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NOTES

FUNK LAGOON. We were at the Funk Lagoon 2 July 1987, toward dusk. The water level has raised about three feet since last spring, closing some of the access roads and promoting extensive cattail growth. We saw two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (the first I've seen in this area), five American Bitterns, two Great Egrets, thirty Great Blue Herons, five Double-crested Cormorants, numerous Coots (adult and young), Blue-winged Teal, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer, a flock of Short-billed Dowitchers, and several unidentified shore birds.

--- George W. Brown, 018 12th Avenue, Kearney, Neb. 68847

WOOD DUCK CARRYING EGG. On 24 April, 1987, Gail Roebuck was hiking along the north Stream Trail in Fontenelle Forest and heard Wood Duck calls. She looked up to see the female carrying something in her bill. The Duck dropped the object along the edge of the trail, and Gail went over to investigate. The 20-foot fall hadn't even broken the egg Gail found. The

literature mentions Wood Ducks carrying young in this mannere, but I have found nothing about their carrying eggs.

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

(From her "Notes on Nature" column in *A Bird's Eye View* XIV, (6), 9.)

MORE ON THE DESOTO EIDERS. The summer 1987 issue of *Iowa Bird Life* (57:88) has about a page and a half of comments, four photographs, and four drawings of the eiders seen at DeSoto last winter (*NBR* 54:10 and 81). The Iowa records committee accepted them both as King Eiders; the Nebraska committee accepted one as a King Eider; the other was not submitted to the committee. For those who want more information on the case, here it is. There are also five more pages on other Iowa eiders.

SWAINSON'S HAWKS. On 28 September 1986 we were traveling east on a gravel road 3 miles south and 2 miles west of Coleridge, Cedar Co. In a 28 minute period from 4:48 to 5:14 PM we observed a total of 166 Swainson's Hawks flying out of the north-northwest into the south-southeast. We continued to watch at this location until 5:35, but no additional Hawks were seen. At 5:45 a Wayne, Nebraska, radio station reported that the winds were out of the north-northwest at 10 to 15 mph. The sky was partly cloudy, with thunderclouds building up to the east of our observation site.

--- Dave and Lois Stage, Box 354, Laurel, Neb. 68745

(The reports in the news about the crash of a B-1 bomber which had been flying low-level runs near La Junta, Colorado, suggested that the cause of the crash was a bird-strike with Swainson's Hawks. This was speculation; it did not come from the Air Force (as of 5 October).--- *Editor*)

PRAIRIE GROUSE. Over the weekend of 11 and 12 April 1987 Bill Huser, Jerry Probst, and I traveled to Center, Nebraska, to observe Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) and Greater Prairie-Chickens (*Tympanuchus cupido*) which were reported to be in the area.

We found the grouse lek on a privately owned, heavily grazed mesic prairie. It was on top of a small rise with a good view, in three directions, of the rolling hills of the surrounding area. The crest of the rise leveled and continued north into non-grazed mesic prairie to merge with hills of slightly higher elevation. The center of the lek was about 30 yards from a barbed wire fence which separated the non-grazed from the grazed prairie. Two Grouse were flushed from the non-grazed prairie late Saturday afternoon, while we were looking for the lek.

Our suspicions that we had found the lek were confirmed when we returned to the area. From a distance, as we looked into the setting sun, we spotted what appeared to be mobile cow pies. As we approached the lek in our vehicle we could tell they were Sharp-tailed Grouse as they vanished into the non-grazed prairie and the twilight.

Only a few feathers were left behind as a sign of their activities.

We returned to the lek early Sunday morning. Sunrise was about 6:50 AM. We arrived at 6:20 AM. One bird, a male, was ready and waiting. We quietly watched as more birds gathered. A total of five male Sharp-tailed Grouse danced on the lek. One local rancher later told us that eight males were present last year. There were at least four female Grouse at the lek. There may have been more than four female birds, since we could not keep



track of all of their movements. The female Grouse appeared much more cautious than the males, so the presence of our vehicle may have inhibited more females from gathering at the lek.

We remained at the lek until about 8:00 AM. From about 7:30 until our departure the birds seemed to lose interest in dancing. Two of the males continued to stare at each other from a very close distance, while two others began to feed. We lost track of the fifth male.

