

NOTES ON CHORDATA FOR DAY COUNTY, SO. DAKOTA

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In 1879 Dr. Chas. E. McChesney stationed at Fort Sisseton, South Dakota, published "Notes on Birds of Fort Sisseton, Dakota Territory."¹ In that paper, Dr. McChesney reported 154 species of birds, among them such extinct or vanishing species as trumpeter swan, swallowtailed kite, whooping crane, American woodcock, Hudsonian curlew, long-billed curlew, Eskimo curlew, laughing gull, passenger pigeon, and raven. In 1935 Mr. Wm. Youngworth, Sioux City, Iowa, after several summers of work in the same region, published through the Wilson Bulletin "The Birds of Fort Sisseton, South Dakota, A Sixty-Year Comparison."² The studying of these two papers and the need for some revisions as well as additions marked the beginning of this study. However, this study does not limit itself to birds, but includes all of the Chordata.

For some time the author has felt the need of a survey-checklist of this type. Briefly, they are: **First**, the extensiveness of wildlife of this region, as well as the economic

importance of many species to agriculture, make it desirable that both the school pupil and the layman should know what species are found in his immediate environment, and **Second**, the location of the region in the heart of an extensive nesting region for birds, as well as its position with respect to the interior continental flyways, makes it desirable for the scientist of the future to know what species of wildlife existed and what progress has been made in view of the recent establishing of federal game refuge areas.

Practically all of the Chordata referred to in this report are found on the "Waubay Migratory Waterfowl Refuge," which is located in Day County. The author of this report spent three months of the summer of 1938 on this refuge and many of the animals therein mentioned were observed during this period. There is no doubt that the creating of this Federal refuge, in a region already richly blessed with wildlife will greatly aid, not only in maintaining that wildlife, but also encourage other less fortunate species to re-establish themselves.

The climate is typically continental. The average annual rainfall at Webster for a period since 1896 is 21.58 in. There have been repeated periods of drought, the last one being in 1934-36. During such periods the waterlevels of the lakes suffer considerably. The temperature is continental in that extremes are the rule. The lowest for the forty year period was -40° F. and the highest, 108° F. The average annual mean is 41.8° F.

The author makes no claims of finality in connection with this survey. Rather, he hopes that as the panorama of wildlife changes for the area studied, and surely it will change, some other individuals may find the time to record such events.

FISHES (PISCES). The listing of the fishes of any region is difficult, because from time to time new species are introduced either by the authorities or promiscuously. The following may well include the original fish of these lakes: black sucker, common shiner, yellow perch, north-

¹"Notes on Birds of Fort Sisseton, Dakota Territory". Chas. E. McChesney, 1879.

²"The Birds of Fort Sisseton, South Dakota, A Sixty-Year Comparison." Wilson Bulletin XLVII, September 1935, pp. 209-235.

ern pike, and wall-eyed pike. Formerly many of the lakes supported fish life. Today it is limited to Pickerel, Enemy Swim, the Bluedog Lakes, where it generally abounds, and to a limited extent in Hillebrand and Spring Lakes on the refuge. Both of the artificial lakes, namely Amsden and Pierpont, have been stocked, and present indications are that in the future they will furnish excellent fishing. In all 25 species of fish are found in this area.

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES. Although amphibians and reptiles reach their maximum distribution in tropical and semi-tropical regions, five species of the former, and seven of the latter are found in Day County. Some of these are commonly known and generally distributed. Aside from the importance of serpents in rodent and insect control, the group presents little of real economic value.

BIRDS (AVES). Day County lies principally in the Mississippi Flyway, but several of the species of birds frequenting this area belong to the Central Flyway. The birds of this region, therefore, represent an over-lapping of these two important flyways.

It is the author's belief, after carefully noting the species of birds of this area and those to the west and east of us, that several species nest here which apparently are not common nesters east or west of us. This may, in part, be due to our altitude which causes them to extend their range southward. A check of the birds nesting in southern Dakota further confirms this assumption.

The work of Dr. McChesney and Mr. Youngworth has already been noted. To further arrive at a list of birds now present, the author checked his list against that of several other observers of this region. These included: Mr. Philip A. Dumont, Sand Lake Waterfowl Refuge, Columbia, South Dakota; Mr. Art Lundquist, Peabody Hospital, Webster, South Dakota; Mr. Leonard R. Mewalt, Aberdeen, South Dakota; Dr. J. F. Brenckle, Mellette, South Dakota, and Mr. Watson E. Beed, Waubay Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Waubay, South Dakota. Since three of these observers reside

west of us, and since they live in the James River Basin and we on the Coteau, there is, no doubt, some difference in the kinds of birds observed. This is further evidenced by the fact that several of our common birds are not reported by them. No doubt the reverse is also true.

In this survey the author noted 252 species of birds. For each of these was noted the fact of residence; that is, migrants, summer, or winter visitors, and permanent. Then an attempt is made to indicate whether the species is abundant, common or rare.

However, there is still a list of doubtful species for this region. For the region of Day County three observers, Youngworth, Lundquist and Beed noted the following during some time of their period of observing: scaup duck, surf-scooter, golden plover, Hudsonian godwit, American egret, olive-sided flycatcher, cardinal, and pine siskin. Observers in the Aberdeen area have also reported some of these. In any event they are very rare in the Day County area. The three observers—namely, Dumont, Mewaldt, and Brenckle—in the Aberdeen area, report the following, many of them with banding records: purple finch, Henslow sparrow, Brewer sparrow, scarlet tanager, golden-winged warbler, cerulean warbler, and American pipit. None of these have been reported for Day County.

MAMMALS. Mammals include hoofed mammals, rodents, flesh-eaters, insect-eaters, bats, and several other orders not represented in our country. Their economic importance, as fur-bearers, food for birds, and destroyers of crops is generally known. This, however, applies to but a few of them. Many of them are innocent creatures we have never noticed.

To bring a complete list of mammals for our county is a difficult undertaking. The list is prepared in part from observations, and in part from trapping operations. Most of these appear on Waubay Migratory Waterfowl Refuge where most of our efforts were concentrated. In the Day County area 13 families including 49 species were reported.