

IN MEMORIAM — ERIC MANLEY CALLIN (1911 - 1985)



E. Manley Callin

Maurice Lindgren

We laid him to rest on 9 November 1985 in Lakeview Cemetery at Fort Qu'Appelle beside his beloved Margaret. Where we stood, bare-headed to the punishing wind, high on the southern flank of their Valley was the finest view one could want. Three lakes can be seen, all of which he knew intimately from years of tirelessly exploring for his major passion - wild birds. We could see the marsh where he shared the discovery of Saskatchewan's first Yellow-crowned Night Heron, and the places where he, with friends, had found the valley's first Iceland and Thayer's Gulls. For those he left behind the valley will now be lonelier.

Eric Manley Callin was born in Whitewood, Saskatchewan to John and

Anna (nee Vickberg) Callin, 9 March 1911, one of nine children. The father was born in Blyth, Ontario in 1864 and came to Whitewood in 1883 to take up a homestead. When he died there he had achieved more than his century, reaching 102 years of age. The mother was born in Jamtland, Sweden, in 1876, arriving in Canada in 1892. Both mother and father had an intense love of the natural world which they bequeathed to all nine children: four boys (Leslie of Moose Jaw, Joseph of Whitewood, and Elmer of Revelstoke, B.C.) and five girls (Gertrude of Saskatoon, Verna, Mrs. Norman Cousins, of Whitewood, Norma, Mrs. Ernest Fredlund, of Broadview, and Nancy and Lorna, both now deceased). But for Manley and his twin, Elmer, the wild world outside the door absorbed them

completely. Norma once told me that both boys often wandered off into the bush thus generating many a search by their worried father. Remonstrances evoked from Manley the same answer: "We weren't lost, we were watching things!" Then there was a greater wealth of wildlife in many forms than there is today.

I recall Manley telling me how he and Elmer, on one of these excursions, when they were 14 years old, came across a nest in a quiet grove on their farm. It was attended by two strange birds, one of which was clad in a dramatic uniform of black, white and rose-pink. They later identified the male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeak from a picture in a volume of the Book of Knowledge. Impressed, both became instant birdwatchers and remained so for the rest of their lives. To salute the founder of his lifelong fervour Manley caused its portrait, painted by his friend, Fred Lahrman, of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, to grace the cover of his book: *Birds of the Qu'Appelle, 1857-1979*. When the book was released at the Saskatchewan Natural History Society Annual Spring Meeting, 6, 7, and 8 June 1980 (that year at Camp McKay on Round Lake in the Qu'Appelle Valley) the original painting was presented to him as a mark of our appreciation for the effort which had gone into the writing of his *magnum opus* (SNHS Special Publication No. 13).

Manley took his elementary education in a rural one-roomed school, Park School, then attended high school in Whitewood. The early summer of 1928 saw him as a 95-lb. crewman struggling with horse-drawn fresnos and scrapers on a road gang but he soon got more congenial work keeping books: for the Bank of Montreal at Punnichy and Battleford, for the Ford agency at Whitewood, for the Co-op in Kipling, and finally as assistant accountant at Fort San in May 1943. In 1947 the chief accountant retired and

Manley was promoted to fill the vacancy. He remained in that capacity with the Saskatchewan Anti-tuberculosis League, the operators of Fort San, for more than 31 years, retiring on 1 November 1974.

The most significant event of Manley's life occurred there. He met and married Margaret Electa Fyke of Moosomin, a student nurse and a patient at Fort San, in November 1944. For 31 years they were a devoted couple, particularly as Margaret supported Manley to the fullest in his vocation and avocation. Her sudden death on 19 January 1976 was a shattering blow from which Manley never really recovered. His Dedication of their project, his book on the birds of the Qu'Appelle Valley, is a moving tribute to a staunch supporter and loving spouse.

No one was better acquainted with the valley's bird life than Manley. He had spent all of his 74 years in it and its environs except for the 5 years 1929-31 and 1941-42 when he was employed elsewhere. For 42 years he lived in the Fort Qu'Appelle area where he chronicled the bird life, and for 55 years of the period 1925-1985 he watched and listened to the birds of the valley, assisted by a host of friends, residents of the valley and members of the Fort Qu'Appelle Natural History Society, all of whom contributed to his detailed records. He had a marvelous ear for bird songs and calls and many times he demonstrated his aural acuity by accurately naming a bird species after hearing the faintest of calls. He demonstrated the value of his skill when, in an article in the *Blue Jay* in September 1968 (26(3):139) he reported the presence for the first time in his valley of an Eastern Wood Pewee which he had heard and identified when rising for the day 22 June 1968. No one was better fitted for the task of writing a description of the bird life of the Qu'Appelle region. His book, covering 122 years of bird records, has been described as the best annotated bird checklist published for North America.

