 18 inches deep and was composed of twigs and branches interwoven with pieces of bark, grass, down and trash. It appeared to be well matted and quite old and weathered which led me to believe that it must have been an abandoned or modified crow or hawk nest. The nest contained a great deal of rubbish around its outside edges such as fur, bones, hair, pellets and fecal matter. The posterior half of a young rabbit was in the nest.

About eight feet above the nest in the same tree was the nest of an American Magpie (*Pica pica*) which also contained young. It was of special interest to note this unusual relationship and association between the two species of birds. Mr. Kieffe informed us that the two birds appeared to tolerate each other which seems unusual between owls and corvids. An adult magpie left the nest before we were 50 feet from it while the adult owl remained motionless until we were under its perch. It then left the nesting area and flew to a group of distant cottonwoods. During our investigation the parent owl circled about the site several times never approaching it by more than several hundred yards.

Young owls in defensive attitude. Note the position of the front bird and the manner in which the wing is held. The nictitating membrane can be seen crossing the left eye of the rear bird.—Photo by Donald S. Carter

The owl's nest contained two young well developed owls about 14 inches in length. They were well feathered out with the exception of the region around the face and head which was still covered with down. On the breast, wings and tail the markings were well defined, especially the cross barring on the breast. At times they erected tufts of down on the head in the same position later ear-tufts appear. This gave the appearance of miniature horns. The mandibles were dark grayish-black as were the tallons. The eyes of each bird were yellow and appeared extremely large for the size

of the head. One of the birds was slightly smaller than the other and of somewhat lighter color. The parent bird had established a perch directly across from the nest in an adjacent tree at the same general level and about eight feet away. Numerous fecal streaks below the perch verified this observation.

When the nest was approached from the ground the young birds moved toward the rear of the nest and made no attempt to show defensive behavior. However, when I climbed the adjacent tree, they watched me closely and at the least threatening movement on my part they hissed and snapped their mandibles rapidly. The flash of the flash gun seemed to annoy them a great deal for they started violently at each flash moving the nictitating membrane rapidly across the eye and blinking rapidly, shaking their heads, and at the same time snapping their mandibles noisely.

A little later I climbed their tree and experimented to some extent with their reactions to my close approach. At first I moved my hand toward them and was met with a great display of "bill clacking" and hissing. When I refused to be intimidated by this action, they simply retreated to the rear of the nest next to and behind the tree trunk. I took a small stout twig and pushed it toward them but found that they even refused to bite at this and allowed me to push them around without too much resistance. I found I was able to touch their wings with my bare hand without opposition. I did not try to handle them, however.

When I approached the nest the larger bird appeared to push the smaller one behind it. I tried leaving the nest several times to allow the birds to re-distribute themselves. Each time I returned the larger bird placed itself in front of the smaller one and as I came near it dropped down on its breast, reached out and snapped its mandibles at the same time fluffing out its breast feathers and fanning the wings and tail. The left side was turned toward me and the left wing was raised at a peculiar angle and held out as though it were shielding itself from attack. When pressed, it continued to retreat pushing the other owl behind it. As soon as I left, the owls advanced to the edge of the nest and peered over the side.

I examined a number of pellets both in the nest and on the ground and found them to contain only the remains of rabbits and small rodents. It is interesting to note that no bird remains were discovered in the vicinity. The presence of cattle near the nest appeared to have little effect on their existence.

I believe it is worth while considering the unusual co-existance of the Great Horned Owls and the American Magpies; and to give more consideration to the apparent protection that appeared to exist between the two young owls. Gladden in *Birds of America* (1936, p. 144) indicates that some thought has been given to the protection theory but he feels there is reasonable doubt that it exists. It might be well worth additional investigation.

I was also interested in the fact that the adult bird made no attempt to attack me in any way during the examination contrary to reports in the literature. It was also of interest that the parent owls had made no inroads on Mr. Kieffe's poultry even though the owls often roosted in the trees beside the house in the evening.—*Chadron*

How?

Relative To Bird Behavior And Color

The average bird student is usually armed with a binocular and a field guide, and he may spend hours traveling miles by foot or car to make his observations. It has been said that the number of birds one sees is inversely proportional to the distance covered. This may or may not be true. Wilson Tout would sit in one good location in the woods or near his back door for long periods to make his observations. He believed that walking slowly, then stopping, caused more birds to fly into the open where they could be seen more easily than merely walking along.

