

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

NOVEMBER MEETINGS

Monday, November 2nd, 1953 at 8.15 p.m.

at the

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Speaker: T.F. McIlwraith, M.A., F.R.S.C.
Professor of Anthropology, University of Toronto.
Associate Director, Royal Ontario Museum of
Archaeology.
President, Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.

Subject: "Man and Nature through the Ages."

NOVEMBER OUTING

Saturday, November 14th.

Sunnyside and the Lower Humber.

Meet at the Bathing Pavilion, Sunnyside at 2.00 p.m.
Look at autumn waterfowl with George Francis.

The annual fee of \$2.00 is now overdue. Kindly send it
by mail to the secretary.

Secretary - Mrs. J.B. Stewart,
21 Millwood Road,
Toronto.
HU 9-5052.

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



Number 118

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Nature Notes on a Texas Tour - by J.M. Barnett

THE PRAIRIE

South of Houston the land flattened out and we soon found ourselves in rice country. Seed had been sown but had not sprouted as yet and the fields on either side were brown and monotonous except for the levees which are about a foot high and snake their way along in sinuous curves, following no particular pattern but dividing the fields into various levels ready to hold back the water which is pumped in from the irrigation ditches when the plants are a few inches high. We found the Texas roads the best we have travelled on, with ample room to pull off on either side and wide stretches of grass extending to the fence lines. Although the fields were brown and monotonous, not so the roadsides, and we seemed to glide along on a flat, smooth carpet; a carpet full of colour which stretched out ahead of us as far as we could see. The roadsides were a mass of wild flowers of such variety and colour as we have never seen.

Ed.Note: Last year Mr. J.M. Barnett, member of the executive of the club, was kind enough to share with us his impressions of a trip to Florida. Since then he and Mrs. Barnett, early last spring, made a similar nature jaunt to Texas. I am sure that the readers of the Newsletter will be as interested in Mr. Barnett's impressions of Texas birds, flowers and animals as they were in his account of the Florida trip. The Texas area which he describes is one of the best birding territories in North America, one which other members of the club have already visited, and to which many others will go sooner or later. Mr. Barnett's article will be concluded in the following issue of the Newsletter.

Large patches of Indian Paint Brush and Prickly Poppies were every here and there, supplying the dominant note in this beautiful picture but between, and interspersed among them, were White and Yellow Primrose, Purple and Blue Wild Petunias, Verbena, Blue-bells, Blue-bonnets, Fire-wheels (Wild Gaillardia), Golden-wave and the richly coloured Wine-cups. All making a rich carpet of ever-changing patterns which we often stopped to admire and examine. To add to, and complement, this rich experience were the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers - the first we had seen. They were quite numerous and conspicuous along the roadside, perching on the telegraph and fence wires from which they would sally forth after insects. As they permitted close approach we had some wonderful views of this spectacular bird with the long tail. Sitting, they are a soft pearl grey in colour with a black eye-stripe and appear mild and peaceful, but when they fly their whole being seems to undergo a change. The underside of the wings and underwing coverts are pink to scarlet and when in flight this colour is predominant and catches and reflects the rays of the sun making a picture of fiery energy which is more in keeping with the birds' nature especially when predators are about. As we travelled south and noon approached, the temperature rose until, when we reached Eagle Lake, the thermometer was registering well over the ninety mark. On the advice of a friend we had written to Mr. Tom Waddell, the State Warden at Eagle Lake and had received an invitation to call on him when in the vicinity. Our first stop therefore was at his house and we found him to be an upright, grey-haired man, very active for all his 60 odd years with a merry twinkle in his eyes. Like all the Wardens it has been our good fortune to meet we found him most helpful. Arranging for our accommodation in an air-conditioned Motel run by a friend, he directed us to it and promised to call for us at 2 p.m. after we had lunched and rested.

Mr. Waddell probably knows more about Attwater Prairie Chickens than any other person, having taken a particular and professional interest in them for over twenty-five years. It is on his territory that they are making one of their last stands and he has shown them to most of the noted ornithologists on this continent, including Dr. Allen of Cornell who went to Eagle Lake to take motion pictures and sound recordings of this species.

