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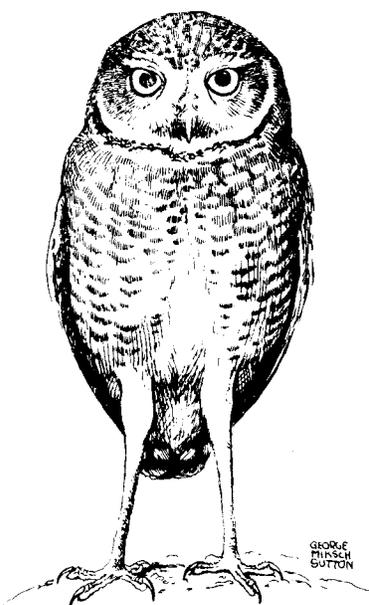
# The Nebraska Bird Review

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS ON BACK COVER**

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POSSIBLE ADDITION OF THE PRAIRIE SKINK TO THE DIET OF THE  
COMMON GRACKLE

On 8 June 1984, at the intersection of California Street and the Union Pacific RR tracks, just west of Saddle Creek Road in Omaha, a Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) was seen flying approximately 2 m above the observer, with a large adult prairie skink, (*Eumeces septentrionalis*) (Reptilia; Sauria) in its bill. The Grackle had difficulty flying, since the skink was somewhat heavy and struggling violently. The Grackle dropped to the ground about 7 m away and released the lizard. The skink lay on its back, twitching slightly. The distal half of its tail was missing. The lack of male breeding colors and presence of a relatively stout abdomen during this season indicated that it was a gravid female. When I approached to within 3 m of the Grackle it immediately grabbed the skink and flew away. This observation occurred at 1315. It is not known if the lizard was eventually ingested.

Since this observation was concurrent with a study that was being conducted on *E. septentrionalis*, and it is the only lizard that occurs in the described area, there was no doubt as to its identity. Blackmore (1940) reported finding prairie skink scales in the pellets of the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*). Peterson (1950) reported an *E. septentrionalis* pinned to a mesquite tree in Texas and implicated the Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) as a possible predator. In addition, Beckenridge (1943) found the Loggerhead Shrike, American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) and Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) to include the prairie skink in their diets. The above observation may justify the inclusion of *E. septentrionalis* in the food habits of the Common Grackle.

#### Literature Cited

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--- Louis A. Somma, Department of Biology,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska 68182

#### OBSERVATIONS OF THE BARRED OWL IN SOUTHEASTERN NEBRASKA

The status of the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) in Nebraska has been questioned for several years. The concern rests mainly with the continued depletion of deep forest habitat which has threatened the very existence of this magnificent raptor. During a three-year study of the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Barred Owls were encountered at various times. It seemed appropriate to accumulate some data on the birds; however, because of their precarious status only limited ecological information was collected.

In 1983 seven nest sites were located within the study area (approximately 76 square miles of northeastern Nemaha Co.). Of these, four were in snags (trees broken off to form hollows) and three were in old Red-tail nests. The following year six nests were located; five in snags and one in a Red-tail nest. Three of the 1983 snags were used again in 1984, presumably by the same mated pairs.

The ecological data gathered included nest height, which averaged 31'9". The snag nests averaged 21'3" and all were located in dead trees with at least a portion of the bark removed. The Red-tail nest sites averaged 47'5" and were located in a linden, a red oak, and two bur oaks.

Not only do these Owls seem to prefer heavily forested areas but they also tend to be found near water. In the sites studied the birds nested an average of 74 yards from a static or flowing waterway. This figure is somewhat distorted by one site that was more than 440 yards from a water source.

In other measurements, the nearest forest edge averaged 76 yards, which is not a reflection of Owl choice but an indication of the poor depth of our forested areas. None of the remaining habitat in this area could be considered to be deep woodland. Therefore, there may be some adaptation to the changing environment on the part of certain individuals.

The birds nested an average of 687 yards from active human dwellings, indicating the species' desire to avoid human activity.

The dynamics of nest life were not studied, due to the possibility of disturbing incubation or placing undue stress upon the young. However, regurgitated pellets were collected to aid in the determination of prey species. The pellets were collected at the nest site or under a nearby roost and dissected to determine prey taken. In general, these include mice, rats, small birds, crayfish, snakes, and rabbits. These Owls serve an important role in controlling the populations of many of the above species. They usually take the ill, aged, or less adapted individuals of a species, thus aiding in the maintenance of a strong prey base.

