

THE MAY BIRD MIGRATION

By COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN
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The spring migration of birds reaches its height in May. During this month about two hundred species are to be found in the Chicago area. Of these, about half are passing through to their nesting areas farther north while the others remain to breed. There are about sixty different kinds of birds nesting in this area in May.

Birds make their long flights at night and stop to rest and feed during the day. The Chicago parks offer not only attractive stopping places for many migrants but also



Bufflehead Duck

Traveling exhibition cases such as that pictured above familiarize Chicago's 500,000 school children with migrant and native birds. The cases are circulated by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of Field Museum, and two of them go to each of more than 400 schools every two weeks.

excellent places for bird observation by students. The weather determines the length of time the migrants stay here. When May is warm the birds pass through gradually, first one species and then another. If the first part of the month is cold, however, the birds are held back farther south and then, on the first warm days, all come with a rush and stay but a short time.

More is being added each year to what little is known about bird migration. A bird is trapped alive and then released with a small numbered band on its leg. Other bird banders may trap it later and through the number learn where it came from. The bands do not injure the birds in any way.

Perhaps the most interesting birds in the May migration are the warblers, of which thirty-eight species have been recorded from this area. Besides the more somber colored birds seen in May, such as sparrows, thrushes, and flycatchers, there are the bright tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles. Many of the May migrants can be identified from the specimens in the systematic series found in Hall 21 of the Museum.

FROG VOICES IN SPRING

By KARL P. SCHMIDT
Assistant Curator of Reptiles

No sounds are more characteristic of spring than the croaking and piping of frogs from marsh and pond. These are pleasant sounds to those who love the out-of-doors with its life, and some of our Chicago frogs have truly musical voices.

It is interesting that each of the eleven kinds of frogs in the Chicago area can be distinguished by its voice alone. The smallest species, and the first to sing in March, has the loudest voice of all. This is the swamp tree frog, with three brown stripes down its back, little more than an inch in length. Its voice, resounding from the frog's distended throat, may be heard a mile away.

The spring peeper, a small tree frog with an X on its back, has a shrill musical whistle.

The voice of the common spotted meadow frog is a typical croak which does not carry to any great distance. Its spotted relative, the yellow-legged pickerel frog, has a voice often described as a prolonged snore.

The toads' high-pitched prolonged trills carry well on the still night air. The voice of the common toad has a liquid musical quality, while Fowler's toad has a disagreeable nasal cry.

The frogs heard later in the season are the small cricket frog, whose voice may be imitated accurately by striking small stones together; the green frog, with a musical "ktung" like the plucked string of a 'cello; and, lastly, the bull frog, whose deep bass voice seems so appropriate to his size. A host of species whose existence was previously unsuspected has become known since naturalists have learned to discriminate frogs by means of their voices. Specimens of various frogs found in the Chicago area, and also of others found in different localities, are on exhibition in Albert W. Harris Hall (Hall 18) of Field Museum. An effort is being made to complete the representation of the local species during the current year.

SIMULACRA

By H. W. NICHOLS
Associate Curator of Geology

Many specimens are brought to Field Museum as fossils which are not fossils at all, but accidental imitative forms called simulacra. Waterworn pebbles are often mistaken for fossil eggs, and many supposed fossils of a great variety of objects such as axes and hams are of this nature.

The most curious example was perhaps a piece of waterworn limestone which did have a superficial resemblance to the fossil baby monkey it was supposed to be. Pieces of slag found in outlying districts are often brought in on the assumption that they are meteorites. The greater number of supposed fossils brought to the Museum are concretions, or aggregations of minerals deposited from solution in many curious shapes, some of which in their general outlines resemble many familiar objects. One common kind of concretion is often mistaken for a fossil horse's hoof. Others are brought in as petrified human arms, legs and feet. Still others are mistaken for turtles or for birds' nests.

Actual fossils are often mistaken for petrifications of quite a different character. Thus a long, thin shell was thought to be a fossil bird's beak. The fossil so-called "honeycomb" coral is often taken to be a petrified honeycomb, and the long, jointed shell of a fossil mollusk is thought to be a petrified backbone.

Some of these specimens, although they are not what they are mistaken for, are nevertheless of considerable value and interest when their true nature is known. A supposed fossil hoof, for instance, proved to be a hitherto unknown species of fossil clam. During the Middle Ages, mistakes of the reverse nature were made. The classical example was that of the interpretation of fossil shells as simulacra made by the devil and placed in the rocks to dupe the innocent.

Orchid Exhibit

Various typical orchids, and the characteristics of their family, are illustrated by an exhibit in the Hall of Plant Life at Field Museum. Included is a large reproduction of a vanilla plant, which is a member of this family.

CHICAGO'S SPRING FLOWERS

By PAUL C. STANDLEY
Associate Curator of the Herbarium

After the robins and bluebirds arrive from the south, we await impatiently the appearance of their companion heralds of summer, the spring flowers. These are now in their prime around Chicago. This region is fortunate in having a plentiful supply close at hand in the forest preserves and the Indiana Dunes.

The first to appear are the pussy willows and the quaint but odoriferous skunk cabbage. These are followed shortly by the white adder's-tongues, the blue hepaticas, the waxy-white chalices of the bloodroot, and that lovely but coy blossom, the trailing arbutus, whose delightfully fragrant flowers are half hidden beneath the evergreen leaves which carpet favored glades among the sand dunes.

In the cold swamps the marsh marigolds display vivid splashes of gold among the leafless shrubbery. Soon, as the delicate velvety pink of young oak leaves begins to indicate an awakening of life in dusky branches, the woods become brilliant with varied color. Spring-beauties, blue and yellow violets, trilliums, phlox, columbine, Dutchman's breeches, shad bush, polemonium, and bluebells make our patches of wilds veritable gardens. The violet was chosen most appropriately as the state flower of Illinois, for it persists in abundance in our woodlands and prairies despite almost universal cultivation.

A little later in the spring the flowering dogwood and crabapple blossoms dominate the landscape. What could surpass in beauty the delicate pink of the crabapple thickets,



White Trillium

Exhibits of the spring flowers are taken to the 500,000 school children of Chicago by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of Field Museum. The above case is typical of these traveling exhibits, two of which go to each of more than 400 schools every two weeks.

with their delicious fragrance? Then, too, the yellow, pink, and white lady's-slippers and other rare plants, although almost extinct in this area, still may be found in secluded places.

The Museum, by means of the portable cases prepared and circulated by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension, is making it possible for the school children of Chicago to become acquainted with our spring wild flowers. Also, in the Hall of Plant Life accurate reproductions of many of our finest wild flowers acquaint visitors with the flowers to be found in rambles through the countryside of Lake Michigan.

Fresh-water Game Fishes

An exhibit of special interest to sportsmen is a collection of the fresh-water game fishes of the rivers and lakes of North America, which is to be seen in Albert W. Harris Hall of the Museum. Pike, pickerel, muskalonge, trout, sunfishes, crappies, yellow perch, salmon, and others are represented.



Standley, Paul Carpenter. 1930. "Chicago's Spring Flowers." *Field Museum news* 1(5), 3–3.

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