This particular afternoon he had been called out to investigate the presence of wolves in an outlying district where these animals were killing young cattle. Picking us up in his car we drove some miles north of the town, all the way through rice and cattle country, and called in at the house of the farmer who had made the complaint. While he was getting the details we were interested in a nearby slough where a large flock of Blackbirds were enjoying an afternoon bath. Among them we saw Red-Wings, Brewers Blackbirds and Boat-tailed Grackles. The conference over we got back in the car and followed the farmer along a dirt track until, at the end of it, we stopped in sight of a river bed. Then, indicating with a wave of his arm the direction in which the wolves were operating, he left us. Driving across fields we followed the course of the river for some distance until we came near some cattle grazing along its bank, when Mr. Waddell noticed a mound of earth near a bush. Getting out we investigated and found a wolf's den at the base of a Hawthorne with tracks of the animal showing in patches of loose earth. While Mr. Waddell set a trap at the mouth of the den and put out a couple of cyanide cartridges smeared with wolf bait around the vicinity, we had a chance to look around. A number of the flowers we had seen along the roadside were present in the fields and in addition saw some Bull-nettle for the first time. The

blossoms of this plant look something like our garden nicotine and smell as sweet but we were warned not to touch it unless we wanted to absorb dire punishment. Hawks were numerous here and we saw some Marsh, Red-tails and Rough-legged. The last named were the most numerous and very conspicuous sitting on fence posts. After setting the traps, we drove around in a circle in the hopes of seeing one of the wolves out in the open but in this we were disappointed, only catching sight of some Jack Rabbits loping off at our approach.

As it was still too early in the afternoon to hope to see any Prairie Chickens we spent our time in gathering and eating Blue-berries (as they call our Black-berries in Texas) and in learning something of the birds we had come so far to see. At one time this district was alive with these birds which were hunted unmercifully for sport as well as the market. Mr. Waddell has seen hunting parties at which the mounds of birds killed were as big as a car. Shooting contests were popular in the district and, in many cases, the killing was wanton - the contestants considering the birds too bulky to carry around, would chop off the heads which they carried in a bag while the body would be thrown away. In later years, when cotton was grown in the district, many birds died from eating cotton-worm moths, of which they were fond, but which were often covered with arsenic from the spraying of the fields. Now the birds are scarce - only to be found in a couple of small pockets in the State and it's mainly rice which is a threat to their extinction. Some years ago when rice started to get profitable the rivers were dammed and irrigation ditches dug. The original sod was ploughed under and the fields of Blue-stemmed Grass went under too. It was the seclusion of this grass that the hen used for her nest. Under it she scratched a small hollow, arranged some bits of grass and feathers and settled down to raise a family. The destruction of its breeding grounds is now bringing this bird to the vanishing point and unless something is done soon, the Attwater Prairie Chicken will be the first American Game Bird to vanish. Fortunately, the Texas Game Authorities are alert and are projecting a conservation programme which it is hoped will save these birds before it is too late.

Eventually, about 5 o'clock, we moved into their territory and saw two lots of eight birds each, standing in the field. Immediately, Mr. Waddell started imitating their challenge - which is not a 'booming', as we understand the word, but a 'wooing' with some cackling thrown in. One group of the birds refused to get excited, but in the second group one bird, more aggressive than the others, took up the challenge and 'wooded' back. Although some distance away, we could plainly see his distended air sack and felt satisfied. Further along there were five birds feeding near the side of the track we were following and we got a splendid look at the markings of their feathers but these birds all refused to take up the challenge thrown out by our host. After this we returned to the Motel but before leaving, Mr. Waddell promised to call for us at 6 a.m. to take us out again for a short run.

