

EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

THE ROADRUNNER

PUBLISHED BY THE EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

LENA MCBEE, CHAIRMAN

NUMBER 22

FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1947

Subscription Rates, 50 cents a year

IN CLOUDCROFT

Alice and I to Jonimac came
 And here found beauty just the same,
 The squirrels scold, the robins blush
 And flute notes float from the hermit thrush.
 A miniature forest is the blue grass tall,
 Half hiding the flowers. We can't name them all,
 The sun is up; a bantam crows;
 We await the botanist, Mamma, who knows.

—Royal Jackman

(This poem was written in 1939, before the passing of "Mamma, who knows". She was May Bailey Jackman, wife of the author and mother of Alice. Readers who know the Jonimac cottage in Cloudcroft will appreciate the picture.

Another poem by a local author appears here, reprinted from THE EL PASO TIMES. Mrs. Bridgers reflects an unusual attitude of friendliness toward the English sparrow.)

CITY SPARROW

City sparrow,
 Gay, insouciant, brave,
 Pecking on the sidewalk,
 Chirping merry stave,
 Do you know that there are woodlands
 With flowing crystal streams
 Instead of window-washers' puddles,
 Lit by synthetic Neon gleams?
 Do you know that rush and roar
 And blaring, raucous horns
 Are replaced in wider spaces
 By silence, breathing softly
 On gentle summer morns?

Or do you care, determined fellow,
 Going on your tiny way,
 Bringing smiles to tired faces--
 Then, gallant birdling, stay!

—Rowena Bridgers

THE LAST MEETING

A business meeting was held by the El Paso Bird Club at the College of Mines Museum, January 14, 1947. The matter of preparing an exhibit in connection with the Garden Club show in April came up, and Mrs. Wilmarth was named to head the enterprise. Private Nick Short introduced tentative plans for a bird walk or two in the spring. Miss Sarah Durkee was appointed Membership Chairman, and plans were discussed leading toward a membership drive. Officers elected are as follow:

- Chairman, Mrs. Lena McBee, 3813 Memphis Street
- Vice-Chairman, Sarah Durkee, 1137 River Street
- Recording Secretary, Emily Barlow, 1701 East Rio Grande Street
- Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Louise Wilmarth, 600 Upson Avenue
- Treasurer, Mary Belle Keefer, 3027 Federal Street

THE NEXT MEETING

Aside from the two remaining Audubon Tours, no meeting is now planned before April (date to be determined), when the first of our bird walks will constitute a field meeting.

Mrs. J. Owen Allen, by special arrangement, takes over Marguerite Wright's feature, the illustrated lesson on birds for children, for this issue of the bulletin.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

Two more Audubon Screen Tours have come and gone since the last ROADRUNNER appeared. Bert Harwell presented "Music of the Out-of-Doors", January 10, to an appreciative audience. His imitations of bird songs and the accompanying comment, his whimsical humor and musical lore, and his excellent pictures themselves combined to make the evening's entertainment highly satisfactory to a large and varied audience. Many of his birds occur in the El Paso area.

On February 4, Howard Cleaves gave us a departure from the ornithological motif in "Midnight Movies in Animal Land". He explained to an admiring audience, largely youthful, how he takes pictures in the dark. The raccoon series was perhaps most popular of the pictures shown, among which were night-stirring shrews, red fox, black bears and skunks. A swamp-full of slumberous birds (prevaillingly tree swallows and redwings), a chimney-full of swifts, a flicker in a cranny, and a night-hawk mother with her young on a schoolhouse roof were among his pictures of birds at night.

COMING SCREEN TOURS

Two of the Audubon Screen Tours remain to be enjoyed. On March 10, Allen H. Cruikshank will bring us "South along the Suwannee", his picture of this romantic river, which he has photographed in brilliant natural color for its entire length. Come and see alligators, frogs, birds, insects, flowers; enjoy an evening of poetic beauty, scientifically caught and presented.

On April 15, we shall see a film, "Arizona Adventure", which brings us nearer El Paso. It was taken by Karl H. Maslowsky in the national monuments of Arizona—the Chiricahuas and the Saguaro and the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monuments. Many of our common birds will appear on the screen against a background of grandeur and picturesque beauty not wholly unfamiliar to the audience.

