Figure 1. Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., with his wife, Ada Wechselberg Stoddard, and his mother, Helen Wallace Flint, in approximately 1917. *Photo courtesy of Herbert L. Stoddard, Jr.*

Herbert Stoddard's Wisconsin Years

by Kenneth I. Lange

Two famous ornithologists began their careers in Wisconsin in Sauk County and the Baraboo Bluffs. One was Alexander Wetmore (Lange 1989), and the other was Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr. (Figure 1). These men were friends later in life, but it is unlikely that they knew each other in their younger years, as Stoddard did not begin his career in Wisconsin until after Wetmore had left the state.

If Stoddard's name is unfamiliar to younger ornithologists, it is a reflection of the inevitable passage of time and our general unawareness of the past, certainly not of Stoddard's importance and influence. His notebooks and publications on Wisconsin (1910–1913, 1917, 1920–1922, 1921a, 1921b, 1921c, 1922a, 1922b, 1922–1923, 1923a, 1923b, 1923c, 1947, 1969) provide an invaluable insight into early 20th century birdlife in the Badger State, just as his Indiana Dunes notebooks (Brock 1986:3) do for that area. It was Stoddard who popularized Baxter's Hollow in the Baraboo Bluffs, and also the Ferry Bluff area, 5 miles below Sauk City on the Wisconsin River, as premier birding spots. He was also a pioneer in bird banding, and helped alert bird students to the fall hawk migration along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Robbins (1991) credited Stoddard as the first person to envisage a publication on the birds of Wisconsin, and Gromme (Septon 1991) credited Stoddard with being one of three individuals who were most influential in his development, because of strong character, high integrity, and mental stimulation. Stoddard also introduced a number of new techniques in taxidermy.

Stoddard was born in Rockford, Illinois in 1889. Four years later the family moved to Florida and remained there until returning to Rockford in 1900. Just before he would have started high school, Stoddard left school and began working at the Herman Wagner farm in Sauk County's Prairie du Sac Township; the Stoddard family home was in the Prairie du Sac area (Mueller 1988:48). Except for brief trips to Rockford, Stoddard lived here for the next 5 years. "At fifteen years of age I began working as a farm laborer for fifteen dollars a month—and for about fifteen hours a day. I

was as much on my own as I have been in all my subsequent years" (Stoddard 1969:70).*

The farm was near the Baraboo Bluffs, and it was here, in Otter Creek in Baxter's Hollow, where Stoddard caught some "fair-sized" trout and set mink traps, baited with trout. He also trapped in the creek after it exited the Hollow. Generally he set the traps by lantern light after doing his evening chores. "Often, after I finished setting my traps, I sat alone on an elevated perch high on the bluff in the moonlight, listening to the drumming of the ruffed-grouse cocks and looking at the twinkling lights of the farms, spread out on the prairie below me like a map."

In the fall of 1906, Stoddard met Mrs. E. C. Wiswall of Madison, a taxidermist and the wife of a school superintendent. She told him of Edward D. Ochsner, a taxidermist, fur buyer, and beekeeper in Prairie du Sac, whom she thought might be willing to teach Stoddard. Stoddard had decided much earlier that he wanted to be a taxidermist, so this was a pivotal moment in his life. "After making an appointment with Ochsner, I borrowed a horse and buggy from the Wagners and drove to town to see him. To my great joy he told me he would teach me what he knew about taxidermy for twenty-five dollars, provided only that I would promise not to compete with him locally. He also showed me his collection of several hundred mounted birds and mammals and his workshop, crowded with mounted deer heads, hawks, and owls. My training was to start soon after the first of the year, when the farm work was not so heavy. Arthur Wagner was agreeable to the arrangement and loaned me the horse and buggy whenever I needed it." Summers he worked on the farm, and winters in the taxidermy shop. At first he merely skinned the hawks and owls that were sent to Ochsner for mounting, but soon he was also "setting up" specimens. During his second summer on the farm, he started a collection of mounted birds, working long hours at night in the corn-drying room over the Wagners' kitchen. When time permitted he studied any natural history books that he could borrow from Ochsner and a few other friends.

Ochsner became a life-long friend. Well versed in natural history and a local fixture, he was on good terms with the taxidermists at the Milwaukee Public Museum and a friend and hunting companion of the Ringlings of circus fame. As a young man of 17, Stoddard could not imagine a "more fascinating life" than Ochsner's.

Another friend of these years was Albert Gastrow, who lived on his parents' farm across the Wisconsin River from Prairie du Sac (MacQuarrie 1954). He was 8 years older than Stoddard, an amateur taxidermist (Figure 2), and an expert at trapping and hunting the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). As Stoddard later recalled, "All these creatures and many others were the subject of discussions by our natural history trio—Ochsner, Gastrow, and Stoddard. Birds of a feather were we."

Stoddard took particular note of the Horned Lark. "When I was plowing or harrowing, I delighted in listening to their songs high in the air and then watching them plummet to earth at the conclusion of their songs. In the early

*Unless indicated otherwise, quotations in this paper are from Stoddard's (1969) autobiography.

Figure 2. Albert Gastrow, Sr. (1881–1958) of West Point Township, Columbia County, Wisconsin, with his collection of personally mounted animals in 1913. He is holding an adult male Hooded Merganser. *Photo courtesy of Albert Gastrow, Jr.*

spring when we were preparing the fields for the first crops, we unwittingly destroyed large numbers of their nests, for they lay their first eggs very early. Later they would nest again in the cornfields, building their little root-lined nests at the base of young corn plants. Many of these nests were destroyed in cultivating the corn . . . Yet, in spite of the enormous number of nests, eggs, and young destroyed by agricultural operations, the larks remained among the most abundant birds on the prairie." This species originally nested in native grassland, but readily switched to the expanding habitat of cultivated fields, pastureland, and fallow fields (Mossman and Lange 1982:101); by the early 1900s, as Stoddard noted, it was already abundant and nesting in cornfields on the former Sauk Prairie.

On 23 April 1908, with Arthur Wagner, Stoddard caught the first Yellow Rail he had seen. "We found the bird in a plowed field. The beautiful little creature seemed to forget he had wings and darted about on foot. Finally we trapped him under Arthur's hat, and before long he was a mount in my collection."