We were up with the first faint flush of dawn and ready when Mr. Waddell called. Early morning is our favorite time for being out. The air was cool and clear and nature, awakening from a refreshing sleep, seems full of life. We lost no time in getting to the parade ground of the Prairie Chickens and this time we were rewarded with the sight of a bird displaying near the track we were on. As we drew up near him, he stopped and surveyed us haughtily and then, as our host started his

imitation, he took up the challenge. Dropping his wings and sticking his tail straight up, he began stamping his feet on the ground; then raising two tufts of feathers from his neck, up over his head, like a pair of horns, he lowered his neck forward, filled his air sacks and started 'wooing'. Seen through the binoculars at this close range, the orange ring around the eye was quite conspicuous and every feather visible. The bright orange air sack looked like a ball the bird was holding under his bill. In Bent's "Life Histories" we were interested to learn that the sound of this bird is produced by "air being forced from the lungs which vibrate special membranes of the syrinx . . . while the air sack is filling the sound waves produced by the syrinx beat against these tense, drumlike membranes which serve as resonators, and give the 'wooing' its great carrying power. Under favourable conditions it may be heard a mile away or even further". This is the performance ornithologists from all over the country come to see. We were indeed impressed and delighted that we had been privileged to witness one of the unique and outstanding performances of the bird world. There were other birds in the field performing and some put on mock fights which were amusing. A lone bird some distance from the others stayed, partially crouched, all the time we were there and this one Mr. Waddell thought was a female with young near her. But time was passing and it was with a full heart that we moved on to look at the wolf trap set the previous day. It turned out to be empty but a close examination showed that the animal had been in its den and had come out since the trap was set. A large paw print in the soft earth sprinkled over the trap showed how cautious it was and proclaimed the fact that the animal was an old, wily one, well versed in the ways of man. We arrived back at the Motel with a healthy appetite and after expressing our thanks and wishing our host goodbye, we packed and went out for breakfast.

Before leaving, Mr. Waddell had indicated a couple of spots in the neighbourhood that we might like to visit and the first of these was quite close to the road we were on. It was a marsh where some trees provided a heronry where Egrets, Herons and Cormorants nested. The place was alive with birds, mostly Egrets, which were continually moving around and provided us with interest for some time. Our next stop was at Waddell's house at the edge of the town where we saw a pair of Sandhill Cranes which are quite famous. The birds were first seen in April, 1950, and when the Waddells put out some corn they accepted their hospitality and made themselves at home in the adjoining field. Now they are quite tame with their hosts but are wary when strangers are around. They come near the house morning and evenings for their feed but walk round the adjoining fields during the day. They occasionally fly around but the flights are restricted because one bird has difficulty keeping airborne and the others will not leave it. After having a good look at these majestic birds, we moved to the Hunt Club where, from spacious lawns shaded by huge moss hung live oaks, we looked across the reeds to Eagle Lake and saw many water birds which, although not new to us, presented a pretty picture in a beautiful setting. It was with some regret that we left Eagle Lake behind us but we had, in this short stay, captured many pleasant memories which will brighten us whenever we think of our tour of Texas.

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ARANSAS REFUGE

So much has been written in books and the press during the past few years about Whooping Cranes that one does not have to be an ornithologist to be interested in these big birds. From the first time that we planned to see Texas, their winter grounds headed the list of places to see, and when we heard that Mr. Hugh Halliday, a well-known nature writer with the Toronto Daily Star and a member of our Club, had visited these grounds, we called him up. The information he very generously gave us was incorporated into our plans although we had to change the timing to suit our holidays. His article on these birds appeared in the April 18th edition of the Star Weekly while we were away but we read it with great interest on our return.

It was in the afternoon of April 10th, after a very warm drive down from Eagle Lake that we arrived at a fishing camp on the Gulf of Mexico just west of Austwell and about two miles east of Aransas Refuge which was our goal. A strong cool breeze blowing off the Gulf was a welcome relief after the hot winds of the inland and after settling into a cottage, we took a well-earned rest. About 4 p.m. we set out to call on Mr. Julian Howard, the manager of the Refuge and the man who watched with such care the nesting of the first pair of Whooping Cranes ever to breed in captivity. This outstanding experiment, while ending disappointingly on its first try, will, we hope, be successfully repeated so that their stay with us may be prolonged if not assured. On arrival at the Headquarters of the Refuge, we found that Mr. Howard was away and would not be back until evening but one of his assistants kindly volunteered information and directed us where to go and find the Deer and Wild Turkeys which are a feature of the place.

