



MARGARET MORSE NICE, 1883-1974

## IN MEMORIAM: MARGARET MORSE NICE

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With the death of Margaret Morse Nice, American ornithologists lost one of their most sincere, dedicated, and in many respects most knowledgeable and interesting colleagues. A person of contrasts, she was usually rather demure, soft spoken, and reserved, but could become assertive and somewhat opinionated when convinced that she was in the right or had been misunderstood.

Margaret was born in Amherst, Massachusetts on December 6, 1883, the daughter of Anson D. Morse, Professor of History at Amherst College, and Margaret Duncan (Ely). The fourth child in a family of seven, she had two older brothers, Ely and William, an older sister Sarah, a younger sister Katherine, and two younger brothers, Harold and Edward.

Amherst in 1883 was a rural community of approximately 5,000 inhabitants. The college provided an intellectual environment. The Morse family lived on Northampton Road in a secluded house surrounded by two acres with an abundance of shrubs and fruit trees. A large barn housed at various times a horse, chickens, rabbits, cats, and a dog. Such a pastoral environment appears to have awakened in the young Margaret an absorbing interest in nature. She attended grade and high school in Amherst and entered Mt. Holyoke College at South Hadley with the class of 1905. She did not graduate and receive her B.A. degree until 1906 because of an interruption of a year's study abroad. She spent the winter of 1903-04 with her maternal step-grandmother in Italy and the summer of 1904 in travel with her family in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and England.

Apparently her interest and aptitude in languages developed early. At Holyoke she took courses in German, French, Italian, English, and Latin. Throughout her year's study abroad she had ample opportunity to increase her knowledge of languages, especially during the winter in Italy with her step-grandmother. This thorough training in several languages was of great help in her later ornithological researches. Throughout her freshman and sophomore years she displayed a deep interest in languages, and her interest in the natural sciences did not become apparent until her junior and senior years. This interest in nature was cultivated and heightened in part by two teachers—Henrietta Edgecomb Hooker, Professor of Botany, and Mignon Talbot, Professor of Geology and Geography.

In 1906 she entered Clark University at Worcester, where she was a Fellow in 1907-09. In 1909 Margaret married Leonard Blaine Nice, also a graduate student at Clark, who received a Ph.D. in physiology there in 1911. After obtaining his degree, the Nices moved to the vicinity of Harvard Medical School, Boston, where Blaine (as he was known to his friends) was an instructor until 1913. Then they moved to Oklahoma, where from 1913 to 1927 Blaine was a professor and head of the Physiology Department at the University of Oklahoma. In 1915 Margaret returned to Clark to receive her M.A. in zoology for her study done six years earlier on "The Food of the Bob-white." In 1927 they moved to The Ohio State University of Columbus where Blaine was Professor of Physiology until 1936. His last faculty assignment, from 1936 until his retirement in 1952, was as Professor of Physiology and Chairman of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at the Chicago Medical School. In 1950 he became Professor Emeritus.

In the following, I have tried to outline those factors that may have been responsible for developing Mrs. Nice into the outstanding ornithologist she was. Citing the subjects of many of her publications shows what phases of ornithology interested her during given periods of her life.

*The years 1906–1913.*—The greater part of this period was spent in Massachusetts, and there is little evidence of her showing a serious interest in birds before 1907. In 1910 Margaret published in *The Journal of Economic Entomology* an article on the "Food of the Bob-white," in which she acknowledged her indebtedness to "Dr. C. F. Hodge under whose direction the work was done" and that "it was the result of more than two years [1908 and 1909] research." This interesting article reveals that she had already begun to organize her data, place it in readable form, and to use graphs, tables, and bibliographies properly. It foreshadows her tremendous ability for concentration during long periods of time, her patience in observing and recording data, including minute details, and her consuming interest in behavior, also her determination to publish as much as possible of what she observed.

*The years 1913–1927.*—After moving to Oklahoma, Margaret became much interested in child psychology, on which she published 18 articles between 1915 and 1933. These concerned her own children and described the development of their vocabularies, the attainment and length of a sentence, the speech of a left-handed child, and the conversations of children with adults on such subjects as nature and bird study.

