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NOTES ON BIRD SIGHTINGS IN NEBRASKA

Black-shouldered Kite. On 6 May, 1995, I saw an adult in full plumage hunting over a field of tall, dead grass just inside the Polk County line from York County. I first noticed this large, white bird hovering while hunting, then it would move a short distance and hover again. Since I see these birds every winter in south Texas, I am very familiar with them, and this is the first one I've seen in Nebraska. Its field marks were very plain, especially the black shoulder patches, long, pointed wings, and long tail. After watching it for some time, I left for about two hours. When I returned, it was still in the same area along with a pair of Northern Harriers. This was a good chance to see the differences in the two species from close range. While they are compared with each other in the bird literature, they really are not similar and are easily separated in the field.

Buff-breasted Sandpipers. This spring (1995) we had lots of these birds like we used to a few years ago when we planted later than we usually do now. Corn planting was so much later this year because of the cool, wet spring. When we plant earlier, I suppose the birds migrate through here after the planting is done and I'm not in the field to see them. They have the odd habit of extending one wing straight up and holding it this way for a short time, so that the white underside reflects the light and can be seen for a long distance. I believe this behavior has something to do with courtship display, but I've never seen other birds display in this manner.

-----Both reports by Lee Morris, RR1, Box 14, Benedict, NE 68316

Western Tanager. On May 5, 1995, a single male was observed off the settlers' trail in Neale Woods Nature Center on the north side of Omaha, NE. It was observed for 15-20 minutes starting at 7:05 AM, and was flying between undergrowth and a sub-canopy of hackberry and ironwood trees. It ate what looked like two caterpillars. I was 20 to 25 feet from the bird, which was thrush size, about 6 to 8 inches in length. It had a slight reddish cast around the eye and bill, fading into a darker yellow on top of the head and on the back of the neck. The upper and lower mandibles were black, as were also the legs and feet. The back, rump, uppertail and undertail coverts, throat, belly, and flanks were all fairly bright yellow. The tail was all black with a small notch. The wings were solid black except for two very distinct and noticeable yellowish-white wing bars. It did not vocalize. I think it was a second-year male going into breeding plumage. It was brighter yellow than the female Scarlet Tanager.

-----John Brennehan, Neale Woods Nature Center, 14323 Edith Marie Ave., Omaha, NE 68112