Interesting discoveries were also made in Ochsner's shop. "That the great horned owls moved southward in winter was proved by one locally collected bird that had a breastful of porcupine quills"; the porcupine [*Erethizon dorsatum*] in Wisconsin generally occurs farther north (Jackson 1961:272–273). "Once a brown peli-

can was brought in to be mounted. Whether it was of the western or the southern subspecies I do not know, for I was unable to locate the specimen in later years." "Many rarities other than birds arrived at the Ochsner shop in those years, among them the first specimens found in Wisconsin of the Alleghenian least weasel [*Mustela rixosa allegheniensis*] several of which passed through our hands before other collectors encountered them. One winter I skinned and mounted a locally collected Canada lynx [*Lynx canadensis*], which had been far south of its normal range."

But Stoddard was becoming restless. "The years on the farm and in the taxidermy shop were happy ones. Rural Wisconsin had much to teach a young naturalist. But . . . For some time it had been my ambition to work in a natural history museum. Ochsner's descriptions of the habitat displays in such institutions had convinced me that it was a museum career I craved. Ed encouraged me in this ambition, for he, too, had dreamed of such a career in his younger days." Stoddard's opportunity came in February 1910, when he and Ochsner went to Baraboo to visit the winter quarters of the Ringling Brothers Circus. On the second day of their visit, Ochsner introduced Stoddard to Alfred Ringling, who told them of the death the previous night of a gigantic bull hippo. It was eventually agreed that the specimen would be donated to the Milwaukee Public Museum, and that Stoddard would assist George Shrosbree, the museum's chief taxidermist, with the work of roughing out the skin and skeleton and arranging to have them shipped to Milwaukee. It took Shrosbree and Stoddard a week to complete the job; Stoddard celebrated his twenty-first birthday in the middle of the week. "While we worked, I had dropped hints to Shrosbree about the possibility of joining his department at the museum. Shrosbree was receptive to the idea and promised to see what he could do for me."

Approximately a month later, at a starting salary of $65 a month, Stoddard joined the staff of taxidermists at the Milwaukee Public Museum. In 1913 he would transfer to the Field Museum in Chicago, and then, after World War I, return to Milwaukee. These were his museum years, which spanned the period 1910–1924, except for service in the War, and which he would later call his "grand days" (MacQuarrie 1941).

Stoddard was pleased with his decision. "The museum was then, and is today, an outstanding institution [and] George Shrosbree was an incomparable teacher and from the outset trained me very carefully in museum work." Shrosbree received his early training in England, and later worked at Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester, New York, where he, Carl Akeley, and most of the other leading museum taxidermists of the day began their careers.

Stoddard was especially taken with Akeley, the man who at the age of 21 mounted the great elephant Jumbo. "The stories of Akeley's life fired my imagination as have those of no other man, and I early decided to pattern my life after his as closely as possible. He was known as a prodigious worker who often worked right around the clock. I could not quite equal that record, but I did put in many fifteen-hour working days during my years in Milwaukee." One of Stoddard's greatest thrills was

a "never-to-be-forgotten two hours' visit with Carl Akeley" at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in 1918, when Stoddard was on military leave; "Akeley told me that when I returned safely from foreign service he would be glad to employ me as an assistant. It was an offer I would have been honored to accept had I not long since decided to devote my life to working with birds. Akeley had long worked exclusively with mammals—and almost entirely with African mammals, at that." One need look no further for testimony to Stoddard's dedication and integrity.

Stoddard was the consummate naturalist. His social life was limited to attending meetings of the Wisconsin Natural History Society, and his little spare time was devoted to reading natural history books from the library.

Ochsner had arranged for Stoddard to live with the John Pete Wechselbergs in Milwaukee. Later Stoddard reflected that the family "must have been amused by their new boarder—a young man just turned [twenty-one] who cared nothing for city life but buried himself in books night after night. I had planned to move to a boarding house as soon as I found my way around Milwaukee, but I became so fond of the Wechselbergs, and they apparently of me, that I remained in their home until I left the city in 1913. I became especially fond of one particular member of the family, the daughter Ada. . . ." Stoddard and Ada Wechselberg were married in 1915. Ada Stoddard would bear one child, Herbert L., Jr., and precede her husband in death.

Under Shrosbree's guidance, Stoddard did nearly all of the bird work at the museum. At first he also worked on small mammals and reptiles. Later he would develop a complex method of mounting the most lifelike reptiles of his day. He also pioneered the use of cork, which he carved to conform to the anatomy of the bird, and he was the first taxidermist to use balsa wood, because of its light weight (Gromme 1977:327; Figure 3). He painted glass eyes for his mounts, as he was never satisfied with commercially produced ones. Gromme (1977:327) was amazed when Stoddard "applied Prussian blue in the reverse side of the glass eye, and like magic produced the glowing red characteristic of the pupil of a Double-crested cormorant when viewed from a certain angle in certain light."

But it was field work that especially appealed to Stoddard. His first extended collecting trip for the museum was along the Mississippi River from Prescott south to LaCrosse in the summer of 1910.

Field collectors at the Milwaukee Public Museum did not have motorized transportation until 1923, when the museum bought a specially equipped Model T truck for field work. Until that time, Stoddard and his co-workers relied entirely upon trains and electric lines for transportation to the field. Once they were in the field, transportation was mainly by foot (Gromme 1977:328, Stoddard 1969:171).

For the Mississippi River trip, the field equipment was shipped ahead to Prescott, and Shrosbree and Stoddard followed by train; later they were joined by two entomologists. "Upon our arrival [in Prescott], we rented a wagon and started south, down the river road. A few miles from town we found some diversified country and stopped at a large farm to make ar-

Figure 3. Stoddard working on a balsa body for a heron at the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1920. *Photo courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum.*

rangements for camping and obtaining meals. We had brought along wall tents for sleeping and a large fly tent to protect the equipment and provide shelter while we skinned specimens."

Stoddard's usual collecting gear was a Parker 10-gauge shotgun, equipped with an auxiliary barrel; the barrel could be slipped into the breech of the shotgun, and was fired by the same pin that fired the regular shell (Gromme 1977:328).

