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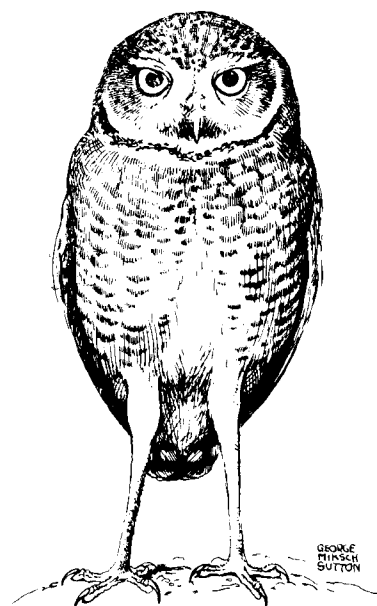
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ESKIMO CURLEW SIGHTED

When Craig Faanes, Grand Island, went to the Mormon Island Crane Meadows 16 April 1987 to watch Sandhill Cranes at night he saw a bird that he first took for a Whimbrel. He was familiar with Whimbrels on both coasts, but the more he studied the bird the more he was convinced that the bird was an Eskimo Curlew. After he had gone to the natural history museum at UNL and studied a stuffed Eskimo Curlew he was convinced that that was what he had seen. After the date of this sighting Eskimo Curlews were reported from "the Sabine and Aransas wildlife refuges in Texas". (Probably the first reference is to Sabine NWR, Hackberry, Louisiana, near the Texas line. Aransas NWR, near Corpus Christi, is the winter home of the major flock of Whooping Cranes. -- Ed.)

The information above was condensed, by permission, from the 1 November 1987 issue of the *Omaha World-Herald*. That article gave the last sighting of Eskimo Curlew in Nebraska as April 1927, near Norfolk, but Johnsgard's *A Revised List of the Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent Plains States* sticks with Haecker, Moser, and Swenk's date of 8 April 1926, near Hastings (NBR 13:13). The review of the *Eskimo Curlew, A Vanishing Species?*, NBR 54:65 mentions that Swenk's article, from *NOU Proceedings* 6:25-44, as reprinted (with additions) by the Smithsonian Institution, is the third most important reference in the book. The birds were very common in Nebraska until the market hunters took their toll. It is to be hoped that the Eskimo Curlew can be brought back, just as the Whooping Crane has been, although the situations are very different.

1987 FALL FIELD DAY

The weather was bright and clear for the 75 people who attended some part of the 1987 Fall Field Day at the 4-H Camp at Halsey National Forest 3 and 4 October. It was nice to have Mrs. Gross, who broke her leg at the Valentine meeting, among those attending. Her leg was progressing according to schedule, although she still used a crutch. There was the usual slide show Saturday night, the rest of the time was for birding, including banding. The Executive Board decided to have the terms of members of the Records Committee start and expire with the spring meeting, rather than at the fall meeting, as at present.

Eighty-seven (and the possibility that at least one of the Meadowlark sp. was an Eastern) species were recorded on or immediately adjacent to the Forest, and 12 (marked *) were recorded only from off the Forest. The 87 count compares with 69 in 1986 and 72 in 1985. The species reported were: Pied-billed Grebe*, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose*, Wood Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail*, American Wigeon*, Ruddy Duck*, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier; Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Swainson's, and Red-tailed Hawks; Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Ring-necked Pheasant, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, American Coot*, Sandhill Crane*, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Dowitcher sp., Ring-billed Gull*; Rock and Mourning Doves; Black-billed Cuckoo, Common Barn-Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl; Great Horned and Burrowing Owls; Common Poorwill, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker, Western Kingbird, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee; Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches; Brown Creeper; Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets; Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds; Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Water Pipit*, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, European Starling*; Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, and Connecticut Warblers; Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Northern Cardinal, Rufous-sided Towhee; Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, Vesper, Lark*, Savannah*, Grasshopper, Song, Lincoln's, Swamp, White-throated, White-crowned, and Harris' Sparrows; Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Meadowlark sp., Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

FIRST REPORT OF THE NOU RECORDS COMMITTEE

Introduction

Since this is the first report of the NOU Records Committee, perhaps a few words of background explanation are in order. I was named to establish a records committee at the annual meeting of the NOU in May 1985. At the fall field day in October 1985 I met with those people who had indicated a willingness to serve and was named chairman. I presented a draft set of by-laws, which we discussed, amended, and adopted. The committee membership and by-laws were approved by the NOU Board of Directors and ultimately published (*NBR* 54:72-74, 1986). Two of the main functions of the committee are: 1) to collect and evaluate reports containing documentary evidence of the occurrence of birds in the state, and 2) to provide guidance and assistance in identification and documentation. This report will enumerate actions by the committee on reports submitted to it, and through comments will attempt to point out the positive and negative aspects of documentation, remark on identification problems, distribution anomalies, etc.

