SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER and IVORY GULL REPORTED

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER. On 12 October 1986 we saw an unusual sandpiper, in company of three dowitchers, on the east side of Nebraska Highway 15, about half the distance between the Platte River and Octavia, Butler Co. We watched the bird from about 1:30 to about 2:30 PM so the sun was at our backs. We had two telescopes (one used at 20x, the other at 40x), and one 8x and two 10x binoculars, and had the Peterson and National Geographic guides. The road ditch was flooded; the adjacent land land was pasture. The bird was 30 to 40 feet from us at all times.

We thought the bird to be a juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (Calidris acutminata). It had a dark gray eye stripe and a finely barred reddish cap, which set off a white supercilliary. The eye stripe and cap met at the base of the upper mandible. The supercilliary appeared to be broadest near the back of the head, but did not extend behind the head. The back of the head and the nape were slightly buff colored, with fine dark barring. The solid black, thick bill was equal to the length of the head. The back had a scaly appearance; the body of each feather was black and the edges were golden. The wings extended just beyond the tail tip and the black primary feathers were edged with red. Overall, the back and wings were rufous/golden with black scales which increased in size as they approached the tail. The white throat was highlighted by finely barred white cheeks and a buffy breast. The breast had a fine barring on the edges and a very faint necklace. The necklace was created by a few short dark streaks, and was seen only under high magnification. The remainder of the breast was unbarred buff, which ended sharply at the belly. The belly and undertail coverts were white and unbarred. Its short legs were yellow, with large yellow feet. The bird at times fed near the dowitchers, affording a good size comparison. The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was about two-thirds the size of the dowitchers. The bird picked at the grass and water surface, rather than probing. It also tended to feed near the water's edge. It did not call, raise its wings, nor fly while under our observation.

We ruled out the birds with which we are familiar: the Pectoral Sandpiper because this bird did not have a barred breast; the Western Sandpiper because this bird was larger and had a buffy breast; and the Stilt Sandpiper because this bird had short legs.

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Babs Padelford and B. J. Rose went out the next day to try to photograph the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, but the birds had moved.

IVORY GULL. On 12 October 1986 we were birding six miles east and half a mile south of Brunswick, Antelope Co. The day was overcast, with periods of light mist. It had snowed the day before, and the temperature was about 45° to 50°. We were sitting in our vehicle at the edge of the road, facing south, when a white gull appeared, coming toward us at a low altitude. The wings were pointed, and the flap of the wings was definitely gull. It was completely white, with black legs and feet and a black bill. Before reaching us it veered to our right and landed in a new short green growth rye field. It presented us a full side view from about 100 yards away. We viewed it for perhaps three minutes. We were both using 10 power glasses - Zeiss 10x25 and Tasco 7-15x35. While the tip of the beak did not show yellow, it was light colored. Outside of the dark eye, and black legs, feet, and bill, there were no markings. It was a clear white, not off-colored gray or tan. We judged its length to be fourteen inches. From A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America by Robbins, Brunn, Zim, and Singer, and Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic Society, we identified this bird as an Ivory Gull. It flew off to the northeast. We turned around and followed, but did not sight it again.

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Eldon and Barbara Marsh, PO Box 385, Brunswick, Neb. 68725-0385

These apparently are the first reports of these two species in Nebraska. The Records Committee has not yet reviewed these reports. Babs Padelford points out that Iowa Birds (p. 149) reports a sight record for the Sharp-tailed
Sandpiper at the Coralville Reservoir, Johnson Co., Iowa 3 October 1974 and (p. 168) reports a sight record of an immature Ivory Gull at Rathburn Reservoir, Appanoose Co., Iowa 20 December 1975. The AOU Checklist (sixth edition) calls the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (p. 198) casual in Colorado and Iowa, and the Ivory Gull (p. 226) casual in Iowa.

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--- Eldon and Barbara Marsh, PO Box 365, Brunswick, Neb. 68725-0365

"... ON OUR NEBRASKA RECORDS*, REVISITED"

At the second annual meeting of the NOU, Dr. Robert H. Wolcott, one of our founders, presented a paper titled "On Migration Records and On Our Nebraska Records* (Proc. NOU 2:5-9, 1901), which included a plea for better documentation. He said, in part, "These problems must be met and answered in a spirit of scientific accuracy, if our conclusions are to carry weight with those living outside our borders. We must know what we know and record only what we know we know. We must be open at all times to conviction, but at the same time we must subject every fact presented to the most thorough criticism. As a society we must judge kindly, but most critically with the records presented by our members for our consideration."

At that time, documentation meant a shotgun and stuffed specimens. Since that time, fewer and fewer birds have been killed expressly for documentation, the study skins having been largely replaced for documentation purposes by photographs, tape recordings, and written records. The amount of time required for documentation has changed little, however. Indeed, it frequently takes longer to obtain adequate photographs than it would take a practiced museum worker to shoot and prepare a specimen. Another thing that has not changed is the absolute necessity of providing a record that will be available for study by future researchers when some question arises. This record may be a study skin, photo, recording, or a written documentation. Each type of record has its strong points and its drawbacks, and none by itself is perfect for all cases. It must be remembered that none of them are of any value without complete supporting data whose veracity is beyond doubt. Keeping accurate records and making reports available in the scientific literature are two of the criteria which separate ornithologists from casual birdwatchers. With a bit of practice and guidance almost anyone can provide adequate documentation, but it does require some time and self-discipline. The first step, the decision to do so, is the biggest one; it gets progressively easier as you go along.

Who should provide a documentation? Anyone who sees a bird that is not where it should be when it should be. This applies to everyone, amateur and professional alike. One of our most noteworthy ornithologists, Prof. Lawrence Bruner, reported a Magnificent Frigatebird along the Elkhorn River near West Point, in the spring of 1884, but provided no supporting details that give a clue as to whether he was correct in his identification. His report is intriguing, but its validity must remain at least somewhat questionable because there is simply nothing available to support it. His word, even as an eminent authority, is simply not adequate. Neither is anyone else's. It is not that his veracity or ability is questioned; it is simply that he did not provide us enough information. As a result, a "once-in-a-lifetime" record leaves us wondering, and we'll never be sure beyond a reasonable doubt, just what he saw. In the century since that time, no one else has reported a Magnificent Frigatebird in Nebraska.

In order to better understand the timing and distribution patterns of the birds of Nebraska, the NOU Records Committee is asking that a documentation be submitted with every reported sighting of birds on the following list. All species on the list have been reported in the state previously. The documentation to support the occurrence of each species varies from non-existent to completely adequate. As already stated, documentation includes evidence such as written
records, recordings, and photos, as well as preserved specimens. Certainly anyone who finds a dead specimen of a bird listed should make every effort to preserve it for future study. If you find such a bird and are unsure how to handle it, put it in a plastic bag, throw it in the freezer, and call the author for further instructions.

This list does not include all the species that may need to be documented. Any species not previously reported in the state should be carefully documented, as should any species not listed on the current NOU Field Card. Other birds to be documented are those that may be regular in one end of the state but not at the other (e.g., Western Tanager in the east, or Summer Tanager in the west), or regular at one season but not at another (e.g., Harris' Sparrow in summer, or Swainson's Hawk in winter). As a general guideline, any bird that is out of range needs to be documented even if it is not out of season. Be sure that the bird on the following list should be documented every time they are seen, anywhere in the state. Your experience in your area will show you which other ones need to be documented for your particular location. Documentations should be sent directly to the chairman of the Records Committee.

Red-throated, Arctic, and Pacific Loons; Red-necked and Clark's Grebes; Brown Pelican, Oliveaceous Cormorant, Anhinga, Magnificent Frigatebird, Snowy Egret, Tri-colored Heron; White and Glossy Ibeses; Tundra Swan; Bean and Rove Geese; Brent, Eurasian Wigeon, Greater Scaup, any eider, Harlequin Duck, Oldsquaw, any scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Vulture, any kite, Northern Goshawk, Harris' Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Gyrfalcon; Ruffed and Sage Grouse; Lesser Prairie-Chicken, any introduced quail; Yellow, Black, Clapper, and King Rails; Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen; Common and Whooping Cranes; Snowy and Mountain Plovers; Black-necked Stilt, Eskimo Curlew, Whimbrel, Red Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Phalarope, any jaeger; Laughing, Common Black-backed, California, Thayer's, Iceland, Glacous, and Ivory Gulls; Black-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull, Common Tern, Common Ground-Dove, Monk Parakeet, Groove-billed Ani, Northern Hawk-Owl, Great Gray and Boreal Owls; Callopin and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds; Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers; Three-toed and Pilated Woodpeckers; Yellow-bellied, Hammond's, Western, Vermilion, Ash-throated, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers; Gray, Steller's, and Scrub Jays; Clark's Nutcracker; Chihuahuan and Common Ravens; Carolina and Mountain Chickadees; Canyon and Bewick's Wrens; American Dipper, Western Bluebird, Varied Thrush; Sage and Curve-billed Thrashers; Sprague's Pipit, Phainopepla; Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Gray, Wilson's, Hermit, Pine, Prairie, Worm-eating, and Swainson's Warblers; Louisiana Waterthrush; Connecticut and Hooded Warblers; Painted Bunting; Green-tailed and Brown Towhees; Cassin's, Black-throated, Baird's, Hepatic, Sharp-tailed, and Golden-crowned Sparrows; Smith's Longspur; Hooded and Scott's Orioles; Rosy Finch, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Hoary Redpoll, and Lesser Goldfinch.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, Chairman, NOU Records Committee, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68603

BY-LAWS OF THE N.O.U. RECORDS COMMITTEE

I. NAME. The name of the committee is the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, hereafter referred to as 'the committee'.

II. STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY. This committee exists to serve the ornithological community in Nebraska, not vice versa. It exists to promote and help maintain a high degree of quality and integrity in Nebraska ornithology. All Nebraska ornithologists should understand this and realize that for the committee to achieve these goals, it needs the support of all interested persons. The committee should be regarded as a logical, convenient clearinghouse in regards to records of Nebraska birds. All ornithologists, professional and amateur, are invited and encouraged to use it as such. The committee should not necessarily regard itself, nor be regarded by others, as infallible; and committee decisions should not be seen as reflecting in any way upon the competency of individual observers. Any of its decisions are subject to review upon submission of new evidence. Both individual observers and the committee should feel free to engage in an ongoing dialogue in the open literature. Individuals are also free to independently publish their findings and the committee should welcome
this as an alternate way of contributing to Nebraska ornithology.

III PURPOSES. A. To provide a standardized, systematic procedure for routinely reviewing and documenting unusual reports of birds in Nebraska in a fair and impartial manner.

B. To compile and keep current an official list of the birds of documented occurrence in Nebraska and to assemble and maintain a file of the documentary evidence, to be available for use by researchers in the future.

C. To provide guidance and assistance in methods of improving identification and documentation, with the goal of improving both the quantity and quality of our knowledge of the birds of Nebraska.

IV DUTIES A. The committee shall publish an official list of the birds of Nebraska.

B. The official list will include all those species whose occurrence has been reported in Nebraska, the species categorized as specified in para. VII, D.

C. The committee shall keep the official list current.

D. The committee shall publish a list of species for which details are requested with every sighting reported.

E. The committee shall publish a summary of reports submitted and actions taken on those reports at least annually.

F. The committee shall establish and maintain a file of substantiating evidence documenting the occurrence and identification of the birds reported.

V. MEMBERSHIP A. The committee shall be composed of at least seven members, elected by the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union.

B. The committee shall select its own officers, to include at least a chairperson.

C. The members shall serve 3-year terms, with one-third of the members' terms expiring each year, so that continuity of membership is maintained. A member may serve no more than two consecutive terms, followed by a year off, before being re-elected to the committee.

D. Members shall be persons familiar with the birds of Nebraska and experienced in field identification.

E. If possible, members shall be chosen from across the state, to help avoid a regional bias.

F. Two-thirds of the members shall constitute a quorum for voting on procedural matters.

G. The committee shall make recommendations to the N.O.U. Board of Directors for filling vacancies on the committee. The board should normally accept the committee's nominee unless there are overriding reasons for selecting someone else.

H. Since the business of the committee must be conducted in a timely fashion, if a member is consistently unable to work within the schedule, that member may be replaced.

I. By a two-thirds vote, the committee may remove a member for failure to review records or other just cause.

J. The committee may make and amend its rules as necessary, so long as they do not conflict with the rules and by-laws of the N.O.U.

VI. PROCEDURES A. All reports submitted shall be referred to the chairperson.

B. The committee prefers that reports be submitted on committee forms, although this is not absolutely necessary. If photographs are submitted as evidence, at least two copies of each photo are desired so that one may be circulated for voting, while the other is retained in a secure file to protect it from loss.

C. The chairperson will review the report and assign it accession and file numbers.

D. The chairperson may request additional information from the reporter, but if submitted, it will be identified as such to keep it separable from the original report.

E. The chairperson will copy the material and submit copies to the committee members to review. The original material will be retained in the file.

F. The members will individually review the material, make comments on it, and return it to the chairperson. The comments will be compiled and
returned to the members along with the report and a ballot sheet. The members will then review the report along with the attached comments, indicate their vote on the ballot sheet, and return the material to the chairperson promptly.

G. If the vote is inconclusive, or if new evidence is submitted, the report may be recirculated for another vote or discussed at a meeting.

H. When voting has been completed and a decision reached, the chairperson shall notify the reporter and the committee members of the decision reached and of the reasons for the decision.

I. Decision on reports submitted will be published in the Nebraska Bird Review at least annually.

J. A permanent file shall be maintained by the committee, which shall include all reports submitted, actions taken by the committee, comments, documentary evidence, photos, etc. The original material will be placed in a file in the N.O.U. library archives and maintained for use by anyone with a legitimate research interest. The chairperson should keep a duplicate to have readily available for his own use.

K. Any record, present or past, may be submitted to the committee for review. Reports already acted upon by the committee may be re-submitted if new evidence becomes available.

L. The committee may send material to outside authority for an opinion or evaluation.

M. The committee shall meet annually, concurrent with the annual meeting of the N.O.U. In addition, the committee may meet as necessary. A meeting may be called by the chairperson or by two-thirds of the members.

N. The committee recommends as strongly as possible that specimens of rare birds taken in Nebraska be prepared and retained as voucher specimens in a public college or university museum collection in the state, where they will be assured proper curation and be available for study by researchers. The committee recommends the State Museum of Natural History at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln as the logical repository for such specimens.

VII VOTING

A. All records need a minimum of 6 votes to be categorized.

B. To be placed in Class I, II, or III, a record must be voted 6-0, 6-1, 7-0, 7-1, 8-0, 8-1, etc., in that category.

C. Only those species classified as I, II, or III will be recognized as accepted records on the official list.

D. In compiling the official list, as well as voting on individual reports, the following categories will be used:

- Class I: a record for which there is an adequately labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for study.
- Class II: a sight record for which there is acceptable documentation provided independently by three or more observers.
- Class III: a sight record for which there is acceptable documentation provided independently by one or two observers.
- Class IV: a record which is probably correct, but not beyond doubt.
- Class V: a record with insufficient evidence submitted to support the stated identification.
- Class VI: Probably a released or escaped bird, probably mistaken identification, or otherwise unacceptable record.

E. Records will be assigned to the highest category agreed upon by the committee with no more than one dissenting vote. If a record is circularized among 8 committee members and receives 2 votes as Class III, and 6 votes as Class IV, it will be categorized as a Class IV record. Similarly, if a record receives 3 Class III, 4 Class IV, and 1 Class V vote, it will also be categorized as a Class IV record. If it receives 3 Class III, 2 Class IV, and 2 Class V votes, it will be categorized as a Class V record.

F. Members of the committee may not vote upon their own records.

WRITING A DOCUMENTATION

As the previous article makes clear, the written documentation helps birdwatchers communicate clearly about unusual sightings. Preparing the report can even add to the excitement of the event as one settles into a comfortable chair with the field notes and paper, chortling "Wait 'til they read about this!" Then one relives the whole experience while organizing one's thoughts for
Those field notes are an important part of the process, for they keep small but critical details accurate. Train yourself to take some kind of notebook or paper into the field, though in a pinch the margin of a field guide or the back of a shopping list will do. Write notes while looking at a bird or as soon afterwards as possible. Since you will make notes as the bird's characteristics become apparent to you, your field notes will be disorganized and repetitious, not to mention illegible. That's fine; no one but you need ever see them.

Take notes as soon as possible and preferably before consulting a field guide or while consulting a guide and also watching the bird. Memory is profoundly modified by expectations (see the extensive literature on problems with eyewitness testimony in criminal trials), so it is important to get your impressions down on paper quickly, before tricky memory rewrites the whole thing.

In the documentation itself, the first thing to write down is the "bare bones" of the sighting: date, location, species seen, number of birds seen, and name(s) of the observer(s). Next write the birds description. Write down everything you see, including characteristics you consider trivial. (They may matter to others later.) On the other hand, write down only what you yourself see. For example, if you see the bird from the back do not describe its front, even though you may know what it must look like. If you know birds well you will find it surprisingly difficult to limit yourself to what you really see, for your mind will "helpfully" supply missing details.

If you and others pool information to write one documentation from all of you, make this clear. Separate documentations from each of you will be more useful and convincing.

Start your description with a general statement of the bird's size and shape. This need not be any marvel of geometry. Write something like "a duck a little smaller than a Mallard", or "a Robin-sized bird with a long tail". It is actually easier to believe a size description if it is put in terms of other birds rather than in inches.

This general statement of size and shape provides the reader with an outline that you will now fill in with the details of shape and color pattern. I prefer to organize my thoughts by starting at the front and working back over the top of the bird, then starting at the front again and working back along the underparts. Specifically, I ask myself: bill (shape and color)?, face?, eyes?, crown?, back?, wings?, rump?, tail?, throat? breast?, belly?, legs?, undertail coverts?. Write in detail, but obviously you will not see all these parts on all the birds you document.

Drawings may describe the bird more easily than words. Indeed, artists sometimes turn in documentations that are mainly detailed drawings. Most of us use words, but even so sketches can be useful. Even the crudest drawing may be invaluable in describing an important shape or the location of a critical spot.

Do not use the tempting short cut of saying "the bird looks like the picture on page ... of ..." and leaving it at that. The pictures in field guides are idealizations; no real bird looks like them in all details. The purpose of the documentation is to describe the individual bird in front of you. Of course, during a description you might find it useful to explain how the bird did or did not look like some particular picture. It's just that reference to a picture is not a substitute for a description.

The bird's behavior, voice, and habitat are all important and in some cases are more important than the bird's appearance. Write down whether the bird swims, hovers, climbs tree trunks, flycatches, runs, or hops. Does it perch in a tree, a bush, or grass stems, or on the ground? Does it scratch the ground for food with a hop like a towhee, or with one foot at a time like a quail? Did you see it in flight, perched, or what? Did it come to a feeder? Was it in woods, brush, a prairie, a cemetery, a cornfield? What did it eat, and how did it get the food? Describe any song or calls it made.