WITH OUR CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. Jack Whitaker of Austin, Texas, sends a sprightly account of a trip made through the Big Bend at Christmas by herself, her family, and Mrs. Ethel Minor of the Houston Nature Study Club. The itinerary included the Chisos Basin, Boot Spring, Santa Helena Canyon, Castalon, Hot Springs, and Bouquillas Canyon. In the Basin they saw band-tailed pigeons, ant-eating woodpecker, the three wrens (canyon, cactus, rock), three kinds of juncos, spotted and brown towhees, Arkansas goldfinches, chipping and black-chinned sparrows; at Santa Helena, a flock of rough-winged and bank swallows, three phoebes (Say's, eastern, and black), ruby-crowned kinglets, Audubon's warblers, white-necked ravens and verdins; starlings were in the Laguna; white-throated swifts on Mt. Emery; lark buntings at Green's ranch; marsh wrens and grey-tailed cardinals at Hot Springs; and at Bouquillas, ash-throated flycatcher, Gambel's sparrow, pyrrhuloxia, curve-billed thrasher; a few western sandpipers and Sprague's pipits at the mouth of the Tornillo. Everywhere in the Chisos grass was returning (since cattle are no longer pastured in the Park), and white-tailed deer were almost as plentiful as jack rabbits.

Mr. and Mrs. Al Eynon, now of Montclair, New Jersey, were anticipating, for the first time in four years, being participants in the Christmas Bird Count there. In 1943, they helped us take the El Paso Christmas Census.

Mr. Harry C. Williams of Las Cruces writes an account of the starling invasion there. A few have been seen around El Paso this winter; but Mr. Williams account, which follows, is spectacular, as well as informative:

"Jan. 24, 1947

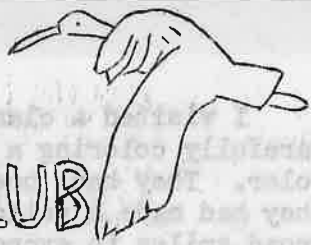
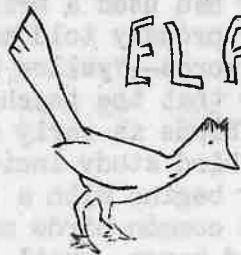
"Today I saw 300 starlings feeding in a cornfield near Fort Filmore in company with a large mixed flock of white-necked raven and western crow.

"About sixty common starlings were brought over from Europe and released in Central Park, New York City, in 1890. Since that time they have multiplied and spread over the United States until today there must be hundreds of millions of them.

"Last January I saw them as far west as Amarillo, Texas, and today they are in the Mesilla Valley. Brought over as a bird beneficial to agriculture in destroying pests, they are proving themselves more of a nuisance than the English sparrow is.

"In Washington, D. C., some years ago, there was concerted effort to destroy the starlings, on account of the fact that they were dirtying and streaking all the fine buildings of the city.

"In England, they are said to be beneficial to farmers in destroying insects, but it is also admitted that they destroy all kinds of fruits and berries, so that their appearance here is a very doubtful blessing."



EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB



THE ROADRUNNER

PUBLISHED BY THE BIRD STUDY CLUB OF EL PASO

CONCERNING BIRDS

El Paso has a Bird Study Club, which exists to bring more information about birds to those who wish to know, and to protect vanishing bird life. Interested persons may become members on the payment of one dollar a year, and amateurs are as welcome as scientists. Subscription to THE ROADRUNNER is included in the membership fee of one dollar.

THE ROADRUNNER is the official bulletin of the Bird Study Club. It was founded in 1942 and is published quarterly. It records the findings of interested bird students here and elsewhere and numbers several ornithological groups on its exchange list. A recent addition to the bulletin is the children's supplement which is used in the El Paso Public Schools.

On the reverse side of this sheet is an article by one of the supervisors of instruction in the city schools, showing why a bird study hobby is good for children. Another article gives an account of the eighth annual bird census taken for this area by the Bird Study Club for the Audubon Magazine. This club has the only consecutive bird census record in the Southwest between Houston and San Diego for so long a period.

The College of Mines Museum has an ornithological room which is visited annually by hundreds of persons who wish to see the collection of bird specimens of this section of the Southwest. The Bird Study Club is aiding in building up this collection.

