

# IOWA BIRD-LIFE

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## THE GHOST OF THE KINGBIRD'S GROVE

By E. D. NAUMAN

In a rolling pasture field near Sigourney, Iowa, stood an ancient grove of oak, elm, hickory, and so forth. It was not much of a grove but merely an epitome of the great forests that once were here. Beneath the trees and nearby stood also enough of the white thorn and crabapple bushes to make the place a haven for many species of wild birds.

Some of the trees were a century or two old and contained cavities sufficient for homes for Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Screech Owls, and sometimes others in the same season. The long, pendant, swaying branches of the elms always furnished a pair or two of Baltimore Orioles with support for their purse-shaped nests. Brown Thrashers and Catbirds sought the thorn-bushes. A flock of Goldfinches always hovered about the grove and somehow found hiding places in the bushes for their pretty little nests. The Cardinals were always there and forever singing the prelude to some grand symphony and never getting to the symphony itself. The Kingbirds kept at the tops of the trees and stood guard over all, giving warning of approaching danger and driving away the Hawks and Crows. Robins, Wrens, Bluebirds, jays and many others found in this grove a "welcome home."

Likewise on hot and sultry days the peaceful kine would stand in the shade of the grove and ruminant while the flycatchers were busy destroying at least a part of their tormentors. Many are the weary travelers who have hesitated and stopped to rest in this grove, grateful for its cool and refreshing shade.

But alas! One fine December morning, two individuals having the outward appearance of men, invaded this grove. They had axes, cross-cut saws, and other implements of destruction in their hands and murder in their hardened hearts. Soon the sounds of sawing and chopping came from the direction of the grove, and the smoke of destruction was seen ascending to the sky. In a few days the rare old grove that had withstood the storms of centuries was a heap of smouldering embers, charred stumps, and heaps of bare and crooked branches and trunks that resembled the skeleton of some uncouth giant much more than the fine old grove of yesterday.

Now this grove is gone, and forever. A score or more pairs of birds

have lost their homes. When their homes are destroyed the birds will not endure. Birds are nature's messengers and helpers to keep the insect pests in check. If unchecked, many species of insects increase at an enormous rate. When hordes of white grubs, cutworms, chinch bugs, and locusts, like in the plagues of Egypt, "shall eat every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees," then shall the Ghost of the Kingbird's Grove, and the ghosts of a thousand other groves which have been wantonly destroyed, rise up before them and smite and torment the guilty consciences of thoughtless men. The ghosts of all the dead forests shall demand that restitution be made for man's sins against nature by replanting these beautiful groves, oak for oak, elm for elm, hickory for hickory, and that for good measure a few evergreen and mulberry trees be added to comfort and sustain all the little birds when insect food is largely dormant and weather conditions are adverse.

Let us therefore beseech the Great Spirit of Nature to soften man's heart and enlighten his brain so "that light may conquer darkness still." And let us take warning. Let us reverse our wanton, wasteful course and save the remnant of our wild birds by saving and protecting their homes, before plague and calamity overtake us. The course of our affairs should be so shaped that future generations as well as ourselves may live and enjoy some of the natural resources of our great country; and that posterity may not be compelled to look back and regard us who lived in the Twentieth Century as a race of vandals who wasted and despised our sublime heritage.

## LITTLE BIOGRAPHIES

### E. D. NAUMAN

The subject of this sketch was born December 19, 1864, in a pioneer's log cabin in the woods on the banks of Clear Creek near where the town of Keota, Iowa, now stands. When he was about eight years of age, the settlers of that vicinity decided they must have a school. So they quarried rock, sawed the timber and erected a school house. Here the boy attended school until he completed the "common branches." This was later supplemented by a four years' course in the County Normal Training School and Teachers' Institute, from which he graduated August 4, 1887. However, this school was in session only four weeks each year, so the course represented but four months of school work.

Mr. Nauman began teaching in 1884 and continued in this work, with short intervals, for six years. Between terms of school and the normal training work he managed to do nearly two years of work in the old Iowa City Academy and Commercial College. It was at the Academy, under the direction of Dr. B. Shimek, who was then an instructor in that institution, that young Nauman became greatly interested in the natural sciences, especially biology.

