

Winter Birdlife of the Black Mesa Country

By GEORGE M. SUTTON

THE Black Mesa, a southeastward reaching spur of the plateau known as the Llano de Maya, is part of the great Rocky Mountain system. Only the tip of the mesa extends into Oklahoma, but, small though this tip is, its plants and animals are so definitely montane that many of them are strikingly different from those of all other parts of the state. The contrast is especially noticeable to the visitor who, having for the first time just crossed the vast, comparatively treeless Panhandle plain, finds himself dipping down from the yucca-studded grassland into a sort of Garden of the Gods. Suddenly the sky-line is broken, no matter which direction he turns. Bold outcroppings of rock stick out at either side of the highway. The vista opening up to the westward is a succession of horizontal mesatops, all of them studded with dark, compact-looking little trees. The lowland about him is obviously a narrow valley, the stream at its bottom a tributary to the great river whose high red banks are visible a quarter-mile off to the north—the Cimarron. A cactus he has not seen anywhere to the eastward grows in this valley—the cholla. Though belonging to the same genus as that of the well known prickly pear, this cactus is quite different in growth. Properly speaking, it has no pads; it seems to have a trunk, branches and twigs; and it is so covered with spines that at a short distance it looks furry.

The road rises, dips, curves as it ascends again to a sort of pass. The low, shrublike trees close to the highway are scrub oaks. The darker green, taller trees are conifers—pinyon and juniper. To the west a mile or so the houses of a little town are visible. North of the town a dark mountain rises precipitously. The flat top of this mountain was visible, though not at all noticeable, from the highway back to the eastward. Now its whole broad front is in sight. The town is Kenton, the mountain is Black Mesa. Two miles beyond Kenton is New Mexico. Back of the big mesa is Colorado.

I first became acquainted with the Black Mesa in the fall of 1932 when my good friend, John B. Semple—no longer alive, alas—and I made a representative collection

of the region's birds. We stayed at a little hotel in Kenton and did most of our fieldwork east and south of town. One of our favorite hunting grounds was the valley of the Texaquite. Often we left the car near the highway, followed the Texaquite upstream as far as the remains of the "Old 101 Ranch," about which grew a grove of fine large walnuts, then retraced our way until we reached the Cimarron, with its high, steep banks. In those days there was a prairie dog colony just north of the confluence of the Texaquite and the Cimarron. Someone told me that the correct spelling for Texaquite was *Tesquesquite*; but no one pronounced the word that way!

So delighted were we with the birds we found, and so tantalized by what we saw and heard but failed to identify, that we revisited Kenton the following year, again in the fall. Our wanderings took us farther and farther from the highway—to remote caves on whose walls were blurred photographs; to the tops of all the mesas we could see from Kenton; to several well known ranches—among these the Brookhart, the Regnier, and the Marcellus. We made a point of driving northward around the Black Mesa into Colorado and westward from Kenton into New Mexico, but these were mere pleasure jaunts; our real work was wholly confined to Oklahoma. Almost every day we made discoveries. Every day we sensed afresh how much we had yet to learn about this glorious region.

In 1936 I went to Kenton in the spring—and thrilled I was with the long-billed curlews and lark buntings which nested in the rolling grasslands just east of the mesa country proper; the curve-billed thrashers which so obviously depended upon the clumps of cholla cactus for nest-sites; and such species as the plain titmouse, scrub jay, and black-billed magpie, about which I knew but little. The plain titmouse was a gray, inconspicuous bird. A *plain* little bird, in other words—not an inhabitant of the plains!

In the spring of 1937 I led a four-man party (Mr. Semple, Karl W. Haller, Leo A. Luttringer, Jr., and myself) to many parts of Oklahoma. In the course of this expe-

dition we again visited Kenton, this time taking far more photographs than before, and finding for the first time in Oklahoma the gray vireo and Cassin's kingbird. The latter was a loud-voiced flycatcher which nested along the edges of the mesas.

During the above-mentioned four visits to the Black Mesa country I saw most of the bird species that veteran observer, R. Crompton Tate—now of Liberal, Kansas—had listed there. Several that he had seen, but that I had not, were winter birds. These I had become acquainted with, during the breeding season, in other parts of the United States or in Canada, but I wanted to see them *in winter*. Notable in this category was the white-winged junco, a bird I had seen repeatedly in the South Dakota Black Hills.