The next section of your documentation could be labeled "similar species". Here explain what other species are similar to the one you saw and how you told the difference. Consider all the possibilities, not just the one most similar species. For example, for a Peregrine Falcon start by explaining why it is a falcon, rather than an accipiter, buteo, harrier, or kite, then narrow your
focus to why it was a Peregrine and not one of our four other falcons. A few species (like Avocet or Scissor-tailed Flycatcher) are so distinctive that after a good description the "similar species" section may be limited to a statement that there aren't any. Think creatively, though; a Vermilion Flycatcher certainly looks like no other flycatcher in Nebraska but it has some resemblance to a Scarlet Tanager.

It is easy to feel that now you are done with the documentation, but you are not. A sighting is really an interaction between a bird, a person, and various other factors like light, weather, field guides, and optical equipment. Just describing the bird leaves most of the sighting a mystery to the reader and he may misunderstand it.

The second main part of a documentation is a description of the sighting. Make sure you note how far away the bird was. Most of us can not judge distance well, but perhaps you can compare the distance to something fairly standard, like the width of a county road or a city block. Sometimes I am reduced to writing something like "50 yards? (Guess)". It's better than nothing, though not by much.

Weather conditions like overcast, fog, precipitation, and wind can affect a sighting. Describe the weather. Explain the relationship between the bird, the sun, and you. As you looked at the bird was the sun behind you, behind the bird, or to the side?

Mention what optical equipment you used and its power. Tell who else was there and what they thought about the bird's identification. Explain what field guides and other sources of information you used and the relationship between the sighting, your notes, and the books. That is, explain how long after the sighting you wrote your field notes, whether you wrote the notes before or after consulting sources of information, and how any books affected your notes or the documentation.

And now maybe you are done. Mail a documentation to the appropriate person. Currently, in Nebraska send it to Wayne Mollhoff, 736 South Third, Albion, Nebraska 68620. If the documentation should also be published, you may wish to send a copy to R. G. Cortelyou, 5109 Underwood Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska 68132. For Iowa birds, send the documentation to Dr. Tom Kent, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

What birds should be documented? Any bird that seems really rare or out of place. If you suspect the bird you see is unusual, at least take notes on it and then check to see if it should be documented. Remember that birds common in one season may be really unusual in another. For example, a Yellowthroat or Chipping Sparrow in your yard in summer would be ordinary but one at the feeder in winter ought to be documented. Also document and perhaps get published nesting attempts by birds that do not normally nest in your area.

There are two variations on the documentation that you ought to know about. For some species, it is valuable to turn in "details of the sighting" without a whole big documentation. This means you should in a sentence or paragraph explain how you identified the bird. This is used for species that are certainly present here but are a little tricky to identify, like either dowitcher, shrikes in winter, the uncommon Common Tern, or Greater Scaup. Sending in details for these birds just signals the researcher that you know enough to take a little care in identifying the species, something that may not otherwise be obvious to a graduate student going through bird records fifty years from now.

The other type of documentation is the "feather by feather description". This merely starts with the type of description written for a normal documentation. Then the observer carefully describes the pattern on the feathers of each area of the body. Writing this is a long job and not often necessary. However, it is probably the only way to adequately describe such unlikely and difficult-to-identify species as Little Stint or Greenish Eleania, two species that will probably never turn up in the midlands.

To me the most valuable thing about any kind of documentation is that it opens lines of communication between the observer and other interested birders. If I see a rare bird I may call up friends and tell them all about it, but through a documentation I can reach birders who are distant in geography or time. The written description is on file so that anyone with questions
about the sighting can look it up and hopefully find the answers.

Of course, there are other ways to communicate usefully about birds. Photographs and recordings are valuable and even now specimens remain important in special cases. However, the written documentation is especially suitable to this era when concerns about conservation make us reluctant to harm birds but at the same time more people than ever are out looking at wildlife, seeing unusual birds, and discussing their unexpected finds.

--- Barbara L. Wilson, Route 1, Box 48, Hastings, Iowa 51540

CALIFORNIA GULL IN KEITH COUNTY, NEBRASKA

The status of the California Gull (Larus californicus) in Nebraska has undergone a series of changes in recent years. Rapp et al. (1958) makes no mention of this species for Nebraska, although one was collected 19 March 1933 in Lancaster Co. (Hudson 1933) and is now an axial skeleton #ZM11152 in the University of Nebraska State Museum (Bray et al. 1986). Johnsgard (1980) lists the species as an extremely rare migrant or vagrant in most of Nebraska, while Rosche (1982) designates it as casual in spring and summer and accidental in autumn in northwestern Nebraska and southwestern South Dakota. Rosche and Johnsgard (1984) do not list the species for the Lake McConaughy area, although in recent years it has been seen there (Rosche, pers. comm.). Bray et al. (1986) consider it casual, and further state that personal communications with Richard Rosche indicate that this gull may be regular in western Nebraska. Despite the recent reclassification and sightings of this species, only one description of a California Gull has been published since the one collected by Hudson, that of a single bird seen 25 October 1966 at Lake Maloney, Lincoln Co. (Shickley 1966). The following includes the first photodocumentation of this species for the state of Nebraska.

On 14 August 1986 I observed and photographed a breeding-plumaged California Gull at Keystone Lake, below Lake McConaughy, Keith Co. The Gull was approached to a distance of approximately 50 feet while it was at rest on the water. The Gull was studied for an approximate 10-15 minutes before it was scared off by a passing boat. The bird was in company with several Ring-billed Gulls (Larus delawarensis), and was noticeably larger by several inches. It also possessed a yellow bill, of which the lower mandible was tipped with red and black. I was unable to assess the leg color, although size, dark eyes, dark mantle, round head, and smaller bill distinguished this bird from being a Herring Gull (Larus argentatus).

LITERATURE CITED


1987 ANNUAL MEETING, VALENTINE, 15-17 MAY
Between 28 November 1985 and 14 February 1986, over 2,500 waterfowl, 48 Wild Turkeys, and at least one Bald Eagle died due to avian cholera in an area from 5 miles west of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, to 5 miles west of Lingle, Wyoming.

On 28 November a severe snowstorm blanketed the North Platte River valley with 10 inches of snow and wind chills of -20°F. An estimated 50,000 Mallards were concentrated 5 miles west of Scottsbluff, at the headwaters of Spring Creek. The area consists of 2 small dredged channels, 10 ft. wide and less than 3 ft. deep, and surrounded by 20-feet high willow trees. The spring water flows at 55°F, forming Spring Creek, which is approximately 5 ft. wide, 1 ft. deep, and flows nearly 3 miles to the North Platte River. Fifteen Mallard carcasses were collected 28 November. Postmortem diagnosis by the National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC), Madison, Wisconsin, confirmed Pasteurella multocida (avian cholera) as the cause of death.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel from Crescent Lake NWR and Nebraska Game and Parks personnel collected carcasses at triweekly intervals over the next 2.5 months. A total of 1,500 waterfowl were incinerated, with over 1,200 being Mallards. Other species collected were Pintail, American Wigeon, a Black-billed Magpie, a Common Grackle, a Bald Eagle, domestic fowl, and Wild Turkeys. Total mortalities were estimated at more than 2,500 waterfowl. By 1 December, 60 Mallards had been collected, and the first eagles were seen feeding on carcasses (2 adult Bald Eagles and 2 Golden Eagles). One week later, 4 adult and 5 immature Bald Eagles were observed.

During a snowstorm 9 December, an immature Red-tailed Hawk fell from a tree directly in front of field investigators. The Hawk was held in captivity for the duration of the storm and was successfully released 9 days later. For several weeks it was observed feeding at various sites along Spring Creek. Many of the ducks collected from the ponds had their bills and feet chewed on by scavengers. Even though muskrats are considered strictly vegetarians, on two occasions, they were observed feeding on the frozen feet on two occasions.

Three banded Mallards were collected along Spring Creek during the first week in December. One was banded as an adult in 1984 at Scandia, Alberta; one as an adult in 1985 at Holden, Alberta; and the third as a juvenile in 1984 at Wiggins, Colorado.

The snow and cold persisted, preventing the ducks' access to harvested corn fields. In a few fields of standing corn, particularly along Summerville Creek (3 miles south of Spring Creek, south of the North Platte River), the deep snow allowed the ducks to feed directly from the ears of corn. Thousands of ducks began feeding in these fields and along Summerville Creek as it traveled through a cattle feedlot operation. Within the feedlot, ducks were able to feed on spilled grain and undigested corn. A total of 19 Bald Eagles were observed feeding on carcasses at this site on 23 December. An immature Bald Eagle, unable to fly, was captured 7 miles west of Spring Creek, along the North Platte River. It was dehydrated, emaciated (7.75 lbs.), and exhibited signs of respiratory distress. The Eagle died after 2 days of treatment. Postmortem diagnosis by the NWHC was: air sacculitis due to avian cholera.

Frequently, one could observe up to 12 immature Bald Eagles harassing one adult for a duck carcass, while just a few feet away there would be up to 40 dead ducks in the creek. Only after the adult would leave did the immatures begin to feed on these carcasses.