Barred Owls have few natural predators, but some do fall prey to Great Horned Owls and Red-tailed Hawks. In addition, their eggs and young may succumb to such mammals as the raccoon and opossum. During the two years of data gathering three Barred Owls were found dead. Two appeared to have been killed by collision with vehicles. The other carcass was found directly beneath an active Red-tail nest which contained two nestlings. The bird was in an advanced stage of decomposition, therefore the cause of death could not be determined.

The main problem confronting these Owls is habitat loss. This loss has several origins, but agriculture is responsible for the majority of the damage. In the area of this study 35% of the forested area was denuded by agricultural activities in the 25 years from 1956 to 1981 (Pappas, L., et al, 1982. Loss of Trees in Nemaha County, NE since 1865 due to Agricultural Expansion. *Trans. of the Neb. Acad. of Science*, 107-11.) I wouldn't hesitate to estimate that the loss has now reached or exceeded 50%.

As the available habitat decreases, the interactions between the Barred Owl and the Great Horned Owl will increase. This confrontation will undoubtedly further deplete the Barred Owl numbers.

Increasing use of standing dead trees for firewood is another problem of minor but accelerating importance. This activity eliminates potential nesting sites. Also, increasing levels of pollutants in the environment are a potential threat. The latter will soon have an adverse effect on the adults and/or the offspring as toxins accumulate in the food chain.

To conclude, if current habitat trends continue, I would expect these raptors to be extirpated from southeastern Nebraska within the foreseeable future.

--- Steve Shupe, Biology Department, Peru State College, Peru, NE  
(Currently an educational consultant with the Missouri  
Department of Conservation, Houston, MO 65483)

#### THE EIGHTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING

About 75 people participated in at least one of the events at the eighty-fourth Annual Meeting, held 18 and 19 May 1985 at the Eastern Nebraska 4-H Camp, adjacent to Schramm State Park, between Louisville and Gretna, in Sarpy Co. There was the usual slide show Friday night. Saturday morning was available for birding. In the afternoon the following papers were presented:

Waterfowl Production in the Rainwater Basins.

Robin Harding, Department of Biology, Kearney State College.

Age and Reproductive Success in Northern Orioles.

Thomas Labeledz, Nebraska State Museum.

A Comparative Analysis of Long-eared Owl Pellets.

Russell Benedict and Ray Korpi

presented by Ray Korpi, University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Breeding Bird Atlas Update, Wayne J. Mollhoff, Albion.

The business meeting followed. Wayne Mollhoff was appointed chairman of a committee to establish a records committee. The Fall Field Day will be at Halsey National Forest 5 and 6 October, and the Annual Meeting at North Platte, the date to be selected by the North Platte committee. The Bean Goose was selected as the best bird of the season. The current officers were all re-elected.

At the banquet that evening Dr. Harvey Gunderson, Lincoln, spoke on African Birds.

Sunday morning was available for birding, and Wayne Mollhoff gave a demonstration of the preparation of a study skin.

The weather both days was fine for birding. Most of it was done around the Camp and Schramm Park, but a group did go to Fontenelle Forest, also in Sarpy Co. The 58 species recorded at both places are marked b, the 50 recorded at Schramm and not in the Forest are marked s, and the 12 recorded at the Forest and not at Schramm (including a Red-tail between the two) are marked f. In addition to these 120 species, 18 others recorded by a party that went to the settling ponds, across the river from the Forest, in Iowa, are marked i; and 2 seen at the Werthman home, in NE Douglas Co., by the Werthmans, who were commuting, are marked d. Eared Grebe i, American White Pelican i, Great Blue Heron b, Cattle Egret i, Green-backed