DURING the Thanksgiving vacation period of the fall of 1952, Richard R. Graber, his wife Jean, David F. Parmelee, his wife Jean, William C. Vinyard and I decided to visit the Black Mesa country, they for the first time, I for the fifth. We had planned to leave Norman the day before Thanksgiving, November 26. That day a blizzard struck northern and western Oklahoma. We had only a little snow in Norman, but officers of the State Highway Patrol informed us that Beaver County, the easternmost of the three Oklahoma Panhandle counties, was closed to traffic; and the authorities at Amarillo, Texas, told us that no one knew whether we could get through to any city of the Oklahoma Panhandle from the south. Annoyed by this delay, but elated, too, since all this talk of snow and wind convinced us that our trip would give us a proper taste of winter conditions in the mesa country, we waited until Thanksgiving morning, set out before daylight, and reached Boise City, Cimarron County (about 35 miles southeast of Kenton) that night. Nowhere did we find the main highway actually blocked, but driving was difficult, and we could see that the snowplows had been busy. The thermometer dropped to 12 degrees F. that night.

Between Boise City and Kenton the snowfall had not been heavy. We were

obliged to walk through knee-deep drifts in retrieving a Lapland long-spur killed by a passing automobile, but nowhere had the snow blocked the roads badly. We reached the rolling open cattle range just east of the Black Mesa country about sun-up—there to come upon the first evidence that the winter birdlife of the area might be different from that of other seasons—a prairie falcon. We had seen this species farther east the day before, in the vicinity of Geymon, Texas County. Recording it for the second time, we sensed that it must be seeking food far from the cliffs about which it had lived the preceding summer. After dipping down into the mesa country, indeed, just after crossing the bridge across the Texaquite, we saw another prairie falcon, this one perched on a telephone pole not far from the highway. A light snow was falling, but this did not obscure the brown tone of the bird's upper parts, the narrow dark streaking of the under parts, and the bold facial markings. I had looked for the prairie falcon repeatedly during my earlier visits to Kenton, but never had recorded the species at all satisfactorily. How gratifying to see it now, and at such close range!

We found no place to stay in Kenton proper, but Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wiggins welcomed us to their comfortable farm home about a mile and a half northwest of town, and here we encountered the prairie falcon again. This time the bird was perched in a dead tree not far from the house. It had, Mr. Wiggins informed us, been about for several days, and it was obviously interested in the scaled quail which fairly swarmed about the place. These quail the Wigginses called not "cottontops"—as I had thought they might—but "blue quail."

The quail were our second surprise. I knew that the species inhabited the Black Mesa country, of course; indeed, I had seen it there many times. But never had I seen it in such abundance as this. Literally hundreds of the trim birds fed about the barn and haystacks. To one side of the house was a rocky hill which sheltered most of the buildings from the north wind. Down this hill the quail came, droves of them, from their roosting places. They had a way of bunching up at certain favorite spots, then racing across to other shelters, and so on down to farmyard level. From boulder to boulder or cactus-clump to cactus-clump they ran, thence to a barrel in which papers were burned, thence to an empty chicken coop, thence to a discarded piece of farm machinery, finally across a little-used road to the haystacks. Their twittering and chirping were almost incessant. Some of

the callnotes confused me, for these sounded like the cries of much smaller birds.

The falcon tried again and again to catch a quail. While I was skinning specimens near a window in the parlor I often looked up, either to rest my eyes or to see what might be happening outdoors. Usually I saw several quail, a brown towhee or two, some western meadowlarks, or a little company of white-crowned sparrows, peacefully feeding. But if the falcon was about, all the smaller birds were on the alert. Once when I looked out I saw the falcon only a few rods from the house, obviously in pursuit of quail. It hurled itself toward the ground, rose for another stoop, flew around the haystacks as if to make a surprise attack, dropped suddenly, rose, struck again, almost reckless in its determination to make a kill. The quail, many of which I could see plainly, seemed over-confident. While the falcon was rising they raced across the open, always rapidly enough to reach shelter before the next attack. Perhaps the falcon was young. I am sure that such predators as these have to learn to catch their prey.