By the first week in January the total number of Mallards began to decrease in the Spring Creek area, with a corresponding decrease in mortalities and eagle observations. On 7 January 3 adult Bald, 11 immature Bald, and 2 Golden Eagles were observed. However, 5 days later, only 4 adult Bald Eagles were seen in the area. During this same period, Wyoming Game and Fish personnel recognized a dramatic increase in the Mallard population on a North Platte River refuge west of Lingle, Wyoming (50 miles west of Spring Creek). An aerial census counted 60,000 Mallards and 2,500 Canada Geese in the area. On 7 January onsite investigations revealed 25 dead Mallards on the river and 40 dead juvenile Wild Turkeys under a roost site 20 yards from the river. Another 8 Turkeys were collected across the river, scattered
among the cottonwood trees. An actual count of 117 Turkeys remained in the flock on 8 January. No other Turkey mortalities were known to occur. Avian cholera was identified as the cause of death by the state of Wyoming's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL), Laramie, Wyoming. An immature Bald Eagle was found among the scavenged Wild Turkey carcasses. Autopsy indicted avian cholera as the cause of death; however, attempts to isolate the organism were unsuccessful. One Mallard collected was confirmed as a lead poisoning mortality by the NWHC. One Canada Goose collected south of this site tested positive for avian cholera by WVDL. The epizootic in eastern Wyoming continued through January, while at Spring Creek the mortalities continued through 14 February. During the final week, the rancher whose land adjoins the Spring Creek ponds lost several domestic geese, ducks, and chickens to avian cholera.

The last previous documentation of avian cholera in the area was in 2 Snow Geese on Lake Minatare NWR, 8 May 1985. No Snow Geese were present during this epizootic.

There are many factors contributing to the cause and duration of this outbreak. An arctic cold front forced waterfowl to fly directly to the North Platte River valley from their Canadian breeding grounds. This is verified by record low fall migratory waterfowl population in North and South Dakota. In addition to the stresses of migration, the coldest November on record froze most ponds and reservoirs, forcing the birds to concentrate on the river and warm sloughs. Mallard drakes continually fought for territory on the crowded ponds. Continual snow storms caused erratic feeding in corn fields or prevented ducks from leaving the water. In addition to these factors, the role played by the domestic fowl is not known.

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The 1986 Fall Field Day was held at the 4-H Camp at Halsey National Forest on 4 and 5 October. The cloudy, rainy weather, which had been rather general over the state the previous few days, cleared up (the last rain at Halsey was late Friday night), and Saturday and Sunday were clear, which pleased the 51 who attended. Of the rare bird reports submitted, the Lesser Goldfinch, by Jim Minyard, was ranked first, and the Laughing Gull, by Paul and Karla Kaufman, the Prairie-Chickens at Omaha, by Douglas Fritz, and the King Rail, by Wayne Mollhoff, were ranked next. Gary Lingle was re-elected and Tom Labedz was elected to the Records Committee. At the Sunday count the members present went on record against the spring goose season, and the proposed season on Sandhill Cranes. The Clark's Grebe (NBR 54:64) was on display, and so was a Common Poorwill with a broken wing, picked up in Hall County and on its way to Lincoln to see if the Raptor Rehabilitation Center could mend it. And birds were netted and banded by Ruth Green and her crew.

Sixty-nine species were recorded on or immediately adjacent to the Forest, and another 18 (marked *) were recorded by parties that went up to Elsmere. The 69 count compares to 72 and 81 in 1985 and 1984, possibly because of the weather, or the fewer observers. Pied-billed* and Western* Grebes; White Pelican*, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose*, Wood Duck, Mallard*, Northern Pintail*, Blue-winged Teal*, Northern Shoveler*, Gadwall*, Redhead*, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier; Sharp-shinned, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged, Swainson's, Red-tailed, and Rough-legged* Hawks; American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, American Coot*, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, American Avocet*, Common Snipe*, Ring-billed Gull, Gull sp.*, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher; Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, American Coot*, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, American Avocet*, Common Snipe*, Ring-billed Gull, Gull sp.*, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher; Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch; House and Winter Wrens; Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets; Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds; Townsend's Solitaire, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Water Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling*; Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green Warblers; Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Northern
Cardinal, Rufous-sided Towhee; Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, Vesper, Grasshopper, Le Conte's, Lincoln's, White-throated, White-crowned, and Harris' Sparrows; Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed* and Rusty* Blackbirds; Common Grackle, House Finch*, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, and House Sparrow.

BOOK REVIEWS


The author's pictures, mostly of polar bears, but with a few of seals, arctic fox, men and their machine, and two of Ptarmigan, are probably more important than the text, which describes a trip out from Churchill in a tundra buggy towing a dormitory accommodation, both supposedly (but not too) bear-proof. The trip was organized for those who were interested in photographing polar bears under relatively natural conditions. In the course of the narrative the author finds occasions for discussions on archeology, anthropology, geology, zoology, history, the philosophy of photography, and other topics that come up. An interesting book.


This book reviews the estimated changes in the breeding bird populations in the U.S. and Canada, based on the survey reports. The situation of each species, or group of species, is discussed, and a chart of the trend is given for most of them. There are also charts of the density of populations of some species, and comments on expansion and contraction of ranges, and of the effect of bad weather on some species. There are tables of the total individuals and routes by species for 1977; the mean number of birds per route by species for each state and province, 1965-1979; the number of routes, total species, and individuals per route for each of the 62 physiographic regions; a listing of the common and scientific names of the birds mentioned in the text; the instructions for the surveys; an explanation of the statistical methods used; and a list of published maps of relative abundance of specific species and where these maps can be found. In other words, a summary of the information collected and is reported under the names and species order of the fifth edition of the A.O.U. Checklist, and one wonders what has happened since 1979. One comment in the book bears repeating. In the discussion of the decline in the Eastern Bluebird population it says: Nest-box trails along established BBS routes are absolutely discouraged because such activity could seriously hamper the ability to detect population trends for this species.

CASSIN'S SPARROW IN GARDEN COUNTY

On 21 May 1986, while searching for evidence of breeding birds in atlas block 2G04 (T17N, R46W, Sections 1 through 3 and 10 through 15) near Lisco, Garden Co., Nebraska, I discovered a Cassin's Sparrow (Aimophila cassinii). This sighting was at 5:20 PM Mountain Daylight Time, along the county road in the northeast corner of Section 11. I was driving slowly down the road and stopped to observe an odd sparrow. I nearly drove past, thinking it was another Grasshopper Sparrow (Ammodramus savannarum), which I had heard and seen all day. The sparrow, which appeared larger than a Grasshopper Sparrow, was perched on the low wire of a barbed wire fence along the road. In the few moments before the bird disappeared into the grass I observed that it was plain-breasted, had dark "whiskers" and tail, a grayish back, pinkish-yellow legs, and yellow at the bend of the wing. As it flew away into the grass it sang a short song. After I consulted my field guide I presumed this bird to be a Cassin's Sparrow, but wanted a second and better look. "Fishing", owl imitations, squeaking, etc., failed to return the bird to view. Remembering the short song, I played Peterson's field tapes in an attempt to match the
song. When I played the recording of a Cassin's Sparrow the bird flew overhead (about 10 feet high) and sang a matching song to the tape's. I did this several times and the Cassin's Sparrow sat on the wire fence between the tape-playings, scolding me with sharp, short, rapid, chipping notes. During these sittings I was able to see all field marks with a 22x spotting scope at a range of 30 to 40 feet: the lightly streaked crown, flat profile of the head, darkish line through the eye, with light above the eye. Because the bird was singing and behaving defensively to another song of the same species I presume this bird to have been a territorial male, which possibly bred this year.

This sighting was at the top of a hill. The pastures on either side of the road were short/mid-grass and moderately grazed, with a smattering of sage. No vegetation in the pastures was higher than about one foot, although some weeds in the road ditches were taller. In 1974 Sejkora (NBR 42:56-57) described the area in Perkins Co. where a Cassin's Sparrow was found as "ungrazed pasture with scattered sagebrush". This description is similar to the area in which I found this bird. Johnsgard (1980, Occ. Papers NOU 86, pp. 105-106) states that the only breeding records of Cassin's Sparrow for Nebraska are Sejkora's and one from Dundy Co. (by Cink, NBR 47:14). This possible breeding in western Garden Co. is certainly at what may be the northern extent of this species' breeding range. However, spring sightings at Crescent Lake NWR in northern Garden Co. (Birds of Crescent Lake WWR, a checklist, Oct. 1984; Sejkora 1974) and on 21 June 1986 at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in central Sioux Co. (Thomas, NBR 54:64) cannot be discounted. Johnsgard (1980) describes this species as very rare and irregular in Nebraska and apparently irruptive. I urge any observers visiting these areas of western Nebraska to watch closely for Cassin's Sparrows.

--- Thomas E. Labedz, University of Nebraska State Museum, 4400 Nebraska Hall, Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0514

Doug Thomas expanded his report to say that he heard an unfamiliar song, and found it was from a biggish sparrow, singing from a power line in a prairie area. The song sounded to him as te-te'teeeuh tahtah, each phrase dropping at the end, and the second phrase starting lower than the start of the first. The bird would sing its song, stop, look around a bit, maybe preen a little, and then repeat the song. He observed this for about 20-30 minutes. He whistled the song as he went back to Alliance. When he got home he put on the tape for Peterson's western birds, and matched the song to the Cassin's Sparrow's. The bird was about 125 feet away, but respect for rattlesnakes kept him from trying to get closer to the bird.

NOTES

CORRECTION TO 1986 SPRING OCCURRENCE REPORT. The q and r for Dark-eyed Junco in Column 1 should be in Column 2, and the explanations in the text should likewise be moved.

