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BIRDS OF THE QU'APPELLE, 1857-1979

E. MANLEY CALLIN. 1980. Special Publication No. 13, Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3B4. 168 pp. \$7.00.

The Qu'Appelle Valley of southeastern Saskatchewan is a beautiful place. The meandering Qu'Appelle River makes its way eastward to eventually enter the Assiniboine River in Manitoba, coursing through a wide valley cut and shaped in the distant past by glacial meltwaters. For the prairie traveller this broad valley with its wide river and series of inter-connecting lakes presents a magnificent view in all seasons. The grassy south-facing slopes and wooded north-facing slopes present a striking contrast and show the effects of sunlight, wind, and climate. The Qu'Appelle Valley is like an upside-down mountain and offers equally exciting vistas for the enlightened viewer. It is a pleasant place to go birding and now there is a handsome book to serve as a guide.

Possibly the best regional report in North America, it is difficult to make comparisons with Manley Callin's epic study of the birds of the Qu'Appelle Valley from near Regina east to the Manitoba border. What makes this study so useful is the thorough historical review of records by early travellers and settlers in the region, many of whom were astute birders, plus the lengthy, almost daily records kept by Callin, his twin brother Elmer, and John Nelson from 1926 to 1951-

52. Manley Callin's notes, again made almost daily in written form, run from 1926 to 1979.

The territory covered by this study is a strip 170 km long, 55 km wide at the west end and 40 km wide at the east end, which includes considerable upland habitat outside of the valley proper. It is a study area that has lakes and river, marshes, sloughs and ponds. Fairly heavy forest cover is found in the numerous coulees, on southern slopes of the valley, and occasionally along the river or streams that feed into it. Otherwise, much of the valley bottom is a large meadow. The vegetation of the area is discussed in considerable detail.

Although basically an annotated list of birds, the introductory material (40 pages) covers a wide range of information. The author provides an excellent description of the area, including general vegetation, topography and geology. The emphasis is on features primarily affecting bird distribution. It is interesting to note that the habitat ranges from upland mixed-grass prairie, through aspen parkland, wooded ravines, lakes, rivers and streams, sloughs and marshes, to bur oak forest on the eastern extremity of the valley. Ten fine black and white photographs by Robert R. Taylor illustrate the variety of landscape in the study area. A striking sketch by Fred W. Lahrman of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak — a typical breeding bird of the valley — provides a suitable illustration for the cover of the book. What an attractive place the Qu'Appelle Valley is, and how fortunate Manley Callin has been to have spent all his life in or near the area.

And how fortunate for ornithology that Manley and his brother Elmer got off to an early start in bird study, making their first written record of the birds of the year at the early age of 14.

The wide variety of habitats in the area, as well as the extensive coverage of the birds, have yielded a long list of species. In all, 296 species of birds are discussed in detail (and one more, no. 297, appears as an addendum with a "STOP THE PRESSES!" note at the end of the species account. This is for an Iceland Gull found on April 24, 1980, long after the manuscript was at the printer). This is a large number of species and, as the author points out, many of them are rare or uncommon birds. Annual totals in most of the last 20 years have ranged from 170 to 200.

There is a careful analysis of seasonal occurrence and a list of breeding birds for the area. The list is broken down into "breeding proved", "suspected breeding", "permanent resident", "usually only a transient", and "mid-winter" occurrence. This is a helpful treatment of the total list. There are 133 proven breeding species and 21 suspected of breeding, a total of 154, a high number indeed for this study area. Another table lists 39 species as extirpated (1), transient (14), vagrant (4), and winter visitant (2). An additional 30 breeding birds were recorded present in winter, plus 15 permanent residents, yielding a total of 84 species recorded in winter. This informative table is followed by a discussion of the reasons for the high number of birds recorded in winter (including 13 species of ducks and geese).

This interesting account is followed by a review of the "characteristic birds of the valley itself." Here we are shown species or groups "that set the valley apart from the adjacent

parklands." This is one of the most interesting sections of the introduction and clearly indicates the influence of the valley on the birdlife of the area.

Manley has gone to considerable length to ensure that his descriptive terms of status can be compared to other areas, borrowing from the standards established by the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs in 1954. There follows a detailed and cautious review of the significance of the data, a most useful treatment and a handy guide.

The author found a "wealth of information" available from other observers and he gives a precise account of the years and areas in which these people studied. This is followed by significant biographical information on "pioneer residents who kept records" (4), "pioneer non-residents who kept records" (7), "observers still resident who kept records" (6), "observers previously resident who kept records" (7), and "later non-residents who kept records" (4). This section, which covers 11 pages of the introduction, pays appropriate homage to major contributors to this book. The early historical information made available through careful exploration of published and unpublished material gives a unique value to the bird accounts. As expected, considerable assistance was received from Stuart and Mary Houston in bringing this data together.

