



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 129

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

BIRD OBSERVATION at ORDWAY.

After almost fifteen years at Ordway one can look back upon changes. Some of these changes are visible ones, others are not so easily discernible. One change which is more subtle than most others is that of the bird population. Particularly during the past two spring migrations there has been a decline both in numbers and in species of birds observed passing through on their annual movement northward. This may not be a firm indicator of an actual decline in species although there have been similar reports from elsewhere in this region. Other factors - principally changes in the weather cycles - have a strong effect on these movements, often causing the birds to move by more easterly routes (if there is a late blizzard or other severe weather in Nebraska and Iowa) or more westerly (if in Illinois/Iowa).

Looking at the birds each year one observes the primordial repetition of the life cycle: courtship, nest-building, egg deposition, the wonder of the newly-hatched life. The transition from the carefully-tended egg through the ugly and pathetically helpless nestling to the ultimately well-feathered fledgling leaving the nest to mingle with the adults is of never-ending wonder and joy.

As I look back across the years it is apparent that it is I who have changed, not the birds. They are always young; they do not show the ravages of time nor the infirmities of age. The Robin which I saw yesterday is no different than one I viewed more than fifty years ago in my boyhood. He is still chipper, cocky, perky and alert - quite in contrast to his confraternal observer. Seeing him again is perennially rejuvenating.

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist

May 30, 1985