In the year 1890 he was married to Miss Emma Goodman, who was also a teacher in the public schools and has likewise become greatly interested in the sciences and especially in the study of birds. They have three children, now all adults, and three grandchildren.

From 1890 to 1900 Mr. Nauman engaged in farming, having purchased a farm near Thornburg in Keokuk County. Since 1900 his



E. D. NAUMAN

Photographed by Chas. J. Spiker at the home of the Yellow-breasted Chat, near Sigourney, Iowa, June 8, 1928. Reproduced by courtesy of Mr. Nauman.

home has been in Sigourney, the county seat, and during sessions of court and busy seasons he is and has been employed as deputy and assistant in the office of Clerk of the District Court.

During all these years his interest in the sciences and especially in ornithology has been unabated. He has collected a good sized private library containing many of the best works on ornithology. He now has to his credit about thirty papers and sketches, all of which have been published by the leading journals of ornithology. Important among these are: "An Iowa Bird Census," published by *Wilson Bulletin*, June, 1926; "Birds of Early Iowa," published by *The Palimpsest*, April, 1924, and republished by IOWA BIRD-LIFE, in March, 1931; and "The Glare of the Headlight," published in *Bird Lore*, October, 1930. He possesses an admirable literary style that has made his writings of much interest not only to bird students but to many other readers.

Mr. Nauman was twice U. S. population census enumerator and has been a regular monthly reporter to several divisions of the U. S. Dept.

of Agriculture for more than forty years, and has furnished bird census and bird migration reports to the Bureau of Biological survey for the past eighteen years. His bird list for the spring of 1931 contained 131 strictly migratory species. His only other "hobby" is music, which he has cultivated as a side issue during most of his lifetime. He conducted the public park concerts in his home city four seasons, but says he is now simply "a good listener." —D.

## FIELD NOTES

**Random Bird Notes from Sioux City.** — Two pairs of Piping Plovers have been seen the past summer at Mud Lake, South Dakota, a few miles above Sioux City. The birds were without a doubt nesting at this favorable spot. Traill's Flycatcher was again found breeding in Sioux City. A vicious habit of the Bronzed Grackle was recently no-

ticed by the writer. A nearly full grown English Sparrow was feeding on a garbage dump, when a male grackle flew down and struck the sparrow a very hard blow on the head. This first blow seemed to cripple the small bird and several more sharp blows at the base of the skull put the sparrow out of misery.

An adult Blue Jay was seen catching a large *Cecropia* moth from which it pulled the wings and proceeded to devour the body of the insect. One evening the writer witnessed a friendly foursome at work. From a large cottonwood tree, a common Kingbird dashed out after an insect and soon after an adult Red-headed Woodpecker flew out to get part of his meal. Watching showed a pair of both species hawking out from this one tree and evidently on good terms. The woodpeckers were surprisingly agile at catching insects and also at alighting, especially on the slender twigs at the top of the tree, in true perching fashion.

On a July trip to Yankton, South Dakota, northwest of Sioux City, the writer found the Yellow-throated Vireo and the Turkey Vulture as summer residents. A brood of young Ovenbirds was also seen near the Missouri river at Yankton.—WILLIAM YOUNGWORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Yellow Warbler Outwits Cowbird.** — About 28,1931, we found a pair of Yellow Warblers busily building their nest. The nest was about three feet from the ground in a swamp shrub. The outer shell was woven of tough strands of weed stalks and laced firmly to the spreading branches at the fork. Interwoven with these tough fibers was downy material gathered from the willow. The nest was lined with pure white down from the same source but so neatly placed that it was almost like felt.

On June 6 it was shown to the members of the Audubon Society during their Sunrise Hike. At that time a Cowbird's egg was found, but the wise little warblers were building a second story on the nest to cover up the egg of the Cowbird. The foreign egg was removed and the warblers continued to a successful hatch. As the Cowbird's egg is too large for the smaller warbler to remove, they either leave the nest or build over it—sometimes a third story if the Cowbird repeats.—R. GILLESPIE, Bay City, Mich.

**Early Fall Migrants**—I have often wondered if August 30 is not a rather early record for the fall migration of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. I saw many here on that date. Warblers were also rather numerous then; among them were Black and White, Mourning and Wilson's Warblers.

