

WESTERN MEADOW LARK[†]

(*Sturnella neglecta* Audubon)

Adult: Similar to eastern meadow lark but with colors less intense. Difficult to distinguish in field except by song. Breeds from south central and southwestern Canada south to lower California, Mexico and west Texas. Winters in lower elevations from British Columbia to lower California, and from Wisconsin and Illinois south to Mexico (*neglecta*: neglected).

Western meadow larks are similar in habits and good selection to the eastern and southern meadow larks. The range listed above suggests the western meadow lark is a common summer resident in the western two-thirds of Kansas, and farther east in winter.

The thrilling, complex, melodious whistle of the western meadow lark is entirely unlike the simpler cadence of the eastern form. Bird students with an ear for bird songs wonder if the odd meadow lark music of specimens in east-central Kansas does not indicate hybridization between the western and eastern species.

Happy indeed was the choice by Kansas school children of the Kansas Audubon Society, voted on January 29, 1925, in selection of a state bird for Kansas. Over 121,000 votes were cast, of which 48,395 went in favor of the western meadow lark. Two other favorites reaching second and third place were the bobwhite and the cardinal. Six other states, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, the two Dakotas, and Wyoming, also have selected the meadow lark as their state bird.

[†]—Reproduction is based on an original drawing by Orville Rice, Topeka wildlife artist, for "Introduction to Our Bird Friends," published by Capper Publications, Inc. Capper Publication is responsible for additional art work and the engraving.