This report covers most of the records #001 - #065. The first record was submitted in July, 1985, before the committee was even functioning, and the most recent record included was submitted in December 1986. Some of the records are still under consideration or reconsideration, some have been withdrawn, some were not complete enough to evaluate, etc.

In this report, the records are divided into two broad categories: accepted and non-accepted. Those records categorized in Classes I, II, or III are placed in the accepted group; those categorized as IV, V, or VI are placed in the non-accepted group. For an explanation of the classification system, see the committee by-laws (*NBR* 54:74, 1986). It is important to point out here that "non-acceptance" does NOT equate to "rejected". By definition records placed in Classes IV or V simply do not contain enough information to justify placing them in a higher category. Furthermore, only some of those placed in Class VI, the lowest category, are believed to be mis-identifications. These differences between "accepted", "non-accepted", and "rejected" may be subtle but they are important. The committee is rarely in a position to state decisively that an identification is in error. Usually the strongest statement possible is that the evidence available to the committee is not absolutely diagnostic for the stated species, and/or does not absolutely rule out other species. Lastly, if you submit reports, as I have, that are not accepted by the committee, don't be discouraged. In many cases, an observer is simply unable to note enough details. Even so, such reports may be valuable in pointing up future areas for field work and may help establish an overall pattern of occurrence that may not otherwise be apparent.

Acknowledgements

The committee wishes to thank the following people who submitted material which was included in this report: Norris Alfred, Oona Bassett, Tanya Bray, Ed Brogie, Mark Brogie, Art Douglas, Mike Erickson, Douglas Fritz, William Garthright, Ruth Green, Willis Hall, Thomas Heatley, William Huser, Henry Hyde, Karla Kaufman, Lloyd Kaufman, Paul Kaufman, Alice Kenitz, Maysel Kiser, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, Thomas Labedz, Gary Lingle, Eldon Marsh, Jim Minyard, Wayne Mollhoff, Lee Morris, Bill Otto, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Jerry Probst, Beth Proescholdt, Mark Proescholdt, B. J. Rose, Carol Somerhalder, Paul Swanson, Hank Thoenes, and Doug Thomas.

The committee also wishes to thank the following: Kim Eckert, Peter Gent, Paul Lehman, Bruce Peterjohn, Richard Rosche, W. Ross Silcock, and Dan Tallman. They were generous with their assistance, input, expert opinion, and knowledge. To them and to those who submitted the reports and photos, we say "thank you".

The following is a list of committee members besides myself who have acted on some or all of the records in this report: Tanya Bray, R. G. Cortelyou, Ruth Green, Alice Kenitz, Thomas Labedz, Gary Lingle, and Babs Padelford. They are to be commended for their careful research, attention to details, insight, unbiased opinion, and for devoting the hours necessary to properly evaluate these records. Their prompt responses and conscientious work have been much appreciated.

Area of coverage

The committee is pleased to review reports of birds that occur within the present political boundaries of the State of Nebraska, with the eastern boundary as established by the Missouri River Compact, May 1943 (Nebr. State Statutes, Vol IIa, p. 663). Please note that due to channel changes the Missouri River does not presently comprise the entire eastern border of the state,

Format

The individual record accounts follow the nomenclature and sequence of the current *A.O.U. Checklist* and subsequent supplements (A.O.U 1983, 1985, 1987). There are two numbers assigned each record. An accession number (acc#), beginning with #001, is simply a catalog number assigned to records in the order received. The file number (file#), a species-specific number based on the A.O.U. number, is used to file and retrieve records and to track the reports by species. Thus, file# 2-1 is the first report of a Red-necked Grebe received by the committee, File# 2-10 would be the tenth report of a Red-necked Grebe received by the committee. When the committee has finished its deliberations the reports are placed in a file in the NOU library in the University of Nebraska State Museum, arranged by file number, and will be available to persons with a legitimate interest.

The following format will be used for species in the "accepted" category. The species name will be given first, followed by a brief statement about the occurrence. The location, date(s) of occurrence, acc#, file#, and the initials of the observer(s) who sent in documentation make up the rest of the minimum report. If the report and/or photo has been published, the reference is listed after the observer's initials. If an observer has submitted a photo or tape recording a (p) or (t) respectively follows his/her initials. A specimen is indicated by #, followed by the museum number and the name of the museum where it has been deposited. Reports not identified by (p), (t), or # are written documentations. Some reports are followed by remarks on the documentation itself, tips on problematic identification, excerpts from committee comments on the report, references, etc. Those reports in the "non-accepted" category will be more abbreviated.