Driving slowly along one of the roads, we found Firewheels, or Wild Gaillardia common and were introduced to a beautiful new flower - the blossom of the Coral Bean which at a short distance reminded us of the Cardinal flower. An animal moving about at the side of the road caught our attention and as we drew near, we were delighted to see that it was an Armadillo. As it was our first sight of this armoured, prehistoric-looking creature, we approached cautiously until the car was almost alongside of him. As he seemed quite unafraid we thought we would try and get a photograph but as soon as we got out of the car he made off into the adjoining bushes.

And then we got our first sight of Wild Turkeys - four of them, one male and three female, with the male displaying just exactly like our barnyard birds. With his tail spread fanwise and turning around so that the sun high-lighted his every feather we had a splendid opportunity of noting the rich chestnut edging to the tail which is the only difference between these birds and our domesticated ones. Peterson in his Eastern Guide gives a couple of sub-species for this bird, but as there is no field difference we can only go by their locale which would make these birds Rio Grande Turkeys which inhabit the southern part of Texas. Later we saw a lone bird in a field and this one walked with a bad limp which was, no doubt, the result of getting his foot caught in a trap. Last of all when we were returning we saw 13 birds feeding together.

Deer were quite numerous and were seen grazing with some cattle.

They thrive in this Refuge and a certain number are trapped each year and sent out to other parks in this and other States. Turkey and Black Vultures were quite common and a Caracara hunting over the fields added to our interest. A strange hawk circling above us had us guessing for some time but, noting that it had a white tail edged with black, we got out our guide and were able to identify it as a Sennett's White-Tailed Hawk. Later, we checked with Mr. Howard and he said that these birds were present in this vicinity. We returned to our Cabin, had supper, and later that evening returned to the Refuge and met Mr. Howard who very kindly offered to take us over the territory of the Whooping Cranes in the morning although he did not know whether any of the birds were still there.

It was with great excitement that we met Mr. Howard at his house and started out. He told us that one bird was seen three or four days ago but was probably away by now. However, as there was always the chance of our luck stretching we were full of hope. We drove down a paved road to a barrier which was the point at which the public was barred. This precaution is necessary so that the big birds will not be disturbed when they are around. Driving around the barrier we found ourselves on a dirt road leading to the Gulf. Our first sight of the marshes as we emerged around a clump of wind swept Live Oaks was a memorable one - as far as the eye could see were vast stretches of mud flats and reeds. For awhile we were only aware of this vastness - birds there were by the hundreds but in these expanses they were lost. Here Mr. Halliday points out "a pair of birds claims ownership of nearly a square mile of tidelands over which to forage". But you can't grasp what this means until you see these vast shallows extending into the distance. Looking over this scene one man wrote: "the figure of the Crane complements the marsh. Here is a double completion, for bird and marsh enliven each other. Nothing less than such a marsh can frame a Whooping Crane, nothing less than a Whooping Crane is adequate for such a marsh".

Knowing that the birds are generally well out, our eyes scanned the distances for a speck of white which might indicate the presence of one - but none could we see. Mr. Howard set up the telescope and we examined some of the hundreds of birds scattered over the waters and shallows. One flock of White Pelicans held our attention for some time as did some Marbled Godwits. There were Herons and Egrets in variety and numbers which would gladden the hearts of many Club members. When we finally brought our observations to the shore line we saw Willets and Plovers, Turnstones, Yellow-legs and Sandpipers, all making a part of, and enlivening, a panorama such as we had never seen before. We drove some miles along the shore and saw the observation tower from which such a jealous outlook was kept on the pair of Whooping Cranes which rested here a year or so ago. It was from this tower that Mr. Halliday had looked over the marshes to get some of his impressions. Although the whole shore line was dotted with birds, one particular inlet caught our attention for in this small bay there were a greater variety of birds grouped together than on the more expansive places. Willets, Turnstones and Black-bellied Plover predominated but Yellow-legs, Pectoral, Red-backed, Semi-pal and Least Sandpipers were present. But what made this such an interesting spot were some long-billed Curlew, the first we had ever seen. These unbelievably long-billed birds are much larger than the Hudsonian Curlew which visit the shores of Lake Ontario during migration and these westerners are more apt to be seen in open fields

