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## Notes- *Nebraska Bird Review* (December 1980)

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## NOTES

**MOTTLED DUCK.** On 5 October 1958 I shot but just winged a female Mottled Duck. This was in Howard Co., on the Loup River, which borders our farm. I kept her (which was legal at the time), got a drake from Texas, and had them for years. I reared many young from the pair.

— Wm. W. Lemburg, Rt. 1, Box 96, Cairo, Nebraska 68824

**EUROPEAN WIGEON IN SARPY COUNTY.** On 28 March 1980, from 4:30 to 5 p.m., I observed a European Wigeon in a flock of migrating waterfowl at a wet field just east of the allied Chemical plant at LaPlatte. Even though I had never seen one before, the instant I saw it I knew that it was a wigeon but not a common. I viewed it through 7×35 Bushnell binoculars and a B & L spotting scope at 15×, 20×, and 30×. The bird was approximately 100 yards away. It was about the size of the American Wigeon (seemed a little slimmer and more compact) but the head, neck, and breast (chest) were a bright rufous or cinnamon color. It was in full breeding plumage. As the bird swam and turned its head, catching the evening sunlight, the vivid gold stripe on the head was very apparent. I also noticed more white on the flank. There appeared to be a female with it but I was so intent on watching the bird that I could not say that it, too, was a European Wigeon. I used Peterson's and Robbin's field guides, and also I described the bird in detail to Andy Saunders, Chief Naturalist at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, and to Dr. Roger Sharpe, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, both of whom have experience in identifying this species. They both agreed with me that the description was indeed that of the European Wigeon.

— Ruth Green, 506 West 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005.

**GRAY (HUNGARIAN) PARTRIDGE NEST.** On 15 June 1980, along a roadside ditch of brome grass located some two miles east, one mile south, and a half mile east of West Point, a Gray Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), probably female, was flushed from cover by a dog. The bird behaved as if it were injured. It behaved this way several times after being flushed by the dog. Later on, at a site several hundred feet away, the bird was again flushed. This time it flew a much greater distance without any apparent injury. I was able to find a nest at the site where the Partridge first flushed. It contained one intact egg (about 1 by 1.4 inches) and was buff-olive in color. The rest of the nest contained shell fragments from 15 or so hatched eggs. The eggs were smaller than Pheasant eggs — two Pheasant eggs, from an abandoned nest in an alfalfa field, were compared with the egg from the Partridge nest. This is the first time the Gray Partridge has been found nesting in the Cuming Co. area. These birds had been sighted in 1979 by other people.

— Larry L. Einemann, R. 3, Box 205, West Point, Nebraska 68788.

The Review has had practically no reports on the Gray Partridge (except when it was out of its normal range (NBR 47:42 and 59), probably because there are no reporting observers in the Partridge's base area. But they are doing well enough to allow the Game Commission to have an open season on them in the fall of 1980, east of US 281 and north of the Platte River.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS.** On 16 May 1980, on their way to the NOU meeting in Halsey, Tanya Bray, the Kovandas, and the Padelfords saw about 12 Buff-breasted Sandpipers in a flooded field just west of Shelby.

— Babs and Loren Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005

SCRUB JAY. Dr. Johnsgard's *A Preliminary List of the Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent Plains States* (NBR 48:37) says (about the Scrub Jay) "Recently a student reported seeing this species in Bull Canyon, Banner County, very close to the Wyoming border (Scott Moorland, personal communication)." Mr. Moorland was a high school biology teacher in the area for four years. He saw the bird in early June of 1978. He was familiar with them from Colorado and didn't realize for a while that they were not equally common in Nebraska. *The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, Fifth Edition* says (p. 372) of *A. c. woodhouseii* "Casual in Nebraska (North Platte), . . .", but Bruner, Wolcott, and Swenk's *A Preliminary Review of the Birds of Nebraska* says (p. 71) of this subspecies (then called the Woodhouse Jay) "This was recorded in Bruner's list as a common 'transient visitor' at North Platte by M.K. Barnum, but it was confused with the Pinyon Jay." Presumably this erroneous report was the basis for A.O.U.'s comment. Thus Mr. Moorland's report seems to be the first published report of the species in Nebraska.