THE DESOTO NWR EIDERS. The March 1986 issue (NBR 51:10) reported Eiders, probably King or Common, at DeSoto NWR, and that photographs were being circulated for confirmation of the species. There seems to be general agreement that one was a juvenile male King Eider (S. J. Rose photo). There was less agreement on the other (not shown), but with a tendency to call it a female King Eider.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION MIDWINTER EAGLE SURVEY. The 1986 survey total of 462 Bald Eagles is the second highest total reported for Nebraska, surpassed only by the 746 recorded during last year's unusually mild winter. Survey coverage and effort expended in 1986 were similar to
1985, except along the Missouri River. The 1986 figures for the Missouri River are from ground census, with all observations included in Nebraska's totals. The 1985 figures for the Missouri River are from aerial census, with all observations from South Sioux City to Omaha included in Nebraska's totals but only half of the observations along the South Dakota border reported in our totals.

Totals for 1980 through 1984 ranged from 388 to 453, with an average of 424 Bald Eagles reported. Age ratios have been relatively stable, ranging from 1:1.8 (Immatures:Adults) to 1:2.4 in all years except 1984. The ratio of 1:3.4 in January 1984 was probably the result of a high percentage of immatures migrating farther south than Nebraska in response to the harsh winter conditions. Another way of expressing the range in age ratios of 1:1.8 to 1:2.4 is to say that for every 100 adults observed, 55 to 41 juveniles have been observed.

--- Greg Wingfield, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Route 4, Box 36, North Platte, Neb. 69101

The 1986 count, which was made at 52 sites, is summarized below. (River sites are stretches of the river.) 1985 survey results are given at NBR 53:40.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Bald Eagles</th>
<th>Bald Eagles</th>
<th>Golden Eagles</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Sites</td>
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<td>Immatures</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Co.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Sutherland Reservoir</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tbody>
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JUNE NOTES FOR WESTERN NEBRASKA. Mark Brogie, Creighton, and I bired the western border of Nebraska in June 1986, trying to see some of the birds that breed out there. On 15 June we located a pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers (Melanerpes lewisi) in the Dead Horse Burn area of Chadron State Park. The pair was found in the same nest tree that Brogie had seen them in in 1985. We observed the pair copulating on a limb near a cavity in this tree. Soon after one of the pair entered the cavity, sometime later, as we were leaving after observing Pinyon Jays, we saw a possible third Woodpecker on a fence post, approximately 300 m. from the site of the first pair.

The same day we encountered a pair of Cassin's Kingbirds (Tyrannus vociferans) north of Hay Springs, on the road to Metcalf Wildlife Area, Sheridan.
Co. One of the pair was perched, with fluffy material resembling animal fur, held in its beak. It soon flew off with the material, presumably to its job of nest building. This pair was at a site several miles south of a site on this road where Brogie had found a pair of Cassin's Kingbirds in May, 1986. An additional pair of the Kingbirds was found at Sowbelly Canyon, and a lone bird, presumably paired, was observed south of Gilbert-Baker campground, both localities north of Harrison, Sioux Co. Each of these birds was separated from the abundant Western Kingbirds (T. verticalis) by their white chins, olive green backs, dark brown tail without white edges, and coarser call notes. Each of these birds was found on the ends of narrow, finger-like projections of ponderosa pines into the surrounding prairie.

On 16 June, while birding Sowbelly Canyon, Brogie found a singing Solitary Vireo (V. solitarius) in the transition zone between the ponderosa pines and the deciduous riparian woodland. While we watched its rather agitated behavior we noticed a nest on a small elm, with an incubating female Solitary Vireo. As we photographed the nest without disturbing her, we discovered an American Redstart (Setophaga ruticilla) nest with an incubating female, only a few feet from the Vireo nest.

In the ponderosa pine zone of Sowbelly Canyon Brogie played a recording of a Western Flycatcher (Empidonax difficilis), trying to locate one he had seen on a previous trip. In a short time one responded and it was soon joined by a second bird. Both seemed to prefer the deciduous brush beneath the pines in a dry wash. Besides their diminutive songs, the identification was based on the conspicuous eye ring, wider behind the eye, the dusky "vest" above a yellow belly, wing bars, and an orange lower mandible. The following morning, as Brogie was finding "his" Solitary Vireo, I located a second singing male Western Flycatcher on a pine-covered ridge just south of Coffee Park, within the canyon.

In the wide open short grass prairie west of Harrison we successfully searched for Brewer's Sparrows (Spizella breweri). Two separate individuals were seen, perched on the fence marking the Wyoming line. The second bird allowed the closer inspection, and exhibited an unstreaked breast; streaked crown; brown on gray, without light streaks; eye ring; and whisker.

The traditional Mountain Plover breeding grounds in Kimball Co., northwest of Bushnell, were searched for Plovers, without success. We expanded our search to pasture ground found a few miles to the north. Nesting McCown's (Calcarius mocamii) and Chestnut-collared Longspurs (C. ornatus) were the consolation for an unsuccessful search in hot, inhospitable surroundings.

--- Bill Huser, 319 W. 17th St., South Sioux City, Neb. 68776

MINDEN NOTES. I saw a Northern Harrier on 2 February 1986, and two Magpies 15 February, and a Prairie Falcon 27 February. During that period I also saw Red-tails and Kestrels, and an occasional Rough-leg and Ferruginous, and in March Swainson's Hawks. I saw small groups of Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks on 2 February, Sandhill Cranes in the Platte valley 8 March, and three Killdeer 16 March. My brother, Elwin, observed a Short-eared Owl during the winter. On 6 April Mourning Doves were here, and on 20 April I saw a Snowy Egret. On 4 May I saw three or four Lark Buntings and a Great Blue Heron. On 29 June I found a Mourning Dove nest with two eggs; on 19 July I saw a young Killdeer learning to fly, and on 3 August I saw a young Upland Sandpiper, just learning to fly, with its parents. My cousin, Robert Spicknall, and I saw a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron on 6
and 13 July. On 6 July Mr. Harvey Bell called my attention to an active nest of a Blue Grosbeak, with three young in it. On a hike 28 September I found Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows, but failed to find the usual Great Blue Heron.

--- Harold Turner, P. O. Box 333, Minden, Neb. 68959

PROXIMITY NESTING: THE GREAT HORNED OWL AND RED-TAILED HAWK

Introduction

Forty-two nests of the Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) and 78 nests of the Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis) were surveyed during a three-year ecological study (1982-84). In 11 instances nests of the two species overlapped the hunting areas of the other. Home ranges, in which most hunting takes place, have been defined by various authors (Miller, 1930; Baumgartner, 1939; Hagar, 1967). For this study Hawks and Owls nesting within one-half mile of each other were compared. The proximity nesting of these two species seemed likely to increase the possibility of predation upon the young of the other, as has been previously suggested (Craighead and Craighead, 1956; Fitch, 1940; Orians and Kuhlman, 1956; Seidensticker and Reynolds, 1971; Mcinvaille and Keith, 1974).

Methods

The study area for this project encompasses 76 square miles in northeastern Nemaha Co. in southeastern Nebraska. The land is mostly agricultural upland (70%) which includes riparian woodlands and small woodlots available for raptor nesting. The remaining habitat is deciduous forest on loess bluffs (14%) and the Missouri River floodplain (16%) (Shupe and Collins, 1983).

This work compares only the number of individuals surviving to fledge and makes no attempt to determine the survival rates beyond fledging. Many of the individuals counted were capable of short flight and all were able to move about freely on the limbs surrounding the nests. The agility of these birds allowed them a certain degree of escape behavior.

After an active Owl nest was found, the area one-half mile in radius was surveyed for other nesting sites. Later, Owl nests were checked for fledglings and known Red-tail nests were checked for occupancy. Red-tail chicks surviving to the fledgling stage were recorded later in the breeding season. After the young had fledged at each nest site, several measurements were taken. Those relating to this paper include nest height, lateral distance between nests (measured at breast height from tree to tree) and visibility of the Red-tail nest from the active Owl nest.

Results

The lateral distance between Owl nests and Hawk nests ranged from 981' to 117' (Table 1). The Owls nested in old Red-tail nests (6 sites) and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr-#</th>
<th>Nest Height</th>
<th>Nest-to-Nest Distances</th>
<th>Nest-to-Nest Fledglings</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Owls</th>
<th>Hawks</th>
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<tr>
<td>82-1</td>
<td>40'7&quot; (12.4m)</td>
<td>36'7&quot; (11.2m)</td>
<td>675' (205.7m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>82-2</td>
<td>21'10&quot; (6.7m)*</td>
<td>46'8&quot; (14.2m)</td>
<td>369' (112.5m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>82-3</td>
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<td>303' (92.3m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>82-4</td>
<td>53'2&quot; (16.2m)</td>
<td>47'2&quot; (14.4m)</td>
<td>852' (259.7m)</td>
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<td>47'8&quot; (14.5m)</td>
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<td>84-2</td>
<td>19'8&quot; (6.0m)*</td>
<td>47'7&quot; (14.5m)</td>
<td>654' (199.3m)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave.</td>
<td>32'6&quot; (9.9m)*</td>
<td>46'9&quot; (14.2m)</td>
<td>519.5' (158.3m)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Snag or cavity, all others in old Red-tail nests.
Nebraska Bird Review 85

Tree snags and cavities (5 sites). Owls nested closer to Hawks when using a cavity (345' average) than when using old Hawk nests (665').

Great Horned Owl productivity was fairly consistent throughout the range of distances to Hawk nests (Table 2). Red-tail productivity was directly related to lateral distance. As the distance between nests decreased, the number of Red-tail chicks surviving to fledge was correspondingly reduced. Between 0 to 328', average productivity was reduced to 1.00 fledglings per nest. When the distance increased (329-984'), fledgling survival increased to 1.57 per nest.

