

WHITE - CROWNED SPARROW

By E. LAURENCE PALMER

WHEN WINTER has begun to give way to spring and spring shows occasional signs of summer, the White-crowned Sparrows are in the height of their northern migration through the northern part of the United States. They have wintered south of a line running crudely from the Po-



White-Crown Sparrow
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tomac and Ohio river valleys to Aridona and southern Lower California. Their winter range extends well into Mexico. They breed north of central Califor-

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nia's mountains through northern Arizona, Wyoming, southern Quebec and southern Greenland. The breeding range extends north roughly as far as trees are to be found.

The White-crowned Sparrow, like its close relative, the White-throated Sparrow, is about 1/2-inch longer than a Song Sparrow with a correspondingly wider wing-spread. The length of the White-crowned Sparrow is about 7 1/2 inches. The easiest field character to distinguish the White-crowned from the White-throated is naturally the absence in the former of the conspicuous white throat of the latter. The White-crowned is also in general grayer. In both, the top of the head appears, at a distance to be similarly black and white striped. Both appear as rather large sparrows and in migration they may be in flocks of small size, sometimes with other kinds of sparrows mixed in.

A college student who was later a professor of zoology was asked by his professor to collect some sparrows for use in laboratory and for feeding a captive alligator. The student, anxious to please his tutor, shot the largest sparrows he could find. They happened to be the White-crowned Sparrows. The professor probably meant English Sparrows. A dynamic lesson followed on the importance of knowing one sparrow from another before any killing is done. This philosophy, according to the National Wildlife Federation, could wisely be applied to many practices associated with casual or intentional wildlife management.

Anyone who has followed a mixed flock of White-crowned or White-throated Sparrows on a rainy spring morning and listened to their sweet sibilant songs, or who may have had any considerable association with the birds, would probably be the last to kill them simply because they were the largest sparrows available. The White-crowned Sparrow seems to be whispering its call while the White-throated gives a high-pitched sweet call that is just out of this world.

White-crowned Sparrows feed to a slight extent on grain and to a great extent on weed seeds. Their economic importance is probably neutral but their emotional importance ranks high with those who know them best. During the summer months their food is primarily insects.

White-crowned Sparrows usually nest in brushland or open woods, usually in hilly country. The nest of grass, roots and leaves with a fine lining is usually hidden in dense vegetation a foot or so above ground. Four to five eggs, each nearly an inch long, bluish gray to whitish and spotted or dotted with reddish-brown or brown, are incubated for about two weeks by the female. There is but one annual brood and the nesting and rearing

Earthworm Species Named For St. Men

Some folks might consider it a bit on the odd side to have earthworms named after them, but that isn't the case with John E. Davis and A. Burr Black, Salem entomologists. Each has recently had a new species of *Plutellus*—earthworm to most of us—named after him. One of the worms is *Plutellus davasi*, and the other is *Plutellus blacki*.

One of the worms was collected by Davis, who is in charge of the plant pest and disease survey program for the state department of agriculture, on the Chetco river six miles above Brookings. The other was found near Salem by Black, who is

period is usually in June and July.

If you have not made the acquaintance of this delightful bird and live within the area of its northern migration this spring, then get out and get acquainted. You will thank me for introducing you to the bird, the bird for living, and wildlife protection organizations like the National Wildlife Federation for sending you this message.

state apiary inspector and entomologist with the department.

These two worm species were identified by Dorothy McKey-Fender of McMinnville and James A. Macnab of the Portland State Extension Center. Each specimen has been deposited in the collection of the California Academy of Sciences.

The two new earthworms are described in some detail—about 12 pages—by McKey-Fender and Macnab in an article in a recent issue of the *Wasmann Journal of Biology*. The authors say the worms "are unique among North American forms in being bithelial," which means they have a double case or covering in a particular part of the worm.

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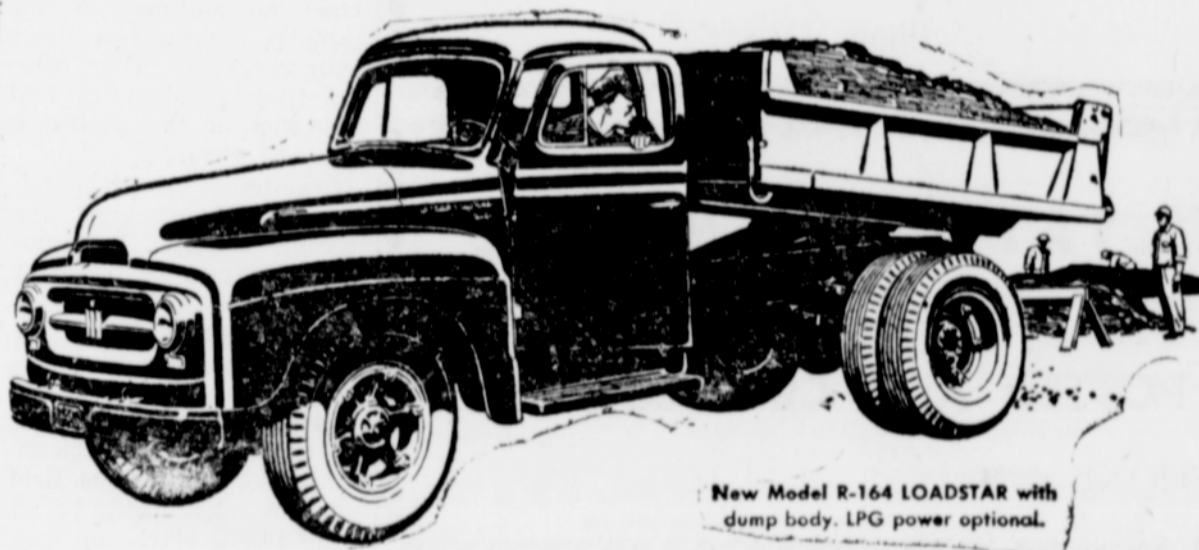
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