A few general comments on the documentations are in order. Please carefully re-read Barb Wilson's article on documentation (Wilson, 1986). Records cannot be processed without dates and an exact location, with directions from a known landmark which appears on a map. In most of the state, the mileage and directions from the nearest small town are adequate. In urban areas a street address or directions from a major intersection will do. Our ideal is to list the township, range, and section numbers, so that the location can be pinpointed to within a mile. The descriptions of the birds themselves have usually been adequate, and are showing steady improvement, as observers become more practiced. Re-reading the section in Barb's article on how to describe the bird will be helpful if you have any questions. If you have photos to support the written documentation, please send them both together, rather than sending the written part first. This lessens the chance that they will be separated or mixed up. The importance of notes made in the field, at the time of the sighting, or as soon as possible afterwards, cannot be overemphasized. Several reports fell into the non-accepted category simply because they were based in part on memory. Carrying a notebook or pad helps keep a tricky memory honest and eases the deliberations of the committee enormously. Finally, send the documentations directly to the committee chairman if you can. Don't assume someone else will relay everything on. This has caused problems with lost material, photos, etc., and caused needless delay, made it difficult to process records, hard to get replies back to the observer, etc.

Species reports -- accepted records

Pacific Loon, *Gavia pacifica*. A single bird in transitional plumage was on Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster Co. 10-16 November 1986; acc# 058, 060, 062, file# 10-1, 10-2, 10-3, TL, TB, BPa, LP(p), (NBR 55:9, 1987). This species was recently split from Arctic Loon, *G. arctica*, and its extralimital distribution is thus imperfectly known. In non-breeding plumage the two species may not be separable except by direct size comparison (DeSchaunsee, 1984; Thede Tobish, pers. comm.) To date, however, the Arctic Loon has been documented

in North America only from Alaska and British Columbia (DeSante and Pyle, 1986).

Red-necked Grebe, *Podiceps grisegena*. One bird was seen in Lincoln, Lancaster Co., 16 June 1985, acc# 001, file# 2-1, WG (NBR 53:77, 1985). Another was seen on Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster Co., 26 October 1986, acc# 061, 063, file# 2-2, 2-3, TB, BPa, LP (NBR 55:9, 1987).

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*. A single breeding-plumaged bird was seen near Homer, Dakota Co., 29 April 1986, acc# 037, file# 197-1 WHu (NBR 54:46, 1986).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax violaceus*. A single bird in breeding plumage was observed briefly near Albion, Boone Co., 10 April 1986, acc# 019, file# 203-1, WM (NBR 54:47, 1986).

Ibis, *Plegadis* sp., (probably White-faced). A single bird in immature winter plumage was seen near Benedict, York Co., 24 August 1986, acc# 049, file# 187-1, LM (NBR 55:10, 1987). This report raises several points which must be faced by every records committee: 1) should the committee spend time working on reports that are only marginally unusual?, 2) should a report of a regular species be non-accepted because the bird is in a plumage which cannot be separated from another species, even if the rarer species has never been documented to occur in the state?, 3) should the committee accept the report as one of a species pair, if the two species cannot be separated in the field? This report almost undoubtedly involved an immature White-faced Ibis, *P. chihi*, but in this plumage it is probably impossible in the field to separate it from Glossy Ibis, *P. falcinellus*. Even in adult breeding plumage this species pair may not always be separable (Mollhoff, 1985). After considerable debate, which involved more discussion of procedural matters than doubts of the identity of the bird under discussion, the committee decided to vote conservatively and accept the record as "Ibis sp., probably White-faced".

Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons*. Three apparently healthy adults spent at least several weeks on a temporary rainwater basin on the Boone-Wheeler county line NW of Albion, 29 May - 24 June 1985, acc# 006, file# 171-1, WM (NBR 53:52, 1985). This appears to be the first summer record for the state (Johnsgard, 1980). No evidence of breeding was noted.

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila*. A single breeding-plumaged male allowed a leisurely examination near Petersburg, Boone Co., 27-28 March, 1986, acc# 018, file# 148-1, WM (NBR 54:67, 1986).

Oldsquaw, *Clangula hyemalis*. A single male in breeding plumage was seen near North Platte, Lincoln Co., 17 May 1985, acc# 028, file# 154-1, LK (NBR 54:30, 48, 1986).

Black Scoter, *Melanitta nigra*. A single male in breeding plumage was photographed at DeSoto NWR, Washington Co., 25 July 1986, acc# 054, file# 163-1, PS(p), (NBR 55:11, 21, 1987).

