

On August 8, 1936, Messrs. W. E. Hurlburt of Vineland and G. J. Clout of St. Catharines, observed an American Egret at Decew Falls in Lincoln county, and on August 12th of that same year James Savage, and others of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, saw two on the ship canal feeder near Wainfleet in Welland county.

Several other occurrences in this area have already been recorded in the pages of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, and include the following references:—Two on the Niagara River bank about 5 miles from Fort Erie on

August 8, 1933 (R. W. Sheppard et al 50:97, 1936); White Herons, apparently *C. a. egretta* reported from Niagara in July-August 1930 (E. M. S. Dale 46:107, 1932), and one seen on August 15, 1928, by a party of six observers in the Wainfleet marshes of Welland county (W. E. Hurlburt, 42:210, 1928); while without specifically mentioning the area under discussion, P. A. Taverner (48:39, 1934) writes of receiving numerous reports of white herons in Southern Ontario localities during July and August 1933. — R. W. SHEPPARD, *Niagara Falls, Ontario*.

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## REVIEW

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NICE, MARGARET MORSE. STUDIES IN THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE SONG SPARROW. Vol. I. *A Population Study of the Song Sparrow. Transactions of the Linnaean Society of New York, Vol. IV, April, 1937.*

Natural history is — in many scientific laboratories — a term of mild opprobrium. If one wished to date the origins of this stigma, he would have to read hundreds of publications, but if one wished to date its termination he might well read only one: Mrs. Nice's "Life History of the Song Sparrow." If field ornithology has produced any science, this is it. In it is exhibited a complete and convincing integration of the field observation, controlled experimentation, and scientific deduction.

Robert Cushman Murphy (whose own work, "Oceanic Birds of South America," could well compete with the present volume as the ornithological book of the year) quotes a French encyclopedia, vintage 1868, as saying, "The natural history of penguins may be considered complete." Mrs. Nice has given an astonishing demonstration of how incomplete is our natural history, even of the most ordinary back-yard birds. She marshals her evidence on question after question in bird physiology, psychology, and ecology which the old-fashioned field naturalist has hardly heard of, and which the

laboratory scientist has discussed only in terms of white rats, guinea pigs, and fruit flies. This feat of moving laboratory methods into the outdoors is made possible by the individual identification of an entire song sparrow population by means of coloured and numbered leg bands.

Mrs. Nice's conclusions challenge many an investigator to extend or verify his work. She finds, for example, that spring migration is correlated with temperature rather than sunlight, thus seeming to contradict Rowan's experiments (though her definitions of sunlight are a bit ambiguous). She amplifies the work of Lorenz on thresholds of effectiveness for stimuli to behaviour, and on the fixed sequences which seem to inhere in the behaviour-pattern. She corroborates Kendeigh and Baldwin on the physiological expressions of temperature. She contributes many new measurements of mortality, reproduction, longevity, and the general mechanism of population-maintenance.

Not the least significant aspect of this monograph is its human circumstance. Mrs. Nice is an amateur. No one paid her to blaze a new by-path for ornithological science, or to search the libraries of the world for its direction and route. Many a full-staffed museum and university has searched longer and done less.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *University of Wisconsin*.





Leopold, Aldo. 1937. "Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow, by Margaret Nice Morse [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 51(8), 126–126.  
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