Margaret's daughter, Marjorie, assured me that her mother had been interested in birds since childhood and added that she became involved in writing about birds in Oklahoma because of a letter claiming that the open season on Mourning Doves should begin in September, as the birds were then no longer nesting. Margaret knew that they were nesting in Oklahoma at that season and became involved. From the 1931 revised edition of *The Birds of Oklahoma*, in sections entitled "Itineraries" and "Reports of Field Workers in the State," we learn that although the Nices "came to Norman in 1913, unfortunately we did not keep many notes until August 1919."

In 1921 she published in the *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science*, *Condor*, *Wilson Bulletin*, and *Bird Lore* articles relative to Mourning Doves, birds about wet-weather ponds, bird observations during a mild winter, the Brown-headed Nuthatch, a white Cowbird, and several bird counts. In 1922 in addition to the usual *Bird Lore* counts, she published in some of the above-mentioned journals and the *Oologist* accounts of the behavior of Swainson's Hawk, new birds for Oklahoma, and the first of a two-part study of the nesting of Mourning Doves (*Auk*), the second part appearing in 1923. Also in 1923 she published nesting records from 1920 to 1923 in the vicinity of Norman.

In 1924 appeared her first major publication, *The Birds of Oklahoma*, authored by Leonard Blaine and Margaret Morse Nice. It consisted of 122 pages and received favorable reviews. She also published jointly with Blaine on the Red-backed Sandpiper and Hudsonian Godwit in Oklahoma. As sole author she published upon the extension of range of the Robin and Arkansas Kingbird in Oklahoma and also on nesting records from Norman between 1920 and 1922, which contained data on 612 nests.

As was their custom for several years, usually in the summers the Nice family visited temporarily in Massachusetts, where Margaret spent much of her time in studying passerine bird behavior. In 1925 she published on changes in the bird life in the vicinity of Amherst over a 20-year period (1905–25). In 1925 she also published on birds in Cleveland County and on shorebirds in central Oklahoma.

In 1926 appeared articles on observations she made during the 1925 summer near Pelham, Massachusetts, for "long hours by the nest in the juniper, recording the doings of the exquisite little birds [Magnolia Warblers], . . . the watching of which grew to be my main occupation in life." She also published notes on the Blackburnian, Myrtle, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, usually with young, the nesting of Mourning Doves during September, and bird counts.

In 1927 she described experiences with Cardinals, Pileated Woodpeckers wintering in Oklahoma, new nesting records for Cleveland County in 1925 and 1926, bird life on a 40-acre tract in central Oklahoma, the evening bath of a flock of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, seasonal fluctuations in bird life in Oklahoma, and bird counts.

These publications show that during the latter half of the 1913-27 period, Margaret began to manifest an ever-absorbing interest in ornithology and in publishing her findings. Although her earliest publications were behavior-oriented, her early ornithological interests seem to have been in listing the various bird species and recording their abundance and distribution. During the early 1920's she began to display an ever-increasing interest, eventually amounting to almost a passion, for behavioral studies, stimulated in part by observations of captive birds kept as pets—doves and owls among others, found injured or taken from the nest. This interest in captive birds eventually crystallized into studies of passerine birds, especially finches and sparrows. The seed-eaters, although they ate animal matter when available, could be kept healthy on a diet of small seeds and cracked grains and, if necessary, could be given a supplement of tallow.

A strong influence on Margaret's ornithological career was Miss Althea Sherman of Iowa, with whom she began an exchange of letters in 1921 when Miss Sherman was 68 and Margaret 38, and continued until 1932. Upon the posthumous publication by Editor Fred J. Pierce of Miss Sherman's book "Birds of an Iowa Dooryard," Mrs. Nice published excerpts from "Some letters of Althea Sherman," (Iowa Bird Life 1952). The letters show the rapport that existed between these two women, and to what extent the younger one followed the advice given by the older.

In her letters Miss Sherman ardently advocated a search for truth, to uphold truth, to avoid the "guessing blunders by ornithologists of note" who copied "such ancient guesses as to the length of incubation periods." Learning in 1921 of Margaret's new-found interest in ferns, she warned "with a family of growing children it is fine to know everything, to be interested in everything, but we can excel in but a very limited number. If I may be permitted a word of caution it would be—Don't spread over too large a field." Miss Sherman stressed the drudgery of housework, illness and infirmities of age, distractions by visitors, and the need of humans to protect "good birds" such as the House Wren from "bad ones" such as the House Sparrow, adding that she hired small boys to remove "bad birds" from her dooryard so as to protect "the good ones."