Other students collect those birds of which they are un-sure, or those which are rare in order to have proof of the species. Some people object to this form of study partly because they want a rare type to become more common. Birds are always "ranging out" because, as a rule, they are over-populating the original area. Very often, they range too far and would not survive, anyway. If they can survive, other birds will soon follow them. So collecting the rare bird does not actually make much difference in numbers of that particular kind (unless, of course, it is a nearly extinct species).

Bird banding is being carried out in more and more localities. This leaves the bird alive, and the living bird—through its travels and by carrying a band—can tell much if it is recovered. But bird banding is not enough when one wants to learn something of individual behavior. Two other methods, or their combination, may be used. Color banding is becoming more popular. Margaret Nice has become famous in bird (and zoology) circles because of the things she learned through watching Song Sparrows she had color-banded in her own backyard in Ohio. The private life of the English Robin is probably better known than any other one species due to the color "ringing." Winifred Sabine has done much for the understanding of Juncos in her yard and from her window in Ithaca, New York. She caught the birds in her traps and glued colored feathers to the tail using "airplane" glue. Marguerite Baumgartner used this method in her study of Tree Sparrows at Cornell University.

Colors have been used further by the Fish and Wildlife Service, especially on ducks. The down of the ducklings of different nests are colored variously and the activity and whereabouts of these birds can be traced for several weeks. Sometimes the adults are captured at the nests, and one wing or the other painted a bright color that can be seen for some distance. (However, this sometimes causes other birds to drive the colored one away.)

Anyone who qualifies may apply to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., for a banding permit. The first requirement is to be able to identify birds. Incorrect identification could do much harm. The applicant must have two reputable ornithologists write letters of recommendation. Next, the person must show some interest in other than just banding—such as the study of a particular species or small group of species. He may express an interest in ectoparasites (lice, mainly), studying weights of birds, condition of the plumage, stage of molting, etc.

We find that the HOW of bird studies requires more than a binocular and field guide. Another essential is a notebook—one of durable material containing substantial paper and a pen having permanent ink. When in

the field, observations should be recorded as near the time of their happening as possible. One should not depend on memory for such items as number of seconds the Bluebird hovers in one spot, or the time between feedings of the young Catbirds. It is impossible to remember the details of the walking and the bobbing tail of the Water Thrush. If one is watching the Goldfinch at the nest, some little action may not seem important until one notices that it is repeated many times. Answers to WHY is the next step.

If zeal and enthusiasm carries one further—or if he wants to contribute more to the understanding of birds, he may apply for a banding permit, get some rather sensitive scales for weighing birds, get bird traps, invest in paint, glue and feathers, and A Guide to Bird Watching by Hickey. He should not forget to investigate books and periodicals which will keep him informed concerning studies made by others which will help him answer the HOWS and WHYS.

As indicated above, many bird students are concentrating on one species as the Junco, Song Sparrow, Golden Eagle. These students are not blind to the birds around. They know their names and note their actions, but they cannot do a thorough job of studying all and are forced to limit their field of interest. Members of NOU have chosen to concentrate on the Dickcissel. All NOU members might take a particular bird which is easy to study for his own problem.

For most of us the binocular, field guide and notebook will be enough. Careful observations recorded and from time to time organized and published will add little by little to the vast material yet to be learned about the most conspicuous animal of our environment.—*Doris Gates.*

General Notes

ANTELOPE COUNTY.—May 6, 1956, Lloyd and I saw a Yellow-crowned Night Heron feeding along the Elkhorn River near Oakdale. As we came up it flew into a tree and perched about 12 feet from the ground. We watched the bird with our binoculars for several minutes gradually moving closer until we were not more than 50 feet from it. When we tried to approach closer it flew just a little higher up in the tree where it remained until we made considerable noise moving through the leaves and brush. We were thrilled with a new bird addition to our life list but especially so when we found, on arriving home and consulting the check list, the Yellow-crowned Night Heron is listed as "a rare visitant" to Nebraska.

We also saw Virgina Rails. Our first record of them in this vicinity was last fall (*Review* XXIV:25). Today we counted seven together in a swampy spot by one of the small lakes 15 miles southwest of Plainview. Sora Rails were numerous also. Most years we see one or two, but today we saw several among the reeds near the lakes and in road-side ditches. —*Mrs. Lloyd Seabury*

CAROLINA WREN IN OMAHA.—The loud, cheerful song of the Carolina Wren is a rare treat to hear in these parts. However, the spring and summer of 1953 I did hear it almost every day on my own place in Bellevue, about six miles south of the Omaha city limits. I have also heard it in Fontennelle Forest and sometimes in Mandan Park.