White-crowned sparrows were common about the farm buildings. Occasionally one of them sang a full song. They fed principally in the straw-strewn area so beloved of the quail, but when not feeding sought the shelter of thickets. I estimated that at least fifty of them were spending most of their time near the house. Using my binocular, I found that about half of these were young birds in first winter plumage, and that some of the adults had definitely black lores. With the white-crowns were a few tree-sparrows, song sparrows, and juncos. The juncos we could not see very well, but clearly enough to make sure that none had white wing-bars.

Magpies visited the farmyard frequently—usually slipping down the slope from the north. Mr. Wiggins said that they occasionally made their way into the buildings, though they did not roost there. Several

of them had been feeding about the head of a recently butchered steer.

The Wiggins house stood about two hundred yards from the Cimarron. In thin woods along the river we found more tree sparrows, song sparrows, and juncos, as well as a few common goldfinches and house finches, but the white-crowned sparrows seemed to live wholly in the vicinity of the farm buildings.

Mr. Wiggins informed us that first evening that the quail about his place had become half tame. He believed that the extreme dryness of the preceding summer had been good for them. He said that they did not roost about the buildings, but on the slopes above, in clumps of cactus or in tall grass.

This discussion of roosting habits led our host to say that we might find birds of other species roosting about the barns, so out we went with our flashlights. In one shed we found a brown towhee and two red-shafted flickers, the towhee on a rafter, with head tucked under its shoulder feathers; the flickers at opposite ends of the ridgepole, each clinging to a flicker-drilled hole, body inside the shed, but bill and fore part of the head sticking out. How the flickers had held their heads while asleep we did not know. We did not see them at first, and when we did discover them they were awake. Despite the fact that their eyes were wide open, we caught them easily. A few English sparrows were roosting under the narrow eaves of another shed.

THE night of November 28 was cold. We awakened early on November 29, noting that a little fresh snow had fallen and that the wind had died. What a wonderful morning for birds! The farmyard was alive with quail, yet the hungry coveys continued to pour down the slopes from the north. None of them flew in—they all ran. A covey which we happened to flush half way up the mesa-side scattered widely. Individuals which flew west suddenly found them-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This is the second article by Dr. Sutton on the birds of Oklahoma which the Quarterly has had the privilege of printing, the first appearing in the issue for January, 1953. At present he is spending almost all of his time in the field, gathering information for a scientific check-list of Oklahoma birds, something which ornithologists know is badly needed. Dr. Sutton is also preparing the manuscript of a book on the birds of the Arctic, which will probably be completed next summer.



selves high in air, far from shelter. Some of them set their wings for a long glide to the lowland, thus exposing themselves to the falcon's sudden stoop.

That day and the two days following, we covered the country far and wide. Each morning I made a point of climbing the mesa north of the Wiggins house, for I had found a falcon's roosting place in the cliff there, but I failed to collect the falcon. We drove back to the main highway, parked the car at a little pass a mile east of Kenton, or near the Laurence Regnier ranch-house, several miles up the Texaquite, and set out afoot, the Grabers forming one party, the Parmeleees another, Vinyard and I a third. We tramped the pinyon and juniper of the mesa-tops thoroughly, finding the habitat to be surprisingly bird-poor. During one two-hour stretch of walking, the only bird we recorded was a flying horned lark. In the lowlands we combed all areas in which mesquite and cholla flourished. Here we found several species of birds, notably the ladder-backed woodpecker and house finch, but all our counts of individuals were low. On the Regnier ranch we paid special attention to the scattered yellow or "ponderosa" pines, a reward for these efforts being a fine red crossbill—the first for Oklahoma—collected by Richard Graber on December 1. The specimen was one of two red males perching (not feeding) in a pine. Graber heard crossbills flying over the same general area the following morning.

We climbed the sides of the mesas and worked our way along the bases of the cliffs at the tops. Among the grass, mesquite, and rocks of the steep slopes, we succeeded in locating one rufous-crowned sparrow. This species, often called the rock sparrow, I had seen repeatedly at other seasons. In spring its singing had been noticeable. In the fall I had located it by listening for its *sil, sil, sil* calls on the slopes. Now it seemed to be completely silent.

