“Notes” from Nebraska Bird Review (December 1985) 53(4)
FILLMORE COUNTY. On 23 June 1985, while I was atlassing block #1F01 in Fillmore Co., just north of Shickley, I saw a Common Moorhen in Weis Lagoon and found a nest with 11 eggs. There was also a very large colony of Black-crowned Night-Herons (I counted 30 in sight at one time). The Night-Herons were nesting close together in a bunch of cattails. Many were still nest building, but others had as many as 5 eggs. I didn't want to disturb the birds too much, but I did see 3 nests with 5 eggs and 1 each of 4 eggs and 1 egg. There was also a colony of Great-tailed Grackles, nesting right in among the Night-Herons, with some Grackle nests as close as 3 to 4 feet from a Night-Heron's
nest.

Other birds seen at Weis Lagoon included Pied-billed Grebe; American and Least Bitterns; Great Blue Heron, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, an immature Franklin's Gull, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. I saw an American Avocet and a Wilson's Phalarope in the atlas block, but not at Weis Lagoon.

-- William C. Garthright, 2240 N. 31st St., Lincoln, Neb. 68503

RED-NECKED GREBE. On 16 June 1985 I was wading through some cattails at the edge of a small open area in a pond at the North 27th Street marsh when I came upon a grebe sitting in the open on the water less than ten yards to my northeast. I hadn't seen it earlier, so it probably moved out of the cattails or the extensive growth of sedges as I got closer. It was at right angles to me, facing northwest, and didn't seem to be aware of my presence. There were no other birds nearby, but I estimated it to be roughly the size of a teal. It was very dark in plumage, dark gray or blackish, though somewhat lighter on the chin and throat. It had a round head and a very long neck. The eye was rather dark, but appeared to be slightly reddish. The tail feathers were short and lay flat on the water at the base of the gradually sloping back. The bill was the most noticeable individual feature, and I studied it carefully. It was very long, nearly the length of the head, slender, and dagger-shaped, coming to a dull point (not sharply pointed like a Western Grebe). Upper and lower mandibles seemed to be mirror images in shape and size. The bill was black except for the base of the upper mandible and the back 1/3 of the lower mandible, which were dull orange. After looking at it for several minutes, I moved forward and the bird started, turned 180°, and took off. (I don't believe it ran on top of the water before taking off, but I really forgot to note that.) It stayed low to the water, flying from my left to my right at first, but quickly turned and headed northwest. When it turned I could clearly see large, though somewhat ragged-looking, white patches at the rear of the inner wing (the secondaries). I didn't notice any white patches on the forward edge of the wings, though I wasn't looking for any and the bird was heading away from me at a low angle.

-- William C. Garthright, 2240 N. 31st Street, Lincoln, Neb. 68503

IBIS IDENTIFICATION. On 23 May 1985 I got a report of an apparent Glossy Ibis in Antelope Co., 2 m. west of Oakdale. I drove up that afternoon and found the bird in a small sandhill pothole that was bisected by a paved road. The late afternoon light was perfect, two hours before sundown, clear sky, sun at my back. I got about a 30-45 second look at the bird from about 30 yards, with a 20x scope. I noted a very narrow white facial ring, dark brownish beak, dark legs that were red at the knees. The facial skin looked dark and I couldn't see the eye color. At this point, based on the above marks, I thought it was probably a Glossy Ibis. I put down my scope, picked up my camera, and was shifting position to get some documentary photos, when the bird flushed across the road into the path of an oncoming car and was struck.

With the bird in hand and unlimited time, I correctly identified the bird as a White-faced Ibis. I found the following marks: the iris was red, between crimson #108 and poppy red #108A. The narrow white ring did go around the eye — a fact that I failed to note on the first brief look. The knees were maroon #31, as were the backs of the legs. The fronts of the legs above and below the knees were still covered with dark scales of greenish-maroon skin that were sloughing off. The facial skin was indeed a dark maroon, between maroon #31 and crimson #108. The entire beak was a dark olive #30. As the National Geographic and Audubon Master Guides indicate for breeding White-faced Ibis (this was a male with enlarged testes that was physiologically at or very near breeding condition), the eye and facial skin color were "right". The legs were partly "right" (from the back) and partly "wrong" (from the front). The beak, the most obvious field mark, was completely "wrong". The white facial ring was "right".
In summary: the guides say that only in adult breeding condition can White-faced and Glossy Ibises be reliably separated. Well, this was an adult in breeding condition, and still didn't have all the "right" marks. I would guess that immatures would be virtually impossible to identify. It sounds like the red eye will identify adult White-faced Ibis any time of the year, if you can see it. Finally, check all of the field marks carefully. They may not all agree, but check and note down what you see. Then, if you can't get enough information to positively identify the bird in the time available, don't be ashamed to admit it. Don't guess at or assume marks you can't see.

