

THE MAGPIE AT SIOUX CITY, IOWA.

ON December 5, as I was returning home from a field trip, I had the pleasure of seeing a rather uncommon bird for this locality, the Magpie (*Pica pica hudsonia*). The first indication of its presence came when I heard it give its loud, harsh call. This was such an unusual sound that I hurried in its direction and arrived on the scene just in time to see a large black bird, with conspicuous white markings, fly off through the trees. It soon alighted, however, and then I was able to call Dr. T. C. Stephens, and together we watched the bird. It was alone, but the plumage was in such splendid condition that it was probably not an escaped cage bird.

An interesting fact in this case is that the Magpie here referred to had invaded the very center of the city. It was finding an abundance of food in the back yards, and was observed to visit and feed from several garbage cans. In one back yard it seemed to find a supply of food on the ground; but a dog annoyed the bird repeatedly. The Magpie, however, simply flew to a nearby post, and returned to the ground as soon as the dog retreated. This game was kept up for some time.

The presence of the Magpie at Sioux City may be explained by the theory advanced by Bruner, Wolcott and Swenk in "Birds of Nebraska"; that the Magpies move eastward, in the winter, through the Niobrara Valley, which would bring them within a short distance of Sioux City. Anderson, in his "Birds of Iowa," quotes Coues as fixing Sioux City as the eastern limit of the Magpie's range.

This is not the only record of the Magpie's occurrence in Sioux City, but they are of sufficient rareness to make publication worth while.

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THE WHISPER SONGS OF BIRDS.

DURING the spring and fall migration of 1915, the writer had the pleasure of hearing several species of birds sing the whisper song.

One evening in May, a Brown Thrasher that had just succeeded in getting a mate, and had selected a place to build a nest in an elderberry patch near the house, was seen with his mate near the nesting site, and a few minutes later was heard singing very softly, not half as loud as a Thrasher usually sings. When first heard singing in this manner, and before becoming aware that it was the Thrasher in the elderberry patch, I thought it was

another Thrasher singing farther away. On May 9, while taking a bird walk, a Song Sparrow was seen sitting on the top of a fence post about ten yards away. I imitated its song, and it immediately answered. I again imitated, and it again answered, but this time very softly, hardly half as loud as the first time. After that it would not answer any more of my calls.

About half an hour later, on the same day, while going through a thicket of hazel brush, briars and vines, a bird was heard singing so softly that it was some time before I could locate the exact place where the song came from. After listening a short time I recognized the song to be that of a Catbird, but to make sure of the identity of the singer, it was driven from its hiding place. A few minutes later this same Catbird again disappeared in the brush, and again sang its beautiful whisper song. Another Catbird was seen near by, which probably was the singer's mate. On September 22 a Robin was heard scolding at short intervals in the front yard. At the same time I also heard, what I thought was a small bird singing very softly. After trying for some time to see the supposed small bird, I became aware that it was the Robin singing a whisper song and scolding alternately. The Robin's repertoire was the same as sung during the spring and summer months, but the singing was so faint that it was scarcely audible at a distance of ten yards. The scolding notes were given as loud as usual. Another Robin was heard singing in the same manner on September 29.

Every year a pair of Catbirds breed in our house-yard and garden, and one of them was heard singing the whisper song in the elderberry patch near the house on September 25 and 30.

On September 26, while taking a bird walk, another Catbird was heard singing the whisper song in some hazel brush beside a fence. The singer was not more than six feet away, and was scarcely audible at that distance.

Other birds that were heard singing the whisper song during the fall migration were the White-throated Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Warbling Vireo, and House Wren.

The whisper songs of the Catbird and House Wren were the softest of any of the birds heard singing in this manner, and one had to be very close to them to hear it.

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