

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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Subject: WINTER-BIRDS at ORDWAY.

A question we can recall from our own childhood is: Where do the birds go in winter? The usual answer - at least here in Minnesota - is: They fly south. This answer, although it does apply, overlooks those hardy "winter residents" who share with us the rigors of our Minnesota winter and provide us with some interesting and most enjoyable bird-friendships.

It is appropriate to divide winter birds into two groups: "the migrants" and "the year-'round residents". Among the latter are the hardy English Sparrow and the Starling, both immigrants to this country; the Blue Jay; the Black-capped Chickadee; the White-breasted Nuthatch; the Cardinal. All of these birds will be found throughout the year. It is very likely that some of them "overlap", that is, they may undergo some degree of migration in the way of "shifting" so that one may not be looking at the same Chickadees and Nuthatches in winter which he saw during the summer.

The migrant winter birds are headlined by the Tree Sparrow and the Slate-colored Junco, both of which begin to make their appearance in the autumn; first come the Juncos in mid-October and then the Tree Sparrows make their saucy appearance about November 1st. Very probably the earlier arrivals continue further south and are replaced by later arrivals who stay the winter through. They are cheery little creatures who feed on the ground, being seed-eaters. Other less predictable migrants are the Redpoll, which travels in good-sized flocks, often intermixing with Tree Sparrows and/or Juncos. (Next time you see a bunch of "sparrows" look closely for some differences among them.) Last year (1972-73) there were no Redpolls at Ordway but they are fairly numerous this winter. It is not rare for the American Goldfinch to put in an appearance at various times during the winter although he will be in his non-flashy winter plumage, sometimes mingling amongst flocks of other small birds.



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