Heron b, Black-crowned Night-Heron i, Wood Duck b, Mallard s, Blue-winged Teal i, Lesser Scaup i, Red-breasted Merganser i, Turkey Vulture b; Red-shouldered f, Broad-winged f, and Red-tailed b Hawks; Merlin s, Peregrine Falcon s, Ring-necked Pheasant s, Wild Turkey s, Northern Bobwhite s; Semipalmated s and Piping s Plovers; Killdeer s, American Avocet i, Lesser Yellowlegs i, Spotted Sandpiper s, Hudsonian Godwit s, Sanderling i; Semipalmated s, Least i, White-rumped s, Baird's s, and Pectoral s Sandpipers; Dunlin s, Stilt Sandpiper i, Long-billed Dowitcher i, American Woodcock s, Wilson's Phalarope i; Franklin's s, Ring-billed i, and Herring i Gulls; Caspian i, Forster's i, Least s, and Black s Terns; Rock b and Mourning b Doves; Black-billed b and Yellow-billed s Cuckoos; Eastern Screech-Owl s; Great Horned b and Barred b Owls; Common Nighthawk s, Chuck-will's-widow s, Whip-poor-will s, Chimney Swift b, Ruby-throated Hummingbird f, Belted Kingfisher b; Red-headed b and Red-bellied b Woodpeckers; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker s; Downy b and Hairy b Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker b, Olive-sided Flycatcher f, Eastern Wood-Pewee b; Least b and Great-crested b Flycatchers; Western s and Eastern b Kingbirds; Purple Martin s; Tree f, Northern Rough-winged b, Bank s, Cliff b, and Barn s Swallows; Blue Jay b, American Crow b, Black-capped Chickadee b, Tufted Titmouse b, White-breasted Nuthatch b, Brown Creeper s; Bewick's s and House b Wrens; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher b, Eastern Bluebird s; Gray-cheeked b, Swainson's b, and Wood b Thrushes; American Robin b, Gray Catbird b, Brown Thrasher b, Cedar Waxwing b, European Starling b; Bell's s, Solitary s, Yellow-throated b, Warbling b, Philadelphia s, and Red-eyed b Vireos; Tennessee b and Nashville f Warblers; Northern Parula f; Yellow b, Chestnut-sided b, Yellow-rumped f, Yellow-throated f, Blackpoll b, and Cerulean s Warblers; American Redstart f, Ovenbird b; Northern b and Louisiana f Waterthrushes; Kentucky Warbler s, Common Yellowthroat b, Wilson's Warbler f, Yellow-breasted Chat s; Summer s and Scarlet s Tanagers; Northern Cardinal b, Rose-breasted Grosbeak b, Indigo Bunting b, Dickcissel s, Rufous-sided Towhee b; Chipping s, Field s, Lark s, Grasshopper s, and Song s Sparrows; Red-winged Blackbird b, Western Meadowlark s, Yellow-headed Blackbird i, Common Grackle b, Brown-headed Cowbird b; Orchard s and Northern b Orioles; Red Crossbill d, Pine Siskin d, American Goldfinch b, and House Sparrow b.

A small group went to Burchard Lake, Pawnee Co., to look for the Henslow's Sparrow, and succeeded. They also recorded Greater Prairie-Chicken, Upland Sandpiper, and Northern Mockingbird which were not recorded in the Douglas-Sarpy area.

#### NOTES

DESOTO NWR. Our Independent Science Research class at Laurel-Concord High School, led by Ed Brogie, took a field trip to DeSoto NWR 3 November 1984. We spotted two species listed as "rare" on the NWR checklist: Western Grebe and Lesser Golden-Plover; and one not listed for fall: Water Pipit.

--- Paul L. Pearson, RR 2, Box 63, Wakefield, Nebraska 68784

CLAY COUNTY. Here are some observations Joe Gabig, Ross Lock, and I made 22 September 1984 at Harvard Marsh, just west of the town of Harvard. Skies were cloudy, temperature was approximately 50-55° F., winds were fairly calm. We were at the southeast side of the basin, looking mostly northwest. Light conditions were very poor, making identification difficult, except for the obvious species. All birds recorded were observed while we were standing near the pickup at one location, between 1830 and 1920. A few small flocks of 15-25 dark geese were observed, and White-fronts were heard calling at times. Some Snow Geese were observed at the main water area .5 mile to the northwest. A local observer reported 200 Snows using the basin. There were scattered small flocks of Blue-winged Teal and other dabblers. There was one flock of 20-25 American Avocets, and single Common Snipe were observed flushing from vegetation. One group of four and two other singles of White-faced Ibis were seen, as were numerous flocks of 1-20 Yellowlegs sp.. Groups of 2-10 White Pelicans were observed off and on. Singles and small groups (4-5 birds) of American Bitterns were observed, and later a flock of about 60 was observed drifting over the marsh. Two Great Blue Herons were also in this flock. Numerous flights of unidentified waterfowl were observed arriving at the marsh. Besides the waves of birds coming into the marsh the sky was dotted with hundreds (thousands?) of birds

that appeared as specks to the unaided eye. These birds were soaring on long, pointed wings, and resembled a flock of swallows feeding high in the sky. They were much larger than swallows, however, but the poor light conditions and the distance between us just didn't allow identification.