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE. On 17 and 18 January 1980 I had an opportunity to observe a Green-tailed Towhee. The bird was seen in Lancaster Co., a mile east of Branched Oak Lake. It was first spotted 5 January by Bob Manning and has been coming to his feeding station since. The bird usually stays pretty much hidden in brush or just on the edge, feeding on seeds in the litter. On the days I watched for him he showed up 4:25 to 4:40 PM, 7:45 to 8:15 AM, and 5:20 to 5:28 PM.

— Rick Manning, 2909 South 93rd Plaza #1, Omaha 68124

Mrs. Ruth Green banded a Green-tailed Towhee (and other birds) there 24 February.

ABERT'S TOWHEE REPORTED. On 29 September 1980 I had an Abert's Towhee here at the ranch. I bird watch every morning, especially during migration. When I first saw this bird I didn't notice the black face; later, when it came closer and sat on the current bush, which is not more than 20 feet from my large picture window, I saw the black face and knew at once that I had seen that bird a number of times in Arizona, but I looked it up to make sure. I am familiar with both the Brown and the Abert's Towhee from my winters in Arizona.

— Mrs. Oona Bassett, Rt. 2, Box 26, Tryon, Nebraska 69167

LITTLE BLUE HERON. Dr. John C.W. Bliese suggested that I notify you of the sighting of an immature Little Blue Heron on 20 August 1979. Dr. Bliese and Stan Longfellow both have studied pictures of the bird and confirm the identification.

Ken and I first saw the bird during noontime that Monday. It was standing in the middle of one of the channels of the Platte River, just northwest of our home, which is northwest of Ft. Kearney State Historical Park. We saw the bird that evening and a couple of days later, when it flew over us at treetop level after having been flushed from near our river bank. On 28 August a neighbor, Ward Schrack, came by and I couldn't wait to show him our visitor. Believe it or not, we went to the backyard, looked out, and there was the heron on the same sandbar!

— Bev Kimball, Rt. 4, Kearney, 68847

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER FEEDING ON HACKBERRY SEEDS. From 2:15 to 2:45 PM an immature Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen feeding in Harmon Park, Kearney. The Sapsucker would pluck an entire, intact hackberry seed from one of the outer limbs and fly back to the main trunk of the tree. Once at the tree the bird would do what appeared to be wedging the seed in the bark and then feed within reach of its perch. When it changed perches it would take the seed with it. About 3:40 PM 1 February 1980 further observation at the same location revealed that the bird (I do believe it was the same bird) was placing the seed in a secure position in the bark of the tree and drumming on it from varying angles until the seed was opened. Once it was open the Sapsucker would feed on the soft pulpy interior of the seed.

— Thomas E. Labedz, 419 W. 24th St. #2, Kearney 68847

CUMING COUNTY HAWKS. On 31 December 1979 I saw a hawk with a light head and breast and strongly banded tail which I identified as a Merlin (Richardson's). It was seen in farming country two miles east and four miles south of West Point. On 23 March 1980, in the same area, I saw a Ferruginous Hawk. This was the first time, in twenty years of birding, that I have seen either of these hawks in the area.

— Larry L. Einemann, Rt. 3, Box 205, West Point, Nebraska 68788

UPSIDE DOWN BIRDS. At dusk, late in April 1980, Dr. Roger Bourland and his family saw a Great Horned Owl fly into a tree near their home at Ginger Cove, near Valley. Immediately after landing, it flipped into a hanging position, with its wings tight to its body, and then let them hang outstretched. It stayed in this position approximately five minutes, until some of the family came close. It then flew, without righting itself first, and landed on the beach. The boys, Pete and Joe, thought it was wounded and went toward it and got very close to it before it flew. This time it landed in a tree and stayed in an upright position.

— *Alice Rushton, Bennington 68007*

D. Andrew Saunders, Chief Naturalist of Fontenelle Forest, said that birds which have been stunned by flying into a window or the like may hang upside down for a while if they are placed on a perch. Dr. Paul Johnsgard, Lincoln, said that Squaw Creek Refuge he had seen a Red-tailed Hawk land in a tree and hang upside down for a while, and then fly off. He assumed that the bird had gotten spoiled or contaminated food, or had contact with some chemical, which had affected its nervous system and left it disoriented.

SUMMER TANAGER NEST. On 27 July 1980 we noticed female Summer Tanager in the picnic area of Schramm Park, between Gretna and Louisville. It kept returning to a bur oak tree, and acted as though it had a nest there. On 2 August we discovered the nest about 25 feet up in the bur oak. Both the male and the female were feeding two young birds.

— *Babs and Loren Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*