In a leather bag he carried the auxiliary barrel, ammunition, and skinning kit. He also carried snacks, such as peanuts or raisins, and a few staples, but often the flesh of specimens would supply the bulk of his food in the field. Gromme (1977:329) recalled that the field menu one day consisted of young Great Horned Owl and American Crow.

At all of the Mississippi River camps they found new animals to add to the collection. Species generally associated with the South had been appearing along the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers, and at Prescott "I was surprised to find one such 'southern mammal,' a gray fox [*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*] . . ." (Figure 4). "Among the southern birds we collected were an orchard oriole and, a short distance south, on the shores of Lake Pepin, a prothonotary warbler. We watched for the cardinal, the tufted titmouse, Bewick's wren, and the red-bellied woodpecker, but failed to encounter them." These species, especially the red-belly and the cardinal, have continued to extend their ranges northward.

Figure 4. Stoddard in 1910 holding a gray fox. Notice the climbing rope in the background. The locality is Prescott in Pierce County. *Photo curtesy of O. J. Gromme.*

Near Lake Pepin Stoddard was surprised to find Turkey Vultures ". . . as conspicuous in the air as they were in Florida. Many were attracted to our camp by the discarded bodies of birds and mammals, and we were thus able to add vulture skins to the collection." Until the late 1940s the Mississippi River between Maiden Rock and Fountain City was the only area in Wisconsin where this species could be found regularly in summer (Robbins 1991:199).

Bald Eagles were also present, ". . . attracted by the dead fish on the shores of the lake. More than once I was tempted by a fine bald eagle or other raptor, perched high in a tree on the heavily timbered Minnesota side of the river." A determined field collector like Stoddard had to improvise. "Since there were no human habitations about, I would remove my clothes, and, tying my Parker and a small waterproof bag filled with shells onto a driftwood log, I would swim across the rapid river and stalk about naked until the mosquitoes drove me away . . . My habit of pushing a buoyant chunk of driftwood ahead of me when swimming dangerous waters has more than once saved my life in the field."

Stoddard returned to Prescott in the

fall of 1910 to trap furbearers and collect migratory waterfowl.

> I was happily proceeding about my work when suddenly I ran into difficulties. A gang of lawless fur trappers had invaded the region and begun working both the Minnesota and the Wisconsin sides of the river. Farmers were up in arms against them, for they were abusing the land, but, by design, they were situated exactly on the state line, and they moved to the other side of the line when peace officers of either state appeared to investigate them.
>
> These outlaws resented my activities in the area and would spring my traps and hang them in the trees. They spotted my line of mouse traps set along the river. The location of each of the more than one hundred traps was marked by an inconspicuous fluff of cotton stuck on a nearby twig. The next time I ran the line, I found every trap destroyed. A 22-caliber bullet had been put through the middle of each one. Thereafter I had to use unmarked sets, which are very hard to keep up with when trap lines are so long and traps so numerous . . . I never got more than a glimpse of none of the trappers cutting across the hills, for they carefully avoided me, probably not liking the looks of the Parker. They knew that I was collecting specimens for the museum—everyone in the region knew it.

But in spite of the poachers' activities, Stoddard collected numerous skins of raccoons, skunks and "smaller creatures."

This trip was also noteworthy for Stoddard's encasement in ice.

> I spent most of the daylight hours in rock blinds built on the ends of the wing dams that project far into the river, in locations where ducks habitually crossed on flights up and down the river. Many specimens fell to the shotgun. One time I brought down an American goldeneye drake near the edge of the ice. While the ice was well over a foot thick near the shore, it feathered out where it came in contact with the swift current. This most desirable specimen fell on its back within twenty feet of the swirling waters, and how to retrieve it posed a problem. I cut a long willow pole and, leaving my shotgun on the shore, worked my way carefully, foot by foot, toward the duck. Just before I reached the bird, into the river I went, pole and all. I had a desperate time getting back onto the ice, for every time I tried to heave myself out, another chunk of the ice broke off. Finally, when my strength was nearly exhausted, I broke my way to a place where the ice was stronger and crawled out, soaked with water and numb from cold. But I had the goldeneye!
>
> The temperature was about twelve below zero, and a strong wind was blowing. The worst was before me, for the farmhouse was nearly a mile away and high atop the plateau above the river. I made the last hundred [yards] to the house on all fours, my body clumsy and past all feeling. I doubt that I would have felt a hatpin stuck into my flesh. The farmer and his family heard my yells for help and assisted me into the house. I was literally encased in an armor of ice—only my knees and elbows had any flexibility. The family rolled me up in the rug on the living-room floor near the red-hot stove and thawed me out. In my haste to get to warmth, I had failed to remove the gamebag from my shoulders, and it held a solid block of ice weighing several pounds and encasing the goldeneye. Curiously I suffered no harm from the experience, not even a cold.
>
> After this near catastrophe I borrowed an old rowboat and kept it on a point of land where the current neared the shore. Then I retrieved ducks that I shot upriver when they floated down to me.

Despite this unsettling experience,

Stoddard was at peace in this sparsely populated land, where virtually the only sounds were the calls of birds and other animals and the voices of wind and water. "My companions were flocks of goldeneyes, gorgeous American and red-breasted mergansers, old squaws, and other waterfowl flying up and down the river."

Stoddard's knowledge of the Prairie du Sac region now became useful. He especially wanted to collect a series of life-history groups of nesting raptors, since the museum had few such exhibits. Permission was given to journey to Prairie du Sac to collect the material; "By early April, 1911, I was again in the field, full of enthusiasm and fully equipped for the work ahead." His first headquarters was the Wagner farm.

> I soon found several nests of red-tailed hawks within ten miles of the farm, on the north sides of the hills in the tallest oaks and aspens, usually seventy-five feet or more from the ground. A lot of strenuous climbing was necessary to obtain downy young at just the right stage of development. I was determined to obtain a typical family of adults and two downy young, and also an unhatched egg, if possible. I climbed to each of the nests at least twice a week. I had brought some climbing irons, which I had rebuilt with a set of removable spurs adapted to almost any type of bark. The irons were an added burden, however, and I soon discarded them and climbed barefoot. On these expeditions my spare frame was draped with game-bag, shotgun, assorted shells, a Graflex camera, and other items. I also had to carry the heavy tree sections containing the nests, carefully wrapped and secured, to a place where they could be reached with the farm wagon.
>
> Soon the Wagner yard was full of nests, in their original tree crotches, of red-tailed hawks, red-shouldered hawks, Cooper's hawks, long-eared owls, and other birds. There was also a section of oak tree in which I had found a family of young screech owls. In most cases one or both of the parent birds had been collected with their young.

