



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

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Inver Grove Heights, Minn. 55075
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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 86

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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

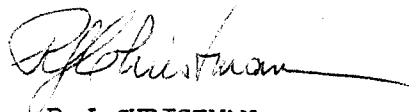
LONG-TIME STRANGER at ORDWAY.

It is not unusual for birds which we have banded to return again and again. In fact, it is an established fact that nesting-birds usually return to the nesting-place of their previous summer. This apparently applies also to the offspring of many species which tend to return to their native environs.

It was unusual, therefore for me to recapture on one blustery Sunday morning in April (1980) a very active individual whom we had encountered first and for the only time in September of 1975. The hiatus of $4\frac{1}{2}$ years casts an aura of mystery about this beautiful and uncomplicated-looking Field Sparrow. It is very likely that he had returned - hadn't I heard him singing his shrill but beautifully-liquid trill from the small trees and shrubs at the meadow's-edge??? Hadn't I seen him quietly flitting from one clump of prairie grass to another, sometimes clinging to the bending shafts while continuing to trill his beautiful strains? He was irresistible each spring as he returned and filled the meadow with his cheery songs and it was always a treat to hear him again and to see his tiny body with his head thrown back and his throat pulsating as he gave forth his spring song.

Yet maybe it was not this one (#1340-33701) which I saw in the intervening years. Maybe he had indeed sought other environs for his intermediate years and now, grown old (five is a lot of years for this species), he had returned for yet another summer at the place of his nativity (he had been a newly-fledged bird when first encountered). He had remained out of sight for a long time. How I look forward to the possibility of encountering him again in 1981 when another spring will stir his instincts to return, if only he can, to Ordway's haunts!

Sept. 12, 1980


R J CHRISTMAN
Naturalist