6-1986

“Notes” from *Nebraska Bird Review* (June 1986) 54(2)
NOTES

MORE 1985 CHRISTMAS COUNT DATA. This data for the Lincoln count is now available: 5:10 AM to 5:15 PM, AM and PM clear. Temp. 31° to 45° F. Wind NW 10-30 mph. Snow cover 0 to 18 in. Fresh water frozen. Wild food crop poor. Thirty-five observers, 19-30 in 11-13 parties, 5-16 at feeders. Total party-hours 73 (48 on foot, 25 by car) plus 18 hours at feeders, 3.5 owling; total party-miles 320 (54 on foot, 266 by car) plus 87 miles owling. The Red-tailed Hawk, White-crowned Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak counts were marked as higher than usual, while the Bob-white, and Tree, Song, White-throated and Harris' Sparrow, and Junco, Red-winged Blackbird and blackbird sp., counts were marked as low.

CORRECTION TO 1980 MIGRATION REPORTS. In the reports covering the first half of 1980 (NBR 48: 73) and the last half of 1980 (NBR 49: 17) I mistakenly reported Chukar, but the species I observed was in reality the Gray Partridge. I apologize for any inconvenience caused by my mistaken report.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68620

SILVER-HAIRED BAT. At about 8:30 PM on 4 May 1986 two adult female Silver-haired Bats (Lasionycteris noctivagans) were discovered in Fontenelle Forest, on south Stream Trail, near Gifford Road. This is bottom-land forest, cottonwoods and some sycamores, by a 30 ft. wide stream. The Bats' dorsal pelage was distinctively marked with silver, and they had naked wings and ears. The identification was confirmed by Dr. Ken Geluso, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This is the first record of these bats from the Forest, and the earliest record in the northern Great Plains. The bats were released after they were identified, since there is no collecting in the Forest.

--- Gail La Rosa Roebuck, Curator/Naturalist, Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, 1111 Bellevue Blvd., North, Bellevue, Neb. 68006

RECORDS NEEDED. During a search for substantiating evidence for the occurrence of certain species in Nebraska, we found that as yet there is no Nebraska specimen available for Cattle Egret, nor is there a published photograph. The first published record for Cattle Egret in Nebraska was
near Holstein, Adams Co., 11 September 1965 (Bernice Welch, NBR 34:76). No substantiating identification details were given for this important sighting, however.

The first documented record was from York Co. 29 May 1969, reported by Lee Morris (NBR 37:47). Several Cattle Egrets appeared in Nebraska in 1971 (NBR 39:14), and the species has occurred every year since, in varying numbers. However, it was not until 1982 that nesting occurred, with a pair at Valentine NWR (Esther Bennett, NBR 51:26). The numbers at this same location have increased each year, until in 1984 there were more than 22 birds at the colony, with at least 5 nests located (Jim Ducey, NBR 52:76). It appears that this species will continue to increase in numbers in the Plains States, and nesting should become more commonplace.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is casual in Nebraska (Bray et al, MS, 1985), usually as a summer visitor, and has nested at least 6 times in the state (Ducey, MS, 1985), most recently in Clay Co. (NBR 33:14). Prior nestings were in Adams, Gage, Lancaster, Logan, and Platte counties (NBR 13:1, 27:19, 13:1, 13:50, and 28:56 respectively).

There is no known specimen taken in Nebraska, nor is there a published photograph to document the occurrence of this species in the state. We publish here a photograph, taken by B. J. Rose, of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher seen between Lewellen and Oshkosh, in Garden Co., 14 October 1981.

The Golden-winged Warbler is casual in Nebraska (Bray et al, MS, 1985), but its occurrences in the state have rarely been documented. There is no specimen taken in Nebraska, and we have found no published or unpublished photograph of a Nebraska Golden-winged Warbler. The best available documentation that we are aware of for this species’ occurrence in the state is a description of a Golden-winged Warbler seen by one of us (BP) in Bellevue 16 May 1985. This description is given here verbatim: "The buzzy three-note (one high, two lower-pitched) song drew my attention to the bird. I saw the Golden-winged Warbler in heavy deciduous vegetation about 8 feet above the ground. It was small, chickadee-sized, with a very small, thin-pointed beak, gold on top of the head, gold patches on wings, black patch through eye, black throat and whitish on belly. Length of observation: about one minute. It remained singing in the woods for about half an hour."

We strongly suggest that if anyone has a recognizable photograph or recording of Golden-winged Warbler in Nebraska, please forward it to the Records Committee of NOU for duplication and retention in files.