From that lek we drove to where we thought the Greater Prairie-Chickens were gathered in their lek. We looked for this area, with no success, on Saturday evening. This was due, in part, to a lack of information from the local ranchers. The people we questioned had heard of the existence of the lek, but no one knew its exact location. On Sunday morning we searched the same area from the previous evening. We split in order to cover a larger area and Bill Huser did hear some booming and flushed two Prairie-Chickens. He watched as one returned to the area from where the booming originated. When we reunited to compare notes, Bill led us to where he had flushed the Prairie-Chickens. As we approached, the three of us flushed a Prairie-Chicken from the same location. This was the only sighting Jerry and I had of a Greater Prairie-Chicken. This lek was also on privately owned, heavily grazed mesic prairie.

In our travels to and from Center, and around the town and area in search of the leks, we also recorded the following notable birds: Say's Phoebe, many Wild Turkeys, and Sandhill Cranes in flight. Altogether it was an excellent trip and one we wish to try again.

--- Randall D. Williams, 2730 So. Cornelia, Sioux City, Iowa 51106

WHOOPING CRANE REPORT. The Fish and Wildlife Service office in Grand Island has released the record of Whooping Crane sightings in Nebraska in the spring of 1987. They are:

An immature 17 March to 19 April in the Lowell area, Kearney and Buffalo counties.

Two adults 4 to 8 April, 6 miles southwest of Holdrege, Phelps Co., Atlanta WPA.

Two adults and an immature, 9 to 17 April, Wheeler Co., 2 miles east and 1.25 miles south of the junction of N 70 and US 281.

Three adults 11 April, Custer Co., 2 miles east, 1 miles north of Gates.

Two adults, 13 to 16 April, Adams Co., 6 miles south, 2 miles west of Doniphan, T8N, R10W, S11, NW $\frac{1}{4}$.

Two adults and one immature, Hall and Adams counties, 5 miles south, 3 miles west of Doniphan.

Two adults, 16 April, Mormon Island, Hall Co., T10N, R10W, S34.

Four adults, 20 to 22 April, Sioux Co., 32.5 miles west, 1 mile north of Alliance.

Four adults, 20 to 28 April, Phelps Co., 2.5 miles south, .5 mile west of Elm Creek Platte River bridge.

Four adults, 29 April, Blaine co., 4 miles east of Halsey, Middle Loup River.

Grus Americana, published by the Whooping Crane Conservation Association, reported in Volume 26, Number 3, September 1987, "May surveys in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park accounted for 30 Whooping Crane nests. On May 21, one egg was removed from each of 24 nests for transfer of 12 to Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, and 12 to the Patuxet Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. Two of the nests discovered had been destroyed by predators, so as an experiment, an egg from a 25th nest was placed in a nest where the eggs had been destroyed. The birds returned to the nest and accepted the transferred egg. Twenty-nine active nests containing a total of 32 eggs then remained. June surveys indicated at least 27 chicks including one seen with the pair which had been given an egg from another nest. Two late nests, established by new pairs, were discovered in June making a total of 32 nests this year. Water conditions are good in the Park and Canadian wildlife officials are optimistic this might be another good production year comparable to the 21 chicks fledged in 1986."

WINTERING KILLDEER. On 17 January 1987 John Manning and I saw a hardy, healthy Killdeer in a pasture that had a spring-fed pond and open water,

--- Duane Wolff, Rt. 4, Box 197, Norfolk, Neb. 68701

CRESCENT LAKE NESTING RECORDS. The first known production of White-faced Ibis on Crescent Lake NWR was recorded in 1987 with not one, but two successful nests discovered on Smith Lake. Refuge personnel documented and photographed a total of seven young. Five young were noted beyond flight stage by mid-August.

Reacting to a pair of "broodish" Black-necked Stilts near Upper Harrison Lake on 10 July, Refuge personnel located and photographed one young, flightless Stilt hidden along the lake shore. The first known nesting Black-necked Stilts in Nebraska were documented on the Refuge in 1985 (NBR 53:72).

Three Trumpeter Swans spent the spring/summer months on a private lake adjoining the Refuge. Our personnel kept watch over them, but nesting did not occur. We are hoping that the birds imprinted on the area and will return to nest next year.