Best of all places for birds were sheltered nooks in the small tributary canyons. Here, especially at the lower edges of the scrub oak thicket, juncos and towhees were fairly numerous. The brown towhee, already mentioned, and the spotted towhee seemed to be about equally common. The former liked rocky places and we usually saw two or three birds together. The latter liked the brush, and the wintering population seemed to be made up of widely scattered individuals. We saw several brown towhees in a loose flock along one of the side-streets of Kenton.

The snow disappeared rapidly from the open lowlands and sun-struck areas but in every sheltered place it lingered. Drifts on slopes with northern exposure continued to

be almost knee-deep. In some of this deeper snow we came upon coyote and deer tracks. One of the most interesting mammals we saw was a big porcupine. He was by himself on a mesa-top, trundling along between trees. To our surprise he showed some fear. Slipping into a crack between rocks, he worked himself deeper and deeper, and finally disappeared. In answer to our shouted goodbye came a moaning and grinding of teeth. Deer that we saw looked well-fed and sleek. Doubtless they had been subsisting on the abundant acorns.

If there was a commonest small bird of the mesas, it was the scrub jay. Every one of our party saw and heard these jays, and

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SONNET

Vast are the names that sleep in common fields

And shall not wake beneath this winter's light,

Nor rouse to rain, nor turn again to find
The charity of life. Vast are the names
That keep the breathless solitude and brood
No more upon the lack of love. Their death
Has sheltered them; the legion of their graves

Prevents their long remembrance or regret.

But in the death that is the crowded heart
There is no earth so settled over loss
To hold the congregation of our thoughts
In still and silent shapes. The names we knew

And lost—now at a certain light or rain
Or sight or sound—wake to haunt us yet.

—WINSTON WEATHERS
'50ba, '51ma

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we collected a specimen or two. But what rangey, wary creatures they were! Soon we learned that, far from being uninformed as to our whereabouts, they were fully aware of it—for off they went, while still hundreds of yards away, flying down the slopes in long swoops and plunging into the thicket with an impudent chattering. Flocks of pinyon jays the Grabers saw among conifers southwest of the Regnier ranch-house.

A bird much more numerous than any of us had expected it to be was the Townsend's solitaire. Actually it was far from common, of course; but each of us saw it, and we came to think of it as a characteristic winter bird of the mesa-slopes. It seemed to be feeding exclusively on juniper berries. I first recorded it high on the mesa north-east of the Wiggins house on the morning of November 29. Hearing an unfamiliar chirp, I looked that way, saw a nondescript gray bird pulling at a juniper berry, and

then, as the bird flew, noted the buffy markings of its wings and white of its tail-corners. Shortly after collecting it, I heard another solitaire. This one, which I never saw, suddenly broke forth into glorious song. The experience was memorable because the music was so completely unexpected in that wintry setting.

HERE and there among the scrub oak and conifers we saw or heard juncos. Some of these may have been slate-colored juncos, but certainly we did not collect that species nor identify it satisfactorily. What we did see and collect were dark-headed, brown-backed, russet-sided Oregon juncos. We also saw and collected the pink-sided junco, but this form was obviously less common than the Oregon. The white-winged junco we failed to find.

Several times we came upon a small company of golden-crowned kinglets among the conifers. These were apt to be, we noticed, not far from the flocks of juncos. But we never encountered a mixed flock of kinglets, juncos, chickadees, creepers, and nuthatches. There seemed to be no such phenomenon as this anywhere in the area. The scrub jays went about by themselves. The three times we saw bush-tits, the tiny birds were by themselves. The Grabers came upon a flock of about a dozen on November 28. December 1 the Parmeleees saw two flocks, a total of about thirty birds. Of the four specimens obtained, two were males and two females. Both of the males were dark-eyed; both of the females white-eyed. The plain titmice, seen several times by the Grabers, were not part of a bird-flock of any sort. David Parmelee saw one chickadee, almost certainly a mountain chickadee, though he did not see the white line over the eye. It was by itself—not part of a flock. Not one of the several ladder-backed woodpeckers seen by us was associating with a flock of small birds. Richard Graber thought he heard a hairy woodpecker in the distance. This species I had seen in the spring and fall, but never commonly.