White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta fusca*. A flock of ten female/immature birds was seen on Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster Co., 2 November 1986, acc# 059, file# 165-1, KK, PK, (NBR 55:11, 1987).

Mississippi Kite, *Ictinia mississippiensis*. A single adult was photographed in Wilderness Park, near Lincoln, Lancaster Co., 11 May 1986, acc# 041, file# 329-1, KK, PK(p), (NBR 54:48, 1986; 55:47, 1987). A single immature-plumaged bird was seen in Omaha, Douglas Co., 27 September 1986, acc# 051, file# 329-2, TB (NBR 55:12, 1987).

Greater Prairie-Chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*. Two birds were seen in NE Omaha, Douglas Co., 20 April 1986, acc# 021, file# 305-1, DF, (NBR 54: 67-68, 1986).

Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis*. A photograph of an albino seen W of Grand Island, Hall Co., 3 April 1986 was filed for record, acc# 036, file# 206-1, TH, HT(p).

Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*. A single bird was seen at the North Platte waste treatment lagoons, Lincoln Co., 18 May 1986, acc# 032, file# 283-1, TL (NBR 54:51, 1986).

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*. A single bird in breeding plumage was seen at the North Platte waste treatment lagoons, Lincoln Co., 18 May 1986, acc# 034, file# 234-1, TL (NBR 54:51, 1986). Two birds in winter plumage were seen and one was photographed at Lake Babcock, Columbus, Platte Co., 5 September 1986, acc# 065, file# 234-3, BPa, BR(p), (NBR 55:14, 64, 1987).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, *Calidris acuminata*. A single juvenile was seen near Octavia, Butler Co., 12 October 1986, acc# 055, 056, file# 238-1, 238-2. JK, SK, BO (NBR 54:70, 1986). The bird was studied at length and the documentaion described the bird's behavior as well as its appearance. The report included the complete original handwritten field notes and sketches made on the scene. The report was referred for expert opinion and was accepted as an adequate description of a juvenile of the species. It is worth noting as well that the age of the bird and the timing of its occurrence here coincided with the pattern established elsewhere on the continent. The distribution of vagrants has been studied enough on a continent-wide basis to show that nearly all such findings are seen to fit into established or emerging patterns. This is the first record for the state.

Red Phalarope, *Phalaropus fulicaria*. A single bird in winter plumage was found at the Willow Creek Recreation Area near Pierce, Pierce Co., 23 September 1985, acc# 005, file# 222-1, EB, MB (NBR 53:72-73, 1985). Another individual in juvenile plumage, with some remnants of natal down still evident, was photographed at Lake Babcock, Columbus, Platte Co., 13 October 1986, acc# 084, file# 222-2, BPa, BR(p) (NBR 55:15, 64, 1987). These are the second and third records for the state; the only previous record was one collected 15 October 1921 in Cherry Co.

California Gull, *Larus californicus*. A single bird was seen at the North Platte waste treatment lagoons, Lincoln Co., 18 May 1986, acc# 031, file# 53-1 RG (NBR 54:30 1986).

Glaucous Gull, *Larus hyperboreus*. A single immature bird in first winter plumage was seen just below the spillway of Gavins Point Dam, Cedar Co., 30 November 1985, acc# 008, file# 42-1, WHu, JP. Another bird, apparently also an immature, was photographed on Lake North, Columbus, Platte Co., 4 April 1986, acc# 035, file# 42-2, HT TH(p) (NBR 54:68, 1986).

Groove-billed Ani, *Crotophaga sulcirostris*. A single bird was seen by many and photographed at Beaver Lake, near Plattsouth, Cass Co., 22 September 1985, acc# 004, file# 384-1, MK, HH(p) (NBR 53:78-79, 1985).

Hummingbird, *Selasphorus* sp. A single immature-plumaged bird in Bellevue, Sarpy Co., 10-17 November 1985, was studied at length, acc# 022, file# 433-1, AD (NBR 53:80, 1985, 54:16, 1986). The lively discussion among committee members also included outside expert opinion, but a consensus could not be reached on assigning the bird to species, based on the description available. Due to the difficulties of separating immature/winter plumaged members of this genus, the committee decided to vote conservatively and accept the record as *Selasphorus* sp. The committee agreed that the claimed identification of Rufous Hummingbird, *S. rufus*, was the most likely identification, in view of the description and known patterns of wandering, but felt that other species could not be completely ruled out. It is, nonetheless, an outstanding record, especially considering the date and the weather at the time.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, *Tyrannus forficatus*. A single sub-adult was seen by several observers near Maxwell, Lincoln Co., 17 May 1986, acc# 030, 040, file# 443-1, 443-2 TL, WG (NBR 54:30, 55, 1986).

