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Notes from *Nebraska Bird Review* (June 1991)

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NOTES

Some Nest Box Observations. The following are some observations on nests of species who use bluebird boxes in the Gering area. Anyone else working on a bluebird project who would like to add their observations in a future *NBR* is invited to do so.

Bluebirds make a nest that consists primarily of grasses. There are seldom any feathers. Well-used ones are plastered with droppings, although I suppose the droppings could also come if they use the box for roosting in bad weather. As far as I know there is no way to tell the difference between Mountain and Eastern Bluebird nests, and we do have both species here—could even have hybrids, I suppose. Chickadees have the neatest nest that is rather flat but very soft, made of a lot of mosses and animal fur and hair. Again, seldom a feather.

Then there is the House Wren. From what I have read, the male arrives first and fills available holes full of sticks. Then the female arrives and picks the site she

wants. She may build the actual nest on top of the sticks, or she may take all of the sticks out and start over again—even using the same sticks. So we find a lot of houses with what I call 'dummy nests' that are just a bunch of sticks. Sometimes the whole house is full and some of the sticks are surprisingly large—you wonder how the bird can manage to get the stick into the right position to get it into the hole. The actual nests can be quite lovely things made of hair and grasses and many times containing feathers. The feathers aren't usually wren feathers, many I have found appear to be small turkey feathers, but I could be wrong in that. It is always fun to see what is in the houses. Once in a while we find a wren nest built on top of a bluebird nest, and we have found a bluebird nest built on top of another bluebird nest.

---Alice Kenitz, HC 50, Box 38-B, Gering, NE 69341

Red Crossbill Behavior. Red Crossbills are common here in central Nebraska, but I thought the following interesting. 8 Red Crossbills (possibly more) choose to feed at my niger finch feeder. With the tiny holes on the feeder and the bulky crossbills, the birds had to open its mouth and get the tiny seeds out with their pink tongues. About half of them feed by hanging upside down on the posts of the feeder. I felt that this was unusual as a larger feeder with larger bird seed was available some 10 feet away [Ed.--note dated April 13, 1991].

---Helen Seim, 415 E. 20th, Grand Island, NE 68801

Turkey Vulture Behavior. On Sunday, April 14, 1991, we saw a large Turkey Vulture on a fence post right along Highway 92, about 4 miles east of Rising City, Nebraska. He had his wings spread in a draped effect. I figure he was sunning himself. He kept looking at us over his shoulder. I had my camera and snapped three quick photos. He wasn't too excited about us. He then folded his wings and just looked at us. A dead skunk lay on the slow lane of the road. It was a fresh road kill, but he never ate it. The skunk was still there when we came back late in the day.

---Carol Krupicka, Box 185, Rising City, NE 68658

Editor's note: Turkey Vultures will sun themselves using wing spreading like this to help warm themselves on cooler days. Davis (1983) also notes that that wing spreading is also part of the Turkey Vulture's pre-mating ritual around the nest site.

If you observe interesting bird behavior, send in a note. It is observations like Carol Krupicka's and Helen Seim's that give biologists clues to bird behavior.

Source: Davis, D. Breeding behavior of turkey vultures. *Vulture biology and management*. Eds. S. R. Wilbur and J. A. Jackson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. p. 271-286.

Bald Eagle Hatchling. On May 18, 1991, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported the hatching of a single eaglet in a Bald Eagle nest on the Platte River somewhere between Fremont and Ashland. Nebraska Game and Parks officials had been keeping a close eye on the nest for several weeks and are keeping the precise location a secret so that the nest is not disturbed. It is hoped that a further report can be obtained for future publication.

References

- Thomas, F. (May 5, 1991). Watchful wildlife workers give Platte's Bald Eagles a wide berth. *Omaha World-Herald*, p. 14-B.
- Joy soars for native Nebraska eaglet. (May 18, 1991). *Omaha World-Herald*, editorial page.

system, so it does correspond to the graphic illustration above it, and some overall general comments are made. Dates are given for migrants and migration peaks. The habitat of the species is then noted, and a brief section on the best places in Wyoming to find the bird concludes each section. Interspersed within this section are illustrations and charts which provide useful information about identification.

The last section deals with good places to bird in Wyoming. This is divided up in several ways: hotspots for each county (with some good directions and a list of birds to be found provided), hotspots in winter, locations of specific habitat, and several general categories (i.e., waterfowl, shorebirds). This section of the book comprises of only about 10 percent of the book, and given the book's stated purpose, more emphasis on this type of information would have been welcomed.

This book is the initial product of the Dorns' work on birds in Wyoming, and some portions of this fine effort still need refining. On the question of accidental species, the Dorns note that determining what is accidental is "somewhat arbitrary" (3); no further note is given on this argument. Those species which are determined to be accidental are given only cursory acknowledgment: date of sighting and latilong number. For example, the entry for Mississippi Kite states "4(6/11/1987)" (25). Further specific information on where to find out about accidentals is not given in text. The Dorns do make some effort in the introduction and throughout the text to correct mistakes or question ambiguities they have found in identification of rare species. This is certainly a valuable item to have in any guide to an area's bird life. The use of both latilong and county designation used does provide some confusion (I found myself doing a bit of flipping to the map on the back cover), but given their explanation of atlas projects in Wyoming, this is unavoidable. Overall, *Wyoming Birds* does provide thorough details and directions, and the Dorns' work should be appreciated by those interested in Wyoming avifauna.

Note: In an effort to update their text, the Dorns have requested that readers send information about Wyoming birds, especially rare or winter sightings, to them care of the publisher (address above). Careful documentation is requested for those species of less regular occurrence.

---Raymond T. Korpi, NW 1340 State #6, Pullman, WA 99163