Stoddard also had material ready for shipment at the Bert and Anna Laws place, which was located along the Wisconsin River in Dane County approximately 5 miles downriver from Sauk City. Stoddard had met Laws, a woodsman and a conservationist, in Ochsner's shop. In time the Laws farm would become a mecca for ornithologists, as more of Wisconsin's bird students became aware of the varied avifauna of the Wisconsin River valley. The roster would eventually include not only Stoddard and Ochsner, but also Gromme and Clarence S. Jung from Milwaukee, S. Paul Jones from Waukesha, and Aldo Leopold and A. W. Schorger from Madison.

It was Laws who told Stoddard of the peregrine falcons that had nested for over 25 years on Ferry Bluff or one of the other sandstone cliffs in Sauk County across the river from his farm (Stoddard 1910–1913, 1917, 1921a). "We located a pair on a ledge of Ferry Bluff. The aerie was about halfway down the cliff, overlooking both the river and the extensive swamp bottom lands at the junction of Honey Creek and the Wisconsin. I confess that I was terrified the first time I went over the towering cliff to the hawks' nesting ledge. But Bert [a person of exceptional strength] was handling the rope from above, and I really had little to fear. In time I came to enjoy climbing about on cliffs looking for museum specimens. On this occasion [20 May 1911] we collected the female, two

downy young, and one [addled] egg for the museum group." Later in the year Stoddard returned to Ferry Bluff with Laws and Henry L. Ward to collect the necessary plants, debris, and other material for the display.

Laws also told Stoddard of the pair of Golden Eagles that had nested on the bluffs across from his farm in the early 1900s. The single intact nest was located on Ferry Bluff on a sheltered ledge about 60 feet above the ground (Stoddard 1917:65). It was made largely of the limbs of red cedar [*Juniperus virginiana*], some of them over an inch and a half in diameter. "Owing to the durable quality of the limbs, the nest remained well preserved for at least twenty years; I visited it many times. According to Bert, the pair had been broken up by a nearby farmer, who had shot one of the birds. As nearly as I could judge, this bird was the one Ed Ochsner gave me in 1907 during my second winter in his shop." This is the only documented nesting of this species in Wisconsin (Robbins 1991:222).

Other interesting discoveries in the spring of 1911 were 2 Long-billed Curlews at Honey Creek ("could not get a shot"), a Northern Harrier nest with 5 eggs in the middle of a cattail marsh in the Merrimac area, Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpeckers throughout the Wisconsin River bottoms, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, apparently in the Ferry Bluff area ("Shot a bird that I have never seen here before"), and a Loggerhead Shrike nest with 4 young about 3 feet from the ground in a hawthorn (*Crataenus* sp.) in West Point Township, Columbia County (Stoddard 1910–1913, 1917:65–66).

Stoddard's notebook entry for 12 June 1911 consists of just 2 words—"Got hurt" (Stoddard 1910–1913). A field collector's job could be hazardous, especially when one worked alone, and on this occasion Stoddard suffered a severe knee injury. "I had climbed a tree and was chopping into a hollow containing a flying-squirrel [*Glaucomys volans*] family, when my ax glanced off the tree and struck my left leg just below the kneecap . . . By the time I arrived at the Wagner farm, my knee was so badly swollen and so painful that I could scarcely move it." A specialist told Stoddard that it would be a long struggle to save the leg. Eventually he got around again, but he wore a brace for the rest of his life. Gromme (1977:323) recalled Stoddard complaining about his "squeaky" knee brace when he didn't oil it in the morning, and kidding that he was going to "have the damn leg cut off."

In 1912 Stoddard did limited field work, and made several trips to the circus winter quarters in Baraboo to obtain specimens for the museum. An Asiatic elephant, zebras, antelopes, and hyenas were among the beasts he helped skin and skeletonize (Figure 5).

By early 1913 Stoddard was in Chicago, working at the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of the Field Museum of Natural History. The Harris Extension assembled natural history exhibits for the Chicago schools, and Stoddard was responsible for preparing small life-history groups of various animals to be circulated among the schools. He had taken the job with the understanding that he would do his own field studies and collections for the displays.

Soon after his arrival in Chicago, he was back in Wisconsin., ". . . in June, 1913, I found a large colony of little

Figure 5. From left to right, Edward D. Ochsner, George Shrosbree, and Stoddard skinning an Asiatic elephant at the winter quarters of the Ringling Brothers circus in Baraboo, Wisconsin, in 1912 (Stoddard 1969:107–108).

brown bats [*Myotis lucifugus*] under a wooden bridge at Lodi's Mill, just below the old dam across Otter Creek [near Ferry Bluff]. There were hundreds of bats among the old timbers supporting the bridge, including mothers with suckling young. Getting specimens proved a difficult job, for I had to work upside down under the bridge, and every team of horses that crossed the bridge brought down a shower of dirt from the surrounding beams. Several bats fell into the water, and since they could not take off from the water's surface, they began to swim for shore. Almost at once black bass and pickerel began feeding on them—not a bat reached shore. It was hard on the bats, but a joyous occasion for the fish. I managed to obtain about forty specimens of the bats, which made interesting exhibits."

It was also on this trip, in June and July, that Stoddard found the Acadian Flycatcher and Louisiana Waterthrush nesting in Baxter's Hollow in the Baraboo Bluffs—both first records for Wisconsin (Stoddard 1910–1913, 1917:66, 1922a:78).

After the War, Stoddard returned to the Field Museum and was soon in the field again, ". . . making collecting trips [in 1919] to Prairie du Sac and Big Muskego Lake, in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, about an hour's train ride from Milwaukee. I stayed with Ed Ochsner when I was working in the Prairie du Sac region, and we covered the surrounding country in his Model 'T' Ford. Albert Gastrow and I

spent many strenuous days collecting on the Wisconsin River about Sauk and in the sand bluffs of Columbia County."

