

with the general appearance and actions of a thrasher fly down to the ground and back up on the fence along the pasture. As we got closer we saw that it had color markings somewhat similar to a shrike and called back to the bird watcher, "What have we here?" "A shrike", he said seeing the color, but on noticing the thrasher-like form and flight her interest was aroused as only that of a bird watcher can be. The bird flew into a clump of willows along the fence. We got out and went over, but it appeared to be a very bird and quickly flew over to a nearby bluff. We went into the pasture and drove toward the bluff, but before we could get out of the car the bird had moved to another bluff. Margaret suspected it might be a Mockingbird (and hoped it would be) but also thought it could be a Townsend's Solitaire. Out came the bird book for a study of fieldmarks before we continued the chase. But as we lost the bird at the next bluff and had to be content to continue our drive ending with a picnic supper along a prairie trail near the Arm valley. Before we left the pasture we saw a Great Horned Owl and found its downy young in a nest in which I had banded Swainson's Hawks for Stuart Houston one year.

As we returned home to do the evening chores we were quite surprised to spot the same bird we had followed earlier and along the same

fence. This time it proved much more co-operative, and as Margaret and I got out to get a better view it moved up and down the fence and finally into the willow clump where it stayed while we approached — one on each side. Here it stayed and tried to hide among the branches and leaves while we fought off great hordes of mosquitoes and observed it at a distance of not over ten feet for some fifteen minutes. Those minutes seemed like hours as at times the mosquitoes almost make you yell, but there was no way to get out of it — a bird watcher will go through anything to establish beyond the shadow of a doubt the definite and accurate identity of a new species, and I had to go along! We established to our satisfaction that this grey and white thrasher-like bird with the white on wings and tail (but no black mask like the shrike's) was a Mockingbird.

No "seers", I haven't become a "watcher" even though I did get up early and tag along with the watchers at Cypress Hills. I had no luck there even of "seeing" some of the new species of small birds the watchers were finding. However, when looking over the countryside on the way out to Cypress Lake I did see some Sage Grouse which I think escaped many of the watchers. We also saw some fine scenery, and it will be some time before I forget the view from Bald Butte.

REMINISCENCES OF NIPAWIN'S NOTED ORNITHOLOGIST

Strictly for the Birds

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last summer Mr. Wright interviewed Maurice Street, a friend of his of long standing who took an interest in him when he was going to high school in Nipawin, and encouraged him to become a bird watcher and bander. We are pleased to publish Mr. Wright's report of the interview because of the encouragement it will give all aspiring birdmen.

"STRICTLY FOR THE BIRDS" is an expression that usually carries certain insulting implications. But it has a very different and appropriate meaning for Maurice Street of Nipawin. Mr. Street is a slim, balding man with warm eyes and a contagious laugh who obviously enjoys life and is accepted as one of Saskatchewan's top ornithologists. He's "strictly for the birds" and the birds are strictly for him!

How did this remarkable bird watcher and bander get his start? Here are his own words. "Well, in 1922 I got my first bird book. It was Chapman's **Land Birds East of the Rockies**. And at that time Mr. Lawrence of Winnipeg had started his **Chickadee Notes** (Winnipeg - Free Press), and I began reading. I was twelve years old. I was on the farm at that time and then I moved into town (Tisdale) and I got acquainted

with Mr. Van Blaricom. I borrowed his field glasses and he showed me a few of his bird books and made things a little more interesting for me."

What sort of bird watching was the young ornithologist doing? "When you're starting out from scratch that way you've just got to puzzle out every bird you see, because there's no one out there to tell you. You just find these things out for yourself. You see a bird and you don't know what it is and you start looking in the bird book for it and finally you find it. And you get more proficient as you go along." Mr. Van Blaricom put up a prize for the best migration list compiled by a Tisdale youngster and young Maurice took the prize several times. He had been keeping careful records before this, however. Were there any birds in those days that our ornithologist doesn't see now? "No. We see birds now that we didn't see in those days."

How does a young fellow get started watching birds? "Being on the farm more or less isolated, my interest was drawn to birds. One highlight I remember after I met Van Blaricom: I saw a Lewis Woodpecker. It was about '26, I guess. It wasn't even in Chapman, because it was a western bird. And I happened to meet Van Blaricom and he was telling me about having seen the bird too. He didn't know what it was either. We went down to his place and looked through all his bird books and we finally found it."

What are some of the most interesting "finds" in the Street bird list? "A very recent one was a Whip-poor-will. Roy Lanz and I found the nest. We took pictures of it and I wrote an article about the whole deal for **The Blue Jay**. And then I remember the Indigo Bunting I saw near Armley in 1926. And the black-headed Grosbeak I saw down on the river flat near Tisdale . . . it's a southern bird."

The conversation turned to Nipawin days. "Nipawin is one of the greatest places in the province for a wide variety of warblers. It's right on the dividing line between the coniferous and transition zones, and we have all types of timber here and we also have swamps and lakes. This is one of the most southern places where suitable nesting habitat

is available for warblers. The only place the Chestnut-sided Warbler nests here is within sight of the Saskatchewan river. And that goes for the Canada Warbler, too. There must be twenty species of warblers that we see here."