Steller's Jay, *Cyanocitta stelleri*. A single bird was seen near Gering, Scotts Bluff Co., 11 October 1985, acc# 014, file# 478-1, AK (NBR 54:17, 1986). The report also mentioned several other undocumented sightings in the area that winter.

Clark's Nutcracker, *Nucifraga columbiana*. A bird was documented on West Hat Creek, NE of Harrison, Sioux Co., 22 August 1986, acc# 052, file# 491-1, BPr, MP. The same observers saw another one or two birds at Chadron State Park, Dawes Co., 23 August 1986, acc# 053, file# 491-2, BPr, MP. These were the only reports of a major invasion that included sightings of flocks of a dozen or more birds that were received by the committee. The birds were reported in the northern Panhandle and as far southeast as Lincoln Co., from August 1986 through May or June, 1987.

Bewick's Wren, *Thryomanes bewickii*. A single singing individual was noted at the NOU Annual Meeting at Schramm State Park, Sarpy Co., 19 May 1985, acc# 024, file# 719-1, WG (NBR 53:39, 55-56, 50, 1985).

Varied Thrush, *Ixoreus naevius*. A single bird NW of Tryon, McPherson Co. 7 June 1985 was described, acc# 003, file# 763-1, OB (NBR 53:61, 1985). This appears to be the latest spring date for this species (Johnsgard, 1980).

Philadelphia Vireo, *Vireo philadelphicus*. A single bird was reported near Dixon, Dixon Co., 19 May 1986, acc# 046, file# 626-1, ME. This breeding-plumaged bird was adequately described. It may be noted here that in fall immature plumage this species may be very difficult to separate in the field from the more common Warbling Vireo, *V. gilvus*. In the hand they may be separated by the full-length tenth (outermost) primary of the Philadelphia, whereas the tenth primary in the Warbling is a tiny feather. Both may be quite yellowish underneath and exhibit other similar characteristics, however, the Warbling Vireo apparently always is whitish in the center of its breast, while the Philadelphia has a completely yellow breast (Robrson, 1980; Roberts, 1955). Observers should be extremely cautious in identifying this species pair in the fall.

Golden-winged Warbler, *Vermivora chrysoptera*. A single singing male was at Branched Oak Lake, Lancaster Co., 10 May 1986, acc# 045, file# 642-1, PK (NBR 54:59-60, 1986).

Northern Parula, *Parula americana*. A singing male of this species, regular in the eastern part of the state, was seen in Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co., 25 May 1985, acc# 025, file# 648-1, AK (NBR 53:62, 65-66, 1985).

Palm Warbler, *Dendroica palmarum*. A single bird of the western race was found NE of Dixon, Dixon Co., 6 May 1986, acc# 047, file# 672-1, ME (NBR 54:50-51, 1986).

Rose-breasted x Black-headed Grosbeak, *Pheucticus ludovicianus* x *P. melanocephalus*. A report was filed of a hybrid male seen near North Platte, Lincoln Co., 18 May 1986, acc# 033, file# 595 x 596-1, TL (NBR 54:30, 1986).

Cassin's Sparrow, *Aimophila cassinii*. A well-described singing male responded aggressively to a taped call of the species near Lisco, Garden Co., 21 May 1986, acc# 029, file# 578-1, TL (NBR 54:80-81, 1986). Actions of the bird indicated territoriality but definite proof of breeding was not found.

(Gray-headed) Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis caniceps*. A single bird was seen at Dominick Lake, SW of Ashby, Grant Co., 4 June 1986, acc# 027, file# 569-1, WM, (NBR 54:47-48, 62, 81, 1986). This appears to be the latest date on record for this sub-species (Johnsgard, 1980).

Smith's Longspur, *Calcarius pictus*. A single breeding-plumaged male was seen at Dam Site 11, NW of Omaha, Douglas Co., 15 April 1986, acc# 044, file# 537-2, BPa (NBR 54:62, 1986). It coincided with a flight of other longspurs and a late spring blizzard.

(Gray-crowned) Rosy Finch, *Leucosticte arctoa tephrocotis*. A single male was seen S of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co., 4 March 1985, acc# 016, file# 524-1, AK (NBR 53:66, 1985).

White-winged Crossbill, *Loxia leucoptera*. A flock of about 20 birds was seen in Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co., 10 December 1984, acc# 015, file# 522-1, AK (NBR 53:17, 1985). A flock of 6-10 birds was in Albion, Boone Co., 12-15 November 1984, acc# 020, file# 522-2, WM (NBR 53:17, 1985).