In 1920, Stoddard returned to the Milwaukee Public Museum. "The prospects were decidedly alluring . . . all bird work was turned over to me, and I was exempted from work on mammals, fish, and reptiles. I was free to engage in field collecting as I felt necessary, alone or with chosen companions, in any part of Wisconsin."

The life of a field collector could be strenuous, and Stoddard always exercised to keep in shape. A new skylight area at the museum proved to be useful in an unexpected way: "To keep in shape for climbing trees and cliffs, I hung a length of one-inch-thick rope from the top of the skylight, and several times a day I would climb up and down the rope, hand over hand." He generally walked to the museum in all kinds of weather, by-passing the street cars and always arriving at work on time (Gromme 1977:323).

The museum now had halls and display cases waiting to be filled, so the spring of 1921 was an especially busy time in the field. A Greater Prairie-Chicken booming ground was located in the sand country west of Prairie du Sac, and, with Ochsner's help, Stoddard collected a number of birds there. "Morning after morning we were out at daybreak, watching the chickens coming into the cooing ground, studying their behavior, collecting specimens, and taking notes."

It was in this area where Stoddard on 27–28 April shot 3 Smith's Longspurs of "20 or 30 probably noticed" amid Lapland Longspurs "by the thousands" (Stoddard 1920–1922, 1969:147); these are the state's only known specimens of this species (Robbins 1991:572).

Stoddard had found Loggerhead Shrikes in this area in 1913, and now he found them again, "fully as abundant as 8 years before" (Stoddard 1920–1922). This species was first reported here in 1890 by Wiswall (1890), the person who in 1906 suggested to Stoddard that he get in touch with Ochsner; it was last found here in 1981 (K.I. Lange fields).

Stoddard noted the ecological distribution of the two meadowlarks: "On all the low lands and in rich farming sections the eastern variety only is found, while throughout the sandy wastes the western bird holds forth in legions. The line of demarkation between these two varieties of Meadowlark as between the rich and poor land is quite sharply defined in this region. Nearby, in Dane County, in a sandy loam region, both varieties were noticed in close proximity" (Stoddard 1922a:77).

Laws had informed Stoddard that a pair of peregrines was again frequenting the Ferry Bluff area; on 11 April they investigated and found a scrape with 3 eggs on a ledge on the northeast face of Ferry Bluff, about 30 feet from the top of the cliff. The birds circled about, calling "like a mallard hen but extremely harsh & grating. Remains of Domestic Pigeon, Meadow Lark, Redwing Blackbirds noticed on this trip and a number of pellets picked up. Pellets are solid mass of bird feathers" (Stoddard 1920–1922). On 12 May the male swooped a number of times at the photographer, "the rush of his wings sounding like a miniature cyclone" (Stoddard 1920–1922). On 15 May, "Two newly hatched young (one unfortunately had been crushed in some

manner and probably spoiled for mounting), one addled egg and a beautiful male falcon were collected" (Stoddard 1921c:40; Figures 6 and 7).

One other peregrine eyrie was visited in the spring of 1921. "On May 31st . . . Mr. Albert Gastrow and the writer found another pair nesting in a great cliff, appropriately named Gibralter Rock, near the town of Okee, in Columbia County, about seventeen miles as the crow flies from the Sauk County locations . . . The eyrie was about twenty-five feet from the top and a hundred from the bottom" (Stoddard 1921a:163–164). The female and the 3 young were collected. Stoddard preserved them in alcohol; some 60 years later, Gregory A. Septon, the taxidermist at the museum, restored them for an exhibit in honor of Stoddard (Kuusinen 1986).

In the Wisconsin River bottoms, Stoddard found Bewick's Wrens and Tufted Titmice in the Prairie du Sac area (Stoddard 1921c:42, 1922a:78–79), and "many" gnatcatchers in the Ferry Bluff area (Stoddard 1920–1922).

The Prairie du Sac dam had been completed in 1915; its impoundment, Lake Wisconsin, was up to 20 and more feet deep. It flooded the river bottom timber, thus creating a forest of dead trees which extended for miles upriver from the dam. While the trees

Figure 6. Peregrine Falcons nested at the Ferry Bluff cliffs from at least 1886 until 1940; apparently they abandoned this aerie because of the activities of egg collectors and increasing public use (Stoddard 1917:64, O. J. Gromme field notes, 7 June–7 July 1940, pp. 2547–2548). Stoddard collected here for the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1911 and (shown here) 1921. "A rope . . . had been used on our trips to the ledge . . . Our friend Bert [Laws], who weighs two hundred and forty pounds, could yank us up by main strength should the occasion arise" (Stoddard 1921c:40–41). *Photo courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum.*

Figure 7. The Milwaukee Public Museum's diorama of the peregrine eyrie at Ferry Bluff, from material collected by Stoddard. A downy young, an egg, and a dead Blue Jay are in the nest to the left of the upper bird. *Photo by the author, courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum.*

were still standing, the lake had a varied avifauna. "Here in summer Kingbird nests are to be found over a half mile from shore, in crotches as low as two feet above the water, while Purple Martins and Tree Swallows share the hundreds of natural cavities and old woodpecker holes with Great Crested Flycatchers and even a few English Sparrows! Flickers, Red-headed, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers also nest here . . ." (Stoddard 1922a:68). "The area was rich in insect life and a good place for the birds to rear their young. Double-crested cormorants and great blue herons also began nesting (often sharing the same trees), for the area was extremely favorable to them also, owing to the richness of the aquatic life." On 10 April Stoddard saw up to 75 cormorants in the same tree: "From a great distance looked like bush full of blackberries!" (Stoddard 1920–1922). The cormorant-heron rookery was located between Merrimac and Okee. "It looked like a fine place to collect a unique group—an interesting assortment of birds nesting on a hydro electric-dam impoundment. Therefore, later in the season we returned to the area to collect cormorants and great blues, as well as hole-nesting birds. The group was finished and installed in the museum in the spring of 1924."

Two other sites visited in 1921 were a Black-crowned Night-Heron colony near Darlington and a Great Blue Heron colony near Fox Lake (Stoddard 1922a:71–72). For the night-her-

ons, it was necessary to take detailed color notes and a number of photographs; at the great blue colony, Stoddard had the "most strenuous tree-climbing experiences of my career, handling a Graflex camera day after day in the tops of very tall trees in which dozens of the huge nests were located."