than the sea shore. Among all this galaxy of water and shore birds we came across a pair of Texas Horned Larks. We looked them over with interest but could not note any field differences from the Prairie Horned Larks which are such welcome visitors in Toronto in February. From what we are able to pick up, the only way they are distinguished is the locality they breed in. The Texas sub-species is found only along the Gulf coast east to Galveston, Texas.

It was nearly noon when we had our last run through the park and no time to see Turkeys, but as we were passing a lone tree which was surrounded by some bushes, we glanced in and saw one bird taking advantage of the welcome shade. As we stopped to look at it, the bird walked off to another clump of bushes further away from the road, slinking through the grass in a direction which kept the tree between us. A very dark hawk sailing around drew our attention for we felt certain it was a new species for us, especially as a white rump showed conspicuously. Further observations revealed a white edging to the tail and on looking up Peterson's, we had no difficulty in identifying it as a Harris' Hawk. Our last observation in the Refuge showed us two Caracaras flying around and diving at one another in a sportive manner. On reading up on these birds, we were surprised to learn that they are very quarrelsome among themselves and their fracas, though often starting in a spirit of play, often end in a fight. We were glad that this event didn't finish in a fight for the birds after making a few passes at each other, flew off in different directions. But, if we were disappointed in not seeing Whooping Cranes, the many other interesting sights more than compensated us for our visit to the Refuge and to this was added the courtesy and consideration shown us by Mr. Julian Howard and his assistants.

Incidentally we stopped at New Orleans on our way home, and although the pair of Whooping Cranes there (the only ones in captivity) were not on public display, an old gentleman directed us to a plot at the back of the Zoo where he said we may see them. This time our luck held, for we were not only able to see them but get close enough to take a picture with an ordinary camera lens.

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THE GULF COAST

"Rockport Cottages" is a MUST for any visitor to the LONE STAR STATE who is interested in birds. "Rockport Cottages" is unique because it caters almost exclusively to birders. "Rockport Cottages" is a MUST because of Mrs. Connie Hager, the wife of the genial proprietor, who is the most enthusiastic birdwoman in the State as well as the best known. She is 67 years old but is out twice daily making the rounds and keeping her records. She goes out and lectures on birds, taking with her skins, which she herself has carefully prepared and, incidentally, maintains regular correspondence with about 300 persons all over the world. All this in addition to keeping a home going and a husband happy!

On your first morning, you always have a date at 7 o'clock with Mrs. Hager who will take you along the 'route' and show you all the interesting spots in the district. After that you follow the cavalcade or go on your own - whichever you choose. You are kept posted as to the appearance of any new migrants to the district or can get particulars of any species you are interested in. Because all the guests are

interested in the same hobby as you are, everyone is sociable and interesting and you can get information about almost any part of the country for there are generally people there from five or six States outside of Texas.

First stop along the 'route' is always the 'Cove' at the end of the shore road west of the town. Here you look over vast stretches of shallow waters and mud flats where waders and shore birds are dotted about as far as the eye can see. Ward's, Louisiana and Little Blue Herons, American, Snowy and Reddish Egrets are numerous and occasionally, you can get a glimpse of Roseate Spoonbills. On the shores you find Willets, Turnstones and Sandpipers while overhead Laughing Gulls cruise around. We sat and watched the sprightly dancing of a Reddish Egret here and saw a young Little Blue Heron, snowy white in colour but easily identified by its blue bill.