Commenting about Miss Sherman, Mrs. Nice expressed her opinion that "It is a tragic thing that a woman of her intellect, gifts and character should have to spend so much of her time in manual labor that she could not give her message to the world. This problem is an increasingly serious one in our civilization. Our highly educated gifted women have to be cooks, cleaning women, and nursemaids. Men who could do notable research have their time wasted in mere routine. We who cherish things of the mind should face this evil and strive earnestly to give such men and women a chance to make the highest contribution to society of which they are capable."

This aptly expresses Mrs. Nice's philosophy. If Miss Sherman's philosophy did not

have a major influence upon hers, much of it at least coincided with her own. Possibly Miss Sherman's reluctance to publish until too late had a beneficial effect upon Margaret, who thereafter lost no time in publishing her researches.

*The years 1927-1936.*—In the autumn of 1927 Blaine joined the faculty of the Ohio State University, and the family moved from Oklahoma to Columbus, Ohio, to remain there until 1936. In 1927 there were five children, Constance (b. 1910), Marjorie (b. 1912), Barbara (b. 1915), Eleanor (b. 1918, d. 1928), and Janet (b. 1923). In Columbus they lived on West Patterson Avenue, about one mile north of the University. From an ornithological standpoint, this location was most fortunate. The house was several hundred yards east of the Olentangy River and approximately midway between Lane Avenue and its bridge to the south and Dodridge Street and its bridge to the north. This stretch on the east side of the river and between the two bridges Mrs. Nice named "Interpont." Until at least 1936 this area bordering the river was prime Song Sparrow habitat consisting largely of neglected fields of brush, weeds, and scattered trees.

The years 1927-36 were, in many respects, Margaret's most ornithologically productive period. She published relatively little in 1928, apparently because she was still settling the family in their new house and she devoted her spare time to completing papers on data obtained earlier. She continued her investigations of avian behavior in the field, following her custom of observing wherever she happened to be, as she did while briefly visiting Blaine's relatives in Athens, Ohio, during early September 1927. There she found and studied late nestings of the Indigo Bunting and Field Sparrow. Her experiences with these species were published in 1928, as were the twilight song of the Crested Flycatcher and notes upon Magnolia Warblers at Pelham, Massachusetts.

Many of the articles she published in 1929 and later were based on data formerly collected outside Ohio. These contained a diversity of behavioral, distributional, and physiological subjects such as the Oklahoma experiences, a nesting Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Domestic Pigeons nest hunting on a mountain top, a pair of Bell's Vireos, Harris Sparrows, weights of Mourning Doves, adventures with birds at a window shelf, and more bird counts.

In 1930 she wrote articles on Myrtle Warblers at the nest, whether birds usually change mates for the second brood, Black-throated Blue Warblers nesting, the American Egret and Anhinga in Oklahoma, and a list of birds recorded on the University of Oklahoma campus. An increasing interest in the Song Sparrow became evident with articles relative to the technique of studying its nesting and an account of the raising of five Song Sparrows with a Cowbird.

In 1932 appeared a two-part study of two nests of the Black-throated Green Warbler at Pelham, measurements of White-throated and other sparrows to determine sex, and an account of the Song Sparrow breeding season at Interpont in 1931.

The year 1933 was outstanding for two major works. One the A.O.U. printed in *Fifty Years Progress of American Ornithology 1883-1933* was entitled "The Theory of Territorialism and Its Development," and covered this field fairly adequately. The second was her first major publication on the Song Sparrow, entitled "Zür Naturgeschichte des Singammers," which the *Journal für Ornithologie* published in two parts, totaling 139 pages, the first part in 1933, the second in 1934. Some persons wondered why Mrs. Nice published her first large Song Sparrow paper in German in the *Journal für Ornithologie* instead of in English in America. Part of the answer,

at least, is found in the "Introduction of Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow I," (1937) in which she states, "I am much indebted to Dr. Erwin Stresemann for asking me to write a report of my study in the winter of 1932-33 for the *Journal für Ornithologie*." In 1932 she published the statement that this journal "is the oldest and thought by many to be the best ornithological journal in existence."

