

SUMMER BIRDS LINGER

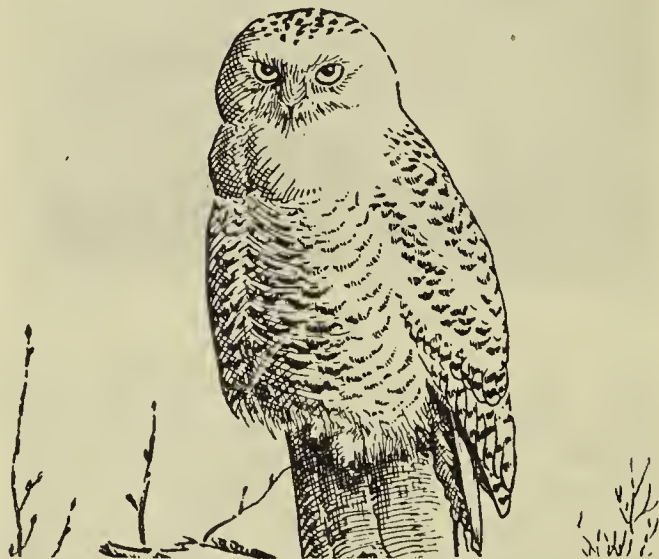
MRS. ELLEN AVERILL, R.R. 3, Minnedosa, Man.

(Editor's note: The keen nature observations of Mrs. Averill, who is 84 years of age, should be an inspiration to all of us. There seems no doubt that the world, to her, is made brighter, happier and more interesting because of her interest in the activities of birds, mammals and insects with which she comes in contact about her farm home. Throughout these pages appear several of her short articles, illustrating the variety and scope of her observations. The accompanying illustration from "South Dakota Bird Notes" was drawn by W. J. Breckenridge.)

Due to the unusually mild fall coupled with an unseasonable cold snap in late October, the birds like the humans, seemed a little doubtful what to do. Many times we have seen a few of what we generally consider winter visitors still around in the late fall; indeed, three ducks were seen flying around on January 3rd; Mountain Bluebirds, which are some of our earliest spring arrivals were also seen much later than usual.

The cold spell in October brought the Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers and the larger Hairy to our veranda where I put fat and bones for their benefit. Snowy Owls have also been seen, but they are not common. Ravens have also shown up. Magpies are getting very common and quite bold. About ten days ago, one of the bold rascals came to a feeding place in a tree, a few yards from the kitchen, where Chickadees and Downy Woodpeckers are daily visitors.

At present I am staying at my



Snowy Owl

daughter's home, in a wide valley shut in by high hills and many deep gullies which are thickly treed, and the Magpies find shelter there. Just now they can be seen flying back and forth almost any hour of the day. A beast has just been killed for the farm winter supply of meat and these long-tailed black and white birds find good picking around the slaughter ground.

WHAT A PICTURE TO PAINT!

ONA F. LICK, Davidson, Sask.

Across the road from our place is a slight depression in our neighbor's field, scarcely discernible except in springtime when filled with winter's run-off. In May, 1953, a severe blizzard and a later rain replenished it. Between the depression and the ditch, also filled with water, is a little ridge of dirt, left there by the grader, with its fringe of tall dead weeds and bare buck-brush.

To the casual passer-by, the depression is nothing; to the farmer it is a nuisance since it cannot be seeded with the rest of the field; but to an amateur photographer it presents many possibilities — with weeds and wading birds mirrored in the still water. Blue sky and fleecy clouds above an unbroken horizon make beautiful reflections, too.

To the bird lover, it teems with interest. Pairs of Mallards and Pintails make a lovely take-off when a car drives by. And what a picture for Peter Scott to paint are the same ducks coming in for a safe landing! A Red-winged Blackbird bathes in the muddy border. A Killdeer, calling shrilly, flits by — swoops down and skims the water's surface. Its mate runs by fits and starts, along the edge. Standing in the water are two bigger wading birds, jerking their heads, dipping long beaks into the water, making perfect reflections as they do so. As if to prove its identity, as I watch, one stretches a wing, displaying a white bar on black under-wing, and almost cries out: "We are Willets."