

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

Ordway Bulletin No. 41

Subject: GRADUATION DAY at ORDWAY.

News Item: In colorful exercises held in the Field House on Snelling Ave. 316 students received diplomas today from Macalester College.....

On the same day (May 23rd) at the Ordway Campus four more were graduated to a new life. They were all residents of the same dormitory and had matriculated about a month before (34 days to be exact), having been placed there by a most interested couple after a beautiful courtship during which they had personally selected this location for their upcoming family. The dormitory selected was Nesting-Box No. 16, a rustic, drab-looking structure but pleasantly situated overlooking a meadow and surrounded by shrubs and bushes.

They were restless the final day or two but still remained tucked in the nest where they were brooded and fed by their attentive and careful parents. In the latter part of the afternoon the parents, who had spent much of the day in coaxing, even scolding, were able to invoke one of the nestlings to come to the box-opening and peek outward into the new world; their success stopped there, however, for a couple of hours. Undaunted and hopeful, the two adult birds perched on a small willow nearby and in their soft but insistent voices continued to call to their youngsters. Finally - it was past 5:00 o'clock - one of the young birds pushed himself through the opening and with much fluttering of wings half-flew, half-glided to a nearby weed stalk to which he clung precariously while discovering his balance faculties; he then began to make insistent and protestatious peepings. All this produced great excitement in the parent birds and apparently did not go unnoticed inside the nesting-box for soon there appeared a second and a third sibling to follow the Intrepid One. (Number Four spent the remainder of the day and night "in the sack" but was gone by mid-morning of the next day.)

Monday, the 24th, found an empty "dormitory" and a covey of increasingly skillful neophytes-in-flight around the Ordway Campus. Incidentally, the family name of this proud group is *Sialia sialis*, most commonly rendered as Eastern Bluebird.

As in almost all graduations there were preludes to this particular affair. The previous Monday there had been a graduation of four precocious Bluebird nestlings; in the subsequent week these were joined by four more (dullard?) Bluebirds and seven diminutive but aggressive Chickadees who graduated from Dormitory #7. Incidentally, a new class is just now enrolling and this consists of a yet-to-be-determined number of Wrens, who should make it to graduation by mid-summer.



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