During that year (1953) I made a number of phonetic recordings of its varied song (for the same bird has many different songs). It often sang that "tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle" song which is nearly always mentioned in bird books. But I never could associate "tea-kettle" with any of its songs for the simple reason that the accent is left out in the books. The dictionary accents the first syllable and naturally, that's the way I accented it. But the Carolina Wren has no particular regard for established customs and habits of expression—nor is it a slave of any dictionary rules. It places the accent on the second syllable instead of the first. However, the effect is highly pleasing.

It was not before November 3, 1955, that I finally got myself straightened out concerning this song. Here is how it happened. I was walking to Benson on a fine, still, typical "Indian Summer" day and the time was about 3:30 in the afternoon. As I came within three houses of Wirt Street, a familiar song fell on my ear. It was none other than that of my friend, the Carolina Wren. It was the same song I heard so often at my place. I made a phonetic recording of the song and noted the accent was on the second syllable.

When I returned home I compared it with the "tea-kettle" verson and found that they were nearly alike. Thus, a very disturbing confusion was cleared up for me in my bird studies.—*Carl H. Swanson*

1954 NESTING AND YOUNG BIRD RECORDS FROM PLATTSMOUTH.—On May 26th while watching the Red-bellied Woodpecker nest I discovered Downy Woodpeckers feeding young in a nest on the under side of a dead branch that had fallen over two other branches. The nestlings were well grown and crowding the entrance. The male was tailless. May 29th this nest was blown down. The entrance was one and three-eighths by one and a half inches. Depth was about nine and a half inches from the base of the entrance hole. The interior was a smooth pocket. Later this male fed young suet in our yard. They had the characteristic red foreheads of young downies and hairies.

May 29th I found a Wood Thrush nest saddled in the fork of an oak. The female was on the nest and the male uttered alarm notes at my presence. As I walked past he sang. Something disturbed them later for they never finished nesting.

June 21st an Eastern Wood Pewee nest was discovered in a big elm on a V-crotch about 20 feet up. One bird was on a wire nearby and flew to the nest and settled down. I have a July 12 record that the Wood Pewees had hatched. I did not get to the nest often.

July 11-13 were very hot days and the sprinkler was kept going, as well as the bird bath being filled. Young Robins, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Orchard Orioles and Chipping Sparrows came. Adult Warbling Vireos and Goldfinches flitted back and forth through the spray. A Baltimore Oriole sat on the hose a long time, often looking down at its feet. (Could it feel the surge of the cool water?) A Wren clung to the bark of a tree in the spray. A dove lay at the edge lifting one wing and then the other to the coolness. Even a rabbit was sprawled out under a shrub just beyond the

water. Kingbirds, Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, Crested Flycatchers, and Yellow Warblers came to bathe or flit. The young Chipping Sparrow sat on a fallen twig where the spray fell lightest and fluttered its feathers. The adults fed it there.

On July 15th a young Cedar Waxwing was seen and others heard. That night a dead Swift was found in the fireplace. Apparently she could not expell an egg. On July 25th a Warbling Viero was seen feeding a fledgling which looked soft as a duckling, but whiter. That same date the kingbirds were feeding a brood of well feathered and noisy young in our yard.—*Lorene Heineman*

WINTER FEEDING OF HARRIS SPARROWS IN SAINT EDWARD.—My first record of migratory Harris Sparrows occured October 10, 1924, in the Bird Garden, then again April 1, 1943, and on February 10, 1948, one immature was recorded. It was not until October, 1950, that a few arrived and stopped over all winter with increasing numbers each winter since 1950. The number has grown to nearly a hundred about evenly divided between mature and immature birds. We find them quite "choicy" in their feed preferring hemp, canary seed and my shelled bird-size sunflower seed. They take cracked corn, sumac and cane grain only as a last resort. They do not seem to shell the regular sunflower seed or feed on it as do the Grosbeaks, Cardinals, Chickadees and others. They do feed from my sunflower feeders and as the Harris Sparrow is a scratcher and jumper while feeding, some of the seed is scattered to the ground which also attracts ground feeding birds such as Ovenbirds. In severe weather and snow they feed in great numbers, too, from the window feeders with covered awnings.