Although her many previous publications had acquainted her peers with Margaret's ornithological ability, these two major works sharply focused the attention of the ornithological world and gave her international recognition. In 1933 she also published on the wintering range of the Tufted Titmouse, remating of Robins and Carolina Chickadees, a female Bobwhite "bob-whiting," a young Cowbird as bait for the capture of its foster parents, and some ornithological experiences in Europe. Also, four additional articles on Song Sparrows, their migratory behavior, relations between the sexes, nesting success during three seasons, and the relocating of returned Song Sparrows banded as nestlings. These publications represented a major and diversified output for one year.

The 1935 publications were quite diversified with observations on Starlings and Common Grackles in relation to light, storks in trees, ornithological experiences in Europe, comments on the Eighth International Ornithological Congress, and erythrocytes and hemoglobin in the blood of some American birds (with L. B. Nice and R. McNight).

Probably because of the time needed to move the Nice family from Columbus to Chicago in 1936, she published little in 1936.

It was fortunate that the Nice family moved adjacent to Interpont in Columbus because it was there that Mrs. Nice did her fieldwork on the life history of the Song Sparrow. Throughout the 1927-36 period Margaret had four principal objectives: 1) spending innumerable hours in the field gathering data, sometimes all day or before daylight or after dark; 2) researching in the libraries housed at the Ohio State University, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus Public, or smaller libraries; 3) discussing avian problems with qualified persons; 4) working up data into manuscript form for publishing.

Two Columbus friends were Edward S. Thomas, then Curator of Natural History, Ohio Historical Society, and the late Lawrence E. Hicks of Ohio State University. During frequent visits with Dr. Thomas, they discussed Margaret's Song Sparrow progress and problems. One day she came to the Museum greatly distressed; a Song Sparrow she had previously banded and weighed many times died in her hand as she weighed it. Margaret was so disturbed that she determined not to band or weigh another bird. Dr. Thomas finally persuaded her to continue to band and weigh birds because that was an essential part of her life history study of the species.

Margaret frequently conversed with Lawrence Hicks, asking opinions concerning phases of her study, later stating in the introduction of her *Life History of the Song Sparrow I* (1937) that "Thanks are especially due to Dr. Lawrence E. Hicks." This confidence in Lawrence surprised those of us well acquainted with both—their natures were so very different.

Occasionally I was invited to her home for dinner. Armed with a list of questions relative to my Buckeye Lake work, I found the conversation quickly dominated by a discussion of her Song Sparrow problems. As had been her custom in Oklahoma, she had birds of several kinds flying about the house. I found it difficult to concentrate upon the subject at hand, especially when a Nuthatch alighted on my head or a Song

Sparrow hopped across my dinner plate. These living birds were too interesting to allow me to concentrate.

Margaret considered it a duty to inform the public concerning the natural world and to promote an appreciation of birds. She became a member of the Columbus Audubon Society and served in several official capacities, including the vice-presidency during the years 1933–36. She occasionally accompanied others on field trips, aiding the more serious-minded in methods of observing birds, and especially in noting their behavior. She occasionally gave nature talks to small groups and to larger radio audiences “To help listeners to get more joy out of life” and “to raise a host of friends for wildlife—to love and protect nature.” During her Columbus residency her interest in national organizations rapidly increased, especially in The Wilson Ornithological Society, The Cooper Ornithological Society, and The American Ornithologists’ Union.

She visited Europe twice during the 1927–36 period, the first with her family in 1932, when their objectives were for Blaine to attend the International Physiological Congress in Rome and to give their daughters a “sight-seeing and educational” experience. Although these were the stated family objectives, some of Margaret’s aims were to become acquainted personally with several European ornithologists, to visit museums and zoological gardens in Paris and Berlin, and to observe birds. The family arrived in Brittany in June, visited portions of France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy (where her “most interesting experience was visiting Prince Chigi, a zealous bird bander”) and England, and left Cambridge in mid-September to return to Columbus.