Of wrens we recorded only two species. The canyon wren we found among great rocks just below the cliffs edging the mesa-tops. We came upon neither family groups nor pairs of these birds, but widely scattered individuals instead. In vain we listened for the bright cascade of song. If we heard an alarm note we had only to keep perfectly still a moment, then squeak loudly, and out the wren would pop—sometimes only five or six feet away—giving us a fierce look before darting into a hole or under a rock. What a curious sight—a canyon wren scuttling through the snow! The rock wren, which I had recorded repeatedly

on earlier visits not far from the highway two miles or so east of town, we failed to find. The Bewick's wren was decidedly rare and unaccountably wild. Nowhere did we hear it singing. On two occasions I heard its notes, started up the slope in pursuit, then, failing to hear it further, watched with the glass and saw it flying up over the rim-rock at the canyon's very head.

The curve-billed thrasher, a robust, hardy bird, we found not on the flats, among the cholla, but at the edge of the scrub oak thicket along the very foot of the slopes. We tried over and over to collect a specimen, but failed. Like the Bewick's wren, it was exceedingly wary. Several times we saw it flying far ahead of us, heading for the thicket on the opposite side of the flat. With the glass we watched one rummaging energetically among the leaves in a snow-free place at the edge of the thicket.

We did not see many hawklike birds aside from the prairie falcons. On November 28 we watched a golden eagle for some time not far east of Kenton. The great bird perched on a fence post for a time, then flew to the ground, where it appeared to be feeding. The Grabers saw a pigeon hawk or merlin and a goshawk. The latter surprised them by flying up suddenly, alighting in plain sight, then slipping swiftly off. Richard Graber tried hard to find a spotted owl, a species not listed from Oklahoma. The night of December 1 he slept out, not far from the Regnier ranch-house. The owl he obtained was a great horn.

Especially eager were we to see that non-migratory, all-but-flightless cuckoo, the road-runner or chaparral cock, a species extant here close to the northernmost frontier of its range. I had observed this bird many times near Kenton; indeed, I had found a nest with two young birds in a little juniper on a slope just west of town. But where would the bird be living now, and on what would it be feeding? On November 29, in a windless, sunny spot south-east of Kenton, Richard Graber saw one fly from the edge of a mesa into a little canyon. It alighted back of a rock and he could not find it again. On December 1, early in the morning, as I was moving slowly along the foot of a cliff working toward the prairie falcon's roosting spot, I came upon a road-runner basking in the sun. At first I only half-saw the bird. By the time I fully realized what it was, it had started moving deliberately toward me down the rocks. Suddenly it leaped into the air, sailed directly past me, folded its wings, and dropped among the great boulders. It must have hidden in the rocks, for I could not find its tracks anywhere in the snow or dust.

David Parmelee's experience with a road-runner that same day is worth recording in detail. Never having seen the species in life, he was very eager to become acquainted with it. While walking along the edge of a mesa-top he noticed something moving in the snow several rods ahead of him. Investigating, he found the widely-spaced tracks of a fair-sized bird. While examining these, he saw a road-runner, about thirty yards away, moving somewhat laboriously across an open stretch of snow. The instant he sighted the bird, it disappeared. Running forward, he found its tracks, which led along a shallow depression to a big patch of bare ground. The bird was nowhere to be seen. When he found its tracks again they led off in a new direction, directly toward a little pinyon at the mesa's edge. Not realizing that the bird might seek refuge in so small a tree, and eager to pick up the trail again beyond the mesa's rim, Parmelee ran forward. When he was about six feet from the pinyon the road-runner bolted—half-running, half-flying, its feathers in a loose flurry. Parmelee fired just as the bird cleared the rocks. He got his specimen.

Toward the end of that same day all of us saw two road-runners not far from the Wiggins house. We glimpsed one bird far ahead of us, moving slowly from a clump of prickly pear across the road to some knee-high weeds. I got out of the car and tried a long shot, but failed to get the bird. A moment later the second road-runner crossed the road exactly as the first one had. This time no one shot; instead we drove rapidly forward, all got out, and hunted hard for a quarter of an hour—failing to see the birds either close at hand among the weeds or on the grassless slopes some rods away. One fact about these road-runners had impressed all of us—neither had moved rapidly. They had seemed almost sluggish. Both of them had eluded us not by racing swiftly off, but by crouching in the vegetation and remaining motionless or slipping furtively away.