This specimen is now a part of the Wayne State College collection, #1054.


--- Wayne Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 69005

**THOSE SIBERIAN GEESE.** Those interested in the Bean Goose sighting may want to read "Bean Goose in the Midlands", by Barbara Wilson, in *Iowa Bird Life* 55:83. The Iowa Records Committee has accepted the Bean Goose as an addition to the official state list. Mrs. Wilson dismisses the Swan and Bar-headed Geese seen in western Nebraska the same winter as non-feral (NBR, 53:3 and 67).

**WOOPING CRANES.** The Fish and Wildlife Service, Pierre, S. D., in its release on spring sightings of Whooping Cranes, said: "A number of birds were held up briefly in Nebraska by adverse weather and wind over the Easter weekend, allowing for a number of sightings in Nebraska. There was an unconfirmed sighting of 3 or 4 birds 28 February, 4 m. S and 3 m. W of Doniphan, Hall Co. There was a probable sighting of 4 birds 3 April, flying west from Alda Platte River bridge, Hall Co. Confirmed sightings were: 7 April, 5 birds flying 5 m. SE of Burwell, Valley Co., 7-8 April, 2 adults and a young 7 m. SE of Stockville, Frontier Co., 7-9 April, 2 birds 2 m. N. of Funk, in Phelps and Kearney counties, 8 April 3 birds 6 m. N. and 5.5 m. E. of Kearney, Buffalo Co. and 4 birds 6 m. S. and 2 m. W. of Shelton, Kearney Co., and 2 birds flying at Swanson Reservoir, Hitchcock Co., and 9 April 2 birds on the North Platte River 2. m. E. and 1.5 m. S. of the junction of highways 92 and 26, Garden Co.

**FLEDGLING LONG-BILLED CURLEWS IN SHERIDAN COUNTY.** On 7 June 1985 Barbara Wilson, of Hastings, Iowa, and I were conducting a census on a Breeding Bird Atlas Block in Sheridan Co., about one mile north of Lakeside. We spotted two very young Long-billed Curlews in the grass. They were quite gray, with much evidence of down, and with very short, straight bills. As we stepped out of the car, an adult Long-billed Curlew rose from the grass and began circling us and calling. Within seconds other Curlews began flying in from all points of the compass. In a very short time there were 18 adult Curlews, plus several American Avocets and 3 Willets standing in that field. We lost sight of the fledgling Curlews almost immediately! As Mrs. Wilson commented, "As a distraction display, this was certainly effective!"

--- Tanya Bray, 9708 Grover, Omaha, Neb. 68124

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI.** On 22 September 1985 I heard the local birds really scolding and they seemed quite agitated, so I walked to the window to see what was wrong. I noted there was a large black bird on the honeysuckle bush. It had its back to me, but it didn't seem to be a familiar sight. The bird seemed to be approximately 14 to 16 inches long, with the tail longer than the body, and the tail was well rounded on the end like a Grackle's tail. I called my husband to bring the binoculars and field book, although I was standing less than 25 feet from the bird. We couldn't figure what kind of a bird it was until it turned and dropped to a lower hedge and then to the lawn. It was then that we got a look at the bill. The bird had no face -- it was all beak or bill, which had grooves on it. It had a black eye. The bird was very calm and seemed content eating grasshoppers etc. in the bushes and on the lawn. The local birds calmed down and flew into the same shrubs but didn't get too close. I called Ruth Green and a few members of our Nature
Club that are bird and photo buffs. They were Maryann and Henry Hyde, Paul Henslee, Dixie Croft, Helen Martin, Bernice Nolte, my husband Cecil, and myself that saw the bird. I finally found the bird in my guide, and Ruth confirmed it when she arrived -- a Groove-billed Ani. The Ani flew to a scotch pine tree to preen itself and Dixie Croft stood below it, within 5 feet, to take a picture. I also was standing there and it ignored us. It is my personal opinion that the bird looked tired, and it also seemed to be a very gentle bird. We milled around the Ani, taking pictures and observing it, and again it was very calm and undisturbed. After dark the Ani flew to a dogwood bush in the back yard, closer to the lake, and I assume a drink, as the lake is there. The Ani was gone the next morning. The neighbor's cat was sitting under the shrubs and probably scared it away.