She went to Europe again with her sister Katherine in 1934 to attend meetings of the Eighth International Ornithological Congress. These began at Oxford 2 July and ended in London at The Natural History Museum on 10 July. While in London, the sisters spent “much of our time in libraries.” Margaret made several excursions to observe birds, by herself or with other ornithologists, one of which was watching seabirds from a destroyer off the coast of Wales, another by the Severn River near Tewkesbury.

*The years 1937–1974.*—When the Nices left Columbus to live in Chicago, Margaret’s life pattern became somewhat modified. Between 1920 and 1936 she had spent much of her time in the field, observing and collecting data. After 1936 except for short periods when outside Chicago, she had little opportunity to watch living birds. She wrote to her daughter, Marjorie, “a great city is no proper home for me. We had no birds around our home but English Sparrows. I visited Jackson Park a good deal on foot and kept ‘censuses’ of the birds seen. On Sundays we often drove out to Orland to see the birds on the lake. But most of my work was desk work.”

It must have been discouraging to have no birds about except House Sparrows after so many years of country living, but the lack of opportunity to study living birds about her home gave her more time for library research, to write hundreds of reviews, and to complete such major works as *Studies on the Life History of the Song Sparrow I and II* and *Development of Behavior in Precocial Birds*. Much of her writings after 1937 were based on observations made previously.

During 1937 she published an article on the curious ways of the Cowbird and Part I of the life history of the Song Sparrow in the *Transactions of the Linnean Society of New York*.

In 1938 she published an excellent article in German on the significance of temperature upon the activity of Song Sparrows; also the biological significance of bird weights, notes on Mourning Doves, territory and nesting of Song Sparrows, an

account of the Ninth International Ornithological Congress, and an increasing number of reviews.

Behavior dominated her 1939 publications, such as the territorial song and nonterritorial behavior of goldfinches, behavior of a young cowbird, and what determines the time of the Song Sparrow's awakening song (somewhat similar to the 1938 article in German); also a major work, *The Watcher at the Nest*.

Two of the four articles appearing in 1940 concerned European birds—those of a Hungarian lake and the Golden Oriole. The others described a Louisiana spring and anting by the Song Sparrow (with Joost Ter Pelkwyk).

By 1941 she continued publishing observations obtained before leaving Columbus—enemy recognition by the Song Sparrow (with Joost Ter Pelkwyk), behavior of a young Cedar Waxwing, courtship in various bird species, Robins and Cowbird eggs, and a spring and winter hawk census from Illinois to Oklahoma.

In 1942 Margaret was confined to bed with what was thought to be a heart condition, but later considered to be a misdiagnosis. That year she wrote reviews and completed her Sparrow II manuscript. This appeared in 1942 under the titles *Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow II*, *The Behavior of the Song Sparrow and Other Passerines*, published as Volume VI in the *Transactions of the Linnean Society of New York*. She also published accounts of a bald Song Sparrow, laying rhythm of Cowbirds, and competition between Starlings and woodpeckers.

Probably because of illness she published little in 1944 except reviews, *The Robins at Interpont*, and *Spring Comes in January*. Brief articles appeared in 1945 including a Cowbird anting, number of times a Song Sparrow sings, accounts of seven baby birds in Altenberg, and adventures at a feeding shelf. In 1946 she wrote on the weights of resident and winter visitant Song Sparrows and phases of growth in the passerines, also an obituary for a co-worker, Joost Ter Pelkwyk. In 1947 there appear to have been only an obituary for James Schenk and reviews.

By 1946 Mrs. Nice's improved health made possible excursions outside Chicago for the purposes of traveling and studying bird behavior. This resulted in 1948 in articles concerning spring in Arkansas, a trip through Arizona deserts and mountains, and a nesting of the Carolina Wren, the latter co-authored with her friend, the late Mrs. Ruth Thomas. Also an article concerning observations made in 1939 upon the Song Sparrows at Wintergreen Lake, Michigan, plus reviews.

In 1949 she published on a 1948 spring visit to California, the laying rhythm of Cowbirds, and the question of sexual dominance in birds. In June of 1949 Mrs. Nice was delighted to find the nest of a Red-eyed Vireo in Jackson Park, and she published an account of it in 1950. She also published several brief articles, reviews, and an obituary for Harold Michener. An article concerning a first trip in 1950 to Florida and one on potholes and prairies, the latter with Constance as co-author, plus reviews, appear to be the output in 1951.