Parmelee's specimen proved to be very fat. Its stomach was packed with the remains of grasshoppers and other insects, but there was not a trace of bones, fur, or feathers. A road-runner collected by the Grabers in the Black Mesa country in January of 1953 was, when they first saw it, picking at some cow-dung. Probably it was finding insects there. As it moved off, it did so deliberately.

ALL of what I have just reported points to the possibility that the road-runner may be quite incapable of running rapidly when the weather turns cold. Glenn E. Jones, of Norman, recently told me of help-

ing to capture a road-runner on the north side of the Black Mesa a year or so ago in mid-winter. The bird sought escape not by running, but by hopping up into a clump of cactus. There it stayed until Jones and his companion caught it in their hands, accidentally pulling out its tail feathers in the process. In mid-winter of 1953, the University of Oklahoma bird collection was presented with a road-runner killed by John King eight miles south and three miles west of Boise City. King described the bird as "much less active than usual." It did not run, but tried to hide instead. Two inches of snow were on the ground. The specimen weighed 412.4 grams, 60.5 grams of which were fat removed in chunks during the process of skinning.

The road-runner has long been of special interest to me. What I have seen of it in recent years convinces me that its survival at the north edge of its range depends upon the accessibility of areas in which, during bad weather, it can find shelter and insect food. Observers in southern Oklahoma have reported the capture of a downy woodpecker by a road-runner at a feeding station; but no Oklahoma-killed road-runner specimen thus far examined by me has had in its stomach the remains of any sort of bird, mammal, or reptile. Many insects become active during really warm winter weather at Oklahoma latitudes. Particularly does this seem to be true where, in sheltered places among the rocks, or on slopes with southern exposure, the sun pours down for several hours continuously.

Let us review, then, our findings with regard to the winter bird-life of the Black Mesa country. We found the mesa-tops, with their scattering of pinyon and juniper, almost birdless. Similarly bird-poor were the overgrazed lowlands. Here not even clumps of cactus and thin stands of mesquite furnished shelter or food enough to attract much of a bird population, though we did see in the grasslands such specimens as the western meadowlark, horned lark, road-runner, prairie falcon, and house finch. Deciduous woods along the Cimarron River were attractive to some small birds, notably song and tree sparrows, goldfinches, and juncos; to one middle-sized species, the red-shafted flicker; and to the black-billed magpie. Rocky slopes were inhabited by brown towhees, canyon wrens, and a few rufous-crowned sparrows. Nowhere did we see or hear a species we fully expected to find—the rock wren. The mesa-slopes and sheltered canyon-heads, with their mixture of scrub-oak and conifers, were much favored by the birds. Here we found scrub jays, pinyon jays, scaled quail, spotted towhees, golden-crowned kinglets, bush-tits, plain

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sheer patience than the average thinking person can easily imagine. But no debtor can be expected to pay a debt willingly unless he understands it fully. Where time permits, we try to make sure that he does understand it.

OUR objectives as collectors are four: (a) to see that we have all the facts straight, from both sides, ourselves; (b) to see that the debtor, and sometimes the creditor also, understands these facts as we do; (c) to get the money; and (d) to keep the debtor's goodwill, for his original creditor and for ourselves, if this is possible.

Of these four steps, only the third step is profitable to us, in actual money. Generally speaking, we are paid only on a percentage basis, upon money actually collected. But the other three steps are equally important to us. We could not remain long in business if we ever neglected them.

In trying to apply the principles of modern psychology to the very practical problem of collecting debts, we assume that, in the long run, every living organism is going to follow the line of least resistance, as determined by its inner drives and by the stimuli it receives from its environment.

So, as a practical matter, we always try to set up a situation wherein it becomes psychologically easier for the debtor to pay his debt than it is for him not to pay it. Usually but not always, we have to take the negative approach. We have to make it more difficult for him not to pay. We have to export the proper stimuli. We have to export trouble. In doing this, we also have to stay within the law. It becomes, indeed, a fine psychological problem!

But how about your own personal debts, the debts which we mentioned in the first paragraph, and which you will inevitably incur if you live long enough, with just the ordinary run of luck?

For the sake of brevity, we are going to answer this question rather dogmatically. Each "rule" given here, however, is based upon the writer's personal experience with literally thousands of delinquent debtors, over a period of many years.