Is the Golden Plover getting more common? It seems to have been scarce here until the last two years. In May, 1930, I saw a large number of them on a lowland pasture, and about the same date this year I saw a great many in the same place. It must be to their liking or else they have a habit of frequenting the same ground from year to year.—B. O. WOLDEN, Estherville, Iowa.

**Our Brown Thrashers.** — Every year we have a pair of Brown Thrashers nesting somewhere about our yard. In 1931 they beat the Catbirds to an immense snowball bush in our front yard. This summer, I have slept on a screened porch near the bush, and each morning the thrasher awakened me with his sweet song. It was the middle of June when I first heard him and noticed the regularity of his singing. At that time, he gave his first note at 4:10 A. M. As the daylight gradu-

ally came a little later, the thrasher regulated the time of his song accordingly, and a month later started singing about 4:40 A. M.

This pair has raised two young this year. One day, a baby bird was near the top of a young apple tree. Each time the parent bird brought food, he started at the lowest limb and took a spiral course upward. We also noticed that they always entered the snowball bush at the same place and left it on the opposite side always from the same opening.

In early August, one of the pair, family cares being over, proceeded to enjoy herself in her own way, by bathing and sunning for three consecutive days. She would hop from a wet bath to a dust bath and back again all day long. At the end of each dust bath, she spread her wings and tail feathers to the fullest extent and drew her head forward under her breast until every neck and back feather was standing erect. She would keep this crouching position in the hot sun from five to ten minutes, remaining motionless, after which she would rouse up suddenly, run to the bird bath and take a good splashing wet bath, then repeat the performance. She kept this up for three full days. We decided it was a plain case of "cooties" and the fall molt.

Our neighbors have two medium sized chokecherry trees in their yard. The trees were unusually loaded with fruit this year, which seemed to ripen almost over night and the trees appeared bright red. The Robins were there by the dozen, also Catbirds, Brown Thrashers and one Flicker. Together they stripped the trees in three days.—MRS. WILLIAM BUZBY, Boone, Iowa.

We should very much like to learn what effect the recent campaigns against the grasshopper invasion has had on the field birds—whether or not the poisoned bran and meal placed in the fields have proved fatal to the birds and to what extent. We shall appreciate hearing from those who have had opportunity to make first hand observations in the poisoned areas.—EDITOR.

**Northern Pileated Woodpecker in Allamakee County, Iowa.**—On June 21, 1931, Mrs. Palas and I were on a side road, very little used by autos, about two miles out of Waukon Junction, in Allamakee County, Iowa. The road was narrow and demanded caution on the part of the driver, but I noticed a large dark bird fly into a tree beside the road about 75 yards ahead. On one side of the road was pasture and on the other light timber. We watched the tree intently and when we were about 20 yards from it, the bird flew out in good light across 100 yards of pasture and into some brush and small timber. The size and color of the bird with red crest, and undulating woodpecker flight, left no doubt as to identity.

We had to drive a little farther down the steep hill before we could find a safe place to leave the car. We were out of the car and about to climb a steep hill in the direction where we had last seen the bird, when we heard the call of the Northern Pileated Woodpecker coming from the opposite side of the road. We followed this call and soon found this bird low down on the trunk of a tree. It was then in such dense timber that we could not tell the colors at 40 yards, but we plainly saw its large size, and the long neck and crest. This bird flew over the hill after we had watched it about a minute, but before its flight we heard another bird near us; we did not find the bird giving this call, however. We hunted, looked and listened, but without further reward. Apparently the two, or possibly three, birds were now in hiding. The hot weather forbade much climbing of those hills.

Farther down the hill we came to the farm house of a Mr. Jones, from whose report I concluded that the Northern Pileated Woodpecker has been in that vicinity for several years. I had seen the bird three years ago in Pennsylvania, but it was the first record for Mrs. Palas.—A. J. PALAS, Des Moines, Iowa.

**Notes from Dallas Center, Iowa.**—Reed tells us that the Meadowlark lays from three to five eggs. This last spring I found a nest containing six eggs. However, only four hatched; the four young birds grew to maturity. This nest was along a drive passed daily by people as well as vehicles. I have found Meadowlarks' nests not more than a rod apart along railroad right-of-ways.

