


9-1985

“Notes” from *Nebraska Bird Review* (September 1985) 53(3)

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NOTES

RE SWAN GEESE IN KEITH COUNTY. A recent account (*NBR* 53:4) of Chinese Geese (domestic forms of the Swan Goose are called Chinese Geese - Ed.) in Keith Co. seems to suggest that the birds were of natural occurrence. No wild individuals of this species have ever been reported in North America, however, and it may in fact be declining in its native range. It is exceedingly common, though, in zoos and parks as well as on farms, where it is often only nominally a captive; birds are readily available and are not typically afforded the close watch given more valuable species. Neither are most Chinese Geese in Nebraska marked as captives. The birds held in zoos and parks are too easily replaced to warrant zealous curation, and those kept as poultry

are, obviously, not affected by regulations governing game farms. These unbanded geese, wandering freely, possess various plumages and body conformations. Birds lacking bill knobs and otherwise resembling the wild form are by no means infrequent; that hunters occasionally kill such birds should be no surprise. To attribute these records to intercontinental vagrancy, however, is to disregard a simpler and more likely explanation.

--- Rick Wright, 102 Lawrence Apts., West Drive, Princeton, N. J. 08540

FIRE REFUGEES? The appearance of birds that I expect in winter, but don't recall seeing in the Alliance area during summer, may be related to the 4th of July Pine Ridge fire. Today (21 July) I heard a Red-breasted Nuthatch outside my window, but, more interesting that that, is Pygmy Nuthatches at the Alliance cemetery. On 13 July I was walking near a large pine and noticed some nuthatches near the crest. There were five individuals, and as they worked their way down the tree it became apparent that they lacked the Red-breasted Nuthatch's white eyebrow and the black line through the eye. They were too small for White-breasted, seemed more brownish, and made "peeping" sounds to boot. I checked the guide and later listened to birdsong tapes, and confirmed they were Pygmy Nuthatches. I've seen them again on 19 and 20 July. Black-capped Chickadees are another that I suspect may be here because of the fire. On 14 July I heard their calls and three flew to my yard to a tree right overhead. I heard a Chickadee call at the airport 17 July, but didn't see the bird.

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