--- John J. Dinan, Box 75, Ceresco, Nebraska 68017

(Ruth Green suggests that the "specks" were migrating Common Nighthawks)

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION MIDWINTER EAGLE SURVEY The NWF survey was initiated in January 1979 as a means of monitoring the nation's wintering eagle population. Nebraska incorporates Game and Parks' surveys (aerial and conservation officer counts) with bird club and other conservation groups' counts and reports an edited number as a statewide total. In 1985, 73 counties were included in coverage by 88 survey participants. I might explain that not all observations reported to me are necessarily included in the totals. Several areas are surveyed by more than one group over the two week period, so I must edit observations to minimize duplicate reporting and to allow for possible local movements by the eagles.

Nebraska's NWF survey Bald Eagle totals from 1979 to 1985 are:

Year	Adults	Immatures	Unknown Age	Total
1979	132	51	11	194
1980	288	154	0	442
1981	306	147	0	453
1982	254	138	1	393
1983	286	147	13	446
1984	296	86	6	388
1985	475	238	33	746

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

The 1985 count was listed by 57 sites. (River sites are stretches of the river.) In condensed form it is:

Location	No. of Sites	Bald Eagles			Golden Eagles		Unknown Species	Total
		Adults	Im-matures	Unknown Age	Adults	Im-matures		
North Platte R.	6	65	41	11	6	1	-	124
Platte River	9	120	30	9	-	-	-	159
South Platte R.	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Republican R.	3	52	66	-	-	-	-	118
Middle Loup R.	2	8	1	-	2	-	-	11
Loup River	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	8
Snake River	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	10
Niobrara R.	5	33	3	-	6	-	6	48
Missouri R.	2	61	13	-	1	-	-	75
Sheridan Co.	5	4	-	-	3	1	-	8
Chase Co.	2	6	7	-	2	1	-	16
Sutherland Reservoir	1	89	72	12	-	-	-	173
Strunk Res.	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	5
Miscellaneous	18	13	3	1	10	-	2	29
Total	57	475	238	33	30	3	8	787

MINDEN NOTES. On 23 September 1984 my cousin, Robert Spicknall, and I saw three or four groups of White Pelicans, about 400 birds, in the air east of Minden. We saw Great Blue Herons from 10 August to 1 September. We saw about a dozen Cattle Egrets 10 August, and a few were still at the same lagoon 16 August. Robert saw a Turkey Vulture in Adams Co. 9 September. I saw a kettle of Swainson's Hawks on 25 August. Robert heard Sandhill Cranes in Adams Co. 20 October, and I saw some in Kearney Co. 24 October. I heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo 25 August. I flushed Grasshopper Sparrows on 1 and 9 September. On 27 October we saw some Lapland Longspurs, and

then about 200 of what I feel sure were Smith's Longspurs -- we had the light in our favor in checking them. Mrs. Mike Bunger reported three House Finches at her feeder from mid-August to mid-September, and I was told of a totally white sparrow -- no black feathers -- in with a flock of House Sparrows near the Post Office.

--- Harold Turner, Box 333, Minden, Nebraska 68959

**WHOOPIING CRANES.** The Pierre, S. D., office of the Fish and Wildlife Service reported three confirmed sightings of Whooping Cranes in Nebraska in the 1984 fall migration. Four adults and a young were sighted in Logan Co., 13½ miles north and 5 miles east of Stapleton on 28-29 October; two were seen flying 10½ miles north and 1 mile east of Minden, Buffalo Co., on 28 October; and two adults and one young were 2 miles east and 6 miles north of Gibbon, Buffalo Co., 31 October to 1 November.

The 11 April record of two birds in Kearney Co., reported as "highly probable" (*NBR* 52:46), is now classified as confirmed.