Orioles are said to not often come to harm from the many horse hairs used in their nests. I once rescued a young oriole that had become entangled in a hair, in attempting to leave the nest. The wing joint was cut to the bone and bleeding. We noted the bird for several days after, and each day it seemed to be gaining in strength in flight.

Purple Martins have been seen here this year, the first to be seen in many years. None that came to our bird house mated. Several times two females came, other times a male alone. We are hoping that next year they will come earlier and build nests in our house. We have Barn Swallows every year in our buildings.

Several nests of Killdeer eggs were hatched in the cornfield this summer. One evening when coming from the fields, the boys brought in an adult that had the pinion joint of one wing hanging by the broken bone and skin. We finished severing the wing, as it was already dead, and turned the bird loose. We plan to keep watch, when migration time comes, to see if we can note the same individual, as it will not be able to fly with the rest.

One morning last spring I watched an Indigo Bunting for a half hour just outside my window. He was busy eating dandelion seeds. He would perch on the stem of one near the base and hop out until the stem was on the ground. Then, still holding it, he proceeded to clean up all the seeds that were on it, before swinging another to the ground. I have watched the female Goldfinch fill her beak with ripe sunflower seeds, then tilting her head backward, allow the male to help himself to the dinner she had made ready.—MRS. MAUD L. MOSER, Dallas Center, Iowa.

**Notes on Pheasants, Purple Martins, and Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks.**—An interesting item came to my notice the other day. A farmer complained about the pheasants eating his corn, so he was given permission to shoot two males, which he did in the presence of the Game Warden as required. Imagine his surprise when the crops of both birds showed a preponderance of cut-worms rather than of corn!

The Purple Martins began gathering for their southern flight the last week in July. This morning (August 9), I estimated that about 2000 martins were gathered on the telephone and light wires in front of my home, which has been their daylight gathering place for several years. Where they spend their nights remains a mystery. In spite of the heat and drought, this has been a better year for martins than was last year, when the flock never exceeded 200 birds at one time. Last year there was a period of extreme heat that drove the nestlings to abandon the nest before they were able to care for themselves; many died at that time.

The Rose-breasted Grosbeaks seem to have left earlier than usual. Four pairs came often to my food shelf for sunflower seeds. It has been over two weeks since I have seen any but one young female, which I trapped and banded. Each time it would come to the shelf by itself and would cry rather piteously. Finally I noticed that it was not able to crack the seeds. One day I opened the screen gently and picked up the little bird and brought it in. It was small and thin, and I came to the conclusion that it was not getting enough to eat, so I keep it in part of each day and fed it. From the very first she has been the tamest wild bird I ever saw. After her excursions in the open, she comes back and eats as though she has not found enough to satisfy her hunger. I should like to hear from anyone who has had experience in raising young birds by hand. Do they ever survive and come back the second year?—MRS. MARIE DALES, Sioux City, Iowa.

**A Canary-Goldfinch Flirtation.**—One morning about seven o'clock in mid-July, Buster, my canary, was in an open kitchen window, and a female goldfinch came and stood on top of the clothesline post just outside the window. After much soft twittering on her part, Buster sang every song he knew to her several times. The concert lasted about ten minutes, then she flew away and Buster returned to his seeds.—MRS. WILLIAM BUZBY, Boone, Iowa.

**Red-shouldered Hawks and Chimney Swifts.**—I had an experience recently that told something of the value of Red-shouldered Hawks. A male and a female were brought in, the latter apparently one of this year's hatch, the other an older one. They had been shot under the accusation that they were destroying birds. I found in the stomach of one, a striped ground squirrel, a young rabbit and twenty-four full grown grasshoppers. The other one's stomach was completely filled with our largest common species of grasshoppers, and one that perhaps has been doing the most damage of any in the central states this year. I identified the remains of forty-nine specimens. It is of interest to know that we have these helpers with us this summer when they are so much needed.

On August 18 I noticed the Chimney Swifts by the hundreds as they had gathered and were descending into an unused chimney in one of our College buildings. They have mostly gone now, a few days later. A thing of considerable interest has recently come in. Mr. Grant Kness, Hamlin, Iowa, sent a beautiful specimen of Chimney Swift's nest. This nest is entirely clean as it has not been in a chimney.