--- Myasel Kiser, 211 Beaver Lake, Plattsmouth, Nebraska 68048

DUNDY COUNTY. The Rock Creek Hatchery and adjacent lake recreation area, near Parks, Dundy Co, is a real oasis. On 31 May 1985 I found pure males of both Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles, plus well-marked hybrids. I found two nests of Cedar Waxwings, both in Siberian elm, well out towards the ends of the branches, in thick foliage. Both were on the lakeside. When I returned on 14 July both were already abandoned. I've seen Cedar Waxwings all summer in Nance and Wheeler counties, and had reports from Stanton Co, as well. I suspect that they could be found nesting virtually anywhere in the state, although not regularly. All of my sightings and reports of suspected nestings have been associated with lakes and marshes. The associated vegetation back away from the lakes and trees in these reports varies from cornfields to sandhills grasslands to sagebrush and yucca grasslands. Water and trees seem to be the common denominator. In May I found 6-10 singing/calling Western Wood-Pewees, but not Eastern Wood-Pewees. On 14 July, despite a thorough search of all the habitat I'd covered before, I found no Wood-Pewees of either species. Later that same day I did find Eastern Wood-Pewees singing in Frontier Co., so I know they were still singing. Elsewhere in the county in May I found Bobolinks and a pair of Mockingbirds. Jim Barner, of the hatchery, told me of Screech-Owls he'd seen there, with young, in 1983, so I returned after dark, primed with tape recorder and flashlights. We played the songs of both Eastern and Western Screech-Owls from the National Geographic Guide records. The birds (2 of them) answered both recordings, but the only call they used was an exact rendition of the Eastern call. The next day I picked up a road-killed bird in Hitchcock Co., 4.5 miles west of Trenton. It is presumably also an Eastern. It is #1055 in the Wayne State College collection and is available for study by anyone interested in checking the Owls at the apparent edge of their range. I would recommend a visit to the hatchery and lake to any birders passing through the area.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68620
CINNAMON TEAL NEST AT CRESCENT LAKE NWR. On 24 May 1984 Mark Koepsel and I were nest dragging with a cable pulled between two vehicles when we flushed a Cinnamon Teal. It flew over to an adjacent wetland where it swam with a drake Cinnamon Teal. This was south of Smith Lake and the West Mail Road. On 2 June I rechecked the nest. The hen flushed and joined the drake on the same wetland. On 11 June I rechecked the nest. The hen was absent and 5 eggs were missing, most likely due to bullsnake predation. On 13 June I rechecked the nest and found it and the remaining 4 eggs abandoned.

--- Mark J. Helsinger, Crescent Lake NWR, Star Route, Box 21, Ellsworth, Nebraska 69340

COOPER'S HAWK NESTS. Free Flight (Raptor Recovery Center, Lincoln) 1:3 has an article by R. Linderholm and J. Wright about Cooper's Hawk nesting sites in southwest Nebraska. Since 1980 they have located five Cooper's Hawk nesting sites in a five by eight mile area by Strunk Reservoir.

COMMON SNIPE. In late May of 1983 Kevin J. Brennan flushed a Common Snipe from a nest with 4 eggs. The nest was north of Gimlet Lake on the east side of Quarters 2, Crescent Lake NWR, Garden Co.

--- Mark J. Helsinger, Crescent Lake NWR, Star Route, Box 21, Ellsworth, Nebraska 69340

FLEDGLING WILSON'S PHALAROPES. At 9 AM on 13 June 1985, Bill White and three other employees of the Game Commission discovered two Wilson's Phalarope fledglings at 98th St. and Ashland Road, Lancaster Co. As they walked through the wet meadow two male and one female Phalaropes flew around them, acting extremely agitated. They walked through the area several times without finding anything, then stood back some yards away and watched till the adults landed in the grass. They rushed toward the area. Two adults flew up, but one male stayed on the ground until the last minute, then flew right at them. On the ground were two fledglings, huddled together.