Two pages of acknowledgments give generous credit to a large number of persons for assistance in various ways, not the least of which is directed to Stuart and Mary Houston.

There are six pages of "Literature Cited", a further indication of the extent to which past and pertinent records have been brought together to provide a firm foundation for this authoritative account of the "Birds of

the Qu'Appelle Valley; 1857-1979." An additional benefit to the reader is the provision of an index to bird species.

The species accounts are, as might be expected, readable, interesting and done with a pleasant flair. It is a pleasure to see so much information on so many species recorded in this fashion for this portion of central Canada. This report is more than another chapter in the eventual "Birds of Saskatchewan" that I expect is likely to appear in the not too distant future. Carefully researched studies such as Manley Callin's, together with an abundance and careful assessment of records by the author, make this an account of unusual ornithological value. To birders in this region it is a delightful and particularly accurate portrayal of what can be expected. The author and all those who assisted him deserve full marks for ample homework. The Saskatchewan Natural History Society should be proud of this latest book in their series of special publications. I think Manley Callin's book deserves an award. — Reviewed by *Robert W. Nero*, Box 14, 1495 St. James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0W9.

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON IN MANITOBA, 1882-1892.

Introduction by C. Stuart Houston. 1980. Premium Ventures Ltd. in cooperation with the Manitoba Naturalists Society, 214 - 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0N2. \$11.95, plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

All fans of Ernest Thompson Seton will want a copy of this new book which is a compilation of six semi-technical reports on Manitoba wildlife, all long out of print. Included are an-

notated lists of the mammals (1887), birds (1980-91), additional bird records (1908), "recent" bird records (1908), fishes (1898), and reptiles and amphibians (1918).

For the naturalist and scientist, there is simply nowhere else to turn for accounts of the vertebrate fauna of Manitoba in the early historic period. Through correspondence and acquaintance with other naturalists in the region, Seton assembled a surprising amount of information. The mammals and fish lists have been replaced by recent publications, but there is as yet no other provincial bird book, hence ornithologists still find Seton's works useful, indeed, essential. To have not only his primary work on Manitoba birds, but his up-dated records as well, under one cover gives this new Seton publication special value.

This work was published by the Manitoba Naturalists Society to commemorate the annual meeting of the Canadian Nature Federation in Winnipeg in August 1980. Registrants at that memorable meeting were properly surprised to receive the book as a free gift from the sponsoring organization, the Manitoba Naturalists Society.

Each section has a foreword by four separate authorities (birds — C. S. Houston; mammals — R. W. Nero; fishes — K. H. Doan; reptiles and amphibians — W. B. Preston). The brief reviews provide a welcome perspective to Seton's several works.

Dr. C. Stuart Houston, whose competent and thorough analysis covers all three bird reports, also wrote the overall introduction to the combined works. In it, he adds the final brush strokes to a clear picture of the activities of Seton in this region, including his homesteading efforts in Saskatchewan. Seton's relatives and acquaintances are also dealt with in

Houston's historical analysis and report that provides the last word on Seton's travels in this region. It is a masterful touch that makes this volume of special value. Two detailed maps, incidentally, make it emphatically clear where Seton travelled and studied.

For many readers, this work will offer fresh insight into Seton as a field worker and writer, and it firmly establishes the extent to which Manitoba (and a little of Saskatchewan) provided Seton with an opportunity to develop his remarkable talents as an observer, writer, and artist.

The volume includes two signed photographs of Seton — a fine portrait, and a revealing shot of the artist-naturalist, fully clothed and sitting cross-legged in a small tent, writing in a notebook, wearing what an Englishman should — a hat, vest, and bowtie! The latter photograph was taken at Shoal Lake (near the Saskatchewan border) in 1901. It is used on the outside back cover.

The main portion of this volume, "The Birds of Manitoba", was published by the Smithsonian Institution as Proceedings of the US National Museum. The two successive lists were published in *The Auk*, journal of the American Ornithologists' Union. Seton, as pointed out by Dr. Houston, was "included among the first 87 associates at the founding meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in New York City on 26 September 1883"

Seton's "A List of the Mammals of Manitoba" was published in the "Transactions of the Manitoba Scientific and Historical Society, No. 23, May, 1886." His list of fishes was published in *Forest and Stream*, a weekly journal of the "Rod and Gun", New York City. "A List of the Turtles, Snakes and Batrachians of Manitoba"

was published in *The Ottawa Naturalist*. It should be noted that all these works were photocopied from the original publications for inclusion in this useful book. The story of the many search efforts and headaches involved in locating this material and seeking permission to reprint it can best be told by Dr. Houston and Ardythe McMaster, both of whom worked so long and diligently, and in haste, in order to get it done in time for the CNF meeting! There is even included, for the first time in print, a copy of the original order-in-council appointing Ernest E. Thompson (one of several of Seton's names) as the first naturalist for the province of Manitoba. Let there be no doubt, this is the definitive volume on Seton in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The cover of the book is appropriately decorated with a photograph by Joyce Holmes of a man silhouetted against a prairie landscape. It could be Seton himself.