Sparrows abound hereabouts, too. "Our main nesting sparrow that you don't get nesting further south is the White-throat. And we have the Lincoln nesting here, the Clay-coloured, the Chipping and the Leconte's. As far as nesting is concerned, I haven't got too many to find now. Once you find one or two there's no point in going on finding nests unless you're weighing the eggs." Nipawin has fifteen species of sparrows!

"I started banding in 1945. Stuart Houston got me interested in that, and I've banded . . . somewhat over ten thousand birds since 1945. Which is not too many. One thing I'm quite proud of is the fact that I got Billy Matthews interested in it, and at the present time I think he's one of the sharpest birdmen in the province. He has a keen pair of eyes, and not only that, he was a student who had enough initiative to do things for himself and find out things for himself."

The conversation turned to Mr. Street's own personal methods of bird watching. One question that arose was how much a bird call had to do with bird identification. "On the warblers—I don't have to see them any more. I know them by voice." Knowing bird calls comes "only through experience." Do bird book descriptions of bird calls give any help at all? "No, none what ever."

What equipment should the young bird watcher have? "Well, the first thing that I'd recommend getting is Peterson's **A Field Guide to the Birds**. I wish now that I'd had one of those when I was young. It doesn't matter where you are—there are birds everywhere, and if you see a bird you've just got to go to hunt until you can identify it." Bird watchers should be keeping regular bird lists. "Every time they go for a walk they should record what they see. Lots of times in my younger days when I was learning these things, I'd see a bird when I was out and wouldn't know what it was, but even if I didn't write down a description of it I would make a mental note of what

It looked like. Sometimes with some of these rarer birds I wasn't sure until years later."

How does this top-flight Saskatchewan ornithologist go about identifying a bird in the field? "I think one of the first things to have noticed is the way the bird flew, and if it alighted on a branch, its posture. Birds are quite different in flight. You can pretty well tell the difference between warblers and kinglets, for instance, just in their flight. If the bird was a small bird and the head appeared large, I'd think first that it would have been a vireo. If the bird was slim and held its body horizontal to the branch I'd say it was a warbler. And if it sat quite straight I'd say it was a flycatcher. Then the colour pattern. The first thing I'd look for would be the wing bars. About half of the birds have them and half of them haven't. Then the colour. And the song, as I have mentioned."

What about good power binoculars for bird watching? "Yes, but not too strong a binocular. I think about a 6x50 or 8x50 is plenty strong enough. Small-power glasses have a large field of vision and you don't have to hold them as steady, and with birds it's hard to get them in focus with the more powerful glass."

In summing up, Maurice pointed out an old truth about bird watching and every other form of nature study: "If you like watching birds, it doesn't matter where you go or what time of day it is, or whether it's raining or the sun is shining . . . there's always something of interest."

Thirty-four years of "something of interest" have made Maurice Street a leader in his field, and a man richly deserving of the reputation of one of Saskatchewan's top ornithologists!

BIRD NOTES

More Starling Records

Wm. Niven reports that the first starlings were seen at **SHEHO**, Sask. April 16, 1944. Although they arrive early in the spring (sometimes even ahead of Crows) and leave late in fall, Mr. Niven believes they are not year-round residents. Never numerous, the Starlings have decreased in the last few years. For several years, large flocks gathered in the fall—500 or 600; but in the last few years, fall flocks have been small. First seen dates: April 16, 1944; March 18, 1945; March 15, 1946; March 24, 1947; March 27, 1948; March 31, 1949; April 5, 1950; April 8, 1951; March 30, 1952; April 6, 1953; April 5, 1954, March 31, 1955; April 9, 1956; March 16, 1957.

Mrs. J. Hubbard, **GRENPELL**, saw the first Starling in their district April 3, 1943 near the town of Grenfell. Small flocks were seen in Grenfell summer and winter for several years after their first appearance. Then, after an interval of a few years with no Starlings, 4-6 were seen March 9, 1957 at a garbage dump

along No. 47 Highway near Grenfell.

Miss E. Barker, Regina, has records of Starlings at **MILESTONE** (May-June, 1945), at **LORLIE** (flock of ca. 15 seen June-Oct., 1945, and described to her as wintering 1944-5), at **GIBBS** (where she came into possession of a female bird Dec. 31, 1948 which is now in her collection of mounted birds), and at **REGINA** (1949-1956). Interesting Regina dates Feb. 13, 1955, Dec. 12 1955, Dec., 1956 suggest wintering birds.

Mrs. Clem Osborne reports that Starlings have nested at **WROXTON**, Sask. every year since she moved there in 1951. Every spring, two, four or six birds nest in holes (probably made by woodpeckers) in the overhanging roof. Early spring arrival dates: March 27, 1953; April 5, 1954; March 30, 1955; March 22, 1956; March 25, 1957.

Dora Bardal has seen Starlings only twice at **WYNYARD**: a small flock several years ago, probably passing through; and a single bird on March 31, 1957, with a flock of grosbeaks.