In 6 cases the nests and movements of the adults of both species were readily visible from the adjacent site. The average Owl productivity at these sites was 2.00 fledglings per nest (Table 3), which is similar to non-visible site productivity at 1.80. However, Red-tail productivity dropped considerably, from 1.60 in 5 non-visible nests to 1.17 in instances of nest-to-nest visibility.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lateral Distance and Productivity</th>
<th>Nest-to-Nest Visibility and Productivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lateral Distance (100m intervals)</td>
<td>Productivity (fledglings/nest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owls Hawks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-328' (N=4)</td>
<td>1.75 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>329-656' (N=3)</td>
<td>2.00 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>657-984' (N=4)</td>
<td>2.00 1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (N=11)</td>
<td>1.91 1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nest-to-Nest Visibility</th>
<th>Productivity (fledglings/nest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visible (N=6)</td>
<td>2.00 1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (N=5)</td>
<td>1.80 1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these 11 proximate interactive situations, the Owls averaged 1.91 fledglings per nest. In the 42 nests surveyed over the three-year period, the average productivity was 1.63. The Red-tails nesting within the one-half mile parameter produced 1.36 fledglings per nest as compared to an overall average of 1.83 young in 78 nests.

Conclusions

In the numerous visits to the areas involved, no instances of predatory behavior were seen. However, at a previously active Hawk nest 675' from an Owl nest, an Owl was observed sitting on the edge of the Hawk nest. We found no Red-tail chicks and no evidence of predation, but we did gather prey items indicative of recent feeding. The area below the nest was spotted with feces, indicating use in the immediate past. This sighting allows speculation, but not conclusive statements.

Certainly there was ample opportunity for the adults of either species to prey upon the young of the other. There were several instances in this study in which the adults were in direct visual contact with young of the other species. As an example, nest site 83-1 had a lateral distance of 117' between tree trunks. However, the actual linear distance from nest to nest (estimated by triangulation) was approximately 90'. The Owl fledgling was visible in its nest from the higher Hawk nest. It did remain unharmed, as did two Red-tail chicks from the neighboring nest. This was the closest these two species were observed nesting in the three-year study. The fledgling survival of both species in this situation is contrary to the average in the 11 instances. This indicates that more work needs to be done if understanding the relationship of these birds is to be of any value in future management decisions.

Due to rapidly decreasing habitat we should expect increased interaction between the species. The results of this study indicate that the higher than normal productivity of Owls nesting near Hawks appears to be a matter of chance and not indicative of any benefit derived by proximity nesting. However, the data indicate lower productivity from the Red-tails nesting near Great Horned Owls.

Acknowledgements

My sincere appreciation to Bob Collins and Jim Whisler for their continuous assistance in data collection. I also thank Dr. Paul Johnsgard and Mr. Mark Fuller for their constructive suggestions regarding this work.

Literature Cited

Cholera, avian 78
Christmas Count, 1985 3, 40
Chukar 30, 40, 49(2)
Clear, Ron 3
Clark, Jamalee 7
Clarke, Kelly 7
Cochrane, Cindy and David 6, 13
Colorado 70
Cohen, Bennie 7
Common Black-headed Gull in Nebraska 28
Conway, James 7
Coons, Vera 3, 31, 58
Cooper, Larry 64
Coot, American 12, 30, 32, 50, 79
Cormorant, Double-crested 4, 8, 30, 31, 46, 79
Cortelyou, R. G. 12, 30, 31(3), 51, 57
Cotton wood 37, 40, 78
Counties
Adams 8, 19, 20, 46, 55
Antelope 62, 70
Arthur 46, 47
Banner 25, 31, 64
Blaine 22, 66
Boone 3, 8, 46, 55, 67, 68
Box Butte 31, 43
Buffalo 3, 21, 31, 36, 46, 48, 59
Butler 70
Cass 31, 46, 51
Cedar 44
Chase 8, 31
Cherry 21, 22, 31, 46, 48, 79
Cheyenne 31
Clay 22, 49
Cuming 46, 50
Custer 22(3), 56, 67
Dakota 7, 8, 16, 46, 56
Dawes 8, 26, 31, 46, 56, 82
Dawson 8, 20, 22, 31
Deuel 31
Dixon 42, 46, 50
Dodge 31, 46, 50
Douglas 3, 8, 19, 28, 31, 46, 57, 67
Fillmore 8, 31
Franklin 31, 46, 48
Frontier 31, 42
Furnas 67
Gage 31
Garden 31, 46, 47, 80
Gosper 31
Grant 8, 46, 47, 48, 81
Hall 3, 8, 21, 22(2), 31, 46, 58, 79
Hamilton 31
Harlan 46, 48
Howard 8, 22, 39, 46, 58
Kearney 19, 83
Keith 31, 64, 77
Keya Paha 31
Kimball 31, 83
Knox 24, 31, 61, 62, 63, 64
Lancaster 3, 8, 20, 31, 40, 42, 59
Lincoln 4, 8, 22, 30, 31, 46, 60, 67
Logan 22, 46, 48