The Whooping Crane Conservation Association's *Grus Americana*, 24:3, reports: Based on the best information available there were about 150 Whooping Cranes in the wild and 44 in captivity at one time in mid-1985. It is very difficult to make an accurate count of the Rocky Mountain population because of the vast geographical area into which they have dispersed.

**MOUNTAIN PLOVER.** A Mountain Plover was observed 8 May 1985 by Scheil Zendehe and me northwest of Bushnell, Kimball County, Nebraska, at the locality described by Richard C. Rosche in the June/August 1982 issue of *Birding*. The bird was seen at about 5:30 PM MDT, in flight and perched on a newly plowed field. The Mountain Plover was smaller than the Killdeer present at an artificial lake in a pasture nearby, and showed a much less conspicuous wing stripe in flight. On the ground, it showed tawny brown upperparts with a small dark area on the crown, and white underparts with a small buffy diffusion on the sides of the breast. The bill was dark and the eye large; there was a broad whitish eyeline. As the bird flew from the bare field back into the pasture, we noted the brown tail with a dark area at the tip. The only vocalizations we heard were a series of hoarse calls given in flight. The legs and feet were grayish-pink.

--- Rick Wright, 11530 Westwood Lane, #33, Omaha, Nebraska 68144

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS.** Ten Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*) of the race *hendersoni* were identified by Soheil Zendehe and me on 14 May 1985, in a flooded field about 1.5 km. east of LaPlatte, Sarpy County, Nebraska. The weather was rainy, but the light soft enough to permit good evaluation of colors; there was no glare. The birds were observed through scopes at a distance of approximately 30 m. Although no Long-billed Dowitchers were present in the flock (which contained, in addition to the Short-billed Dowitchers, 30 Stilt Sandpipers, 8 Lesser Golden-Plovers, 7 Ruddy Turnstones, 2 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 Semipalmated Plover, and numerous Least, Semipalmated, and White-rumped Sandpipers), we had closely observed flocks of Long-bills in western Nebraska two days earlier; thus we did have basis for comparison, if indirect.

Our first impression of the Dowitchers were that they were quite light above, pale below, and short-billed (some members of the flock were also rather long-billed). Closer inspection showed that the feathers of the back and scapulars were broadly edged in orange and white, giving the upper surface a bright golden glow, unlike the dark (even blackish) upperparts of Long-billed Dowitchers. The throat, neck, and breast were peach colored, again seemingly lighter than the orange-red colors of Long-billed Dowitchers; this comparison is very difficult, however, without the birds together. The bellies and undertail areas of the birds were patchy white and pink, typical for the *hendersoni* Short-bill. The throat, jugulum, and breast of these birds were unmarked, and the sides of the neck were lightly spotted; the flanks were barred. This general sparseness of markings beneath contrasts with Long-billed Dowitcher, which is typically more heavily barred on the neck, breast, and sides. The tail pattern was unobserved. The birds were generally very quiet, although a few three-noted, Yellowlegs-like calls were heard; these were unequivocally the calls of Short-billed Dowitchers, with which we are

both familiar (the eastern race *griseus*). We had also heard the peep-peep calls of the Long-billed Dowitcher only two days before.

The general paleness of the birds, the short bills of some of the flock, and the light markings underneath point strongly to the conclusion that there were indeed Short-billed Dowitchers; the calls are unmistakable, and confirm the identification.

--- Rick Wright, 11530 Westwood Lane, #33, Omaha, Nebraska 68144

SNOWY OWL. I spotted a Snowy Owl today (26 December 1984) atop a telephone pole along the road on a hill, surrounded by pastureland.

--- Galen Wittrock, RR 2, Lodgepole, Nebraska 69149

BURROWING OWL. On 23 October 1984 I spotted a Burrowing Owl in Wayne Co. It stayed around for about three days, allowing many other birders to see it.

--- Paul L. Pearson, RR 2, Box 63, Wakefield, Nebraska 68784.