Now, every interested person can obtain this "collection of Seton's important scientific contributions to the early knowledge of natural history in Manitoba." Fortunately, Seton was an excellent writer, as well as a naturalist, and his accounts are highly readable. Take, for example this sample chosen at random from Seton's report on the still poorly known Swamp Sparrow: "To the Swamp Sparrows we are indebted no little for the merry twittering and the bustling signs of life about the brushy sloughs and reedy swamps of our country.

"They delight in these damp thickets and may be seen continually scrambling around in the sedge and wet tangle or running on the floating reeds, holding 'their skirts' very high, standing very high on their legs, with tails much raised, and otherwise showing great fear of getting wet. When they take wing, they flit over the

water with rustling flight and tail rapidly pumping up and down; they usually make for the nearest bush or tussock, and then appear to tumble into it with nervous haste." — Reviewed by *Robert W. Nero*, Box 14, 1495 St. James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0W9.

RESEARCH IS A PASSION WITH ME

MARGARET MORSE NICE. 1979. Consolidated Amethyst Communications, 12 Crescent Town Road, Unit 310, Toronto, Ontario, M4C 5L3.

Born in Amherst, Massachusetts in December 1883, the daughter of a history professor, Margaret Morse Nice probably contributed more to scientific ornithology than any other amateur in this century. Indeed, by pioneering and revolutionizing the study of bird behaviour, she led the professionals. Although she died in June 1974 at the age of 90 years, her autobiography was not published until late in 1979.

The Foreword is by the Nobel prize winner, Konrad Lorenz, with whom she worked in Austria in 1938. Lorenz says: "Margaret Morse Nice was a naturalist in the truest sense of the word. . . . Her attitude towards nature was retained — up to her high old age — that of a child's wide-eyed wonder, combined with a childlike curiosity which is exactly what a scientist's attitude ought to be, but so very seldom is."

The autobiography tells of her childhood, her University studies, and her marriage in 1909 to a fellow graduate student, Blaine Nice, thus forever stopping her studies towards a Ph.D. degree. However, Blaine, "a most understanding and sympathetic

husband," made possible her travels and studies, which "involved much more outlay of money than income derived from it."

Her first ornithology paper in 1910 told of the food of the Bobwhite. After they moved to Oklahoma in 1913, her second paper in 1921 was a study of Mourning Dove nesting on the University of Oklahoma campus at Norman. Much of her time was devoted to collecting and publishing details of the daily development of vocabulary by her four children, summarized in seven major papers in psychology journals. She and Blaine also found time to collect material for *The Birds of Oklahoma* in 1924, which she augmented and revised in 1931.

The work which was to make her famous began after they moved to Columbus, Ohio, in the fall of 1937. In the next ten years, before they moved to Chicago, they lived adjacent to 60 acres of wild, neglected land between two bridges at the edge of Columbus. Here Margaret Nice made her detailed studies of the Song Sparrow, which resulted in a two-part, 56-page paper in German in the *Journal fur Ornithologie*, and then in a two-volume monograph in 1937 and 1943. She collected so much data from her observations and banding that it took an entire year to write the first volume. One year she had 69 male Song Sparrows on her 40-acre study area. Her oldest bird, "4M", eight years old, began singing on 11 May 1934 at 0442; he sang up to 278 times an hour, for a total of 2,305 songs for the day.

Her diary allows presentation of unusual detail on many topics. There are interesting sidelights concerning almost all of the "big names" of ornithology at the time, and of the major meetings of these people. There are many trivia, some of which are fascinating. Imagine paying only eight

dollars for 300 reprints of a 19-page paper (in 1908)!

In later years, as her field work diminished, she became noted for her prolific reviews in *Bird Banding* — 719 in four years through April 1940, for example. She also traced back to Aristotle the source of 20 centuries of uncritical quotation of erroneous figures for the length of incubation of many bird species.

Margaret Nice received many honours. She was the fifth woman elected to what is now Elective Membership in the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), and the second woman to become a Fellow of the AOU. She was elected President of the Wilson Ornithological Club in 1937. She received richly deserved honorary degrees of Doctor of

Science from her alma mater, Mount Holyoke College, in 1955, and from Elmira College in 1962. On the latter occasion, the dean said of her: "She used the outdoors near her home as her laboratory and common species of birds as her subject. In so doing . . . (she) saw so much in what appeared common to so many."

We are indebted to Canadian ornithologist, Doris Huestis Spiers, for editing this book. Canadians can be proud indeed that a small group of women naturalists in the Toronto area, known as the Margaret Morse Nice Ornithological Club, have made possible this autobiography of this important and fascinating woman. — Reviewed by C. Stuart Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0J8.



Stemless Lady's Slipper

Ron Jensen