Members of Boy Scout troops, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Rainbow Girls, and other groups desirous of training in bird study are assured of the aid of our members, in the future as in the past.

There are 14,000 kinds of birds in the United States of America. In Texas, there are 600 kinds. Over 300 kinds have been listed in El Paso and the surrounding area, and there is reason to think that fifty to a hundred more might be listed.

The spring migration through El Paso is at its height; in fact, ducks and geese have already gone through. Down the levee are flocks of ibis, avocets, egrets, and various sandpipers. In the city parks are vireos, warblers, flycatchers and thrushes. A bird walk to Ascarate Park is planned for next Saturday. Bring your field glasses and count the birds with us. Call Mrs. J. Owen Allen, E-2915, for further information about the trip.

There is only one more Audubon Screen Tour on your ticket for this season, dated for April 15, when Karl H. Mazlowski will present "Arizona Adventure", photographed in the National Parks and Monuments of our neighboring state on the west. The familiar roadrunner, Gambel's quail and the housefinch will appear in this colored movie. The El Paso Public Schools and the Bird Study Club hope that you are enjoying this valuable addition to the entertainment program of our city.

The National Audubon Society is a non-profit organization composed of individuals who "cooperate to preserve American wildlife for the betterment of human welfare". The membership fee of five dollars includes the excellent "Audubon Magazine".

Because people have been asking about how to join the Bird Study Club, this page of information is being distributed among the audience. Miss Sarah Durkee, who is presiding at the Membership Table in the hall will answer further questions on membership.

I visited a class of beginning Spanish-speaking children yesterday. They were carefully coloring a mimeographed outline of a bird. They had used a bright yellow color. They had been in school only a few days, but they proudly told me that they had made a yellow bird. However, they used only two words—"yellow bird"—and broad smiles to express the idea. This incident showed me that the teacher involved realized the value of arousing the children's interest in birds as early as possible.

All the children in the El Paso Public Schools begin bird study incidentally very early in their school career. The first formal study begins with a unit on birds in the third grade. At this time children study the common birds near El Paso. The list includes: house finch, sparrow hawk, white-necked raven, quail, western mourning dove, red-shafted flicker, Say's phoebe, rock wren, white rumped shrike, red-winged blackbird, Arkansas goldfinch, desert sparrow. The children learn to distinguish many of the common birds, learn their habits of life, their food, and their value to the community, etc.

Several third-grade teachers have become bird enthusiasts since working with the children on this unit of work.

The curriculum-makers of El Paso School System recognize the value of bird study for boys and girls. Outside the humane and esthetic values derived, children gain many other values. Through field trips children gain a love for the out-of-doors. They gain a valuable hobby that gives a wholesome, safe outlet for the abundance of stored-up energy that must find expression. They build an interest early in life that may grow throughout the years.

Far too many of our children depend upon the movies for their recreation. A steady diet of movies is much too stimulating for young children. We hope to make bird study a rival of this movie habit, at least taking a part of the child's attention and time.

The Bird Club of El Paso, through their many activities, especially THE ROADRUNNER, are helping us make the subject of Birds a real and vital one.

—Bland Burckhardt

THE CHRISTMAS CENSUS

Several members of the El Paso Bird Study Club covered their usual territory on December 22, in the eighth Christmas Bird Census taken by the group. The weather was propitious, and the workers, or some of them, were afield from 7:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. On foot they covered twenty-seven miles, and by car, forty-seven. Areas visited were Ascarate Lake; the Rio Grande levees, with farm lands and contiguous desert; McKelligon and Indian Springs Canyons and desert mesa. El Paso is fortunate in possessing such a variety of terrain, each having its typical bird populace.

Major General G. Ralph Meyer considers desert sparrows predominant in the Indian Springs Canyon, having listed sixty-three. Mr. W. W. Wimberly found unusually large numbers of black blackbirds along the levee east of El Paso, mixed flocks including Brewer's, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds, cowbirds, and white-necked ravens. Nick Short said he stopped counting Gambel's quail in the Country Club area after reaching 100.