A drive east along the shore will give you some intimate glimpses of shore birds, Herons and Egrets as well as Gulls and Terns. Forster's and Gull-billed Terns are new species which you are likely to see but, much to our surprise, we saw a Glaucous Gull gleaming white and towering over a number of Laughing Gulls which were sitting with it on one of the numerous piers jutting out into the water. At the basin, located at the east end of the town, Mrs. Hager stopped the car on the sands not 20 feet from a Wilson's Plover sitting on a nest. Here we often stopped to feed the Laughing Gulls which come quite close to the car when they can get a 'hand-out', or just sit and admire at close range the dainty feathered outfits of the Least Terns resting on the sand, and watch Sanderlings and Turnstones walking along and examining every piece of seaweed or debris for hidden food.

Driving away from the Gulf you go along a road lined with bushes and here we were fortunate enough to see a Hooded Warbler. This road is also a good spot for Painted Buntings but, although some of the guests saw some early arrivals, we were not so lucky. Back towards town along the main highway is Tootsie's, where a pond straddles the road. Here is a good place for ducks. On one side were a large number of Coots and Baldpates feeding while perched on posts sticking out of the water a number of Cormorants were sunning themselves. There were two species of Cormorants present - the Double-crested with which we are familiar and the Mexican which was new to us. Being together and so close we had an excellent opportunity of comparing them. On the other side of the road were more Coots and Baldpates but, in addition, there were several Shovellers and in the middle a flock of Ruddies actively diving around. Pied-billed Grebes were present as well as a pair of little Mexican Grebes which were new to us. On one occasion we also saw a lone Holbell's Grebe. From here the 'route' leads north of the town to Moore's Pond, a slough where Shovellers, Pintails, Baldpates and Blue-Winged Teal were present. Most interesting for us was a flock of eight White-faced Glossy Ibis which we had never seen before and which we were able to examine and admire at our leisure. Black-necked Stilts, Dowitchers and Lesser Yellow-legs were also present at various times, and on one occasion just to add variety, an Osprey came circling overhead. On one of our visits here two Black Vultures were feeding on an Opposum when we drove up and Mrs. Barnett, thinking to help the birds, picked the carcass up and placed it on the side out of the way of passing cars. But the birds had other ideas for when we returned they had it pulled into the middle again.

A little further up the road were some Sweet Acacia Trees, known as Huisache and pronounced Weesache. They are not large trees but have symmetrical crowns and dark green ferny foliage. Although it was too late in the season now, we were told that in late winter or early spring their 'globes of golden bloom, for a supreme moment eclipse all other vegetation in sheer beauty. The spherical bloom is really compacted of many tubular flowers whose pale protruding stamens seen closely in a good light, produce a fuzzy effect but, in semi-darkness, give an illusion of glow, or aura, as if these tender filaments were truly and in fact radiating beams of light - a brief candle enjoying its period of unchallenged triumph over the slumlike darkness and degradation of the brush covered countryside'. At this time they are a favorite with the bees whose honey produced from their nectar is famous throughout the country. But, although we saw nothing of this, we still fell in love with the delicate appearance of the trees and were surprised to learn they were a favorite with the Warblers when they are migrating through the country. We were a little too early for the main wave of these feathered jewels but in our search around we saw some Myrtles and Black-throated Greens. Orchard Orioles were present in scattered numbers and we were surprised and delighted to find a Sennett's Thrasher, a dark version of our Brown Thrasher, which gave us an interesting time before we were finally able to identify it. But our best observations along this stretch of road were of Blue Grosbeaks - there seemed one or more present every time we passed.

Getting into more open country we found the Lark Sparrow - one of the prettiest of this family and one of the few which give you a good opportunity of really observing it. At a bend in the road where the fields open up we were told to listen and watch for Cassin's Sparrows - a species we had never seen - but for some reason we never saw or heard this bird which is as drab as the Lark Sparrow is handsome. In these open fields at this time of the year you were always sure of seeing Long-billed Curlews. There was a large flock of these birds present every time we passed here and we had some intimate looks at them and also of some Upland Plover which associated with them.

