

FEATHERED VICTIMS OF THE AUTOMOBILE

BY CHAS. J. SPIKER.

During the year 1926, the writer covered over 3,500 miles by bicycle within the state of Iowa. Let me say at the outset that there is no better means to an ornithological end than a bicycle, provided one is willing to "work his passage." Of course, one must not be in a hurry, but the greater charm of a birding expedition by wheel is in being able to browse along by the wayside, stopping easily for a closer inspection of something that catches the eye, and pushing the steed up a hill that defies both leg and lung power. But even the last has its compensations, for I have found few hills that did not have two sides, and the coast down the decline, with the breezes sweeping by one's ears, is an exhilaration not to be found in any other way.

Perhaps 3,500 miles may look a bit unreasonable to the average reader, but if you take the trouble to place a map of Iowa before you as you read this article, I shall outline the itineraries of the various trips I made during the year.

During the spring vacation, when I was a student at Morningside College, Sioux City, I spent the first five days of April pedalling, covering about three hundred miles and visiting the following cities: Ida Grove, Jefferson, Anita, Atlantic, Harlan, Denison, returning to Sioux City.

On June 11 I commenced a tour which took me along the outside tier of counties on three sides of the state when I passed through the following cities, by which the trip may be traced on the map: Missouri Valley, Sidney, Clarinda, Mt. Ayr, Leon, Keosauqua, Keokuk, Burlington, Muscatine, Davenport, Maquoketa, Dubuque, McGregor, Waukon, Cresco, finishing at New Hampton, where I spent part of the summer. The month of August was spent in Winthrop, about seventy-five miles southeast of New Hampton, and the trip to and from that point was made by wheel.

I was to take up my teaching at Ashton on the first Monday in September, and on August 28 I set out for that place, stopping at a number of places enroute. The trip covered about two hundred miles and carried me through the following towns: Waverly, Iowa Falls, Blairsburg, thence north through Garner to Forest City, west through Estherville, Spirit Lake and Sibley, to Ashton.

The trips here described do not, of course, account for the whole of the 3500 miles. During the spring and fall months, while in school, I rode on the average of fifty miles per week; and practically all weekends, when the weather permitted, were spent in the field.

It was not until June 11, however, when I commenced the around-the-state journey, that it occurred to me to keep a record of the birds found dead in the road. From June 11 until the first of the present year the dead birds which I found in the road, and which I think it reasonably safe to say were killed by automobiles, number twenty-eight species and 277 individuals. In keeping such a list, I noted the kind of road on which the carcasses were found, whether dirt, graveled, or paved; the county in which found, the date, and whether the birds were immature or adult. Perhaps the best way to give a summarized report is by means of the following table:

Species	Road			Age		Total
	Dirt	Gravel	Paved	Adult	Imm.	
King Rail	---	---	1	---	1	1
Carolina Rail	---	3	---	3	---	3
Killdeer	1	---	---	---	1	1
Prairie Chicken	---	1	---	1	---	1
Hungarian Partridge	---	1	---	1	---	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	---	10	2	12	---	12
Mourning Dove	1	1	---	2	---	2
Screech Owl	1	13	2	16	---	16
Red-headed Woodpecker	4	21	13	36	2	38
Flicker	2	9	3	14	---	15
Kingbird	---	2	---	2	---	2
Meadowlark	1	2	---	3	---	3
Bobolink	1	---	---	1	---	1
Red-winged Blackbird	1	---	2	3	---	3
Bronzed Grackle	1	1	---	2	---	2
Blue Jay	---	2	---	2	---	2
Crow	---	3	---	3	---	3
Prairie Horned Lark	---	1	---	1	---	1
Goldfinch	1	1	---	2	---	2
English Sparrow	48	62	44	154	---	154
Dickcissel	1	---	1	2	---	2
Migrant Shrike	2	---	---	1	1	2
Barn Swallow	---	2	---	2	---	2
American Pipit	1	---	---	1	---	1
Brown Thrasher	2	---	---	2	---	2
Catbird	1	---	---	1	---	1
Chickadee	1	---	---	1	---	1
Robin	2	1	1	3	1	4
Totals	72	136	69	271	6	277

The fact that the greatest number were found on gravelled roads does not mean that more birds are killed on gravelled roads; but most of the mileage covered was on gravel, while the least was on paved roads.

I was much surprised at the end of the year's riding to find the list embracing so many different species, but I did not find them all, for I have since learned of others still that have been found. It will be interesting to continue these findings over a period of years for the sake of comparison.

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