There were no bluebirds counted, in contrast to the census of the previous winter; also in contrast, only one robin was seen, and not a single roadrunner or turkey vulture. There were over 200 ducks on Ascarate Lake, baldpates predominating. The pyrrhuloxia looked Christmasy in his coat of red and gray. An albino falcon (species undetermined) was the most unusual find of the day. (Wright, Short, Allen, and Durkee.)

Participating members, in addition to those already named, were Mrs. W. W. Wimberly, Mrs. J. Owen Allen, Emily Barlow, and Mrs. Lena McBee. The list is appended.

Pied-billed grebe, 4; Treganza's heron*, 5; mallard, 6; New Mexican duck*, 12; gadwall, 20; baldpate, 120; green-winged teal, 15; shoveller, 6; canvas-back, 3; Cooper's hawk, 1; sharp-shinned hawk, 4; western red-tailed hawk*, 1; marsh hawk, 1; sparrow hawk, 4; scaled quail, 15; Gambel's quail, 100; coot, 22; killdeer, 6; Wilson's snipe, 2; least sandpiper, 2; rock dove, 15; western mourning dove, 7; barn owl, 3; horned owl, 3; long-eared owl, 1; red-shafted flicker, 11; Batchelder's woodpecker, 1; cactus woodpecker*, 1; Say's phoebe, 1; white-necked raven, 376; long-billed marsh wren, 1 (heard); canyon wren, 3; rock wren, 5; verdin, 5; western mockingbird*, 3; crissal thrasher, 5; sage thrasher, 1; western robin, 1; western gnatcatcher, 8; ruby-crowned kinglet, 6; American pipit, 3; white-rumped shrike*, 21; Audubon's warbler, 6; English sparrow, 130; western meadowlark, 4; yellow-headed blackbird, 4002 (est.); redwing, 1500 (est.); Brewer's blackbird, 2570 (est.); cowbird, 201; pyrrhuloxia, 6; Cassin's purple finch, 17; housefinch, 125; pine siskin, 6; pale goldfinch*, 20; Arkansas goldfinch, 6; spurred towhee*, 1; canyon towhee, 4; lark bunting, 50; desert sparrow, 75; Shufeldt's junco*, 29; pink-sided junco, 37; red-backed junco, 2; western chipping sparrow, 5; white-crowned sparrow, 2; clay-colored sparrow, 4; Brewer's sparrow, 40; Gambel's sparrow, 440; song sparrow, 11. Total, 68 species; 10127 individuals.

*Starred terms are sub-species names, here given (as in the El Paso Check List) for the convenience of local birders; but in the list submitted to THE AUDUBON MAGAZINE, species names were used in cases where there are no discernible field differences.

THE KILLDEER

As Mr. Lamar drove slowly around the lake, Carlos whistled low, "Whew! Did you ever see so many redwings?"

"I like redwings. They look so pretty, swinging on the cattails," said Tommy.

"Look at the ducks!" whispered Carlos. "There must be hundreds of them."

"They are always on the other side of the lake," grumbled Tommy. "I wish they'd stay close, like the redwings."

"So do I," sighed his brother. "Some day I'm going to slip up on them and see what kind they are."

Father laughed. "That is easier said than done. You'll have to save your money and buy a pair of field glasses, if you want to see ducks, Carlos."

"That's just what I'm going to do. I'd rather have a pair than anything."

"Kill-dee! Kill-dee!" came in at the window.

"I spy the killdeer," whispered Tommy, pointing to a patch of sandy desert nearby.

"Stop pointing!" sighed Carlos. "In our bird club at school, we learned not to point or talk if we want to see birds."

By this time, everyone had seen several killdeer running about. "Their little brown backs match the sand, don't they?" smiled Tommy.

"That's what makes them so hard to see," explained the older boy. "How white they are underneath! And look at the two black bands across each bird's breast. It's the killdeer's own mark."

With a swoop the birds were off. They called their names over and over as they went. The white V in their wings flashed as they flew toward the lake. Then they wheeled and came down on the sand nearby. "Oh, there they are again," whispered Tommy. "We didn't frighten them after all."

"I guess they thought the bug-hunting would be better over there," his brother replied.

"We read a story about the killdeer at school, said Tommy. "I remember it because he eats such funny things."

"What funny things?"

"Oh, he eats spiders and centipedes. He eats ticks too."