A hundred sparrows take a lot of feed and they like fresh feed put out often during the day. This way the Starling, English Sparrow and Blue Jay cannot gobble it all up. We manage to keep the English Sparrows and Starlings under fairly good control with sparrow traps and bird shot.

If left to do so the Starling will drive out the English Sparrow as well as all other birds except the Horned Owl. However, the English Sparrows bully and chase out the larger Harris Sparrows. The Harris Sparrows besides being trim and well groomed with gamebird like shadings of buff, tan, gray, brown and black is well mannered and in most cases not combative. They do fight a little among themselves. The only other bird I have seen them attack is the Purple Finch and they drive them out of the Bird Garden! This may prove the Harris Sparrow and Purple Finch nest and feed in the same area.—*Dana Anderson*

SAY'S PHOEBE NESTING IN NANCE COUNTY.—For several years a Say's Phoebe has been nesting in the garage attached to the house at the Raymond Wright farm home in Nance County five miles northwest of Fullerton, Nebraska. During 1955, 10 year old Vincent Wright kept an accurate record of the activities of the phoebes. During his absence for a few days, his brother Brian (15), continued with the record. Contents of the nest were observed by using a mirror. The record, somewhat modified, follows:

April 1 the phoebes came; April 2 they sang and ate; and April 3 they started looking around the garage. April 4-12 they were seen only once. They were seen again April 13 and April 14-15 they looked around the

garage. April 16 they started a nest in the garage; April 17 the base was completed; April 18 the nest was half done but April 19 the nest was blown down. April 20 the nest was re-built and April 21 it was blown down again. April 22 English Sparrows took over the nest and laid an egg April 23. I tore down the nest the next day and on April 25 the sparrows were back and I tore down their second nest. April 27-28 the phoebes were back and by April 29 they had started to build. April 30 the base was completed and the nest was completed May 3. I did not see them May 4 and May 5 there was an egg in the nest. May 6 there were two eggs. The morning of May 7 there were three eggs, and in the afternoon there were four. May 8 there were still four but May 9 there were five. May 10 one egg was broken and May 11 there were four eggs smeared by the broken one. May 12 the nest was torn down by the phoebes. May 13 a nest was started outside the garage. May 14 the nest was half done but May 15 it was blown down. May 16 a nest was started at a different place outside the garage. May 17 it was half done and May 18 it was completed; but May 19 it was blown down again. May 20-21 the birds acted "confused." May 22-25 the phoebes were there, but were not building. May 26 a nest was started inside the garage. May 27 it was half done and May 28 it was completed. May 29 there was one egg and each of the next three days another egg was laid. June 2 a phoebe was on the nest all day. June 3-13, incubation. June 14 one egg hatched and June 15 two more hatched. June 16 there were four young and an egg (which had not been observed earlier). June 17 the fifth egg hatched. June 18-21 parents fed the young such flying insects as moths and small grasshoppers. By June 22 the young were still quite "fuzzy" and June 23 pin-feathers appeared on the wings. By June 25-26 the nest was "crowded." June 27-28 the parents were kept very busy. The babies were "bottomless pits." June 29 the young were fully feathered. June 30 they were sitting in a line on the ledge where the nest was built. By July 1 the nest was flattened; and the birds seemed ready to fly. The first one flew July 3 and all flew July 4. July 5 the garage was deserted. July 6 the young were back, roosting on things in the garage. July 7 the young were being fed by the parents. July 8 they chased a Barn Swallow and took food from the swallow whose nest with two-day old young was across the garage. July 9 the birds were apparently frightened away by a tornado that struck at 3 a.m. For several weeks the Say's Phoebes were seen in a grove near the house.

