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OGDEN, IOWA

Apr 11 1928

Phil DuMont

New York, N.Y.

Dear Phil:-

Your letter arrived some time ago and I have been trying ever since to get a minute to scratch a reply to you but it seems that I am busy all the time.

Your father dropped in on me this morning on his way to Dennison and that reminded me again that I had not written you so I am going to get busy RIGHT NOW.

Your letter stated that my letter made you homesick and I want to confess that when I get one of your long "epistles" it makes me wish that you were back here with us again. I am looking forward to the month of June when we will expect "Mutt and Jeff" to drop in at our back kitchen door some evening all ready for the morning hike the following day at daybreak.

Bird work has started off with a rush this spring and if this keeps up I will beat my last years record of 112 field trips with 267 hours in the field.

My list so far is not so large however since I only have 74 varieties. I have a nest of the Barred Owl on which I have spent some time and it is proving most interesting and so far has upset a lot of "dope" given us by the so called authorities.

The nest was found on Mar 16th in a stump about 15 ft from the ground. It contained three eggs the first of which hatched on Apr 5th, the second one on Apr 8th and the third one Apr 9th.

We are checking up the food contents of this nest every day and find that this bird does considerable damage. For instance the nest to day contained the following:- Robin 1 ; Bluebird 2 ; Junco 5 ; Blackbird or Cowbird (?) 2; Yellowbellied Sapsucker 1 (entire) hindparts of two whitefooted mice and one whole mouse of same variety. Fourteen birds and rodents in the nest at one time. In addition to the above we have also found remains of a mole also a Goldfinch.

I have always been led to believe that this bird was a very useful one but I am beginning to change my mind.

Kenneth asked me to prepare something for the Ames meeting and I am thinking seriously of talking of this bird as the family will just about be raised by that time and I will have some real "dope" on them. You asked me a lot of questions about those geese and I will try to answer to the best of my ability.

First:- The way we indentified them in the field was through our 8 x glasses and furthermore they came mostly right over us or at least so close that we could distinguish between the Canadian and Blue with the naked eye. The Blue Geese could always be distinguished by their white heads while the Canadian as you know has the black head with only a small white spot on it. It was a clear bright day and the bright sunlight upon those white heads of the Blue Geese made a wonderful sight. They were probably 200 to 1000 yards away but always plainly discernable through the glasses.



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I could not distinguish between their calls nor did I try as we were kept so busy otherwise identifying them and trying to count them. We would count 50 or 100 in the wedge and then estimate the total number in the wedge from that by proportion. They were in flocks of from 25 to 800.

We could always hear them coming in from the south before we saw them and would get ready with our glasses. Bennett had his Graflex and was shooting straight up at the closest flocks and I assure ^{you} that we were a pretty excited pair for about six hours. We would both count and estimate and whenever a flock came low enough he would take a shot with the Graflex.

I suppose that a person might give their calls a little more study one might distinguish between them but it was rather hard as they were all mixed flocks. The snow geese were mixed with the other flocks and could be plainly seen without glasses in most cases.

On Sunday April 1st Junior, Bob Walker, Sydney Walker and I drove to Long Pond where we met the Des Moines Bird Club in their spring hike. It was a great day for me as I listed three new birds on my life list and a total for the day of 55 varieties. Good for Apr 1st, I thought. I presume that Kenneth has written you all about it so this part of my letter may not be new for you.

I listed 12 varieties of ducks on the pond and Kenneth had 13 and Miss Mc Cabe got one that we missed so that made a total of 14 there. My list was Mallard, Pintail, Scaup, Ring Neck, Red Head, Canvasback, American Merganser, Bufflehead, Shoveller, Bluewinged Teal, Baldpate, Greenwinged Teal. We also got two flocks of Whitefronted Geese. We don't take a back seat for you New York "guys" even though you do live right by the "big pond".

The new ones for my life list in Boone County for that day were the Bufflehead, American Merganser and Ring Billed Gull. I also have had the Ring Neck Duck as new this year making four new ones for my life list or a total of 206.

When you and Kenneth come up to Ogden for that annual trip of ours I want your eagle eyes to uncover two or three others for me as I am anxious to get my life list up to 250 for Boone County and then I will compile my lists in permanent form or publish them. Considering the amount of field work that I do there should at least be some results.

I travelled all the way to Clinton last Saturday and gave my illustrated lecture and next week I am to go to Rippey and Scranton. I have now covered the State from Sioux City to Clinton and from Spirit Lake and Hampton to Iowa City so I have told some of the folks about our feathered friends anyway.

I never expect to be able to write such interesting letters as you do but I just ramble along the same as though I were talking to you and hope you will overlook all grammatical errors, blunders etc. as I have tried to put this together with people talking to me on every hand. Be sure to arrange your "itinerary" to include Ogden on your western trip for that will be the red letter day of the year for me. Best regards from us all. Hope you are well and happy and will drop me a line when you have time. Your friend,

Walter

When Nelson and DuMont go with the Biol. Survey on their expedition I hope to be included as "flunky" or cook or anything to be able to go with you