In 1952 her output showed considerable variety, including accounts of the breeding birds in Jackson Park, a baby Sora Rail, a 1951 trip to Riding Mountain and Delta Marsh with Constance as co-author, and the song of the hand-raised Meadowlarks. A major contribution appeared in the *American Midland Naturalist* on the breeding biology of the Purple Martin. In addition she published excerpts of letters to her from Althea Sherman and three poems.

The publications in 1953 ranged from why one should love vultures, the incubation periods of birds of prey, question of 10-day incubation periods in birds, experiences in



imprinting ducklings, to the earliest mention of territory. The publications of 1954 concerned an account of the incubation periods throughout the ages and problems of incubation periods in North America. In addition, she drew line drawings of newly hatched and young birds for her daughter Constance's article in *Nature Magazine*, "Bird Babes of Delta Marsh." In 1955 she wrote a brief account of a Blue Jay anting with hot chocolate and soap suds.

In 1957, her 75th year, the number of annual publications, except reviews, began to decline. In this year an article appeared upon the nesting success in altricial birds. Two contributions in 1959 concerned head-scratching movements in birds (*Auk*) and head-scratching in passerines (*Ibis*), both with W. E. Schantz as co-author. In 1961 she published on the belligerency of a pair of Wood Pewees and a nesting of the Least Flycatcher, the latter co-authored with N. E. Collias.

In 1962 she published on the displays and songs of a hand-raised Eastern Meadowlark and a major work on the development of behavior in precocial birds. Articles in 1963 consisted of her debt to Konrad Lorenz and concerning the Russian contribution to anting and feather mites with the senior author, Leon Kelso.

In 1964 Mrs. Nice had a second eye operation, which may have accounted for no publications except the reprinting of her population studies by Dover Publications. In 1965 a brief article appeared on the displays and songs of a hand-raised Eastern Meadowlark. Dover Publications reprinted *The Watcher at the Nest* in 1967. In 1968 she contributed 11 pages upon the Mississippi Song Sparrow to A. C. Bent *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, etc.* an appropriate ending to a long list of publications, but she continued writing reviews for Bird-Banding until 1971.

Although Mrs. Nice had become a recognized ornithologist through her publications prior to 1933, it was the three monographs on the life history of the Song Sparrow, published between 1933 and 1943, that established her reputation as an outstanding ornithologist. Professor Niko Tinbergen praised her Song Sparrow work highly. A letter he wrote her on her seventieth birthday expresses his opinion nicely; "In a long life you have found reward not only in the home circle for all your cares and sacrifices, but with remarkable creative power you have served science. Through your works you have become known to ornithologists throughout the entire world as the one who laid the foundation for the population studies now so zealously persecuted." In a recent letter to me Ernst Mayr wrote of her work and especially of the Song Sparrow, "I have always felt that she, almost single-handedly, initiated a new era in American ornithology and the only effective countermovement against the list chasing movement. She early recognized the importance of a study of bird *individuals* because this is the only method to get reliable life history data. She was one of the first people in this country (? the first) to analyze a local deme. In other words she pioneered left and right, at least as far as the U.S. is concerned."

At the suggestion of William Vogt, Margaret wrote a semipopular work, *The Watcher at the Nest*, which she dedicated to Constance Nice, Katherine Moore, and William Vogt. The contents consisted largely of portions of her studies of the Song Sparrow, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, cowbird, and warblers. Reviews were largely favorable, but Margaret wrote her daughter that the book was a failure—too pessimistic an opinion, as evidenced by the fact that in 1967 Dover Publications issued a paperback edition.

The reviews of *The Role of Territory in Bird Life* indicated that it covered the subject adequately. When approached to write concerning the breeding biology of the

Purple Martin, Mrs. Nice declined because she "had so little firsthand knowledge of the species." Later she changed her mind, and collaborated with R. W. Allen upon a publication that was well received.

