

Mr. Harris brought home to his audience the labour and patience involved in this type of work. Long may he and others continue such

work—in spite of jazz, radio, movies and bridge parties.—F.J.F.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

NESTING OF THE LARK SPARROW.—The nesting of the Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus grammacus*) in Southern Ontario, is perhaps of sufficient rarity and interest to be worthy of recording in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

Credit for the discovery belongs to J. F. Calvert, and although he claims it was a case of luck or chance, it would appear that, coupled with these factors, there was at least a certain amount of keen observation.

The birds were found on May 24th, 1930, and on Mr. Calvert's return to the city (London) the following day, the news was passed around and an expedition organized to visit the locality the following week.

On May 31st some half dozen members of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, with Mr. Calvert as guide, motored to Walsingham where the nest had been found, situated on the ground, just below an overhanging bank alongside the road about half a mile south of the village. When we arrived, the nest, which on May 24th had contained four eggs, was found to have in it young birds, one of which stretched up its head and neck for food as we came near. The parents were not in sight, but in a few minutes, one, presumably the female, put in an appearance in a nearby tree, with food in its mouth. After waiting for some minutes to assure itself that all was safe, it flew to the ground and after feeding the young, settled down upon the nest. The male bird had in the meantime arrived upon the scene, and during the next few minutes gave us a splendid opportunity of becoming well acquainted as it leisurely moved about on the bare roadway in excellent light and at very close range. It was interesting to note that it walked rather than hopped. The only thing that might have added to the pleasure of the occasion would have been to hear its song, but although we remained in the vicinity for quite a while, it did not favour us. As we prepared to take our leave, we went over near to the nest where we could plainly see the mother bird sitting closely and all the while keeping an eye on us, wondering, possibly, what all the fuss was about.

From 1878 to 1889 one or two pairs of Lark Sparrows nested regularly near London, but since that date records for this section of the province have been few and far between, the last

apparently being a pair near Komoka in the summer of 1900.—E. M. S. DALE.

LAPLAND LONGSPURS SINGING FROM TREES.—On March 17th, 1929, while crossing a field just north-east of Toronto, the writer was attracted by a strange chorus of bird song coming from a large oak tree standing in the field. A closer approach revealed a flock of about a dozen small birds perched among the upper branches. They would remain silent for a short time, then with a few opening notes, the whole flock seemed to join in a sweet, indescribable, twittering song, regularly interspersed with short, clear whistles which made it rather distinctive. The birds proved to be Lapland Longspurs, most of them apparently in a plumage resembling the typical female, although it was impossible to be positive of details viewing the birds with only the sky as a background. Enough was seen, however, to make the identification quite certain.

On March 23rd, 1930, about two miles directly east from the above mentioned location, I had a very similar experience. This time the birds, seven of them, were in an apple tree and as they were lower than on the first occasion and allowed quite a close approach a better view was obtained. As before, a majority seemed to be in an indeterminate plumage, probable changing from winter to spring, but two or three, viewed at close range, were in full, adult, spring male dress. This flock was very restless, constantly flying from branch to branch about the tree. The singing performance was as before, all the birds appearing to join in the chorus, though it is probable that only the males, if both sexes were present, were singing.

I do not think it would be possible to give a transcription of the song on paper, especially as it was never heard from a single bird, but some idea may be gained by stating that it had the same form as a Goldfinch or Siskin chorus, the only distinctive feature being the short whistle before mentioned. On both occasions when the birds took flight the usual Longspur *ch-r-r-r* was heard.—R. J. RUTTER.

NESTING OF THE PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius meloda*) IN ALBERTA.—While canoeing on a small lake about fifteen miles north-west of Camrose, on June 15th, 1930, in company with Mr. Arthur

Twomey, a visit was made to a low, rocky island where a dozen or more Common Terns and several pairs of Avocets were nesting. This island is about 300 feet in length and 100 feet in breadth and at its highest point is about five feet above the present level of the lake. Vegetation is entirely absent on the sandy surface of the island but numerous rocks scattered over the higher portions provide partial shelter for the nesting birds.

Immediately upon landing, a bird note entirely new to both observers was heard, and was the cause of much speculation as to its origin. It was a soft, low, muffled whistle repeated at irregular intervals and appeared to come from a considerable distance. At the time it was suggested that it might be a bird on the mainland half a mile distant. While progressing along the center of the island towards its northern point, a small, light-coloured wader was seen flying along the shore line; it alighted about 150 feet ahead of us close to another bird which we took to be its mate. Upon a closer approach it was clearly evident that the notes were uttered by these birds, which at the time were believed to be either Piping Plovers or Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmata*). So close did we approach the birds that their throats could be seen expanding and contracting every time they whistled. They seemed to be interested only in the northern point of the island and when disturbed always returned to that locality. Believing that they might have a nest in the vicinity, I remained to watch the actions of the strangers, while Mr. Twomey went on to another island for further investigations. During an hour of watching the birds showed little interest in me and continued to feed along the shore, sometimes at quite a distance from each other, occasionally calling with their soft notes. When it was apparent that their only thought was hunting food, I moved slowly toward their favourite area and within a few minutes my eyes fell on a slight depression in the fine gravel

in which was a single egg. There was no attempt at nest building or lining and the egg lay on several brownish flat pebbles. The nest was about 40 feet from the water and was entirely in the open. The birds showed little concern when I was inspecting the nest and surroundings.

We again visited the island on June 23rd and found that the nest contained four eggs, which were taken and are now in the National Museum at Ottawa. On this occasion we had our glasses and examined the birds at close range and were satisfied that they were Piping Plovers. This is, I believe, the first record of their nesting in Alberta, and it is the first time I have observed them in my thirty years' residence in this province.—FRANK L. FARLEY.

JAPANESE STARLING AT ALERT BAY, B.C.—On page 24, Vol. XLIV, of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, I reported the Japanese Starling at Alert Bay, B.C., on the authority of Miss Edna Moorhouse, who had spent a few years at Alert Bay. Miss Moorhouse was no more familiar with the bird than I was with the details of its range, but she took the word of her friends there that the bird was a Starling. Publication of the note brought forth a prompt question from Mr. J. A. Munro, who is well posted on the ornithology of British Columbia, and ever since then I have been trying to get more exact information, which has now arrived, in the form of a reply from a friend of Miss Moorhouse to the effect that the birds are not really Starlings, but are, as Mr. Munro suggested, Brewer's Blackbirds.—W. E. SAUNDERS.

CORRECTION.—Through an unfortunate error, the caption under the excellent photograph on page 205, Volume 44, December, 1930, was made to read "Female Goldfinch about to feed young". Reference to the photograph makes it obvious that it is the male bird.

BOOK REVIEW

BIRD PICTURE CARDS—A Series of 60 Coloured Bird Post Cards with descriptive matter, published by the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa. Price \$1.00 postpaid or two for five cents singly.

The National Museum of Canada has issued a set of sixty coloured plates of common birds by Allan Brooks in postcard size for use in schools and by private individuals. The name of the artist guarantees a high quality of work in the picture and the reproduction is good.

The text, doubtless by P. A. Taverner, is in his usual happy vein and enumerates the interesting and economic points of each species very well.

If any criticism were to be offered it would be that the series is a mingling of East and West that does not lend itself to the greatest utility in either section. But as there are only three exclusively eastern birds pictured, and only about a dozen exclusively western ones, this criticism carries little weight.



Farley, Frank L. 1931. "Nesting of the Piping Plover (*Charadrius meloda*) in Alberta." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 45(1), 21–22.

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