Gromme had joined the museum, and in the spring of 1922 the two field men ". . . decided . . . to obtain a flying group, or wedge, of Canada geese. A few of the geese usually wintered around Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, and in the spring they were joined by migrants . . . The big birds fed primarily on the shocked corn and winter wheat on Sauk Prairie and rested by the thousands on the rotten ice and open water of Lake Wisconsin . . . We decided that there was no better place to obtain the specimens than around Lake Wisconsin." But the geese generally remained beyond gun range, and Stoddard and Gromme ". . . took all sorts of chances in old boats in dangerous lake waters made doubly treacherous by floating ice . . . We worked before daylight until after dark, day after day, and in all kinds of weather, refusing to admit that the elusive geese were smarter than we . . . Of course, what we needed was live decoys, but none were to be had in the region, and in any case we would have hesitated to use them, for we were unsure about their legality under the state and federal collecting permits we held. Finally, we began obtaining specimens, one by one, under the most trying conditions. Over and over again we had to postpone our departure time . . . We finally returned to the museum with our Canada geese and other specimens. It is a miracle that both of us survived the expedition, considering the chances we took and the unreliable boats we used. But the completed specimens made all the trials worthwhile."

Stoddard's tenacity as a field collector was perhaps best illustrated by his experience of 28 August 1922; the locality was Lake Michigan off the mouth of Bar Creek near Cedar Grove in Ozaukee County:

> . . . I happened to be collecting alone, camping at the mouth of the creek. Late in the afternoon I saw flocks of small shore birds, perhaps five hundred in all, in the water well out from shore. The birds would circle and fly a short distance and then settle on the water and swim about like ducks, feeding in an oil slick from some commercial fishing nest. In the field of my binoculars the scene was an animated one.
>
> I identified the little birds as phalaropes. But were they northern [Red-necked] or red phalaropes—or both? For the observation to be of much scientific value it was necessary for me to get out among the birds and perhaps collect some specimens. I was well aware of the absence of records of phalaropes in numbers on the waters of the Great Lakes. But how was I to reach them? There were no unlocked boats for miles, and the water was too rough and cold for swimming. I was almost frantic, for I had to leave for home soon, and time was getting short.
>
> Finally I could stand it no longer. Loading both barrels of the Parker with fine bird-shot shells, I strapped the gun between two pieces of driftwood and dived into the rough waters of Lake Michigan. I swam out until I was among the birds, pushing the driftwood before me. First I would be on top of a wave looking down on the swimming birds; then I would be plunged deep into a trough looking up at them. I unstrapped the shotgun and, draping my left arm over the driftwood to keep it with me,

tried desperately to swing the heavy gun to cover one of the swimming birds. But it was no use in that pitching water. I was rapidly becoming exhausted when finally a massed flock flew overhead and I managed to fire into them and drop a bird. I could see at a glance it was a northern phalarope. Since all the birds were marked alike, the identification was satisfactory. But it was a struggle to get gun and specimen back to shore, for I was unable to lash the gun to the driftwood again. With one of the bird's legs between my teeth, the gun, under water, in my left hand, and the driftwood under my arm, I battled it out and made the shore, about as exhausted as I have ever been in my life. But I had my specimen, and I even made it home on time, feeling pretty cocky, you may be sure.

That experience also solved some mysteries of the past. I now felt certain that other flocks of shore birds I had observed, barely discernible through binoculars far out in Lake Michigan from the Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana shores had been northern phalaropes. For years those observations, always made in late August or September, had mystified me. As far as I know, to this day we have no further information about the migrations of the phalaropes in the Lake Michigan region. It should prove a fertile field for investigation for some ornithologist with a good boat.

Bar Creek attracted Stoddard because of a hawk flight that he and Jung witnessed there on 25 September 1921. "For hours I called out names and numbers of birds, while Jung wrote down the data . . . that flight stands out especially because of the great numbers of sharp-shinned hawks . . . In all, we saw more than two thousand raptorial birds, belonging to eight species, passing at the approximate rate of five birds a minute for nine hours. It was a day of rich visual experiences; there was also an incredibly large flight of monarch butterflies down the lake shore."

Jung and Stoddard had been banding birds in the Milwaukee area since 1920, and later they were joined by others, notably Gromme and S. Paul Jones, an army friend of Stoddard's. Together they devised a variety of traps and nets to catch adult birds. Soon the bird-banding group was making weekend camping trips to the mouth of Bar Creek, looking for nests, trapping sandpipers for banding, and collecting shorebirds. Noteworthy shorebird records from the mouth of Bar Creek included another Red-necked Phalarope collected about a month after Stoddard's immersion in Lake Michigan, a Red Phalarope on 8 October 1921, and a Stilt Sandpiper on 13 August 1921 (Stoddard 1923a).

The European Starling was spreading through the United States during these years, and Stoddard (1922b, 1923c) noted its arrival in Wisconsin, when on 17 February 1923 he picked up a dead individual under a House Sparrow roost in Milwaukee's Washington Park; this was the first definite state record of this species.

Unbeknownst to Stoddard, 1923 would be his last full year of museum work. On 28 May, in the museum's new Model T truck (Figure 8), Stoddard and Jung explored Chiwaukee Prairie, ". . . a bit of natural prairie on the Lake Michigan shore near the Wisconsin-Illinois line . . . [This] was virgin prairie with low spots, or shallow spring sloughs, with knolls between, on which short grass and a profusion of prairie flowers were growing. We encountered no fewer than five hundred black-bellied plovers, flocks of up to fifty ruddy turnstones, and consider-

Figure 8. The Milwaukee Public Museum's Model T truck at Friendship, Wisconsin, in 1924. A field trip of G. Shrosbree and Ernest Meinecke; E. Meinecke in the photo. *Courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum.*

able numbers of red-backed sandpipers. All were in their gorgeous spring plumage, and were feeding on the knolls where the ground was dry. The mellow calls of the plovers filled the air with sweet music. The last remnant of prairie was evidently a gathering spot for shore birds during spring migration."