Mother asked, "Why don't you tell Sandy about the ticks? You know what a time that dog has with ticks."

"I'll tell Sandy the minute I get home. He'll be glad. And killdeer eat mosquitoes, too. I'm thankful for that," Tommy finished.

"You can put the farmer on the thankful list too," smiled father. "The killdeer helps to save crops by eating many insects."

"This would be a good place to look for killdeer's nests," said Carlos. "That is, if you can call them nests."

"They do pick queer places to build in," Tommy added. "The story told about one bird that had a nest on a bare roof. Another one nested between the railroad ties."

"Tommy, do you remember the nest we found last spring in Mr. Hill's pasture?" asked Carlos.

"Yes, I do; and I remember how Mother and Father Killdeer didn't want the cows near their nest."

"I should say they didn't. How they scolded and flew at the cows!"

"I wonder if the killdeer liked two boys any better than the cows." Mr. Lamar seemed to be thinking out loud.

"Oh, but after we found the nest, we didn't bother the birds. Honest, we didn't," Tommy hurried to say. "We wanted the baby killdeer to hatch so that we could see them."

"We did see them too," continued Carlos. "And, Dad, the baby birds had only one band on the breast. Was I surprised to learn that killdeer have to grow up to get two breast bands!"

Father looked at his watch. "My stars! how this afternoon did fly. It's time to go already."

"This has been fun," said Carlos. "I can hardly wait for our next trip."

And Tommy added, "It's the nicest day I've had since Christmas."

Write the letters in the squares.

1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									

1. Used to lock a door.

2. Frozen water.

3. A woman.

4. A baby sheep.

5. A barking pet.

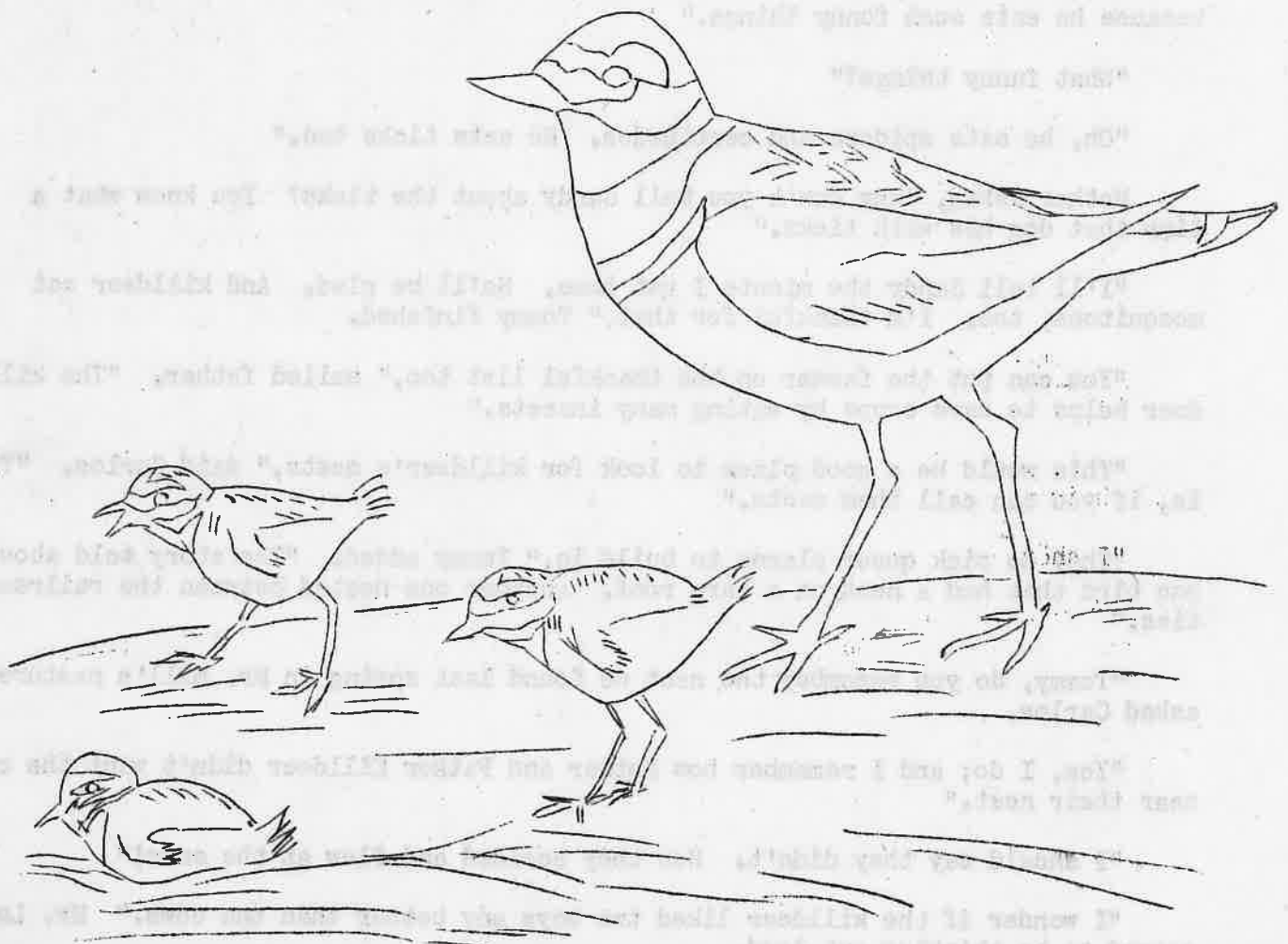
6. Used for hearing.

