

6-2007

## Remembering Sue Amiotte, Mildred Gross, and Izen Ratzlaff

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev>

 Part of the [Ornithology Commons](#), [Poultry or Avian Science Commons](#), and the [Zoology Commons](#)

---

"Remembering Sue Amiotte, Mildred Gross, and Izen Ratzlaff" (2007). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 976.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/976>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Bird Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

### **Remembering Sue Amiotte, Mildred Gross and Izen Ratzlaff**

This past spring the NOU lost three longtime members whose contributions to the organization are noteworthy.

In March, Amelia "Sue" Amiotte passed away in Kearney. Born in 1942, Sue grew up in rural Dawes County, attended Crawford High School and received a B.A. in education from Chadron State College. She later attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and received an M.A. in counseling. She worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for many years and eventually returned to the Chadron area to open her own business in mental health and workman's compensation counseling. When she could take time from her busy schedule, Sue enjoyed reading, needlework, camping, gardening, and, of course, birding.



**Sue Amiotte**

Sue served as Treasurer of the NOU from 1998 to 2000 and was a regular at our meetings for many years. Her reports of sightings from the Panhandle were a welcome feature on NEBirds. She will be remembered for her easy smile and sense of humor. Sue was an enthusiastic birder and loved to go to new places and find birds she had not seen before. Her sister Betty reports that the two of them took a trip to Florida a few years ago, where Sue was delighted to add some southern species to her life list.

Sue will be missed by all who knew her, and especially by her fellow birders in western Nebraska. She is survived by her son Andrew and sister Betty.



Mildred Gross

In April, we lost another loyal member in the person of Mildred Gross. Mildred was born in 1920 and, with her husband Everett, was a familiar sight at NOU meetings for decades. Everett says that they had long been interested in birds but didn't get binoculars or discover the existence of the NOU until about 1966. Mildred served as President of the NOU in 1970.

Mildred was born at Rokeby, Nebraska, and graduated as valedictorian from Kearney High School in 1938. She attended Kearney State Teachers' College and graduated with a double major in chemistry and education. While raising their three children, she and Everett both began graduate studies and in 1963 Mildred became the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Mildred went on to teach math at Doane College in Crete for 25 years.

In addition to her keen interest in all facets of the natural world, especially birds, Mildred was an avid musician. Her primary instrument was the piano, but she also played the organ, bassoon, clarinet and oboe. She played in several community orchestras and bands and was a church organist on and off for most of her adult life. Mildred is survived by her husband Everett, daughter Donna, and two sons, Daniel and Damon.

In May, Izen Ratzlaff lost her battle with cancer. She was born in 1938 in Valentine. She received her RN degree at Nebraska Methodist Hospital in 1961 and married Neal the same year. She practiced nursing in Omaha, Kansas City and the Republic of the Congo. A gifted artist, she also received degrees in fine arts and art history from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

One can hardly think of the NOU in recent years without thinking of a Ratzlaff contribution: members since 1979, Neal was President from 1994 to 1996 and continues to volunteer in many capacities, while Izen acted as the unofficial photographer, welcomer and general oiler-of-squeaky-wheels at NOU meetings. Her many albums of photos serve to chronicle our yearly meetings and field trips. According to Neal, she actually liked the people in the NOU more than she liked the birding. That affection was abundantly returned by the members of the NOU. Izen is survived by husband Neal, daughter Rebecca and son and daughter-in-law Mark and Karen.



Izen Ratzlaff