The Say's Phoebes have returned to the garage this year (1956) and Vincent is keeping records again. This is a fine example of bird observation which could be followed by others.—*Willetta Lueshen*

AURORA.—Last year (winter 1954-1955) my daughter, Janet, wanted to try some taxidermy. We decided to use Starlings and set a crude trap. They were rather easy to catch. We made a sort of cage to keep them alive until she was ready for them. We were surprised to find that the birds were not nearly as panic-stricken at the sight of people as we had expected. They did not beat their wings frantically as some birds do, but settled down almost immediately to try to find a way out. On the day after they had been captured one of the birds took food from our fingers. We took it from the cage and tied a string to its leg. After a

couple of dashes the bird settled down on the back of a chair and began tugging at the string on its leg. We tied the bird to the chair and left it. In a very short time it learned how far the string would let it go and would circle the chair back. Toward the end of the day the bird was flying to us and would perch on fingers or heads. We removed the string and the bird was allowed to walk about. When the dog came into the room the Starling flew to the chair back. The fourth day it gave a few calls when it heard the Starlings outside and scolded the dog. The bird ate almost anything offered, but prefered fruit and suet to bread. It picked all the raisins from a slice of bread even turning it over to get those on the other side. Needless to say, this bird was never killed. Had it not been so messy, we might have been tempted to keep it. Without thinking of how the bird had become accustomed to the warmth of the house, we opened the door and let it fly away, but in a short time it was back walking around on the front porch and seemed to be quite cold. It was brought back into the house for the night. The next morning, which was sunny and bright, Janet took the bird into the park and set it free.

Across the road from our house is a large cottonwood tree and every spring the Baltimore Orioles fight for the right to nest there. Have you ever seen two male Baltimore Orioles battling for a territory? They "forget" everything else. They come tumbling from the top of the tree and land fighting at our feet. Three years ago one of the males fell prey to a cat during one of these battles. Shortly after this we began to hear a plaintive two-noted whistle. Upon investigation we found that it was a female Baltimore Oriole. Throughout the day we kept hearing this call and since I had never heard a female oriole that behaved in this manner before, I finally started watching her. Everytime the male flew, she gave this two-noted whistle and followed him. Then at last I saw that the male was following another female and paying no attention to the bird that was calling. We decided that the lonely female must be the mate of the bird that had been killed. For over a week the bird called continually. It seemed to be the first sound that we heard in the morning and the last at night. At first we thought it was rather pretty, but after a while it became irritating like the constant squeaking of an old gate. One morning we awoke and missed hearing the whistle. When we went outside we found the feathers of a female oriole on the front lawn and surmised that she, like her mate, had been caught by a cat.

One afternoon I found three nests of Red-winged Blackbirds no more than a foot apart on Prairie Island. One nest held five young birds, another had four and the third was not quite complete. I watched the nests closely and never saw more than one male in that vicinity. He defended the nests and the females and displayed frequently, usually from a nearby fence post, but not once did I see him helping clean the nest or feed the young. A fifth egg was added to the second nest and in due time five young birds hatched, but the third female had only four eggs and young. Since our cabin is twenty-four miles from Aurora I was not able to watch the nests as I would have liked and was never fortunate enough to be present when any of the young birds left the nests. I did notice that the nests were kept clean. The females dropped refuse in the water. When

the young birds left, the nests were in excellent condition, hardly appearing used. I have found many other Redwing nests, but they were located singly or in colonies where there were several males. This was the only time that I was positive that there was only one male for three females.

Nature built woodpeckers so they could eat clinging to the side of a tree and we have found that this is the way they prefer to eat. On a vacant lot next to our home my daughter, Janet, has put up a number of bird feeders. There is a thick growth of saplings and she has thinned them out, cutting the tops from some to make poles for waterers, feeders, etc. One tree was made into a suet pole by drilling a number of one inch holes at intervals and filling them with suet. Suet is placed at the other feeders in baskets, but the woodpeckers fight for the privilege of eating on the pole. Consequently the suet disappears first from the pole. One morning as we were watching the birds feeding we saw a female Hairy Woodpecker fly to the pole to feed. She climbed the pole, hitching her way around and peering into all the holes. Finding no suet, she flew to a nearby feeder and pulled a piece from the basket, carried it back to the pole and pounded it into a hole. She fed for a while, but before she had finished the suet she flew back to the basket for more suet which again was carried to the pole and pounded into a hole. A female Hairy Woodpecker, which we think was the same bird, repeated this performance several times.

These events began one day in May, 1952, when a pair of Robins built their nest in a low crotch in a poplar tree near our neighbor's garage. One would have had to go far to find a stronger or better built nest. It soon became evident that our Robins were having trouble with a family of House Wrens that were occupying a house under the eaves of the garage. Shortly after the fourth egg was laid we found a puncture in one of the eggs and guessed that the culprit was a wren. In due time three birds hatched. When they were nearly feathered out we had a windstorm and a neighbor brought us another young Robin that they found on the lawn after the storm. The bird was just the same size as the three in the nest. We couldn't see a pin-feathers difference. So we thought the parents might adopt another. After the old birds had dumped the stranger from the nest for the fourth time, my daughter took over the job of raising it. The three little Robins grew up and left the nest without further incident.