1. Grow up if you haven't. Face the fact that you cannot have everything you want from life. Face the fact that you cannot long spend more than you earn without running into serious trouble of some kind.

2. Keep a budget of some kind, whether you follow it absolutely or not. Keep a record of your actual expenditures for three months in a row. Then, determine whether there is any way you can change the pattern this record shows (a) to stay out of debt, or (b) to get more of the things you really want from life from the money you are actually spending now.

3. If you have any vices, include them in your budget, for you are not going to change these things overnight, if you ever do. Be a realist for once. If you smoke too heavily, budget for it. If you drink too much, budget for it. Especially if you gamble, budget for that activity also, and try above all things not to lose more money than your budget allows you to lose, regardless of what others may think.

4. Try to avoid all "impulse buying," regardless of the blandishments of salesmanship and advertising. If you are like most people, you do not earn your money on impulse; you earn it slowly, hour by hour. Isn't it a logical idea to spend it slowly, and not all at once?

5. If you buy goods or services on credit and find your purchases unsatisfactory for any reason, make your complaint to the creditor immediately and not weeks later when he presents his bill. Frankly, no sane creditor and no sane collector ever considers very seriously a complaint which has never been mentioned until after the bill is presented. It is a standing joke among all collectors that dentures never fit after the dentist starts pressing for his money. This is a situation which every collector encounters often.

6. Never start avoiding a person to whom you owe an honest debt. Never start taking your cash business elsewhere. Most creditors, and most collectors, will honestly try to help you as long as you are honestly trying, as long as you are utterly frank and honest with them. Give them no excuse to doubt you.

7. If you make a promise to pay and cannot keep that promise to the letter, call or go see your creditor and explain the matter to him fully. The whole civilized credit system depends upon the sanctity of the promised word. Take your own promises seriously. Other people do, as long as they can!

8. It is always better, for your credit record and for your peace of mind, for you to owe two or three large debts, including one or two banks or loan companies, than it is for you to have dozens of small debts scattered all over town. About four "worrisome" debts at once is all that the average mind can handle, if that mind is going to be used for anything else besides worry.

9. If for any reason, just or unjust, a creditor gives your account to a professional collector, the most prudent thing for you to do is to reach an early agreement with that collector, if you feel that this is possible for you at all. We realize that this is a touchy subject and that we are writing from a prejudiced viewpoint. But it is not the mark of a mature person to hate any legitimate business blindly. And we believe you will find most experienced col-

lectors to be surprisingly courteous, surprisingly understanding, whenever you give them an equal chance to be.

There is more to all this than just credit and debts and money. Character and personality are intangible things; but throughout the ages, they have been expressed in terms of tangibles, and quite often in terms of money and credit.

Think of the great characters of literature, of history—Midas—Shylock—A Certain Rich Man—The Prodigal Son. In every one of these characterizations, and in hundreds of others like them, the use-of-money-and-credit concept has been the psychological center of the whole dramatic character portrayal.

With no scientific evidence whatsoever, it has long been the writer's contention that the use or misuse which every person makes of his money and his credit is the most valid, the most practical index of his true personality, both to himself and to others, which can be found in the world today.

As a corollary, we believe that a person can largely direct his own personality, into whatever channels he seriously wishes to take it, by arbitrarily buying with his money and his credit those things which will push him in that direction.

Of course, the same unscientific hunches were much better stated centuries ago. "For where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also." And, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

... *Winter Birdlife*

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titmice, Bewick's wrens, Oregon juncos, pink-sided juncos, Townsend's solitaires, ladder-backed woodpeckers, and curve-billed thrashers—the last-named exclusively along the lower edges of the thicket at approximately the same level as that of their cholla-dotted nesting grounds. White-crowned sparrows we found only about the Wiggins farmhouse. Prairie falcons we saw principally in the open. To an almost amusing degree their distribution seemed to coincide with that of the telephone poles along the highway, except where a roosting spot on a cliff, or farmyard quail population, attracted them. The golden eagle we saw only in the very open country, the goshawk, pigeon hawk, and great horned owl only in the woods. The screech owl and bobwhite quail we failed to find. The red crossbill we saw only among the yellow pines.

Our Thanksgiving vacation had added valuable details to our knowledge of the winter birdlife of the Black Mesa country.