Two pairs of Barn-Owls produced an estimated seven young in man-made nest boxes. We intend to construct additional boxes this winter for placement prior to next year's breeding season.

A noteworthy 3,000+ ducks and geese, the highest number in 13 years, were produced during 1987 on Crescent Lake NWR.

--- Royce R. Huber, Refuge Manager, HC 69, Box 21, Ellsworth, Neb. 69340

BLAIR BACKYARD BIRDING. On 22 August 1987 My father spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in our backyard, and soon after that I saw two Wilson's Warblers. Later on I saw another warbler, bluish-gray above and yellow below, prominent eye-ring, a hint of a band across the breast, and yellow feet, so I decided it was a Canada Warbler. And later the same day I saw about twenty Empidonax flycatchers and four more Wilson's Warblers. And a week later we had a small warbler in our bird bath. The bird had very prominent wingbars, yellow below, light brown above, and when it flew it had white on the outside and around the tail like a Vesper Sparrow. We figured it to be a Pine Warbler.

--- Joel Jorgensen, 1218 Jackson St., Blair, Neb. 68008

BLUEBIRD NEST BOXES. In 1985, Boy Scout Troop 18 of Gering made 150 bluebird nesting boxes as a conservation project and in honor of scouting's 75th anniversary. In the early spring the Boy Scouts, along with members of the Wildcat Audubon Society, placed 115 of these nesting boxes in the Wildcat Hills south of Gering as a Mountain Bluebird trail.

For a number of years previously Mountain Bluebirds had been observed nesting in a gate made of iron pipe. This gate is about on the Scotts Bluff-Banner County line and is across the old highway 71. The Wildcat Hills Game Preserve is along the west side of this old highway, so there is a high buffalo-proof fence on that side of the road. The east side of the road is pasture that is privately owned. The ends of the pipe gate were plugged in 1986 and the bluebird boxes were placed on the fence of the Game Preserve near this gate and then going south and north to the junctions of this road and the present highway 71. Fourteen boxes were placed on a cross fence going directly east of the pipe gate. Another 17 boxes were placed on the fence separating the Game Preserve and the Wildcat Hills Recreation Area to the north of it.

Because of several factors it was impossible to monitor the boxes regularly during the 1986 nesting season but they were all cleaned in the winter. Five of the boxes were used by bluebirds. A big surprise and delight was that Eastern Bluebirds successfully nested in at least one of these houses. One of the boxes had an unhatched Mountain Bluebird egg in it. In early July several Chickadees were observed as they were harassing a Mountain Bluebird at this box. Because of the presence of the two bluebird species we are unsure as to just which species used the other three boxes. All five of the Bluebird-used boxes were along the top of the hills where the only trees are ponderosa pine. Three were along the old highway on the Game Preserve fence - this includes the two previously described nests. The other two were on the fence going

east of the pipe gate.

Of the remainder of the boxes, 29 were used by Wrens in some fashion, three had only a few sticks, which could have also been Wren usage, and one had apparently been removed by vandals. Some of the boxes used by the Wrens were in the same habitat as the boxes used by Bluebirds but others were in the brushy canyon areas on either side of the hills. Because of the location and habitat we were not bothered by House Sparrows or European Starlings.

--- Alice Kenitz, HC50, Box 38 B, Gering, Neb. 69341.

LEWIS' WOODPECKER DOESN'T QUALIFY. The Bill Lemburgs saw a Lewis' Woodpecker from US 83, within the Waterfowl Refuge, on their way home from the 1987 Annual Meeting. It was just a little after noon, and so outside the official count period.

ONE OF OUR COWBIRDS IS MISSING. All winter long three Cowbirds, one male and two females, were staying in my one feedlot. On cold days they would huddle on the back of a fat heifer, The cow and birds both looked content. Then on 20 January 1987 a Cooper's Hawk showed up, slowly moving over and around the cattle. Since then only the male and one female are around. Maybe one lady went south, or else she might have helped the Cooper's get through the winter. In either case it is all right with me.

--- Duane Wolff, Rt. 4, Box 197, Norfolk, Neb. 68701

1988 ANNUAL MEETING, CAMP KIWANIS, SCOTTS BLUFF, 20-22 MAY