

Cranbrook's Bird Man Retires; Exhibits Stay

Birds are his big business but he is also a rock, plant and bug man. This man, who appears gruff and brusque yet has a heart as big as the outdoors he loves, is no name dropper. But he lists three men as mentors who wielded a long and lasting influence on his life--the late eminent biologist and naturalist Dr. J.L. Kessler, the late Dr. George Washington Carver, and the late Dr. Charles A. Eastman (Chief Ojibwa), one of the three founders of the Boy Scouts of America. Born in Kentucky, Dr. Nickell early began to develop his in-

The man is Dr. Walter P. Nickell, who is retiring Sept. 30 after 35 years as the naturalist at Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills.

terest in nature and learned to imitate bird calls. It was on an educational field trip to Tuskegee Institute that he first met Dr. Carver, and "we saw eye to eye right away." "I would sneak away from the others and spend every possible minute with him," Dr. Nickell recalls. "Later I spent two spring vacations there. I remember they had a rule that no whites were permitted in the dining hall. But we both were rebels, and I ate there all the time."

It was in 1930 that he met Dr. Eastman, a half-blooded Sioux whose grandfather was white. He recalls Dr. Eastman detailing the Battle of the Little Big Horn, a sorry affair that Dr. Eastman witnessed as a small boy.

DR. NICKELL began banding birds in 1932 and has continued for 37 successive years, reaching a total of over 160,000. At first, he said, about 100 birds would be banded a year, but as techniques improved, he hit his peak in 1964 with 19,000. That was also the year that Central Michigan University gave him an honorary doctor of laws degree.

For years he made regular treks to northwest Canada and British Columbia. Then there were six expeditions to Mexico and British Honduras, and four to the Lower Delta of the Mississippi. He has banded birds in every state but Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii.

His records include notes on some 50,000 nests. Close to 100 publications bear his name.

CURRENTLY ON display in the Cranbrook Institute of Science is an original exhibit, "Migration of Birds," done by institute preparators under Dr. Nickell's guidance.

During October he will demonstrate his bird banding techniques Mondays through Fridays at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., and on Sundays at 4 p.m.

In November Dr. Nickell and his wife, Billie, will move to their two-acre retirement residence near Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Muddle Puddles

When a patio is puddle-prone due to improper grading, the quickest cure may be to cover it with a wood deck. Lay 2x4 joists on building blocks for the framing, then run 2x4 deck boards crosswise over joists. Leave one-eighth-inch spacing between deck boards.

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Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority naturalists are available this winter season for lectures to school assemblies in the Observerland area during each school day from Friday, Nov. 1, through Tuesday, March 25, 1969.

Naturalists from Kensington or Stony Creek Metropolitan Parks will visit the schools for only one-half day, but will provide up to three lectures during a visit accompanied by slides or films. The illustrated lectures concern various wildlife which inhabit the woods, fields and water areas in southeastern Michigan and are available by advance appointment only.

Two 30-minute programs are designed for youngsters from kindergarten through the second grade, while the other four 45-minute programs are beneficial to boys and girls in grades three through twelve. The lectures are entitled "Wading in a Pond," "From Nature's Nursery," "Out of an Egg," "Six-Legged Animals," "Predators and Prey," and "Around the Corner."

Many schools throughout southeastern Michigan have already received 1968-69 applications for these free lectures. However, if your school has not received prior information, contact the Nature Program Services, Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, 1750 Guardian Building, Detroit, Michigan 48226, or phone 961-5665 (Detroit).

Represent Musicale

Six members of the Farmington Musicale are attending the annual meeting of the Southeast District of the Michigan Federation of Music Clubs being held today (Oct. 9) in the Oakland Hills Country Club. Members are Mrs. George Rickey, president; Mrs. Edward Savely, past president; Mrs. Albert Schaefer, vice president; Mrs. Robert Williams, treasurer; Mrs. Paul Notestine, program committee chairman; and Mrs. Homer Manuel.

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