THREE GOATSUCKERS AT BOHEMIA PRAIRIE. Bohemia Prairie Wildlife Management Area, 5 miles south and 4 miles west of Niobrara, Knox County, was visited from 15 to 17 June 1984 to go birding. During this time an unusual occurrence of three species of Goatsuckers was noted. There were four Common Nighthawks counted flying above the prairie in the evening, and during the night a Common Poorwill was heard calling at the same time that two Whip-poor-wills were also heard. A pair of one of the two later species was also flushed from a rock outcrop one day. This is the first time I've heard of these three species being present at the same site. It was interesting to note that the breeding ranges given in *Birds of the Great Plains* does not indicate any overlap.

Vegetation in the area that would influence the bird's presence was comprised of three different plant communities. Northern floodplain woodland, with willow, cottonwood, and elm, is found along tributary streams and the Niobrara River, which is a little more than half a mile north of the area. Eastern deciduous woodland grows on the sideslopes of the hills, with bur oak the most common component, and also eastern redcedar. Most of the wildlife land is upland with mixed grass prairie. The several codominant grass species are little bluestem, needle-and-thread, blue and side-oats grama, and wheatgrasses. Big bluestem and switchgrass would be more common along the bottoms. A rugged area, with rock outcrops, prairie, and woods, occurs along a small creek in the northwest corner of Bohemia Prairie.

This occurrence shows how the habitat present in the Niobrara Valley contributes to species from the east and the west being present in the same locality.

--- Jim Ducey, 910 North 49th Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68132.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE. Ed Brogie and Lyle George had a Townsend's Solitaire in the Wayne cemetery 18 November 1984. Ed and I found it again in the same place (large group of cedars) on 22 November. This is a county record.

--- Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Nebraska 68729

On 25 November I spotted a Townsend's Solitaire flying from the road into a grove of trees. The next day one was on our farm, about two miles south of where I spotted it the day before. On 1 December I saw one on our farm, but I haven't seen it since.

--- Galen Wittrock, RR 2, Lodgepole, Nebraska 69149

BOHEMIAN WAXWING. On 18 November 1984 my brother, Ed, my wife, Ellen, and I saw a single Bohemian Waxwing in with a flock of Cedar Waxwings in front of the Wayne High School. We were within 20 feet of it several times. My first one for the state (what a beautiful bird!).

--- Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Nebraska 68729

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER. Ed Brogie and I had a Black-throated Green Warbler at the cemetery in Wayne, 18 November 1984. This is a first record for Wayne Co. and a very late date. It was foraging in white pines, and we observed it for several minutes.

--- Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Nebraska 68729

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH.** On 15 June 1983 Betty Grennon and I banded a Northern Waterthrush in Fontenelle Forest. Since it is most unusual for waterthrushes to even be here at that time of year, and also because we knew there were Louisiana Waterthrushes in the Forest at that time, we very carefully measured, photographed, and checked every field mark. The astounding thing about this bird was that it was a female with a very active brood patch. When I sent this record to the banding lab, naturally it was questioned, as it should have been. I sent pictures of the bird, and after a considerable length of time and study by officials in the Bird Banding Laboratory, I was notified that this record was accepted and the slides are now a part of the library collection.

--- Ruth C. Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005

**WILSON'S WARBLERS.** Seventeen miles south of Alliance, just south of the Morrill-Box Butte line, is a rest stop on US 385. It has prairie grasslands, marshes, and groves of Russian olives, firs, chokecherries, and some sort of scruffy, berry-bearing bush I've neglected to try to identify.

On 31 August 1984 I saw at least 20 individuals of what I took to be Wilson's Warblers. In the five years of visiting this stop this is the first one that more than two or three could be spotted. I was surprised that they usually flew about in a loose flock. The birds were uniformly yellow below, darker above, head yellow except for a black cap (not a mask as in the Yellowthroat) that was lighter in those I identified as female or juvenile individuals, no streaks in the breast plumage, nor any other field marks that I could discern other than the cap. I didn't identify this warbler the first time I spotted it, but noted what I could about its behaviour and fieldmarks. The next time I spotted them I had a field guide (*National Geographic*) with me to compare with the living birds. Because they were present during the summer I wondered if they nested. When I saw this large flock they were exploiting the ripening sunflowers, as were the Pine Siskins and Red-winged Blackbirds.