Counties, continued
McPherson 8, 22, 46, 61
Madison 3
Merrick 46, 49
Nemaha 23, 24, 46, 51, 84
Otoe 4, 24
Pawnee 31
Perkins 30, 31
Pierce 8, 46, 61
Platte 46, 49, 68
Poli 8, 31, 46, 64
Red Willow 31
Richardson 23, 46, 51
Rock 31
Saline 31
Sarpy 4, 8, 31, 40, 41, 43, 46, 57, 64(2)
Saunders 31, 46, 51
Scotts Bluff 4, 8, 31, 46, 64, 78
Seward 8, 25, 31, 46, 50
Sheridan 8(2), 28, 31, 46, 47, 81, 82
Sioux 16, 31, 46, 64, 83
Thayer 44
Thomas 46, 48, 79, 81
Thurston 17
Washington 3, 8, 58, 81
Wayne 43(2), 46, 50
York 17, 31, 46, 50
Cowbird, Brown-headed 6, 24, 30, 63, 64
Cranes, Sandhill 12, 20(2), 50, 62, 79, 83
Whooping 12, 21, 36, 64
Creper, Brown 5, 18, 56
Crossbill, Red 6, 24, 63
Crow, American 5, 18, 30, 34, 56, 79
Cuckoo, Black-billed 15, 53
Yellow-billed 15, 19, 23, 53
Cunningham, Harold 7
Curlew, Long-billed 13, 30, 31, 32
Cutshall, Isolde and Roger G. 7
Roger A. 7
Dean, Kurt 56
Dickcissel 19, 22, 30, 34, 61
Diggs, Hazel and Fitzhugh 43
Dinan, John 31(2), 50
Dolezal, Teri 56
Douglas, Arthur V. 30
Dove, Mourning 5, 15, 30, 32, 53, 79, 83
Rock 4, 15, 30, 31, 53
Dowitcher, Long-billed 14, 52
Short-billed 14, 30, 52
sp. 14, 52, 70
Ducey, James 7, 31(6)
Duck, American Black 4, 9, 47
Mexican 41
Mottled 39
Ring-necked 10, 48
Ruddy 10, 19, 30, 31, 48
Wood 4, 9, 30, 32, 47, 64, 79
Dunlap, Ara Jane 7
Dundon, 13, 51
Eagle, Bald 4, 7, 11, 13, 42, 48, 78, 81
Eagle, continued
- Golden 4, 11, 32, 49, 78, 82
- Eckerson, Gloria 31
- Egret, Cattle 8, 19, 30, 31, 40, 46
- Great 8, 15(2), 17, 46
- Snowy 8, 31, 32, 46, 83
- Elder King 81
- sp. 10(2), 81
- Elk, Siberian 25
- Empidonax sp. 17, 55
- Erickson, Gloria 24
- Mike 43, 44, 50(2), 61, 63
- Ernst, Alfred 6
- Falcon, Peregrine 11, 15, 32, 49, 83
- Ferguson, R. F. 57
- Field Day, Fall 1986 79
- Finch, Cassin’s 24
- House 6, 13, 20, 24, 30, 31, 34, 63, 80
- Purple 6, 24(2), 63, 64
- Rosy 24, 63
- Flicker, Northern 5, 16, 30, 32, 54, 79
- Flycatcher, Acadian 16, 55
- Alder 55
- Great Crested 15, 17, 30, 31, 55
- Least 16, 30, 55, 57
- Olive-sided 16, 54, 58, 64
- Scissor-tailed 30, 41, 55
- Western 55, 56, 64, 83
- Willow 16, 55
- Yellow-bellied 16, 54
- Ford, Walt 3
- Freiberg, Robert 3, 7
- Fritz, Doug 68, 79
- Gadwall 4, 9, 30, 31, 47, 79
- Gage, George 3
- Garnett, Tom 7
- Garthright, Wm. C. 6, 13, 26, 31(4), 49, 59
- Geluso, Ken 40
- Gentes, Sue 7
- Getchler, Jone 7
- Giblin, Daryl and Margaret 6
- Glather, James 3, 7
- Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray 16, 57
- Godwit, Hudsonian 51
- Marbled 51
- Goldeneye, Common 4, 10, 48
- Golden-Phase, Lesser 9, 12, 50
- Goldfinch, American 6, 25, 30, 31, 56, 64, 80
- Lesser 56, 64, 79
- Goodell, Geraldine and Jerry 7
- Goose, Bean 18
- Canada 4, 9, 19, 30, 31, 32, 47, 79
- Ross 47, 59, 64
- Snow 4, 9, 19, 47, 64
- White-fronted 4, 9, 18, 47
- Goshawk, Northern 4, 7, 11
- Grackle, Common 6, 24, 30, 34, 63, 78, 80
- Great-tailed 24, 34, 52, 63
- Graf, Marjorie 19
- Grebe, Clark’s 64, 79
- Eared 8, 30, 46
- Grebe, continued
- Horned 8, 46, 55
- Pied-billed 8, 12, 30, 32, 46, 79
- Red-necked 8
- Western 8, 31, 46, 79
- Green, Ruth 3, 7, 30, 31, 32, 40, 62, 64(2), 80
- Rose-breasted 22, 30, 31, 60
- Rose-breasted x Black-headed 30
- Grouse, Sharp-tailed 4, 12, 49, 79
- Gubanyi, Joseph 31
- Gulf, Bonaparte’s 14, 30, 52
- California 30(2), 52, 77
- Common Black-headed 13, 14, 28
- Franklin’s 14, 30, 52
- Glaucous 52, 68
- Herring 4, 14, 30, 52, 68
- Ivory 70
- Laughing 52, 79
- Ring-billed 14, 30, 52, 77, 79
- sp. 79
- Gunlicks, Mrs. A. B. 14, 31, 60
- Hamilton, Gail 50
- Hancock, Betsy 31
- Harrier, Northern 4, 11, 20, 30, 31, 32, 48, 79, 83
- Harrington, Ellen 6, 14
- Harvey, Mary 3
- Hawk, Broad-winged 11, 23, 49, 79
- Cooper’s 4, 11, 42, 49
- Ferruginous 4, 11, 20, 30, 32, 49, 83
- Red-shouldered 44, 49, 79
- Red-tailed 4, 11, 30, 32, 40, 49, 78, 79, 83, 84
- Rough-legged 4, 11, 49, 63, 79, 83
- Sharp-shinned 4, 11, 30, 49, 64, 79
- Swainson’s 11, 19, 30, 31, 44, 49, 79, 83
- Hayward, James 6
- Shama 6
- Headley, Tom 68
- Heck, Berlin 18
- Heckman, Alice 3
- Jennifer 3
- Justin 3
- Heisinger, Mark 16, 64
- Helvey, Jeanette and Robert 6, 13/14
- Helser, Elsie 12, 55
- Henrickson, Jennifer 3
- Hepner, Greg 3, 7, 57
- Heron, Great Blue 4, 7, 8, 17(2), 19, 30, 31, 46, 79, 83, 84
- Green-backed 8, 30, 31, 32, 46
- Little Blue 8, 31, 32, 46
- Hirsch, Esther 6
- Hodgson, Barbara 12
- Hopf, Tom 30, 49
- Hughson, David 31, 64
- Helen 7, 31, 64
- Hummingbird, Broad-tailed 16
Hummingbird, continued
Ruby-throated 13, 16, 54
Rufous 15, 30
Hume's 17
Bill 7, 12, 17, 47, 48, 56(2), 64, 83
Hybrid Bluebird Update 26
Ibis, White-faced 9, 15, 31, 47
Iowa 3, 4(2), 71
Jay, Blue 5, 17, 30, 31, 56, 82
Pinyon 5, 18, 56, 82
Steplers 16, 17, 30, 86
Jensen, Debbie 7
Johnsgard, Dr. Paul A. 40
Johnson, Chad 3
Layne 7
Dr. Norma 59
Rebecca 7
Wally 38
Junco, Dark-eyed 6, 23, 49, 62, 80, 81
Gray-headed 48, 64, 80, 81
White-winged 47, 81
Juniper 25
Kahler, Don 7
Kaufman, Karla and Paul 6 (2), 21, 59, 79
Kathryn and Lloyd 21
Kelley, Ann 6
Kenn, Alice 7, 15, 16, 25, 31(2), 64
Lee 7
Kennedy, Mrs. Esther 12, 55
Kerr, Stephen M. Avian Cholera in the Panhandle, 1985-1986 78
Kestner, Judy 12
Kestrel, American 4, 11, 30, 49, 79, 83
Kiebba, Eva Mae 7
Kildeer 12, 30, 32, 50, 62, 79, 83
Kingbird, Cassin’s 17, 25, 55, 64, 82
Eastern 17, 30, 32, 55
Western 17, 25, 30, 31, 32, 51, 83
Kingfisher, Belted 5, 16, 30, 54, 79
Kinglet, Golden-crowned 5, 18, 57, 79
Ruby-crowned 18, 57, 79
Kirch, Frances and Harvey 7
Kiser, Maysel 39
Kite, Mississippi 11, 18, 48, 64
Knot, Red 30, 42, 51
Kurpi, Ray 7, 59
Kovanda, James and Sandy 3, 7, 12
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 70
James 57
Labeled, Thomas E. 13, 14, 30, 47, 59, 79
Cassin’s Sparrow in Garden County 89
Lark, Horned 5, 17, 20, 30, 31, 32, 55, 79, 81
Lavelle, B. C. 60
Lawrence, Margaret 6
Lemburg, William 39, 58, 59
Linn, Lennis 15, 31, 64
Lingle, Gary 3(2), 30, 58, 66, 67, 79
Whooping Crane Nest Site
Characteristics on the Platte River, Buffalo County, Nebraska 36
Kari 3, 58
Livermore, Wayne 56
Lock, Russ 66, 67
Longspur, Chestnut-collared 55, 62, 68, 83
Laplant 6, 20, 23, 58, 62, 64, 83
McCown’s 31, 34, 62, 83
Smith’s 62
Loon, Common 8, 46
Losch, Bob 56
Lowery, Roxanne 3
Luesen, John and Willetta 7
Lundgren, Elsene 42
Mabon, Sue 42
Magpie, Black-billed, 5, 18, 30, 31, 34, 56, 78, 79, 83
Mallard 4, 7, 9, 19, 28, 30, 32, 47, 78, 79
Manitoba 26
Manning, John 7, 66
Mike 6
Robert 6
Margaret, Leon 44
Marsh, Dorothy 12, 55
Eldon 61, 62
Eldon and Barbara 70
Ivory Gull 70
Martin, Gene 16
Purple 17, 30, 55
Maslowski, Pete 6
Matthey, Steve 7
Mathieson, Courtnee 3
Marita 3
Richard 3
McCann, Clara 13, 58
McCoy, Sherry K. 15
McMorris, Robert 57
Meadowlark, Eastern 24, 63
Western 6, 24, 30, 31, 34, 63, 80
np. 6, 24, 30, 63
Meeting, The Eighty-fifth 1986 30
Merchant, Louise 64
Merganser, Common 4, 10, 48
Hooded 10, 48
Red-breasted 10, 48
Merlin 4, 11, 31, 49, 63
Meyer, Jim 3
Miller, Gene and June 3
Pat 3
Minyard, Jim 56, 79
Missouri 4, 18, 43
Mockingbird, Northern 19, 30, 58
Mollhoff, Wayne 3, 12, 13, 30, 40, 43, 47, 48(3), 49, 55, 67(2), 68, 79
Whooping Cranes in Blaine County 66
On Our Nebraska Records, Revisited 71
Moorhen, Common 32
Morocco, Ralph 7
Morris, Lee 9, 15(4), 18, 31(2), 44, 49, 64(2)
Shirley 64
Steve 64
Ross 7
Morrow, Harold 3
Morton, Margaret 7
Mottled Duck in Nebraska 39
Mouse, Deer 26
Field 44
Mouse, continued
sp 25
Mulder, Bill 31
Muskat 78
Neaderheiser, Wanda 57
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
25, 31(21)
Nesting Survey 1985 31
Nests and Nesting 9, 17, 19, 25,
26, 42, 59, 61, 82, 83(4), 84
New Mexico 23
Newhouse, Esther 7
Night-hawk, Common 15, 30, 31, 53
Night-Heron, Black-crowned 9(2),
31, 46
Yellow-crowned 9, 30, 47, 55, 83
North Dakota 26
Nutcracker, Clark's 56
Nuthatch, Red-breasted 5, 18, 31,
34, 56, 79
White-breasted 5, 18, 56
Oldsquaw 10, 14, 30, 48
Olive, Russian 60