One might think this is where the story ended, but this nest was to serve another family of birds. Some time later we were surprised to see a Brown Thrasher fly from the nest and start scolding. Upon investigation we found four young Brown Thrashers in the nest. The nest had been neatly relined, but the outside was unchanged. Earlier in the spring we had located three other Robin nests in osage orange trees and we investigated these, also. We were surprised to find that Brown Thrashers had moved into two of them. These nests were back in the thorns and we were unable to examine them closely to see if they had been altered. I have found nests of the Brown Thrasher every year since I was a small child, but this was the first time that I had found them using secondhand nests.—*Mrs. Kermit S. Swanson*

Reports of Nests, Nestlings and Fledglings 1955

McPherson County—**Western Kingbirds,** there were at least two sets of young out on the light wires at one time, and for more than a week the parents would feed them. They seemed to make each one wait its turn. **Lark Sparrows,** while the female was sitting on her nest the male sang from the top of the coal house or a fence post. The female fed her five young on the same light wire that held other kinds of young birds. **Orchard Oriole,** a male brought four young into the yard about the same time there were other young birds around. The orioles seemed to gather in a group and call or twitter. This was not a song, but calls on slightly different tones making a rather musical sound. They usually had their heads rather close together at this time. They were in the yard and trees several days. **Barn Swallows,** several nests in the barn. I did manage to watch them feed their young, though they wouldn't feed when they knew I was near. The parents feed the young on the wing and are very quick about it. Each bird has to wait its turn. They are pretty well feathered out (more so than many other birds) when they leave the nest and seem able to fly quite well from the start.—**Mrs. Oona Bassett**

Lincoln County—in the town of Hershey; **Bronzed Grackles,** several nests in cedars and Chinese elms. **Robins,** four or five nests, nestlings seen in May, June, July and August. **Blue Jay,** nest in cottonwood near a house, nestlings seen the last of June. **Chickadee,** fledglings seen the last of June. **Yellow-shafted Flicker,** nest in old cottonwood, fledglings seen in early May. **Mourning Dove,** nest in Chinese elm near a house, last nestling killed by lightning late in September. **Baltimore Oriole,** nest in the top of an elm. **Starlings,** nests under the city water tank. In the country near Hershey; **Killdeer,** young birds seen near a ditch in the middle of June. **Upland Plover,** fledglings seen in July. **Crows,** nests in old ash tree claim, June 5. **Yellow-shafted Flicker,** young seen "peeping" from a hole in an old cottonwood, May. **Meadowlark,** young were in a hay meadow in July. **Bobolink,** young were in hay meadows in July. **Dickcissels,** young were in hay meadows in July.

Four years ago **Black-crowned Night Herons** came to the George Koch ranch about five miles southwest of Hershey and four miles northeast of the Sutherland Reservoir. The first year there were about a dozen nests. Each year they have multiplied until now there are well over 100. The rancher said he would not attempt to count them.

The nests are located in a grove of Chinese elms just back of the barns and not over a city block from the dwelling house. In the summer of 1954, the Kochs decided that there was an over supply of young, or a shortage of food, as the young birds lined up on the corral and chicken-yard fences calling for food. Last summer one tried to build a nest in a tree by the house, and another near the chicken house.

Due to the accumulation of refuse, the grove is becoming repulsive and the odor is strong in summer. Because of the increasing numbers, the Kochs are becoming apprehensive and would like to get rid of the herons, but find the birds won't "scare" even by guns discharged in the

vicinity. The Kochs would certainly like an answer to their problem. When the herons leave in the fall, the crows roost in these trees.—**Mrs. Bernardine (M. A.) Cox**

Douglas County—**Bell's Vireo,** for the third successive summer these birds have nested in our yard.—**L. O. Horsky**

Excerpts From Letters To The Editors

"I identified Tree Sparrows in a flock that strung out for nearly a half a mile along a milo field. There must have been several thousand birds! A Prairie Falcon and a Sparrow Hawk were following it. They flew from pole to pole along a power line. The Sparrow Hawk stayed at some distance from the falcon."—*Mrs. Bernardine Cox, Hershey*

