The 1953 Convention . . .

By CLARA HUSSONG

The 1953 Wisconsin Society for Ornithology convention held in Green Bay, May 1-8, was attended by 186 members and guests of the Society. The Beaumont Hotel was convention headquarters, and Chester Krawczyk, Green Bay, was in charge of the program.

At the business session held Saturday afternoon, Krawczyk was elected president for the 1953-54 year; Miss Helen Northup, Madison, was re-elected secretary; and Carl Frister, Milwaukee, was re-elected treasurer. The vice-president will be named later by the board, it was decided at the meeting, presided over by President Sam Robbins of Adams. This slate of officers was presented by the Nominating Committee, headed by S. Paul Jones of Waukesha, and unanimously voted.

New directors-at-large included C. Dennis Besadny, Madison; Mrs. F. L. Larkin, Milwaukee; and Mrs. W. E. Rogers, Appleton. Sam Robbins was named the new editor of The Passenger Pigeon. N. R. Barger, editor for the last ten years, was thanked for his services by the Society, as were also the other retiring officers.

An invitation from Madison to hold the next convention in that city was accepted. Committee reports were given, and the youngest life member of the Society, Billy Strehlow, seven-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Strehlow of Milwaukee, was introduced.

The Society indicated its concern for the plight of the sharp-tailed grouse in Wisconsin by passing and sending to the Wisconsin Conservation Commission a resolution urging the Conservation Commission to make every effort to retain an adequate number of sharp-tailed grouse openings in central and northern Wisconsin and to reserve such openings against further reforestation efforts.

The convention opened Friday evening, May 1, with a reception given by members of the Green Bay Bird Club. Walt Disney’s movie, “Water Birds,” was shown during the reception.

President Robbins called the convention proper to order Saturday morning. Krawczyk introduced Dominic Olejniczak, mayor of Green Bay, who extended the city’s welcome to the convention body. The response was given by Robbins who pointed out that along with collecting facts and scientific data, bird students receive spiritual benefits from their studies.

Saturday morning’s program included a colored movie, “Wisconsin Nature-ally,” by Carl L. Strelitzer, Milwaukee; a discussion of the status of the sandhill crane in Wisconsin by Wallace Grange of Babcock; a flannel board demonstration, “Birds in the Wheel of Life,” given by Mrs. Larkin; “Books for the Ornithologist,” by Mrs. R. P. Hussong of Green Bay; and a memorial to Earl Wright, Green Bay, past president of the W. S. O., who died in 1952. Part of Wright’s movie, “Nature’s Calendar in Color,” was shown.

An illustrated talk by W. D. Barnard of St. Croix Falls, “The Un-Ruffled Grouse,” opened the Saturday afternoon session. Dr. Robert A.
McCabe of Madison, with the help of slides, told of “The Hybridization of the Bob-White and Scaled Quail.” New facts about the nest of the Baltimore oriole were told by Dr. A. W. Schorger of Madison; and Wesley E. Lanyon, also of Madison, gave a most interesting paper on “The Development of Behavior in a Hand-Raised Meadowlark and its Role in the Study of the Genus.” A colored movie, “This is Wisconsin,” shown by R. P. Hussong of Green Bay, closed the Saturday afternoon session of the convention.

Walter Scott of Madison was master of ceremonies at the Saturday evening banquet which was attended by 164. He pointed out that of the 15 past presidents of W. S. O., eleven were present at this 14th annual meeting. Introduced by Scott, they were N. R. Barger, Alvin Throne, Murl Deusing, Dr. B. L. Von Jarchow, Clarence Jung, J. H. Evans, S. Paul Jones, Scott himself, Charles Nelson, Harold Wilson, and Robbins. Besides the late Earl Wright, the only absent past president was the Reverend Howard L. Orians.

The highlight of the convention was the superb movie, “Exploring the Everglades,” shown by Murl Deusing following the banquet. Deusing contributed this part of the program without charge to the Society. Besides the floral centerpieces at the banquet tables, table favors were hand-
molded swans made by Mrs. Alice Weber of Green Bay, well-known artist and W. S. O. member. Mrs. Weber spent the entire 1952-53 winter in making the beautiful swan figures, which were complete with a "water base" made by her husband, Andy, and marsh grass and cat-tail settings.

Several Brown County 4-H clubs prepared educational conservation and bird study exhibits which were displayed throughout the convention. Another exhibit was that of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Higgins of Kenosha, who had a display of bird houses and feeders, and other bird attractions.

Field trips were taken both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Saturday's trip was to the Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, a project which several Green Bay W. S. O. members helped establish. A divided trip was taken Sunday morning, and a total of 83 species of birds was recorded. The week-end was cold, and somewhat rainy, and the record was as good as could be expected, considering the weather and the time of year.

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HOW TO KEEP FIELD NOTES

By SAMUEL D. ROBBINS, JR.

How many interesting bird observations have been lost and forgotten because they were not properly recorded? How many sight records of rarities have lost most of their value because the binoculars and bird books were not supplemented by notebook and pencil? How much more might now be known about the distribution and migration of birds, and their effect upon human life, had every bird observer taken the pains to keep careful records of the birds he had seen in the last fifty years? The persistence of these unanswerable questions, together with occasional requests about my system of keeping field notes, prompt me to set down some thoughts about recording bird observations.

Nearly any method of keeping field notes is likely to be a mixture of the ideal and the expedient. To keep records complete in every way would require an enormous amount of time—much more than the average amateur can afford; it would entail the maintenance of a series of notebooks and files that might make anyone other than a trained bookkeeper shudder. Nevertheless, one best arrives at a workable system by surveying the various types of data that have potential value.

Types of Data

The most obvious feature of bird records is the listing of species. If the data is to be of use for later reference, after memory has dimmed, the listing should be complete; the common species should be listed along with the rarer ones. The listing should be done promptly—surely before the end of the day. When one allows bird lists to lapse for several days, the observations of the intervening days can become almost hopelessly confused, and the necessary guess-work does nothing to enhance the value of the records. Moreover, the records should include every day, whether or not a field trip is made. Not only can one catch departure dates and instances of unusual flocking of birds, but it also keeps one "in trim." The habit of recording ornithological data is like any other habit; constant practice is necessary to keep it up.