The development of behavior in precocial birds includes 19 pages of sketches drawn by the author, which were also published as a separate. Margaret had taken drawing lessons as a child but "displayed no aptitude." Returning to Chicago from Columbus by train in 1946 she "busied" herself by sketching passing trees. Thus began another intellectual endeavor, resulting in the publication of line drawings and stipplings of plants and animals in several articles and in lovely individual Christmas cards and letters to friends.

In her early publications she designated individual birds with such symbols as  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ ; later increasingly using descriptive names and endearments on titled and text such as a "baby Sora Rail." I found it a little incongruous to read in a learned discussion about father, mother, and the children and about divorces between father and mother birds. Her love for living things was apparent, as it was in the article on why one should love vultures.

If a complete list of Mrs. Nice's publications exists, I have not seen it. The best estimates are that she published more than 250 titles on birds in scientific journals, 7 of book length, and 3,313 (her count) reviews of the works of others. Her need to communicate with others, to tell them what she had learned, knew, thought, and did, apparently was a compelling force expressing itself not only in publications but through correspondence and the spoken word to groups or individuals. In 1952 her correspondence file contained the names of 130 foreigners and 220 Americans. To some she wrote dozens of letters.

She could not have accomplished as much as she did without her working knowledge of several languages, which enabled her to cover much of the field of natural science and to prepare large and valuable bibliographies, some containing several hundred citations, a major contribution in themselves. To accomplish so much she had to have a marked ability to produce acceptable scripts with no or few rewritings. Under such circumstances, some errors could be expected.

As she grew older, Mrs. Nice became increasingly outspoken, especially in correspondence, concerning her opinion of all who did not agree with her, these included presidents, senators and other politicians, conservationists, and the public in general. In correspondence and in print she condemned the unrestricted use of pesticides, killing of albatrosses on Midway Island, and misuse of wildlife refuges. She wrote in *Nature Magazine*, to several newspapers, many senators, and conservationists concerning the proposed taking over part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge by the Army.

Remembering her objections to scientific collecting, I was amused to learn that Mrs. Nice had collected birds. During a testimonial dinner given for Ludlow Griscom in 1953 he commented, "Consider that remarkably gifted woman, Margaret Morse Nice, the great student of life histories. She has no advanced degrees, never had any museum connections, never shot a bird or did any taxonomic work, spent her life running a home and raising four children on a meager budget. No one now fails to call her an ornithologist, and it shows what persistence, determination and interest can do." In a letter to the editor of the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society* she replied, "in regard to Mr. Ludlow Griscom's kind tribute to me, may I make a few corrections? I have an M.A. from Clark University, 1915; I have prepared bird skins and done

considerable work on the bird collections in the Museum of the University of Oklahoma; and I have shot a few birds." It is true that she never earned a Ph.D., was never a faculty member of a university, received few or no grants and little secretarial assistance. To have made so great a contribution without these presumed necessary requirements makes her achievements all the more noteworthy. She appeared to be very sensitive about this lack and especially resented being referred to as a housewife. Several of us have heard her exclaim, "I am *not* a housewife, I am a *trained zoologist*." Undoubtedly she was both.

The Chicago years appear to have been less satisfactory than the earlier ones for studying living birds. Repeatedly in conversation and correspondence she remarked how much she missed daily contact with birds and especially those of Interpont. She traveled as much as health permitted, visiting relatives and friends, localities where she had formerly lived, and others more distant such as Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Baja California, and Canada. Her daughter, Constance, frequently accompanied her, as she did to the Delta Waterfowl Research station in Manitoba, Canada. On one of the Delta trips they digressed somewhat by "going by way of Yellowstone Park."

Her last European visit was in 1938 to attend the Ninth International Ornithological Congress at Rouen and Paris, visits to the Natural History Museum, Jean Delacour's home and zoological park, the vicinity of Jumieges and Camargue, France, and Lake Lalence, Hungary. Later she spent a month with the Konrad Lorenz family at their home at Altenberg, where Dr. Lorenz taught her how to raise baby altricial birds.

Mrs. Nice continued, but with decreasing frequency, to attend scientific meetings—in 1950 at Buffalo, New York and Minneapolis, Minnesota, the latter making her "very weary." In 1952 attending the North American Wildlife Conference, she found "but few friends." In 1954 she attended the A.O.U. meeting at Madison, Wisconsin writing, "I never enjoyed an A.O.U. meeting more than this one." She was unable to attend the 1957 A.O.U. meetings at Cape May, New Jersey, but did attend the Cooper Society meetings while visiting her daughters Barbara and Janet in California.

