



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 109

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

A POSTAGE STAMP at ORDWAY.

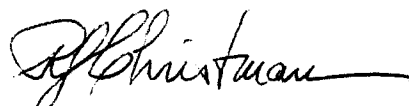
Recently there came a letter which carried one of the new postage stamps issued to depict the several state birds and flowers. The stamp showed our state bird, the Common Loon - which is not so common and not quite so "loony". The Showy Lady's Slipper added a further touch of "class" to the stamp and I found myself making comparisons with the stamps depicting other states' birds and flowers. There are some interesting observations about these and the attitudes of the different parts of our nation.

In all there are 28 species of birds (only 27 if one gets a little "sticky" about Barnyard Fowls). In general, the birds seem to have been selected because of their common occurrence locally (Mockingbirds in the South; Meadowlarks in the West) or even some historical context (the California Gull, which is credited with saving the crops of the early Utah settlers threatened by the appearance of swarms of grasshoppers).

Seven states have selected the Cardinal as their representative bird. The Western Meadowlark represents six, the Mockingbird five and Bluebirds four states - the Mountain Bluebird for two western states and the Eastern Bluebird for two in the east/middle west. The common Robin is representative of three of the states and the flashy Goldfinch plays that role in three midwestern states. The feisty Chickadee represents two states. The remaining - twenty in all - have unique avian representatives. This is understandable for such states as New Mexico (Roadrunner) and Arizona (Cactus Wren), where the birds are singularly significant in their locales. Two of the states - Delaware and Rhode Island - indicate the early settlers' self-dependence on their own poultry by recognizing two varieties of the Barnyard Fowl (hence a single species, if one wants to get persnickety about such things).

I contemplate with some poignancy the fact that I have never observed our state bird on the premises at Ordway. There is not much doubt that they do put down on our lake and little pond during the migration to and from their northern nesting-places but they can be rather secretive and moreover during their migrating they are much less inclined to indicate their presence by the yodeling laughter of their wild and haunting calls. I like the Loon as our state bird and anticipate the pleasure of observing them here in the stretches of Ordway.

July 12, 1982
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R. J. CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist