

Dr. Whinnery's Collection Proves Him the Real "Bird Man"



HAWKS ABOVE, OWLS BELOW—ROW OF SPARROWS IN BETWEEN



HERONS, BITTERN, RAILS, SNIFE, SANDPIPER AND PLOVER



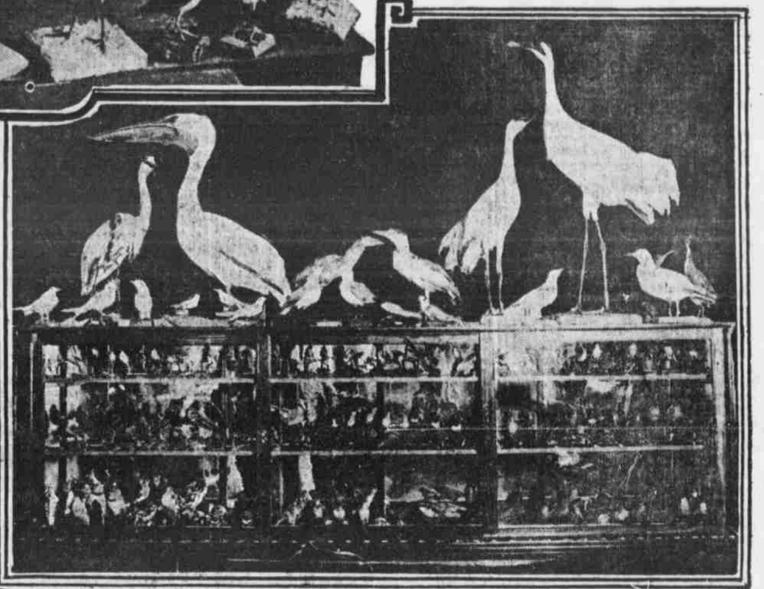
DR. J. C. WHINNERY



DUCKS AND GESE



LAWRENCE SKOW



HERONS, GULLS, AND TERNS ON TOP OF CASE
SONG AND INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS INSIDE OF CASE

AFTER thirty-five years of activity as a dentist, Dr. J. C. Whinnery will leave the tooth-doctoring business of the family to his wife, Dr. J. G. Whinnery, and will spend the greater part of his time in the future completing his collection of Nebraska birds, of which he already has the finest general private collection in the state.

Dr. Whinnery is a dauntless bird man. Lured on by an unfamiliar bird-note, his enthusiasm leads him over plain and prairie, through marsh and briar and brake. His patience keeps him waiting hour after hour, past dinner hour, past supper hour and way into the night for some particular member of the feathery tribe which has pricked his curiosity.

In fact the doctor waited two years for a certain kind of owl to add to his collection—the great horned owl which is found only in the wilder and more heavily wooded parts of the country and visits Nebraska rarely. And as "all things come to him who waits," the great horned owl came at last to the patient doctor. It happened one day when he was with Mrs. Whinnery in the woods near their ranch on Swan lake, in Holt county. The doctor heard crows cawing and knew that they had a squirrel, opossum or bird of some kind. He located the crows and found them worrying one of the much-desired great horned owls. The birds scattered at his approach and the owl flew away with the crows in hot pursuit. The doctor followed, and after maneuvering, waiting and hiding in the brush for several hours, he finally had the satisfaction of seeing the crows abandon their prey and had a chance to take his prize.

"But," adds the doctor in telling the incident, "after waiting two years for that owl, I had opportunities to take several in the following three months."

So the life of the birdman as well as that of the fisherman and huntsman has its ups and downs.

The Doctor's Enthusiasm—His Collection.

The doctor's enthusiasm, however, never wanes even in spite of the "downs." His interest in birds began when he was a small boy and has waxed stronger with the years. During his active life as a dentist, the doctor could not give as much time as he wished to his bird interests, but now that he has retired he will ride his hobby to his heart's content. He has now 300 of the 400 known varieties of Nebraska birds, and his ambition now is to add those kinds which his collection lacks and to complete the pairs of which he has only the male by adding the female bird.

ranch on Swan lake where he spends most of his time. He has also scoured the woods of Cut-Off lake, of Florence, Calhoun, Child's Point and Bellevue.

The stories of Dr. Whinnery's birds are not merely "bird stories." He has "the goods." There may be some collectors who have a finer assemblage of game birds, of swimmers, of waders or perchers, or those of some other order or family; but all kinds considered, the doctor's collection takes the blue ribbon. His home is a veritable bird museum. Two rooms are given over entirely to the collection, arranged in movable cases. A frieze of birds borders the walls, which are hung with bird pictures, and the book-cases and table are filled with books of bird lore.

Stories of Crane and Pelican.

The first bird which one sees on entering Dr. Whinnery's home on North Thirtieth street is a tall, stately crane standing in a corner. The doctor carefully flicks a speck of dust from his beauty's wings and tells you this is a whooping crane, the greatest bird in North America and growing very scarce. He took this particular crane south of Atkinson, as it was journeying northward with five other cranes.

Another bird which adorns the Whinnery parlor is a huge, white pelican, with its big yellow pouch and short yellow legs. The doctor took it from a flock of about 2,500 which stopped on Swan lake on their trip from the south.

First came the leaders of the flock—four old birds—to look over the lake and keeping high out of gunshot. Having decided that the lake was a good place to alight, the leaders went back, and in about an hour returned with the whole flock, which formed a semi-circle on the lake, with the old birds at the end of the line, their object being to crowd the fish in to shore. Before the pelicans had a chance to get any fish, the doctor took one from the bunch, threw it over his shoulder and was lugging it home when seven good-sized fish fell out of its pouch. The big water bird had carried the fish in its pouch from the last lake which the flock had visited.

Water and Land Birds in Collection.

In two long glass cases are the brownish and grayish-colored water birds—the bitterns; the marsh-inhabiting rails and more aquatic coots; the wading shore birds, snipes and sandpipers; the diving birds, the grebes; the swimmers, the gulls and terns, the ducks and geese.

Then come the land birds, a large array looking as natural as if living on their perches. In one section are the hawks with their sharp curved claws, those birds of prey which the doctor explains are really the farmers' friends, because they kill the small rodents which destroy the crops. Next sit the

wise-looking owls, most noticeable among them being the great horned owl with outstretched wings, and the snowy white owl, a fluffy white bird which the doctor took near Lyons, on its way from Canada to a warmer clime.

Brilliant Plumage of Smaller Birds.

Most colorful of all are the smaller birds. Among these is the red-headed woodpecker with his deep red head and black back and tail. Beside him sits his relative, the red-shafted flicker, which is found more often in Dakota and the Black Hills than in Nebraska. Here also is the ruby-throated hum-

mingbird with its throat of metallic ruby-red and upper parts of metallic green, which lives in the honeysuckles and trumpet flowers and hums with its vibrating wings—the tiniest bird in the whole assemblage.

Among the most beautiful are the perching birds—the scarlet tanager with his fire-red body, black wings and tail, who sits beside his modest wife, who wears a dull olive-green dress; the ruby-crowned kinglet with its ruby-colored crown patch; the redbstart, with deep salmon feathers on tail and breast, and his relative, the yellow-breasted chat.

Skow Goes on Bird Jaunts.

Dr. Whinnery has some rare birds among the perchers—a tuffed titmouse with its conspicuous crest and a Bohemian waxwing, a southern member of the sociable though silent family of waxwings, which rarely visits the Antelope state.

Dr. Whinnery does not always go on his bird pilgrimages alone. Sometimes his wife accompanies him, but oftener his companion is his old friend, Lawrence

Skow, a Nebraskanized son of Denmark, a taxidermist by trade, who lives in a little cottage out Florence way. These two cronies are like boys in their enthusiasm over birds, and spend many days together studying their feathered friends. And these quiet birdmen have had many an interesting experience on their jauntings.

On one of their rambles they discovered a barn owl in a crevice of the steepest precipice on the road north of Pries lake. The doctor and his friend, Skow, were both imbued with the desire to take this nocturnal bird for the former's collection; but how to do it was a question. Suddenly the doctor had an inspiration. He got out his hatchet and chopped at a nearby tree until it could be bent over the precipice. The doctor's part was to hold down the tree, while his friend Skow's role in the performance was to cling to the tree, hang over the precipice and take the owl, all of which he did successfully, coming up with the flapping, struggling owl for the happy doctor.

Sometimes the birds play tricks on these devoted birdmen. Doctor Whinnery tells how his friend Skow was fooled by a chickadee. The two were in the woods together, when Skow, who knows the notes of the birds around, pricked up his ears at a new bird-note which he had never heard before. They waited and listened and finally heard the note again. They located the owner of the call and were chagrined to find that it was only a common little chickadee which had struck a brand new note.

Bird Study for Nebraska Children.

One does not talk with Dr. Whinnery very long before discovering that one of his beliefs is that more attention should be given to bird study in the public schools in Omaha. He believes that these feathered creatures which are everywhere around us—in our gardens and orchards, in wood and field and sky—and some of which are here at all times of the year, are not given the importance which is theirs by right. If he had his way the study of ornithology should be on the curriculum of all the schools and every boy and girl in Omaha would be given a chance to study bird life. His idea of starting this study is to have as complete a collection of Nebraska birds as possible for their use, and to start a system of adding to the collection the varieties it lacks.

"The time to learn about birds is in childhood. When a child once learns the plumage, the motion and the song of a bird and its habits of migration, mating and nesting, he never forgets them, and this knowledge is a pleasure to him all his life."

The doctor holds that Nebraska boys and girls should be more-versed in bird lore than those of any other state on account of their unusual opportunities for studying many varieties of birds.

"Why," says the enthusiastic doctor, "there are more different kinds of birds in Nebraska than in any state in the union."

And he explains that Nebraska, which has been dubbed by social workers of Omaha the dumping ground for human birds of passage between the east and the west, is the natural stopping-off place for the feathered tribes on their migrations north and south and so is geographically favored as a bird state.

Venom of Toad Good Heart Stimulant

MODERN science is enlisting the toad in the battle for human life.

By an accidental discovery two professors of Johns Hopkins university have evolved from the venom of Bufo agas, a gigantic toad of the tropical countries, a heart stimulant far more powerful than digitalis. They have named this new drug "bufagin," indicative of its origin.

And thus science, through the agency of Doctors John J. Abel and David I. Macht of Baltimore, has stumbled upon the truth of one of China's ancient traditions and has raised the croaking creature of the witches' chant to a place of pharmacologic value, says the St. Louis Republic.

For many ages Chinese physicians have tried to tell their western brethren of the remedial value of toadskins. They derived from it a preparation they called "senso," and declared it to be from 50 to 100 times more powerful than digitalis. The west listened to them, made an ineffective venture or two, and went its way.

Various European nations, for a few centuries, gave the powdered toadskins a place among therapeutic agents. They said it was a remedy for dropsy, but they dropped it. In 1882 it was the joke of skeptics.

But the venom of the toad has been recognized from the earliest times. As the "tsab" of the Talmud it was differentiated from the frog, and was absorbed as a creature whose touch contaminates. Among the primitive Indians of New Granada its poison was used on arrowheads employed in the chase for game. This venom was powerful enough to kill a stag in two minutes. The aborigines of the Amazon used it in place of curara of other tribes. A few scientists made note of it, and proceeded to forget it.

So it remained to two American investigators to discover anew the pharmacologic value of the toad. They were interested in poisons of animal origin, and in the laboratory of Johns Hopkins university they were testing the effects of organic dye stuffs on a tropical toad. The creature became irritated by the action of the drugs and a milky substance was exuded from its parotid glands. These glands are located just back of the ears.

"Scraping off some of the secretion with a knife," they say in telling how they stumbled upon the new drug, an account of which appears in the Journal of the American Medical Society, "we were struck by the bluish-green discoloration which appeared on the blade. This observation led us to test some of the diluted secretion," and they discovered they were dealing "with a substance which is identical with, or closely allied to, the suprarenal principle. Further work demonstrated the presence of a second body, which, in respect to its pharmacologic action, is to be classed with the digitalis group of poisons."

The suprarenal principle, or epinephrin, is obtained mostly from the sheep, although it is known to exist in all of the higher animals.

These discoveries set the two scientists to work in earnest. Through the assistance of Prof. E. A. Andrews of Johns Hopkins, they laid in a big supply of Bufo agas, and "milked" of their venom as many as sixty at one time. They did the "milk" with a forceps and caught the secretions in a bowl.

Then began a series of experiments with the crude poison upon the lower animals. Cats, dogs and a rabbit were the victims. Given internally with meat, the drug had no effect; injected into the blood, it killed the cat. Administered to the dog in a capsule, it made the animal sick. And it was found to be a rapidly acting agglutinating agent for the red corpuscles of the rabbit.