Letters to friends during the 1950's disclosed that "the reading and reviewing of behavior papers" for various journals, including fifteen or more for *Bird-Banding* per quarter, was becoming "rather burdensome;" also that she must not do things in a hurry because having done so recently necessitated the rewriting of a manuscript. She continued to be very vocal in her denunciations in the widespread use of DDT, other insecticides and herbicides, methods of controlling the fire ant, and in attempting to save the Dinosaur National Monument and Indiana sand dunes. In 1965 after a second eye operation, she wrote that she "must cut down on activities, I am sorry to say." At that time, she was 81.

Among her many good qualities was her willingness to assist others, especially younger ornithologists and especially during the latter half of her life when she had become well-known. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the important role her husband played in Margaret's becoming a trained zoologist. Blaine supplied the moral support, encouragement, and monies for her travels and attendance at meetings and for conducting her researches. It was apparent to those who knew him that he was willing to sacrifice his free time so that she could pursue her researches. By 1950 he had become unwell, Margaret stating that the trip to Oklahoma had been "hard on Blaine." Later, in 1952, she wrote that he was "feeling fine" again.

Mrs. Nice's memberships in scientific societies and honors from these organizations

were manifold. In 1907, as Margaret Morse of Clark University, she became an associate of the American Ornithologists' Union, remaining in that category until 1910. In 1920, as Margaret M. Nice, she rejoined as an associate, was elected a member in 1931, a fellow in 1937, and later became a life fellow. In 1942 she received the Union's Brewster Medal for her studies of the Song Sparrow. She served on the Committee on Research from 1942 until 1953.

She became a member of the Wilson Ornithological Club (later Society) in 1921, was a council member from 1929 until 1931, a second Vice-President from 1934 to 1936, first Vice President in 1937, and President in 1938 and 1939, thereby becoming the first and only woman to serve as President of any major American ornithological society. She was an Associate Editor of *The Wilson Bulletin* from 1939 to 1949. In 1969 the Society, wishing to fund a grant, the monies to be given to self-trained amateur researchers, decided to further honor her by establishing the Margaret Morse Nice Grant-in-aid.

She joined the Cooper Ornithological Club in 1921, became a life member in 1950.

In 1922 Mrs. Nice and 51 other bird banders organized the Inland Bird-Banding Association. Between 1935 and 1942 and again from 1946 until her death, she was an Associate Editor of *IBBA News*.

She was President of the Chicago Ornithological Society from 1940 to 1942. The Margaret Nice Ornithological Club of Toronto, Canada, was named in her honor.

She was elected to Honorary Memberships in the British Ornithological Union, in the Finland, German, Netherlands, and Swiss ornithological societies and was a corresponding member of the Hungarian Institute for Ornithology. She was likewise an Honorary Member of seven ornithological or conservation societies, sponsor of the Hawk Mountain Association and of Conservationists United for Long Island.

During her 50th reunion at her alma mater, Mount Holyoke, Mrs. Nice received an honorary D.Sc., writing that she was very pleased, and her classmates so proud and happy. In 1962 she received another D.Sc. from Elmira College.

During her later years she wrote her memoirs, which have not yet found a publisher. One source gives its title as *Adventures with Oklahoma Birds and with Song Sparrows*, and "it contains 30 chapters of about 15 pages each and about 130,000 words." Another source gives its title as *The Making of an Ornithologist*. This manuscript was sent to the Cornell University Press in 1970, but they returned it.

Mrs. Nice died on 26 June 1974 at her Chicago home, a few months after the death of her husband. She was 90 years old. Services were held at Athens, Ohio, on 29 June. Burial was on the Nice family plot at the New Marshfield cemetery in Athens County. At the time of her death she was survived by 4 children, 7 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren, a sister, and 2 brothers.

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A 12-page bibliography of Mrs. Nice's works is available on request from the author at *The Ohio State University Museum of Zoology, 1813 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43210*. Accepted 29 December 1976.