Another thrill of that "red-letter" day for Stoddard and Jung at Chiwaukee Prairie was finding 2 nests of the Piping Plover. "Jung found one containing three eggs, and I found one containing four. Three or four pairs of the immaculate creatures had bred on a strip of gravel well back from the water's edge . . . At that time there were few plovers breeding at widely separated spots on the western shores of Lake Michigan. In a careful investigation I had been unable to find more than half a dozen breeding places along the 150-mile shore line between the Indiana Dunes and Sheboygan, Wisconsin." Today there are none, and this species is on Wisconsin's endangered list. The last Wisconsin breeding record was in 1983.

Chiwaukee Prairie was already slated for real estate development when Stoddard and Jung were there, but today, thanks to The Nature Conservancy, 234 acres are preserved, with more hopefully to be protected in the future.

Stoddard made several trips in the spring of 1923 to another interesting region near Milwaukee, the Dousman-Golden Lake area:

> The region was ecologically as diverse as any I visited in Wisconsin. There were extensive savannas and also several tamarack [*Larix laricina*] swamps . . . The higher areas separating the swamps were covered with oak and other deciduous trees. There were several lakes, some with steep shores where kingfishers and bank swallows nested and others bordered by extensive cattail marshes where swamp-loving species made their homes.
>
> There were more species of gallinaceous game birds in the Dousman area than in any comparable spot I have seen in eastern North America. Prairie chickens were abundant on the savannas; there was a fine cooing ground in the center of one large savanna. Ruffed grouse were plentiful in the deciduous woodland patches of higher ground, and bobwhites thrived near cultivated areas and along the brushy borders of the woodlands . . . ring-necked pheasants and Hungarian partridges had been introduced to the region . . . and had become numerous and widespread.
>
> Great horned owls nested in the tamarack swamps, which also sheltered long-eared and saw-whet owls during the winter.

Stoddard and Gromme had special collecting permits for obtaining specimens within the city limits of Milwaukee. "These permits were important to us, for Milwaukee Harbor was one of the best concentration points for many species of waterfowl. Here we obtained specimens of red-breasted and American mergansers, which we exhibited in a large flying group in the museum's new Bird Hall."

Education was not being stressed at the museum. Stoddard gathered Long-eared Owl pellets in winter under several roosting trees in a tamarack swamp near Milwaukee, analyzed them to reveal the owl's diet of rodents, and then helped prepare an exhibit to show the economic value of the long-eared. Civic clubs requested illustrated talks on birds that Stoddard or Gromme had to fulfill, and the museum now had regularly scheduled public bird walks during the spring. Stoddard teamed with Huron H. Smith, the botany curator, on bird and botany walks, which were given on Saturday mornings and often attracted 30 to 40 people. But Stoddard's real interest was elsewhere: "I never fancied this sort of work very much, especially during bird-migration periods, when I wanted to be in the field collecting specimens."

Stoddard's interests were changing. "Up to this point in my career my work had been evenly balanced between museum work and field activity. But by now my main interest had shifted to field studies of birds [and] it had become evident that museum work would keep my indoors for long periods of time. I was a countryman by nature and could never be happy in a large city. I would have enjoyed collecting birds in virgin country, and had given much thought to the possibility of spending most of my time so engaged in South America. Marriage and family responsibilities made that idea impractical, but I could see no reason why I could not be a field naturalist, specializing in the study of bird life in the United States. However, I did little more than ponder these ideas during the period from 1920 to 1924. I had a rewarding job, my wife was happy in Milwaukee, and we were buying a home there."

The American Ornithologists Union had their 1922 annual meeting in Chicago; Stoddard was there, and ". . . we bird banders got together and founded the Inland Bird Banding Association [which stimulated] bird banding

throughout the Middle West." At the first meeting of this association, Stoddard heard about a proposed Northern Bobwhite study, ". . . an exciting new project taking form in the region around Thomasville, Georgia."

Billy Richardson, the photographer on many of Stoddard's expeditions (for example Ferry Bluff in 1921), had cautioned Stoddard about becoming too narrowly specialized, and Stoddard took this advice seriously. Stoddard also realized that the quail project would be a pioneering study in the relatively new field of wildlife management. Eventually he received a letter from E. W. Nelson, the head of the Biological Survey, inquiring about his interest in the project.

Stoddard pondered his decision:

> I discussed the matter at length with my wife and with Shrosbree and other friends at the museum. I was somewhat concerned that my limited formal education might be a handicap in this new field. But I had learned that most problems could be solved by intense application, and I felt confident that I could make a contribution to the work. In truth, almost everything I had done so far in my life, from my boyhood activities in the Florida pinelands, had been good training for life-history investigations of birds. And it must be admitted that one of the attractions of the work was that it would be carried on far from great cities!
>
> I was deeply involved in several uncompleted exhibits for the museum . . . Shrosbree, always interested in the advancement of his staff members, pointed out that Gromme could finish and install the groups in a creditable manner and assured me that in taking the position I would not be letting down the museum.

Stoddard left museum work in March 1924 at the age of 35. His new position resulted in the publication in 1931 of *The bobwhite quail: its habits, preservation and increase,* a book hailed as the "Bobwhite Bible" and a cornerstone of game management.

Stoddard's rich and varied career is testimony to a remarkable individual who overcame limited schooling with intelligence, tenacity, confidence, and integrity.

Stoddard could not explain his fascination with living creatures, although he does mention an "inborn curiosity." But can anyone explain all the factors and influences in their life?

So far as he knew, there had never been a naturalist in his father's family. His mother had painted landscapes as a girl and appreciated nature, but she was not absorbed by it as was her son. His father died when Stoddard was five weeks old, so in his early years his world was centered around his mother. There was a "close bond of love and respect" between mother and son, and she encouraged or at least tolerated Stoddard's interests. But his stepfather was also influential, if for no other reason than that it was "Dad Flint" who decided that the family should move to Florida and start an orange grove.

As a boy in Rockford, Stoddard devoured the taxidermy and natural history books in the public library, and he was much taken with a special collection of mounted animals in the new library. But, regarding his youth, one should look especially at his early years in Florida in the late 1800s, when as a "small wild creature" he roamed barefoot in the pinelands. Stoddard recognized the significance of those years: "As I look back on my early life in Florida, I am convinced that no schooling or advantages could have been more valuable to me. I firmly believe that all experiences become a part of a man.