If anyone finds a dead or dying Cattle Egret, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, or Golden-winged Warbler in Nebraska, please freeze it, record date, location, and collector, and send it to a permanent, well-curated collection for safe keeping.

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Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, Iowa 61658
Tanya Bray, 8708 Grover, Omaha, Neb. 68134
Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, Neb. 68005

MEXICAN DUCK IN NEBRASKA. The Mexican Duck is now considered a subspecies of Mallard (A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds, Sixth Edition, 1983). There are two published records for the Mexican Duck in Nebraska.

The first was one shot by H. B. Conover in Cherry Co., 17 October 1921 (A. C. Bent, U.S. Nat Mus., 126:50). In order to verify that this specimen was still available, we wrote to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and found that the specimen is indeed #973 in the Conover collection there. However, this female-plumaged bird is now considered to be most likely a hybrid of Mallard and Black Duck (David Willard, pers. comm.).

The second record for Nebraska was one shot by Karl Menzel in Rock Co., 19 October 1969 (NBR 31:89-90). The adult male specimen was identified by Paul Johnsgard as a Mexican Duck. Menzel, however, suggested that the bird might have been an escapee, as he knew of game farms in Nebraska where
Mexican Ducks had been raised. There was no mention that this specimen was preserved.

--- Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, Iowa 51653
Tanya Bray, 9708 Grover, Omaha, Neb. 68124
Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, Neb. 68005

DIXON COUNTY. On 6 July 1985 Sue Mabens, of Dixon, saw a Scarlet Tanager 3.5 miles north of Newcastle, and that afternoon she saw an immature Bald Eagle, flying alone over the Missouri, north of Newcastle.

--- Elzene Lundgren, Box 7, Dixon, Neb. 68732

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.

RED KNOTS. In May, 1974, when I was a novice birder, my mother-in-law, Elsie Bray, and I were walking along Leber's Point at Branched Oak Lake in Lancaster Co. Suddenly a thunder shower occurred and we ran for a picnic shelter. As we were waiting for the rain to end a flock of shore birds came around the point. The first ones were easy -- Ruddy Turnstones in bright summer plumage. The next six were also large and rather colorful, but not as easy to identify. As they huddled in the lee of the point we looked at them through binoculars, then checked the field guide, another look at the birds, check another mark in the book. The rain continued and the birds sat quietly, allowing us to positively identify them as Red Knots! What I didn't realize at the time was that I would not see Red Knots again in Nebraska to this day.

--- Tanya Bray, 3708 Grover, Omaha, Nebraska 68124
(Condensed from A Bird's Eye View. XII, 6. Another Red Knot was reported from Branched Oak Lake 11 August 1974, NBR 43:28 and 38.)

BURROWING OWLS. On 11 August 1985 I spotted a Burrowing Owl. I stopped to get a better look, and realized there was a second one on top of the closest power pole. This was the first time I had seen more than one at a time. As I reached for my binoculars I caught a little movement on the other side of the road. To my delight, I saw three Burrowing Owl chicks standing on the edge of the road. The two adults were equidistantly spaced on either side of the burrow. I checked the chicks' progress over the next few weeks, discovering that there was a fourth I hadn't seen the first time, and last saw them around the middle of September.

As you can see, the burrow is at the bottom of a ditch. It went underneath a concrete irrigation ditch. The farmer regularly disced the weeds in the ditch, but each time he did (and fouled up the entrance) the Owls quickly dug out their home, and continued raising their chicks. As well as I could tell from the pellets cast around the entrance the Owls were eating and feeding nothing but grasshoppers. The farmer didn't deserve their help on his crop. As best I can determine the chicks survived, but there were no Owls around when I passed their burrow in the middle of October. I found out that someone had filled the burrow with wide-mouth beer bottles, which I didn't disturb. The one thing I found most interesting about the chicks was that they always were standing in a row by the edge of the road when I drove toward the nest. I watched their body language closely, to assure the longest, closest look at them. The photo shows what I always saw when I started getting too close - one closest to the burrow generally in a crouch, the next one in an intermediate position, the next one just a little more erect, and the last one staring straight
at me. I got only three chicks in the photo because one had already moved. Once we backed up too fast and I saw the head bobbing that they do when alarmed.

--- Doug G. Thomas, 1036 Mississippi Avenue, Alliance, Neb. 69301

LATE REPORT OF COMMON RAVEN. On 16 December 1971 I saw a Common Raven 1 mile S of Wakefield, perched on a telephone pole by the road, about 75 feet away. I saw it for 20-30 seconds, on a bright, sunny day. I was familiar with the species because of 3 years in the northwest. It wasn't until recently that I realized that the sighting was so unusual, but I did record it in my notes.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68620

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES. One winter we saw from our kitchen window a one-legged Black-capped Chickadee. He flew down and grabbed a sunflower seed, but he couldn't perch, hold the seed, and peck it open to get the kernel out to eat. He then backed up into the crotch of two limbs to keep his balance so he could hold the seed with his one foot to peck it open. He stayed several weeks.