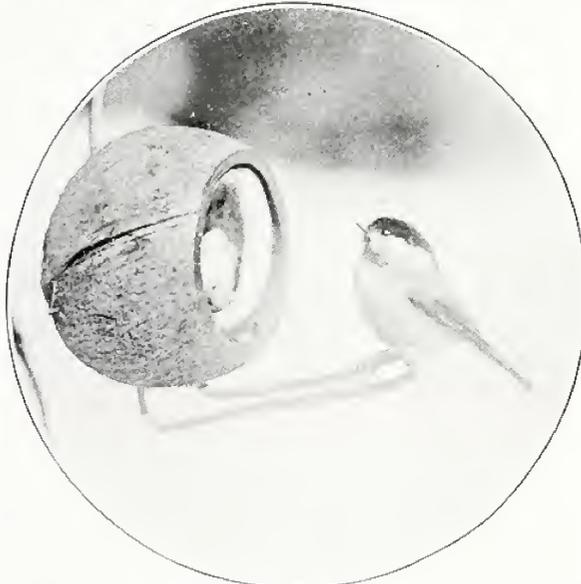
Mr. Kness writes me as follows: "I am hoping that a minute examination of the inclosed bird's nest, the sticks in which are cemented together by a secretion from the bird's mouth, will enable you to identify and name the bird that can execute such a delicate task. I found the nest sticking to the wall of the vestibule of a country school house during the summer vacation. When I found the nest four two-thirds grown young ones were clinging to the edge of the nest with their feet. There they clung day after day and clamored for food side by side until they grew so big that their combined weight broke the nest loose from the wall, and it fell to the floor, after which the young birds clung to the wall side by side where the nest had been. To me they resembled swifts or swallows."—J. E. GUTHRIE, Professor of Zoology, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

## RECENT BIRD BOOKS

**Two New Books by Mrs. Funk.**—Bird students in general, and Iowa students in particular, will be grateful to Mrs. A. B. Funk of Des Moines for her careful preparation of two recent booklets entitled "Bird-Study Field-Book" and "Methods of Bird Study." They are of a size to fit conveniently into the pocket, and since there is ample space for making notes in the field, their worth will be emphasized on every field trip. The "Field-Book" is especially designed for note-taking. The "Methods Book" covers a wide range of topics of importance to bird students, and is certain to lend invaluable aid to those who are

conducting classes in bird study for amateurs, or to those who desire to arouse enthusiasm among young people.

Mrs. Funk goes into her subject very fully. She begins her Methods Book by giving sound advice on acquiring and using bird lists, then relates how to attract birds by placing bathing pools, food-trays and bird houses for them. The chapter devoted to the work of leaders in bird study is filled with helpful sug-



A CHICKADEE GUEST  
An illustration from Mrs. Funk's book

gestions on identifying birds, following up the results of the field trips, making observations at the food-tray or in the field, holding club meetings, and training for leadership. Mrs. Funk's statement that it is better to know a few birds well than to have a hazy knowledge of many is excellent advice, while the thoroughness of her work attests her belief in this doctrine. The Methods Book contains a very complete bibliography of bird books. It is divided into three parts—Publications for General Use, State Publications, and Regional Publications. This is information of a kind eagerly sought by those who are building ornithological libraries. The low price of these booklets should assure a wide distribution.

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"Birds of Oklahoma."—An outstanding bird book of the year is "Birds of Oklahoma," by Margaret Morse Nice, published by the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Okla. (price \$2.25). This is a revised edition of Mrs. Nice's earlier book, published in 1924, although the extent to

which it has been enlarged and rewritten makes it practically a new work. It is a masterpiece of thoroughness. Even the casual reader is certain to be impressed by the vast amount of data presented and the amount of painstaking research work that has gone into its making.

The introductory portion of the book covers 50 pages and takes up the history of Oklahoma ornithology, physical features of the state, bird migration, suggestions for attracting birds, and kindred topics. A complete list of "Itineraries and Reports of Field Workers in the State", from 1719 up to the present time, is a unique and valuable feature. The list of Oklahoma birds fills the greater part of the book; 385 forms are treated. A number of halftones and maps illustrate the book, which contains 224 pages. Mrs. Nice has given the bird students of Oklahoma a book of great value, and one that is destined to remain a standard work of reference for many future years.