--- Doug Thomas, 1035 Mississippi Avenue, Alliance, Nebraska 69301

(Wilson's Warblers are primarily insectivorous; perhaps they were getting bugs rather than seeds from the sunflowers. --- Editor)

**HENSLOW'S SPARROW.** On 6 May 1985, at approximately 8 AM CDT, Scheil Zende and I observed a singing Henslow's Sparrow at Burchard Lake Special Use Area, Pawnee County, Nebraska. The bird was seen in excellent light at distances of about 3 meters for 45 minutes; there was ample opportunity for the taking of field notes and photographs as the bird sang from the stems of last year's grasses and, particularly, a short thorny shrub.

The bird was first located by its song, a "tse-lick" given with a wing flutter; at times, especially when we were very close, the song was distinctly three-syllabled, "t-tse-lick". The bird was not shy as it sang, permitting us to note all salient marks for identification. The general impression at a distance was of a flat-headed, large-billed, short-tailed sparrow. At closer range, the bill was seen to be a dull horn color, the culmen somewhat darker. The tarsi and toes were grayish-pink. The face and nape were olive-green, the latter finely streaked at the center. There was no apparent eye-ring, although the lower eyelid may have been pale. A faint black line ran under the auriculars back from the base of the lower mandible; the auriculars themselves were marked by a small, discrete, triangular black spot. The crown had two blackish stripes, bordering on a central stripe of white fading to buff. The throat was white, bordered by a very faint whisker; the area between this whisker and the auricular streak was pale buff. The flanks were also buff, and finely streaked. The breast was crossed by a necklace of streaks, heaviest toward the sides. There was a barely perceptible bit of buffy yellow in the breast band, the ground color of which was otherwise buffy gray. The wing was short, when folded extending only to the rump. The primaries were brown, the secondaries and greater coverts rust. The yellow at the bend of the wing was not visible. The scapulars were streaked in chestnut, black, and white. The rump and upper tail-coverts were chestnut, streaked with black.

The song and plumage characters of this bird identified it conclusively as Henslow's Sparrow. The olive head, rusty wings, and whisker and line below the ear (giving the impression of a double whisker) are unique to the

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Historic Breeding Distribution of the Least Tern in Nebraska	26
Possible Addition of the Prairie Skink to the Diet of the Common Grackle	36
Observations of the Barred Owl in Southeastern Nebraska	37
The Eighty-fourth Annual Meeting	38
Notes	39

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species; we are familiar with all other sharp-tailed grass sparrows but Baird's, which has a different head pattern and a distinctive song. An examination of specimens at UNSM later that day confirmed our identification.

--- *Rick Wright, 11530 Westwood Lane, #33, Omaha, Nebraska 68144*

CARDINAL IN DAWES COUNTY. Dr. Jim Hansen, who lives across the highway from Doris Gates' property, reported seeing a male Cardinal in his backyard 4 June 1984. This is the first sighting of a Cardinal in the area that I know of since Doris Gates saw three in the State Park in the early 1950's. The Evening Grosbeaks were still at my feeders 24 April.

--- *Marjorie Blinde, 834 King Street, Chadron, Nebraska 69337*

LAPLAND LONGSPURS. I stopped by Crescent Lake NWR, Garden County, 24 October 1984, and I saw thousands of Lapland Longspurs.

--- *Ruth C. Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCHES. Mark and Ed Brogie, of Laurel, were attending the same science teachers' meeting in Chadron on 25-27 October 1984, that I was. While there, they decided to get in a little birding, so they headed for Gilbert Baker Park. Just one mile north of Harrison they found one of the rarest birds to come to Nebraska -- 50 to 60 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches feeding on sunflowers along the highway. Now these were the Hepburn's race that breed on the Arctic tundra of Alaska or in the high northwestern mountains, not the Brown-capped of the Colorado tundra that comes into the Scottsbluff area every winter. They really were the gray-crowned Gray-crowns! I was pretty excited about finding these birds the next day so I, too, headed west. I had only to go 15.7 miles west of Fort Robinson when I saw a tremendous flock of Rosy-Finches along Highway 20. I estimated at least 500 birds, and off in the distance there were about 1500 more.

--- *Ruth C. Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL. I have had a male White-winged Crossbill at our feeder for about six weeks. Yesterday (28 March 1985) the female was also there.

--- *Lucille Davis, 113 West State Street, Atkinson, Nebraska 68713*

CORRECTION TO MARCH ISSUE. The March issue of *The Nebraska Bird Review* is mismarked Number 4. This should be changed to Number 1.