"On Our Nebraska Records, Revisited" 71
Ontario 26
Oriole, Northern 24, 30, 34, 63
Orchard 24, 30, 34, 63
Osprey 11, 14, 30, 48
Ott, Mabel 13, 59
Otto, William 3, 7
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 70
Ovenbird 21, 30, 31, 34, 60
Owl, Barred 5, 15, 24, 53
Burrowing 15, 30, 31, 32, 42, 53
Great Horned 5, 15, 30, 32,
53, 79, 84
Long-eared 5, 15, 31, 32, 53, 55
Northern Saw-whet 15(2), 53, 64
Short-eared 5, 15, 53, 83
sp. 5
Padelford, Babs 70(2)
Babs and Loren 3, 7(2), 9(2),
10, 12, 13, 31, 49, 50, 57, 59
Common Black-headed Gull in Nebraska 28
Partridge, Gray 4, 12, 40, 49
Parula, Northern 20, 59
Pearson, Paul 7, 50
Pelican, White 8, 12, 20, 46, 79
Pennington, Iola 7, 31
Phalarope, Red 14(2)
Red-necked 14, 23, 30, 52
Wilson's 14, 30, 31, 32, 52
Pheasant, Ring-necked 4, 12, 30,
32, 49, 79
Phoebe, Eastern 17, 30, 55, 62
Say's 17, 30, 31, 32, 55, 62
Pine 25
Pintail, Northern 4, 9, 31, 43,
47, 78, 79
Pipit, Sprague's 19, 30, 58, 62
Water 19, 58, 79
Pluffer, Black-bellied 12, 50
Piping 12, 30, 31, 32, 50
Semipalmated 12, 50
Poison-well, Common 15, 53, 79
Prairie-Chicken, Greater 4, 12,
49, 57, 67, 79
Probst, Jerry 56
Proximity Nesting: The Great Horned
Owl and Red-tailed Hawk 84
Pruess, Dr. Neva 30
Pulc, Rose 6
Raccoon 26
Radford, Norma 3
Rall, King 50, 79
Virginia 12, 50
Rasmussen, Chris 7
Ratzlaff, Neal S. 3, 7, 57
Raven, Common 43
Records Committee By-laws 72
Redhead 10, 30, 31, 48, 79
Redpoll, Common 6, 24, 43, 64(2)
Redstart, American 21, 30, 60, 83
Reitan, Kenneth 6
Report, 1985 Christmas Count 3
Fall Occurrence 1985 (28th) 7
Spring Occurrence 1986 (61st) 46
correction to 1980 40
1985 Treasurer's 2
Richardson, Marguerita 3
Robin, American 5, 19, 24, 30, 34,
58, 79
Rock, Harold and Marilyn 7
Roebuck, Gay L. 40
Salsbury, Richard 28
Rose, B. J. 3, 12, 14(2), 28, 57, 70
Sharon 3
Row, John 24, 57
Rumery, Alice 3
Rushton, Alice 12, 31(3), 51, 57,
58
Rye 70
Sanderling 13, 30, 51
Sandpiper, Baird's 13, 30, 51
Buff-breasted 13, 52
Least 13, 30, 51
Pectoral 13, 30, 51, 70
Semipalmated 13, 30, 51
Sharp-tailed 70
Solitary 13, 50
Spotted 13, 30, 51
Stilt 13, 51, 70
Upland 13, 30, 31, 32, 51, 831
Western 13, 51, 70
White-rumped 13, 15, 30, 51
Sapsucker, Red-naped 25
Yellow-bellied 5, 16, 25, 54
Scaup, Greater 10, 48, 55, 67
Lesser 4, 10, 30, 48, 67
Schleicher, William 3, 13, 58
Scheiber, Hazel 6
Schreier, Lona, Phil, and Steve 25
Scoter, Black 10
Surf 10
White-winged 10
Screech-Owl, Eastern 5, 15, 30, 53
Seim, Helen 13, 58
Shafer, Lona 30
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Ivory
Gull Reported 70
Shoveler, Northern 9, 30, 47, 79
Showen, Don 6
Shrike, Loggerhead 5, 19, 30, 31,
34, 58.
Shrike, continued
Northern 5, 7, 19, 58
Sp. 58
Shupe, Steve
Proximity Nesting: the Great Horned Owl and Red-tailed Hawk 84
Silcock, Jacque 7
Ross 3, 7(2), 41, 42
Mottled Duck in Nebraska 39
Simmons, Helen 3
Siskin, Pine 6, 25, 30, 31, 34, 64(2)
80
Snipe, Common 4, 14, 30, 31, 32, 52, 59, 79
Sole, Thelma 12, 55
Soller, Townsend's 5, 19, 57, 79
Solnitaker, Carol 7
Sora 12, 50
Sparrow, American Tree 5, 22, 40, 61, 62
Brewer's 61, 83
Cassin's 61, 80
Chipping 22, 30, 34, 61, 80
Clay-colored 22, 30, 61, 68
Field 5, 22, 61, 62, 80
Fox 23, 62
Grasshopper 19/20, 23, 30, 34, 61, 64, 80(2), 84
Harris' 6, 23, 40, 62, 80
House 6, 25, 26, 30, 31, 64, 80
Lark 22, 30, 61
Le Conte's 15, 23, 43, 62, 80
Lincoln's 6, 23, 62, 80
Savannah 20, 23, 30, 61, 84
Song 6, 23, 40, 62
Sparrow 6, 23, 30, 31, 34, 62
Vesper 15, 22, 30, 61, 80
White-crowned 6, 23, 30, 40, 62
White-throated 6, 23, 40, 62, 80
Spicknall, Robert 20, 83
Stage, Dave 56
Starling, European 5, 19, 30, 34, 58, 79
Starr, David 3, 31
Robert 3, 7
Still, Black-necked 31, 32
Stopkotte, George W. 13
Strom, Ken 3, 31
Whooping Crane Nest Site Characteristics on the Platte River, Buffalo County, Nebraska 36
Marie 3, 31, 36, 38, 48
Stuthett, Randy 50
Sudrla, Pat 9
Swallow, Bank 17, 30, 34, 56
Barn 17, 30, 34, 56, 79
Cliff 17, 30, 34, 56
Northern Rough-winged 17, 30, 34, 56
Tree 10, 17, 26, 30, 31, 32, 55
Violet-green 17, 55
Swan, Tundra 4, 9, 10
Swanson, Phil 12, 13
Swift, Chimney 15, 30, 31, 54
White-throated 15, 54
Sycamore 40
Tanager, Scarlet 21, 42, 60
Summer 13, 21, 31, 34, 60
Western 22, 60
Taylor, Frances 6, 14
Teal, Blue-winged 9, 30, 31, 47, 79
Cinnamon 9, 31, 32, 47
Green-winged 4, 9, 30, 47
Tern, Black 14, 30, 31, 53
Caspian 14, 52
Common 30, 53
Forster's 14, 30, 31, 53
Least 14, 30, 31, 32, 53
Thomson's, Bank 49, 68
Nancy 68
Thomas, Doug G. 31, 43, 48, 64, 81
Thresher, Brown 5, 14, 19, 30, 34, 58, 79
Thrush, Gray-cheeked 57
Hornit 5, 19, 57
Swainson's 19, 30, 57, 79
Wood 19, 57
Varied 57
Titmouse, Tufted 5, 18, 56
Toll, Jerry 7, 57
Townson, Green-tailed 22
Rufous-sided 5, 14, 22, 30, 34, 80
Turkey, Wild 4, 12, 30, 31, 50, 78
Turner, Elwin 83
Harold 20, 84
Turnstone, Ruddy 30, 42, 51
Uttech, Delmer and Jan 7
Vacanti, Lynne 7, 15(2)
Vance, Nora Mae 7, 64
Vannier, Lyle 6
Veery 19, 57
Vireo, Bell's 9, 58
Philadelphia 20, 30, 59
Red-eyed 20, 30, 31, 34, 59
Solitary 20, 23, 58, 83
Warbling 20, 30, 58
White-eyed 58
Yellow-throated 20, 31, 58
Volden, Eric 3
Votipka, Joyce M. 9
Vulture, Turkey 10, 20, 30, 48, 79
Walker, Phyllis 7
Warbler, Bay-breasted 21
Black-and-white 21, 59
Blackburnian 20, 59
Blackpoll 30, 59
Black-throated Blue 20
Black-throated Green 21, 59, 79
Canada 21, 60
Gerulan 59
Chestnut-sided 20, 59
Connecticut 21
Golden-winged 41, 59, 60
Kentucky 21, 60
MacGillivray's 60
Magnolia 20, 59
Mourning 21, 60
Nashville 23, 59
Orange-crowned 20, 59, 79
Palm 50, 59
Pine 21
Prothonotary 21, 60
Tennessee 20, 30, 59, 60
Townsend's 20
Wilson's 21, 60, 79
Yellow 20, 30, 59
Yellow-throated 59
Yellow-rumped 20, 59, 79
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Ivory Gull Reported</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;... On Our Nebraska Records&quot;, Revisited</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By-laws of the N.O.U. Records Committee</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Documentation</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Gull in Keith County, Nebraska</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avian Cholera in the Panhandle, 1985-1986</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 Fall Field Day</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassin’s Sparrow in Garden County</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity Nesting: the Great Horned Owl and Red-tailed Hawk</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index to Volume 54</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waterbury, Emma 31
Waterthrush, Louisiana 60
Northern 14, 21, 60
sp. 14
Waxwing, Bohemian 58
Cedar 5, 19, 30, 58, 79
Weber, John and Marlene 3
Welch, Miss Bernice 12, 55
Werthman, Ione 3
Whip-poor-will 15, 54
White, W. T. 31
Wheeler's Cranes in Blaine County, Nebraska 66
Wigeon, American 4, 9, 30, 47, 78
Wigg, Melanie 57
Willet 13, 30, 51
Williams, Angela and Don 6
Willow 37
Wilson, Barbara 3, 7(2), 31, 51
Hybrid Bluebird Update 26
Writing a Documentation 74
Wingfield, Greg 30, 31, 66, 67, 82
Wulff, Duane 3, 7
Wood, Gertrude 12
Woodcock, American 14, 31, 32, 52
Woodpecker, Downy 5, 16, 30, 31, 32, 54, 79
Hairy 5, 16, 30, 31, 32, 54, 79
Lewis 54, 82
Woodpecker, continued
Pileated 54
Red-bellied 5, 16, 30, 54
Red-headed 5, 7, 16, 24, 30, 32, 54
sp. 26
Wood-Pewee, Eastern 16, 31, 32, 54
Western 16, 31, 32, 54
Woodruff, Brad and Margaret 3
Wren, Bewick's 57
Carolina 5, 18, 57
House 18, 25, 30, 34, 57, 79
Marsh 18, 31, 57
Rock 18, 30, 31, 34, 56
Sedge 18, 57
Winter 5, 18, 57(2), 79
Wright, Rick 31, 49, 52, 57, 58(2), 60
Writing a Documentation 74
Wyman, Wilma 7
Wyoming 78
Yellowlegs, Greater 12, 50
Lesser 13, 30, 50
sp. 13, 15, 50
Yellowthroat, Common 21, 30, 31, 34, 60, 79
Ziewitz, Jerry W. Whooping Crane Roost Site Characteristics on the Platte River, Buffalo County, Nebraska 36
Zlonke, Jack 58