Lesser Goldfinch, *Carduelis psaltria*. A single male was seen repeatedly S of Crawford, Dawes Co., 1 June to 7 July 1986, acc# 050, file# 530-1, JM, (NBR 54:56, 1986). The same observer also reported (without supplying additional documentation) that he had seen what may have been the same bird several times over the past several years. This is about 30 miles E of the only other sighting reported in the state (NBR 52:42, 1984).

Non-accepted records

Chukar, *Alectoris chukar*. A single bird reported SW of Franklin, Franklin Co., 7 June 1986, (NBR 54:49, 1986) was unquestionably identified correctly, but is not accepted due to the likelihood that it was released locally. This species is frequently released for hunting or for training dogs, but has not yet become established in the wild in the state.

King Rail, *Rallus elegans*. A call thought to be of this species was heard in NE Arthur Co., 5 June 1986 (NBR 54:47, 1986). However, the bird was not seen, its call could not be recorded, nor was the complete diagnostic call for the species described. The species has been reported previously from Keith Co., about 40 miles SW of this location (NBR 52:30, 1984).

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*. A second report of the bird seen at North Platte, Lincoln Co., 18 May 1986 was received but not accepted because of the lack of detail in the description.

Laughing Gull, *Larus atricilla*. The description of a single bird, reportedly with a flock of Franklin's Gulls, *L. pipixcan*, in Lancaster Co., 26 May 1986

(*NBR* 54:52, 1986), did not completely rule out the possibility of it being a Franklin's. The latter may closely resemble *L. atricilla* in some plumages and separation in the field may be very difficult. For further information see Chase (1985) or one of the specialized gull/seabird guides. There have been a number of reports of this species in the state, but only one has been verified (Bray et al, 1986).

Common Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*. A single winter-plumaged bird was reported from Douglas Co., 18 November 1985, (*NBR* 54:28, 1986), but the committee did not feel that the very similar Bonaparte's Gull, *L. philadelphia*, could be absolutely ruled out. In addition, the report was received secondhand. As a result of procedural questions raised, the committee has decided not to routinely accept reports from someone other than an original observer, primarily to reduce chances of confusion. The committee does, however, retain the option of searching out and evaluating other records, especially older historical reports.

Ivory Gull, *Pagophila eburnea*. An intriguing report concerning this species has been published (*NBR* 54:70, 1986), but was found by the committee, as well as outside expert opinion, to be inconclusive. Objections to the report were in three main areas: 1) the description was not detailed enough to rule out leucistic (feathers lack pigment but other parts are pigmented) or albinistic (neither feathers nor soft parts pigmented), gulls of other species, 2) the early date (12 October) of the sighting (other inland sightings have been December to February), 3) the age of the bird (other inland sightings have been of immatures). These points were raised both by members of the committee and outside experts. For a report of this extremely unlikely species to be accepted, it would have to contain an EXTREMELY detailed description that could eliminate all other white gulls, preferably substantiated by a series of adequate photos, or better yet, a specimen.

Whiskered Screech-Owl, *Otus trichopsis*. A report of this species was too sketchy for the committee to begin actions, further details were requested but not submitted.

Rufous Hummingbird, *Selephorus rufus*. A second report of the hummingbird accepted above as *Selasphorus* sp. was not complete enough to be acceptable.

Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocophus pileatus*. A report of this species did not contain sufficient data to make it acceptable to the committee.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*. An old record of this species (*NBR* 54:43 1986) was considered indicative but not absolutely diagnostic (Class IV) because the details were rather sketchy and it was based in part on recollection and not entirely on field notes made at the time of the sighting.

Smith's Longspur, *Calcarius pictus*. A small flock reported in Morrill Co., 2 September 1984 (*NBR* 53:81, 1985) was considered indicative (Class IV) but not accepted because part of the report appeared to be based on memory rather than on field notes made at the time of the sighting.

Audubon's Oriole, *Icterus graduacauda*. A report of this sedentary Mexican species did not have enough detail to convince the committee. The closest known population is in the lower Rio Grande Valley of extreme southern Texas, and the committee is not aware of any instances of vagrancy nearer than Midland and San Antonio, Texas (Texas Ornith. Soc., 1984). Given the extreme plumage variations exhibited by orioles in the Baltimore/Bullock's gene pool in western Nebraska, every effort should be made to salvage unusual orioles. While it is possible that orioles of other species than Northern, *I. galbula*, and Orchard, *I. spurius*, may be found in Nebraska, virtually all of these unusual birds may be safely assigned to the Baltimore/Bullock's complex.