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Chas J. Spiker's first report for the Roosevelt Wild Life Station at Syracuse, N. Y., was published a few months ago. It is entitled "A Biological Reconnaissance of the Peterboro Swamp and the Labrador Pond Areas," and is published as Vol. 6, No. 1 in their 'Bulletin' series. Mr. Spiker, who is an Iowa ornithologist, has been working as Field Naturalist for the Roosevelt Station for several years. This publication covers 1927, the first year of his work there. It contains a great deal of information, is profusely illustrated, and is well worth reading.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Our secretary, Mrs. Bailey, planned to present the membership roll in the June issue, but it was postponed. After planning to have it in this issue, it was again postponed as an economy measure. The roll has not been published since 1929, and we hope to be able to print it a little later on.

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Burton W. Meltvedt, of Paullina, Iowa, is a new member of the Union. Through an oversight, the name of Mrs. C. C. Flodin of Cedar Rapids was not included with the new members listed in the June issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the sessions of the Wild Life School at McGregor during August included a trip to the home of our treasurer, Oscar Allert, near Giard. About fifty people viewed his fine collection of mounted Iowa birds at that time. Mr. Allert is a taxidermist of real ability and the collection he has assembled is quite representative and holds much interest for students of Iowa ornithology. National, the home of Miss Althea R. Sherman, is also near McGregor and many of the people who attend the Wild Life School each year make a journey there to call on this well known ornithologist. Miss Sherman's home is filled with paintings (all her own work), books, and many other valuable articles of ornithological interest. Some of the buildings in which certain birds have nested have become famous through the articles she has published in *The Auk* and *Wilson Bulletin*. Of our officers, both Mrs. Bailey and Walter Bennett attended the school this summer.

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**DuMont Returns to United States.**—The following excerpt regarding Philip A DuMont, one of our members, is taken from a July issue of a Des Moines paper:

. . . . Phil landed in New York Wednesday. As a representative of the American Museum of Natural History in New York he has been for sixteen months on a bird collecting expedition in Madagascar. This

was a joint expedition sponsored by the American, Paris, and British museums. The entire collection of 11,400 specimens, secured in this expedition, was shipped to Paris where the three representatives have concluded their work of dividing the birds for their respective museums.

A crested cuckoo, a fine new race of bird, was discovered by Phil on the west coast of Madagascar and has been named "Coua cristata damonti" in honor of the Des Moines ornithologist. It is described as larger than a Blue Jay, greenish gray above, a gray crest and very fluffy. The bare skin around the eye is said to be purple and blue and the throat of the bird pale lavender. The belly is pure white and the outer tail feathers are tipped with white.

Phil is a Drake graduate and since receiving his diploma in 1926 has lived in the east. On a scholarship he attended the National Recreational school in New York. . . . During that year he did part time work for the American museum, with which he has since been identified. Always interested in birds, Phil's first work was the unpacking, labeling, and classifying of birds secured on the Whitney expedition to the South Sea islands for the American museum.

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**Walter W. Bennett**, former president of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, has a series of three lectures illustrated by moving pictures which he is prepared to give before bird clubs or other groups of interested people. One is called "Iowa Birds" and is used to



create admiration for and interest in some of Iowa's beautiful birds. It consists of original photography, both moving pictures and colored slides, and lasts 1½ hours. Another lecture is "Island Bird-life." This explains why islands are resorted to by birds, and shows thousands of interesting birds of our Middle West, with a talk on the game birds and conservation. Moving pictures and colored slides are used, and the time is 1¼ hours. "Siyo," which consists of 1½ hours of moving pictures, is the story of the birds' battle for existence and shows the spring mating dances and nesting of the Prairie Chicken, one of Iowa's most interesting birds. This lecture forms a strong appeal for conservation of our remaining game birds. Further information regarding the lectures may

be obtained from Mr. Bennett at Arnolds Park, Iowa.

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Field Notes on Iowa birds, book news, and historical or biographical material pertaining to Iowa ornithology are desired for publication.

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