7. Used to see with.

8. A bunny.

What do the first letters spell?

Key to puzzle: KILLDEER



Mr. Lamar came through the back gate and called, "Who wants to go for a ride?"

"I do," yelled Tommy and Carlos together.

"Hey!" shouted Carlos, as Tommy ran toward the car. "We have to put away these bows and arrows. We promised."

Tommy's face was red as he began to pick up arrows.

"Now, Sandy won't chew on our toys while we're gone," said Carlos.

"Where are we going, Mother?" asked Tommy, as Mrs. Lamar came out of the house. She was carrying a paper bag. The water jug was sitting outside the door. The boys ran to take them to the car. "What do you think about a trip to Ascarate Lake?" she said.

"Swell. That's where I wanted to go," answered Carlos.

"Me too," replied Tommy. "I hope we see the Grandfather birds."

"What kind of bird did you say?" asked Father, as they headed toward the lake.

"He means the great blue heron: Treganza's heron," explained Mrs. Lamar.

"Why do you call them Grandfather birds, Tommy?"

"Because they look so big and important."

"I bet you can't remember what they eat," said Carlos.

"Oh, yes, I do," grinned his brother. "I haven't forgotten the last Audubon Screen Tour. There was a heron in that movie. He was out catching fish and frogs by night."

"Right you are," laughed Carlos. "My bird book says they eat snakes, mice, and grasshoppers too."

"Well, I'd rather be a boy than a heron," sighed Tommy. "Heron work on the day shift and the night shift too."

Just as the car started around Ascarate Lake, he saw a heron. "A Grandfather bird!" he whispered. "Over there by that old log! See him standing on one leg. He looks like a funny old stick."

"Wait till a fish comes by, and then watch your stick. His neck will move like lightning," grinned Carlos. After looking at his bird book, he continued, "No wonder the bird is called the great blue heron. He is about four feet tall."

"How funny!" laughed Mother. "That's just about as tall as you are, Tommy. What else does your book say, Carlos?"

"He is even taller the other way," said Carlos. "When his wings are spread, he measures six feet from tip to tip. That's about as tall as Daddy. It's easy to see why they call him blue: that's his color, mostly. You have to get very close to him before you notice that he has some white and black and gray on him too."

"Look at those long feathers on him," said Tommy.

"Every great blue heron has those, if he is grown up," explained Father. "They are on his head, back, and breast. These plumes grow longer in the spring, and brighter. But I think we'd better move on. You will probably see other herons before we leave the lake."

As the car went round the lake, the boys looked back. There was Grandfather Heron, still fishing in the very same spot.

THE HERON

Choose the right word;

1. Mr. Heron looks _____. (blue, white, red)
2. He is about _____ feet tall. (two, one, four)
3. He eats _____. (seeds, grass, frogs)
4. His legs look _____. (short, long, fat)
5. Mr. Heron fishes _____. (all day, all night, both day and night)