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--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, Chairman, NOU Records Committee,
136 E. Fairview, Albion, Neb. 68620

BOOK REVIEWS

A Field Guide to Hawks of North America, William S. Clark. Illustrations by Brian K. Wheeler. 1987. Number 35 in The Peterson Field Guide Series, edited by Roger Tory Peterson. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. xii + 198 pp., 24 color plates, 2 black-and-white plates, 241 photographs, 6 figures, 32 maps. ISBN 0-395-36001-3 (hardcover) \$19.95, ISBN 0-395-44112-9 (softcover) \$13.95.

The softcover is a mere 4.5 x 7.25 inches, and less than 0.75 inches thick, but the wealth of information concerning the field identification of diurnal raptors is enormous. William S. Clark, from Arlington, VA, (not William H. Clark as stated on the inside of the front cover) is the former director of the Raptor Information Center of the National Wildlife Federation. Brian K. Wheeler, from Longmont, Colorado, is an accomplished painter of birds and other wildlife and his work has appeared in *Birding* and *American Birds*.

"The purpose of this field guide is to present the latest in tried and proven field marks and behavioral characteristics by which 33 regular and six accidental N. American diurnal raptors may accurately be identified. These field marks and characteristics should enable anyone, with a little practice, to accurately identify most flying and perched diurnal raptors when they are seen clearly." This paragraph is from page one of the book and I believe that the goal has been accomplished. This hawk guide has an exquisite cover painting of an American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon that led me inside with hopes of illustration of the 70+ species of falconiforms in North America. I was quick to discover that "North America" once again means "North America north of Mexico" and that 39 species are discussed. No matter, getting all the details for these species crammed into such a small book would be work enough. Wheeler did a superb job in that the plates do well to illustrate the description in the text.

In the species accounts section (the bulk of the book) each species is discussed in detail in a similar fashion, enabling comparison of different species, if not already discussed. A brief initial description of the species indicates range, size, and general type, and mentions color morphs, sex- and age-related differences, and field marks common to all plumages. Following this is a detailed description of each different age, sex, color morph, or geographically different plumage. Diagnostic field marks are conveniently italicized for quick comparisons. Adult and immature plumages are described and illustrated for all species, as are sexually different and subadult plumage or color morphs. A section on similar species is included in each species description. Range maps are prepared for 33 species and show summer, winter, and permanent resident ranges for those species.

If you want to start hawk watching this is an excellent book to help you through some of the early identifications. If you are a hawk watcher and want to differentiate between forms or subspecies, this guide will help you. If you are an experienced hawk watcher this book will help you explain to the rest of us what you are seeing.

--- Thomas E. Labeáz, Division of Zoology,
University of Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588

A Bird Watcher's Handbook: Field Ornithology for Backyard Naturalists, Laura O'M'Biso Socha. viii + 182 pp. 5½ x 8½. Dodd, Mead & Company, New York. \$16.95 hard cover, \$7.95 paperback.

The chapter headings indicate the book's coverage: The Science of Watching Birds - Identification, birding equipment, field techniques, keeping records, window birding, projects; Hands-on Birding - Bird observatories, bird banding; Cooperative Birding - Atlases, surveys, counts; breeding bird atlas projects, breeding bird surveys, census, colonial bird register, nest record program, beached bird survey, Christmas bird count; Organizing Your Own Project - Choosing a project, defining goals, behaviour, life histories, collections, suggestions for field studies; Caring for Injured or orphaned birds - Care of nestlings, fledglings, release, birds requiring special care, injured birds, oiled birds, diseases, keeping records, thoughts; Aviculture - Captive breeding and re-introduction, birds as pets; Cooperative Research Organizations, References, Contacts - A directory. Each chapter has a list of references on its particular topic. The first chapter takes one from the rawest beginner through the rudiments; the other chapters are for a seasoned birder looking for more worlds to conquer. The author does stress requirements for permits where applicable, and she stresses the need to be sure a bird is orphaned or in need of help before accepting it, and the problems involved in attempting its care. The chapter on aviculture mentions a "back yard aviary", not a cage in the parlor. For one with enough just plain birding under his belt to consider going further the book can offer a good guide to the various fields available. It even includes comments and a reference on the use of computers by birders.

Birding An Introduction to Ornithological Delights for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals. iv + 24 pp.. Paper. Free from Reference Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"A free national library program of braille and recorded materials for blind and physically handicapped persons is administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress. With the cooperation of authors and publishers who grant permission to use copyrighted works, NLS selects and produces full-length books and magazines in braille and on recorded disc and cassette. Reading materials are distributed to a cooperating network of regional and subregional (local) libraries where they are circulated to eligible borrowers. Reading materials and playback machines are sent to borrowers and returned to libraries by postage-free mail." Material for both adults and children is listed, and there are suggestions for bird-listening instead of bird-watching. Probably most people are aware of the services for the blind, but probably not many are aware that specific attention has been given to ornithology.