The road then led over some mud flats to Rattlesnake Point - which we never did get to see - because we ran into some mud which soon had us stalled and required the services of a tow truck. There is no tide on these flats but if the wind blows hard, it drives the water up and leaves the mud like glue, after which it is no place for a car until it dries out again. But even this mishap had its compensations for, while we were waiting for the tow truck, we sat down and looked over the water and presently saw a Brown Pelican flying in accompanied by a Laughing Gull. When fairly close in, the Pelican landed on the water and immediately proceeded to put his head under looking for food. To our surprise the Gull landed on the Pelican's back and looking over his shoulders watched to see how the fishing was getting along. As soon as the Pelican got apouch-full he started raising his head and then the Gull walked along the neck until he was standing on the Pelican's head and looked either side to see if there were any parts hanging out which he could snag. The Pelican, however, was wise for there was nothing hanging out and as he raised his head to let his catch slide down his gullet the Gull flew up and floated above. Flying off to another spot these two went through the same performance and at the end of it, the

Gull was still hungry. The actions of the Gull were really very funny and we were almost sorry when the truck came.

But you didn't have to go out of Mrs. Hager's grounds to see birds. A Mexican Ground Dove and a Mocking Bird had nests in some wind blown Live Oaks just behind the cottages, and invariably when we sat down to eat near a window overlooking the backyard, there were Mexican Ground Doves, Boat-tailed Grackles, Cardinals and Sparrows feeding on the grass. Strolling in the grounds behind the cottages we saw Northern Waterthrush, Black and White, Myrtle, Black-throated Green and Blackburnian Warblers. A number of Blue-grey Gnatcatchers always seemed to be around and Summer Tanagers came to add colour to the assemblage. Some of the last named did not have their full breeding plumage, but those that did were brilliant birds, breath-taking in their coats of scarlet.

But Rockport had other things of interest to offer than birds. One day while we were out we saw one of the cars from the cottages pulled up by the side of the road and its occupants grouped around something on the ground. We stopped to look and were delighted to find a pair of Horned Toads - those prehistoria looking animals which are not toads at all but a lizard. After the group were through examining them we took them back to the cottage for photographing and found them very docile. However, they are fast runners as we soon learned when we set them up for a picture. Then there were the lizards of a beautiful shade of green which we could never seem to capture for photographing. But one young lady from Milwaukee hearing us make this confession promptly went out into the backyard and brought one back for us. Following a cavalcade of birders one day to see a new route, we were suddenly brought to a stop by the car ahead and when we piled out to see what it was all about, found a Tarantula Spider on the ground. And then there were the flowers. Big showy ones and small ones making up for their lack in size by the brilliance of their colouring. Oleanders were in flower in every garden and by the roadsides, and wild Gaillardia turned fields to flaming red and the bright yellow of the prickly Pear Cactus made the waste places to bloom. Unfortunately, our botanical knowledge is very skimpy and we could not name a quarter of the beautiful blooms we saw but this did not lessen our interest and admiration of them.

Our stay at Rockport Cottages was something like a holiday at a Nature Camp. Mrs. Hager was always willing to help you identify any species you were unfamiliar with or help you find those species you were anxious to see. We were anxious to see Spoonbills, but the Spoonbills wouldn't come around - until the day we were leaving. That morning we had foregone making the rounds as we were busy packing and we were just making sure that the toothbrush was left handy and the winter underwear placed where we could get it in a hurry when there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Hager had rushed back from the cove to tell us that a couple of Spoonbills were feeding on the flats by the cove and Mr. and Mrs. Ernst of Boston were setting up their telescopes to get a good look. Dropping everything, we hopped in the car and drove out but when nearly there met the Ernsts coming back and they informed us that the birds flew off before they could get their scope fixed. Disappointed? Not very, for not having seen them we can still look forward to the pleasure of making their acquaintance sometime, somewhere.

Needless to say that it was with deep regret that we said goodbye to Mrs. Hager and Rockport.

R. M. Saunders,
Editor.