"I want to report a Carolina Wren. We saw it three different days about December 2, 1955. We have two Tufted Titmice. These are the first I've seen around here."—*Marian Day, Superior*

"A friend described a 'new sparrow' and it was a Harris Sparrow. We had no birds at our feeding table, then a snow came (February) and for three days Cardinals, Harris Sparrows, Juncos and of course Chickadees were back in numbers."—*H. J. Allen, Cozad*

"My feeding window-shelf is a very busy place. The following birds come (November, 1955): White-crowned, White-throated, Gambel's and Harris's Sparrows; Cardinals, Chickadees, Juncos, Titmice, Brown Creepers, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets; Downey and Hairy Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwings, Flickers, Goldfinches, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches." —*Susie Callaway, Fairbury*

"We have lived near a small city park in Aurora for 17 years, and during this time there has been a small flock of Crows roosting there every winter. About a mile and a half south of Aurora there is a large Crow roost. This spot happens to be one of my favorite birding places since there is a farm pond here that is hidden from the road, and in the spring and fall it is alive with migrating water fowl and shore birds. All my references term the Red-breasted Nuthatch as being shy, but I have found it far from it. It is one of the tamest birds at my feeders. It is never abundant (in 1952 we had five) but one is usually there. These little birds will take food from our hands and seem to have no fear almost from their first visit in the fall. This year we first saw the Red-breasted Nuthatch at our feeders on November 6 and on November 10 he took food from the dish as I was filling the feeder. Since that time he has helped himself from the dish or pecked food from my fingers nearly everytime I replenish the supplies.

"Mrs. John Berggren of Route 2, Aurora, reported two Whooping Cranes over the house about noon of Oct. 25. On Nov. 2, Mrs. L. G. Margritz who lives about six miles west of Aurora reported five Whooping Cranes flying over their place. She said that one appeared slightly smaller than the others and seemed to have a pinkish color. The birds were circling about 'objecting' to crossing highway 34 which runs past their farm. The traffic was quite heavy and the birds appeared to be afraid to fly over it."—*Mrs. Kermit S. Swanson, Aurora*

Meetings And Reports

THE FIFTY-FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING.—The annual meeting was held in Kearney May 4-5, 1956, at the Fort Kearney Hotel. Dr. John C. W. Bliese was in charge of local arrangements. Members of Beta Beta Beta from the Nebraska State Teachers College of Kearney assisted. Many students from the college were in attendance as well as a fair number of regular members.

The following papers were presented in the Friday sessions:

Birds Through the Years—Miss Carrie Ludden, Kearney.

Banding Reports—Carl E. Smith, Halsey; Mrs. John Lueshen, Wisner.

Mourning Dove Banding—George Wiseman, Valentine.

Nebraska Prairie Chickens—Yesterday, T od a y and Tommorow—John V. Beck, Lincoln.

A Teacher Speaks—John C. W. Bliese, Kearney.

Prairie Ecology—W. E. Bruner, Kearney.

Current Trends in Ornithology—William F. Rapp, Jr., Crete.

Adventuring With Birds—Mrs. Martha Conyers and her Junior Audubon Club, Kearney.

Sandhill Cranes in Nebraska—W. E. Eigsti, Hastings.

The dinner speaker was Dr. E. Raymond Hall, Director of the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

BUSINESS MEETING.—William F. Rapp, Jr., reported on the Occasional Papers of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union. He explained that the first paper is nearly paid for and the second paper is to be released soon. (The announcement is on the back page of this issue.)

Willetta Lueshen submitted the secretary's report in which she stated 168 letters had been written. Mary Lou Hanson gave the Custodian's report, and Mrs. O. W. Ritchey gave the Treasurer's report. (The yearly report was given in the April issue of the *Review*.)

The group expressed pleasure in receiving the monthly NOU NEWS sent to its members by the Editor, Doris Gates.

The secretary read the report of the tellers, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Seabury. Ballots from 98 persons were received and the following were elected to office:

President—Henry Baumgarten, Lincoln
Vice President—John C. W. Bliese, Kearney
Secretary—Mrs. John Lueshen, Wisner
Treasurer—Mrs. O. W. Ritchey, Hastings
Custodian—Mary Louise Hanson, Lincoln
Editor—Doris Gates, Chadron

When the new president presided, appreciation was expressed by the group to William F. Rapp, Jr., retiring president. Mrs. Carl Franzen, on behalf of the Nature Lovers Club of Scottsbluff, invited the members to hold the 1957 meeting in Scottsbluff. (The dates have been set for May 18-19.) Mary Ann Wake was appointed chairman of local arrangements.

