

CITY STATE BANK

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OGDEN, IOWA Oct 19 1927

Phil DuMont

"NewYawk"

Dear Phil:-

Your long epistle arrived a couple of weeks ago and it was as usual a dandy and full of interesting news.

Your account of the climbing Mt Washington reminded me of my experience in climbing Mt Wilson near Pasadena, Calif in 1915. This is over 8000 ft high and we climbed it during the night and had the great pleasure of viewing the sunrise from the summit. It certainly was a grand sight and one never to be forgotten. We were above the clouds and I got a picture with my camera.

The worst of all was coming down. I thought my knees were going to crack in two before I reached the bottom and had to hang on to the shoulders of the two boys that were with me. I like climbing mountains if it were all up grade but I believe I would prefer sliding down rather than walking.

You certainly are a professional at "getting in" on the real jobs. I wish that I had your ability in that way. I want to congratulate you on being able to get in with Chapman at the Museum and know that you will enjoy this work. I only wish that I were with you. I would rather do that than eat and that's going some.

I am going to try to help the Biological Survey with their census of the water fowl each month but so far I have only been able to get out once and that was around home. Saw only Shovelers, Mallards and Pintails. No coots here now in our small ponds. On the November date I would like to make Long Pond and am going to write Kenney to meet us there. You can come too if you like.

I certainly have been kept busy all year with my bird work and photography. Have had over 100 field trips so far and over two months to go. My list is the largest ever and even then it is not quite 170 for Boone County only. I only added seven to my life list this year which brought that up to exactly 200 for our County.

During the summer I have photographed Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Least Bittern (on nest), Hummingbird (on nest), Prairie Horned Lark, Catbird, Killdeer, Yellowheaded Blackbird, Least Flycatcher, Pied Billed Grebe and others.

I knew of seven different nests of Meadowlarks but did not get a single first class picture of any of the birds. They are about the hardest of all to photograph. Always extremely shy and suspicious.

Four different nests were on our golf course. One had four large young birds when I saw them one afternoon while playing golf so I decided to try for a picture the following morning. When I arrived there the two oldest birds had left the nest and the other two were well feathered and ready to go too. I set up my camera and waited for two hours for the old birds to come up and feed them but they did not come and when some other golfers came up I decided that they would frighten the birds more than ever so went to the camera to take it down and go home and give it up as a bad job.

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Imagine my surprise upon approaching the nest to find that a full grown ordinary garter snake was attempting to devour the largest one of the birds. He had its head entirely in his mouth with the bill starting down his throat but that was just as far as he could ever get for the bird was full grown. The foolish snake however was working hard and stretching his mouth to terrible proportions and I realized that here was a picture much better than that of the old Meadowlark and my disappointment was turned to joy. I immediately got a shot at this performance and after I had finished the snake gave up the attempt to swallow the bird and wriggled off into the grass where the boys killed him for we were afraid that he would come back and kill the other bird too. The one he was working on was of course dead.

I have seen lots of interesting things in my ramblings among the birds but this was the best yet and the first time I have ever caught a garter snake doing any harm. It would be interesting to me to know what Chapman would say about a thing of this kind. It may be old stuff to him but it was new to me.

I secured the beautiful nest of the Hummingbird up along the banks of the river south of Fraser. It was on a low limb of a soft maple which almost hung over the water. When we approached the nest the two young which were full grown became very uneasy and the oldest one flew away. The other one made a "fizzle" of his first flight and almost landed in the water. He landed in the mud about six inches from the water where Junior rescued him and we brought him home and I placed him in the nest in our kitchen that night. The next morning he very graciously posed for me sitting on the edge of the nest and we secured a very fine picture of him on the nest. I then took him home and placed him on a large flower out in my flower garden where he sat a long time giving his shrill wiry squeak. I watched him for some time and finally had to go in for lunch and when I came out again he had disappeared so I guess he made a success of his second flight. In the evening when I had him in the kitchen I fed him sweetened water with a medicine dropper and he seemed to relish it. He ran his sharp little tongue up into the point of the dropper and drank as if it tasted good.

Every year I get new thrills and every year I learn a lot more in rambling around with the camera and field glasses. Some folks may think it foolish and time wasted but I would not trade those pleasant hours for leisure hours of any other kind and if I ever live to be old I hope to have accumulated a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the birds of our County and be able to tell the younger generations of my own actual experiences in the field and not from a lot of "dope" written up by nature fakirs.

I would like to know all about your experiences at the museum and hope to hear from you when you have time. Kenney came up see me while I was away in N. Dak. but had to be entertained by my wife instead.

Your old friend Miss Betts from Adel ^{was} knew you well at Drake is one of our High School faculty this year. Junior has her in two subjects and likes her very much. I have talked to her about you she has told me a lot of nice things about you (ahem).

Mrs Rosen and Junior send their regards as well as, Your old friend,

Walter