Another time, in the fall, we netted a Chickadee that had been almost totally scalped by a predator, but had managed to free himself and survive, while the strips of skin on his head managed to adhere and heal down.

We have banded over 50,000 birds in our 22 years of banding. In the early 1970's we began banding in Fontenelle Forest, and we have banded hundreds of Chickadees there, as well as many other birds. In the spring of 1986 Ruth Green netted some of the birds we had banded there. On 1 March she netted a Chickadee we had banded 6 March 1981 and one we had banded 16 February 1980. On 16 March she netted two we banded 6 March 1981 and one we had banded 9 March 1978. When a bird is banded in the spring it is considered an AHY (after-hatch-year) bird at least one year old. So here we have three birds banded in 1981 which were at least 6 years old when resighted, one banded in 1980 which was at least 7 years old, and one banded in 1978 which was at least 9 years old.

--- Hazel and Fitzhugh Diggs, RR 1, Box 64, Hamburg, Iowa 51640

WAYNE COUNTY. Our farm is 8 miles N and 1 W of Wayne. On 25 and 26 October 1985 I saw a Le Conte's Sparrow near there in a wet pasture with very many marsh plants, and some small trees. On 29 November I saw 10-20 Common Redpolls, in a weedy pasture that had not been grazed for two years. On 20 December 1985 I was looking for some Snow Buntings I had seen earlier that day, and I saw 17 Redpolls in a weedy fence row, near the first site.

--- Mike Ericson, RR 3, Wayne, Neb. 68787

THE PEREGRINE AND THE PINTAIL. On 3 March 1985, while traveling between two of our farms, I noticed a hawk perched in the center of a small pond, close to the road, in a corn stubble field. This small pond had been frequented by many ducks the preceding days, but none were visible this morning. As I stopped my pickup for a better look with my binoculars I could see that the hawk was struggling desperately to fly, but seemed to be held down by something in the water. With the glasses it was easy to see that it was a Peregrine Falcon trying to lift a Pintail that appeared to be dead. The weight of the large duck was more than the hawk could manage and all it could do was to slide the duck slowly along in the water. After several attempts to get the duck out of the water the hawk seemed to give up on moving the bird, but stayed perched on it while watching me. Although the hawk was no more than 100 feet from the road it showed no inclination to leave the prey. It was the closest sighting I've ever had of a Peregrine Falcon, and I was reluctant to leave, but I thought I should call Norris Alfred, as I knew he would want to see this. A short time later we arrived back at the scene, but the hawk and the duck had vanished. I wondered how the duck had disappeared, as I knew the hawk couldn't lift it out of the water to carry it away. After considerable searching and wandering I found the duck along the edge of the pond, out of the water. It wasn't dead, after
all, but was unable to fly. I don't know why the hawk would leave a sure meal, but I never saw it again.

--- Lee Morris, Rt. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Neb. 68316

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK. Ed Brogie, Mike Erickson, and I saw a Red-shouldered Hawk at Gavins Point Dam, Cedar Co., 11 January 1986. According to Willis Hall of Yankton, S. D., the bird had been seen off and on for several days prior to this sighting. The bird was observed both at rest and in flight, and exhibited the reddish wing linings and barred underparts. The whitish wing barrings and narrow tail bands were also seen closely. The bird was on the north side of the downstream side, which is still on the Nebraska side of the old channel.

--- Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Neb. 68729

HAWK CONCENTRATION. On 3 October 1985 my father and I were sowing wheat on a field which had a lot of straw on it. The straw provided cover for field mice, and going over the field with a springtooth would flush out a mouse once in a while. Having a hawk pounce on a mouse is not unusual, but then 2 or 3 hawks would dive. When I looked up there were 10 hawks directly above, about 10 in the distance to the south, and 10 to the north. One group would catch a few mice, then another 8-10 hawks would take their place, and so on. I counted 50 hawks in this group. This was a beautiful sunny, warm day with no wind. The hawks were gliding effortlessly on the thermals as they worked their way in a diagonal line to the southeast. They were in no hurry, but at the same time it was as if they were in a cafeteria line, the way they flew over the field catching a couple of mice as they went. I'm guessing that the group were Swainson's; they looked as if they wore a tan hood over their head and neck, and had black wing tips.

--- Leon Marquart, RR 2, Box 4, Byron, Neb. 68326