Certainly my years in the southern pinelands—conditioned as they were by the forces of climate, hurricane, and fire, rooted in the soils laid down under the gulf such a short time before, geologically speaking--those years were invaluable to me in my later years as ornithologist, ecologist, and wildlife researcher and manager. This first phase of my life . . . was one of very rich memories."

Certainly Stoddard was fortunate in knowing a number of individuals who encouraged and guided him at various stages in his development and career. He dedicated his autobiography to his wife and to "Mister Barber," a government surveyor who had retired in Florida and gave Stoddard "endless patience and kindly interest." One would like to know more of Mister Barber; I expect that he was very influential in Stoddard's development. Ochsner and Shrosbree were especially important. Stoddard learned much from Shrosbree, who always supported him in his career moves. Ochsner's influence was more encompassing. He was, of course, Stoddard's first teacher and mentor. In a 1978 interview, Gromme exclaimed: "He was our Alma Mater!" (Mueller 1988:59). Stoddard recalled this period of his life in a letter he wrote to Ochsner in 1944 when his old friend was dying of cancer: "I often review in my mind the many fine times we had together years ago. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and just go over some of those collecting expeditions, in my mind, and every detail is as sharp as if it were only yesterday. I think of when I drove down from the Wagner farm behind 'Old Florrie' for my first taxidermy lessons, or of all the thrills I got when working with you the following three years" (Mueller 1988:59). Ochsner also aided Stoddard in securing his initial museum employment by introducing him to the appropriate people. But the lives of Ochsner and Stoddard were also intertwined non-professionally, in that it was Ochsner who arranged for Stoddard to live with the Wechselbergs in Milwaukee, a favor which led, albeit unplanned, to Stoddard's marriage.

Another influential person in Stoddard's life who might not come to mind so quickly was his wife, Ada Wechselberg Stoddard. Without her support and understanding, I expect that Stoddard would have accomplished far less. Later he did come to more fully appreciate her sacrifices: "I sometimes feel guilty when I recall the days and weeks my wife was alone while I was on extended trips. Fortunately, though city born and bred, my wife always understood my need for those retreats from urban living and bore her lonely hours without complaint. It is likely that the life of a naturalist's wife is not an easy one."

I grew up in Milwaukee in the 1930s and 40s, and the museum was a significant part of my life. On Saturday mornings my mother would take me there for special programs for children presented by museum employees, and I often wandered, spell bound, through the museum halls, gazing at the natural history exhibits. I now know that some of them were prepared by Stoddard. Taxidermy was still much in vogue, and the Northwestern School of Taxidermy in Iowa was always tempting impressionable youngsters to send them money for correspondence courses. Somehow, perhaps because of another love—baseball—I resisted

their charms, but now, 50 years later, I reflect on this phase of my life with fondness and appreciation. Those museum collectors and taxidermists probably accomplished more than they realized. Certainly they led me in the course of writing this paper into a reexamination of the major factors in my life, of the influences, in addition to a supportive mother and open land in which to roam, that led to my own career as a professional naturalist.

Stoddard did field work in Wisconsin during a period that encompassed World War I and America's continuing industrial expansion. We have gained technologically, for example in transportation and communications, since a young man sat on a bluff at night after doing chores and watched the farm lights twinkling below, but there truly is no free lunch. The countryside is no longer so sparsely settled nor so quiet, and the Peregrine Falcons no longed stoop and call by Ferry Bluff and Gibralter Rock.

Stoddard's writings often portray landscapes now altered or vanished. Of all his descriptions, I am especially haunted by the "high rolling prairie" in the southeastern corner of the state, with its panorama of flowers and the plaintive calls of hundreds of Black-bellied Plovers sounding along the shoreline. What, I wonder, was this area like in presettlement time?

Wild and natural areas in Wisconsin, in Florida, and elsewhere are irreplaceable. As they are impoverished, so is our collective spirit. The appropriate philosophy was expressed by Donald Culross Peattie (1941:156): we must protect what remains of our natural heritage with a patriot's reverence.

The last paragraph in Stoddard's autobiography might well serve as his epitaph: "I have learned that without Nature man has nothing, and my greatest desire would be satisfied if I could know that my grandchildren, and their children after them, will develop a love, an understanding, and an appreciation of the natural world. They can find no greater satisfaction in life."

Acknowledgements

I consulted Stoddard's field notes at the Milwaukee Public Museum Library and the Archives and Manuscripts room of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison. In addition, Samuel D. Robbins, Jr. loaned me his copies of Stoddard's field notes for the 1920s. The late Walter E. Scott assisted with historic references. I fondly recall a winter day in 1978, when Erhart Mueller and I visited Owen J. and Anne Gromme in Briggsville; we chatted about Stoddard and Ochsner and looked at photographs, and admired Gromme's just finished artistic interpretation of Aldo Leopold's essay, "Marshland Elegy." Herbert L. Stoddard, Jr., of Sherwood Plantation, Thomasville, Georgia, kindly supplied information about his family and photos. For assistance with other historic photos, my thanks to Albert Gastrow, Jr. of Sauk City, and Gregory A. Septon, Neil T. Luebke, and Susan Otto of the Milwaukee Public Museum. Michael J. Mossman, wildlife researcher with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, edited the manuscript.

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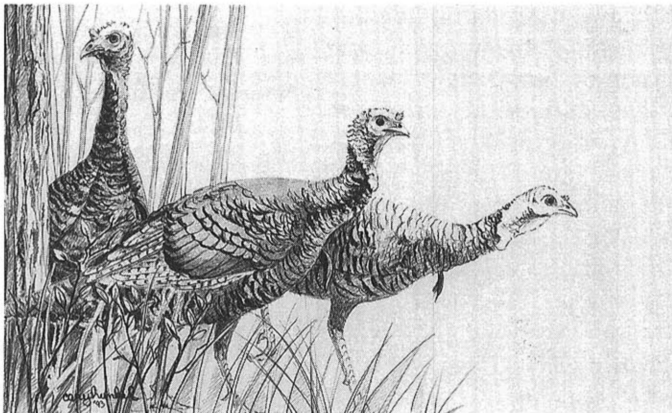

"Turkey" *by Cary Hunkel*