Manley had accumulated considerable additional data, including a number of species new to the area so he had plans to publish a supplement to his book. It was not to be. The summary of his data from 1980 until his death, compiled and augmented by friends and SNHS members will be found in this issue of *Blue Jay*,

Manley was a solid conservationist and was generous with his resources in supporting the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's programs. He donated the years of recording, the meticulous files and notes, and the considerable labour of distilling them for publication. Recognizing his outstanding contribution to their cause, the Board of Directors of SNHS determined to show the appreciation of the Society in a tangible way. Another great conservationist, his friend and fine artist Fred Lahrman had donated the painting of a lovely pair of Gadwall so that prints could be made for sale to support the SNHS Heritage Marshes Program. Print No. 1 was reserved for Fred but Print No. 2 was presented to Manley on the evening of 15 October 1983 at Fort San, the locale of the SNHS Annual Meeting.

Manley was a man of ready wit. His hilarious acceptance speech was delivered in a casual, deadpan manner plentifully punctuated with witty comments that kept his audience laughing. For example, he recalled that his first job on the books of the bank was difficult but he survived because he remembered that the credit side of the ledger was the side nearest the window! He did learn because for years he was the auditor of the books of both the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and The Blue Jay Bookshop.

His lifelong friend, fellow birder and early companion, John Nelson, recalled how Manley and Elmer founded the Sylvan Bird Club in the Percival School. For some years the group regularly went

on birdwatching hikes in the vicinity of ½j½Percival. In the biographical notes in his book Manley observed that, as time passed, the area explored grew to include Round, Crooked and Ekapo Lakes. The Callin twins started to keep bird records in 1926. That year Manley began corresponding with A. G. Lawrence, the editor of 'Chickadee Notes,' the weekly nature column in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and sent him bird observations until illness forced Lawrence to give up the column in 1954. The resulting friendship lasted until Lawrence's death in 1961, whereupon his widow presented his telescope to Manley, who treasured it.

Manley also contributed bird notes from Qu'Appelle to Hugh Boyd, who edited a weekly column 'About Birds' which ran in the *Regina Leader-Post* from 1933 to 1937. In the biographical notes in his book Manley gives considerable data about his birding companions and friends who contributed to the book, as well as about those whose records were written long before his time. For many years John Nelson and Donald Weidl joined Manley and David Chaskavitch at Broadview each spring for a 2-day birding weekend covering their boyhood haunts. From 1982 until 1985 I was honoured to be included in the party. The 1982 trip was particularly memorable as Don photographed, on 6 June, a male Scarlet Tanager. In 1984 the party included Terry Toews.

Among his personal traits Manley had the enviable knack of attracting and keeping friends. Attesting to this, St. John's Church in Fort Qu'Appelle was packed to the doors at his funeral. He pays tribute to many of them in the acknowledgements in his book. We will all miss him but none more than Kay and Maurice Lindgren, his next-door neighbours in Fort Qu'Appelle since 1971. After Margaret's passing in 1976, their constant concern for his welfare helped him overcome lengthy periods of illness while their cheerfulness lifted his

spirits when he most needed it. Manley introduced Maurice and Kay to the pleasures of birdwatching and they then contributed to his records. Another of Manley's interests was baseball and often Kay and Maurice kept him company when his favourite team, the Toronto Blue Jays, was featured on television. Regardless of the accumulation of material things, when one comes to the end of his days his wealth is to be found in the number and regard of his friends. In this respect Manley Callin was a very wealthy man!

Manley was not a great traveller. When he and Margaret were younger they did move about a bit but the greater part of his journeying was in the valley area so his life list of birds seen was mainly those species he had encountered there. Quite a number of years ago I remember he stayed overnight in Regina with friends and in the morning he and I drove south of the city so that he could do prairie birding for a change. He was so pleased to discover McCown's Longspur, a new bird for his life list.

After Margaret died, Manley and his sister Gertrude went to Revelstoke to visit their brother, Elmer, who had settled there in 1951. I can recall only two other occasions when Manley left the valley on birding trips. Bob Kreba, of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, had told me of a pair of Barred Owls he had found late in June 1980 on the Red Squirrel Nature Trail in Duck Mountain Provincial Park. As neither of us had ever seen a Barred Owl Manley agreed to go with me. On 4 July we arrived at the park and in due course walked down the trail 100 yards until we located the owls - lifers for both of us! The birds put on a good show for us which Manley enjoyed hugely.

Bob Luterbach (a birding friend from Regina), Manley and I spent 28 and 29 May 1981 in Riding Mountain National Park. Considerable rain interfered but we

managed to see and hear some good birds. Manley's and Bob's keen ears readily identified bird species by songs so it was edifying to watch these two aural experts zero in on each of the several Golden-winged Warblers we found as both had learned the songs from records. We also saw another Barred Owl.

Manley was not a robust man. His last few years were distressful. He was plagued by an arthritic back which made walking painful. Three times in one 10-month period he underwent major surgery but his back pain and walking difficulties remained. On two or three occasions when we thought the end had come he recovered and soon was his old self — cheerful and anxious to be out with the birds in spite of the back and legs. He was so remarkably resilient that the end was a distinct shock to us. As I look back over the last few years and remember how much effort it cost him even to walk from the house to the car for our weekly birding trips with Johnnie, I am comforted in my belief that at the last Death came as a friend and joined him to his waiting Margaret — though it left us desolate. — *Frank Brazier*, 2657 Cameron Street, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4T 2W5