The secretary submitted the tellers report for Honorary Membership. Dr. R. Allyn Moser was elected. The group voted to issue membership

cards each year and Bud Pritchard was appointed chairman of the committee to design such a card.

ANNUAL FIELD DAY, 1956.—In spite of a cold and misty morning a list of 123 kinds of birds was compiled. The group started about 6:15 after having breakfast at the college cafeteria. Following is a list of the birds reported: Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern, Canada Goose, Mallard, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Baldpate, Shoveller, Redhead, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup, Buffle-head, Ruddy Duck, American Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Bob-white, Pheasant, Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Greater Yellow-legs, Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Forester's Tern, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Horned Owl, Chimney Swift, Kingfisher, Flicker, Red-shafted Flicker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatcher, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Olive-backed Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Migrant Shrike, Starling, Warbling Vireo, Black and White Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Western Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Water Thrush, Yellow-throat, Chat, Wilson's Warbler, Redstart, English Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Redwing, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Brewer's Blackbird, Bronzed Grackle, Cowbird, Cardinal, Rocky Mountain Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Goldfinch, Red-eyed Towhee, Arctic Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

ERROR

A Nebraska Record of the California Gull proves to be Erroneous.—In the NEBRASKA BIRD REVIEW (1[3]: 61, July, 1933) I reported an immature specimen of gull taken at Lincoln, Nebraska, as a California Gull. The identification was confirmed by the late Myron H. Swenk. Since becoming familiar with this species in the northwest I reexamined this specimen (No. 492 in my collection) and became skeptical of its identity. Dr. Frank A. Pitelka of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and Mr. Bernard Bernstein of the U. S. National Museum have examined this bird and there seems to be no doubt that it is a Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*).—George E. Hudson, *Department of Zoology, State College of Washington, Pullman, Washington.*

Mrs. Jane B. Swenk

1886 - 1954

The death of Mrs. Jane B. Swenk, July 29, 1954, brought to a close a long career of service to the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, a distinct loss to the organization.

Mrs. Swenk was born at LaGrange, Indiana, in 1886. She came to Lincoln at the age of two and remained a resident of that city until the time of her death. She became a member of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union in a joint membership with her husband, Prof. Myron H. Swenk in 1900. The memberships were separated in 1932 and she carried a membership in her own name through the remainder of her life, the last three years of which was a life membership.

She very successfully carried out the strenuous duties of Corresponding Secretary for five years, 1942-1946, then served as Vice-President in 1947 and 1948. Her service to the organization also included many committee assignments.

An outstanding accomplishment was her collaboration with F. W. Haecker and R. Allyn Moser in compiling and publishing a Check-list of the Birds of Nebraska in 1945.

Mrs. Swenk's efficient service and her ever cheerful attitude was a pleasure and an encouragement to all who came in contact with her.—*E.W.G.*

Book Reviews

AN INTRODUCTION TO NATURE. John Kieran. Hanover House, Garden City, New York, 1955: 223 pp. $6.00.

Three books are included in this one volume—An Introduction to Birds, An Introduction to Wild Flowers, and An Introduction to Trees. The three books individually are also in print. As the title states, it is an introduction. Most of the birds, many of the flowers and fewer of the trees occur in Nebraska. The illustrations (by Don Eckelberry, Tabea Hoffmann and Michael H. Bevans) are good and the descriptions are informative and simple. Historical notes, comments or poems by well known writers, use of plants for food and medicine add much. Scientific names are given for the plants but not for the birds. This book would add much to a general library.—DG

LOUISIANA BIRDS. George H. Lowery, Jr. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1955: 556 pp. $5.00.

The first 98 pages are devoted to such things as feather areas, bone structure, migration, attracting birds, conservation, etc. These things are generally omitted, and yet are important. Since the book deals with Louisiana birds, its topics are local such as weather, associations, and collections at the University Museum. Illustrations are excellent. They are mostly paintings and line drawings by Robert E. Tucker; and there are many photographs. The families are discussed and illustrated from Loons to Finches. This would be a fine reference book for the library.—DG

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