--- William Garthright, 3240 N. 51st St., Lincoln, Neb. 68503

CHEYENNE COUNTY. On 18 November 1984 I noticed a Robin still hanging around our farmyard, and today (6 December) he can still be spotted. Now for the rare bird in this area: on 25 November I spotted a Townsend's Solitaire flying into a grove of trees from the road. The next day one was on our farm, about two miles south of where I spotted it the day before. On 1 December I saw one on our farm, but I haven't seen it since.

--- Galen Wittrock, RR 2, Lodgepole, Nebraska 69149

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD. I had a female Rufous Hummingbird from the morning of 10 November 1985 to the morning of 17 November. It was at my hummingbird feeder, in my backyard in Bellevue. It had a rufous tail; underparts rufous laterally; a fairly large scarlet (metallic) patch on its throat; totally green back; tail rounded, and held high compared to body plane while it was feeding. The feeder is about three feet from the window and I had plenty of time for observation. The totally green back and metallic red spot on the throat rule out a female Broad-tailed or an immature male Allen's. Its larger size and well developed coloring indicated at least a year-old female.

--- Arthur V. Douglas, 615 N. Third St., Bellevue, Neb. 68005

VARIED THRUSH. I had a male Varied Thrush in my backyard 24 November 1984. One (probably the same one) showed up briefly in my neighbor's yard 2 December. Both times House Sparrows chased it away. There were apples from a flowering crab on my neighbor's shed roof, and the Thrush pecked at them until he could extract the seeds. I examined the apples later, and it appeared that none of the flesh was consumed. This bird was much more
timid than the one that spent 19 January 1980 into February with me (I was not a member of NOU in 1980, and did not report the bird.)

--- Doug G. Thomas, 1035 Mississippi Avenue, Alliance, Nebraska 69301

WAXWINGS. I had a large flock of Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings on 1, 2, and 3 February 1985. I worked on the next two days so I don't know if they came those days or not. They did not come after that. About 50 Robins were there with them. The Robins stayed a few days longer. The birds cleaned off the berries about 2/3 of the way down on two cedar trees, each tree about 8 to 10 feet tall.

--- Zee Uridil, 78 Westview Estates, Chadron, Neb. 69337

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR NEST IN SIOUX COUNTY. On 9 June 1985 Barbara Wilson, of Hastings, Iowa, and I were birding on the shortgrass prairie southwest of Harrison, very near the Wyoming border. When we arrived at the site Ed and Mark Brogie were studying a female longspur. The bird would run back and forth very near us, but seemed reluctant to fly. As we suspected she might have a nest nearby, we backed up about 20 feet and waited. In a few minutes she flew onto the nest. From where we were standing the nest was invisible. As we approached she again left the nest, and we could see the four eggs. The nest was built into a small depression in the ground. A very neat cup of woven grass stems completely filled the hole. One side of the nest was rather open, but the other was concealed by a taller tuft of dry grass. Not wanting to disturb the nest further, we left the area. As we were walking away a male McCown's Longspur flew in and began singing his flight song.

--- Tanya Broy, 9708 Grover, Omaha, Neb. 68124

SMITH'S LONSPURS. Around 9:30 AM 2 September 1984 I saw about 15 Smith's Longspurs at a rest stop on US 385, about 17 miles south of Alliance, just inside Morrill Co. This has prairie grasslands, marshes, and groves of trees. There were about 15 females and juveniles perched on a power line over the south marsh, but (thank God for flashy males!) I made my identification on a solitary male about 30 feet away in the lower branches of a Russian olive. When I first saw it I thought it was a Black-headed Grosbeak, but a Robin landed in a nearby branch and provided scale. Odd how single birds seem larger to me than birds in a flock. Anyway, I used binoculars to identify it, and felt fortunate indeed that it tolerated my commotion for several minutes of fumbling through field guides to check and double check the identification before it flew over to join the rest of the flock. I went back the next day to get another look, but they had flown on.

--- Doug Thomas, 1035 Mississippi Avenue, Alliance, Nebraska 69301

EARLY PINE SISKIN EGG. For four weeks I had observed Pine Siskins in fervent display in southwest Omaha, and had for some time suspected them of nesting. when on 21 March 1985 I collected an egg that had fallen to the
sidewalk. This was eight days earlier than the earliest date given for eggs in the Pine Ridge by Johnsgard's *Birds of the Great Plains*. Few egg dates seem to be available for eastern Nebraska, where the species is a not infrequent but erratic breeder. The specimen is deposited in the State Museum in Lincoln.

--- Rick Wright, 102 Lawrence Apts., West Drive, Princeton, N.J. 08640