Audubon's Birds of America Postcards. 9 x 12. Dover Publications Inc., New York. \$3.50

Twenty-four of Audubon's bird pictures are printed in color as postcards, four to a page, which is perforated for easy separation.. Each postcard has an identification of the subject on the back, and on the back cover there is an expanded comment on each.

Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl. A. C. Bent. ix + 244 + 46 pages of photographs, and vi + 314 + 60 pages of photographs. 5.375 x 8.5. Dover Publications, Inc. New York, \$12.95.

The original two volumes are bound as one in this issue.

EARLY FALL MIGRATION OF SEDGE WRENS

Johnsgard (1980) lists the Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) as an uncommon spring and fall migrant in eastern Nebraska, and a rare summer resident in eastern Nebraska, mostly east of a line from Knox to Gage counties. Half of the initial spring records occur between 1 and 12 May, with the latest 3 June. Half of the final fall records occur between 11 Sept. and 9 Oct., with the earliest 29 July. This paper presents observations of Sedge Wrens during 1987 in southcentral Nebraska, west of the line.

I found Sedge Wrens to be locally common in grassy or marshy areas from late July through at least mid-August, 1987. I recorded Sedge Wrens

in Clay, Hall, and Hamilton counties (Table 1). All Wrens counted were singing. Many were unseen because of their reclusive habits, but I saw about half of them either singing from an exposed position near the top of the vegetation or by "swishing" them.

Table 1. Distribution of Sedge Wren Sightings

	Date	Location	Number of Wrens
The birds at the Taylor Ranch, in northwestern Hall Co., were in a complex of dry short-grass prairie mixed with low spots that had tall (4 to 5 ft.) marsh vegetation. These low spots had dried up earlier in the summer. The Wrens were using the tall vegetation. After finding the 4 birds on 28 July I returned the next day to look for evidence of nesting. I looked for a couple of hours and saw no evidence of anything other than the presence of singing birds, but a more thorough search did reveal at least 12 Sedge Wrens. No Marsh Wrens were using this area.	7/28	Taylor Ranch, Hall Co.	4
	7/29	Taylor Ranch, Hall Co.	12
	8/2	Pintail Wildlife Area, Hamilton Co.	1
	8/12	Pintail Wildlife Area, Hamilton Co.	1
	8/16	Rainwater Basin #157, Clay Co.	11
	8/17	Harvard Marsh, Clay Co.	26
	8/20	Mormon Island, Hall Co.	5

The 11 birds counted in the Clay Co. rainwater basin (US Fish and Wildlife Service survey #157) were using a short (about 12 inches high) grassy area, with about an inch of standing water. The large count of birds at Harvard Marsh was in the bluestem prairie to the east and northeast of the wetlands. Due to intermittent rain, I counted only along the road. A large area of similar habitat in the interior and southeast went uncounted. There is a similar report of about 14 Sedge Wrens in a bluestem pasture 11 to 25 August, 1986 from Washington Co., Oklahoma (Williams, 1987).

I have an additional record from Mormon Island on 1 August 1985, with Gary Lingle, when I recorded 5 Sedge Wrens. These birds were not present earlier in the summer (G. Lingle, pers. comm.). The first record of Sedge Wrens on Mormon Island wasn't until 1984, when 2 were reported on 28 June and again on 3 July (Labeledz 1984).

I examined *NBR* volumes 46 (1978) through 55 (to September 1987) and noticed a couple of trends. The Sedge Wren is noted fairly regularly in the fall occurrence report as early as late July and early August in eastern counties. Also, it is reported more often in fall than in spring. I counted 38 fall sightings from 10 reports and only 13 spring sightings from 9 reports. Many of the spring sightings were from Lancaster Co., where it was reported in the 1982 nesting survey. This contrasts to Johnsgard (1980), which lists somewhat more spring than fall records.

Whether these birds were migrants or indicate a breeding population is not known. Sedge Wrens apparently have an unusual breeding strategy that includes a nesting cycle which can begin as late as August. Johnsgard (1979) says that the few Kansas records indicate that eggs are laid in July and August at that latitude. Walkinshaw (1935) says that nesting occurs in Michigan any month from May until September. Meanly (1952) found eggs and young during the first two weeks of September in Arkansas. Additionally, there is a report of an active nest in northeastern Kansas, in Atchinson Co., on 10 August 1980 (Williams 1981). This aspect of their breeding strategy apparently has not been studied, but is discussed by Burns (1982) and Kroodsma and Verner (1978).

I was prompted to write this note because Sedge Wrens seem to be a relatively obscure species not commented upon in *NBR*, I was surprised at how many of them I saw. For other readers of the *NBR* perhaps an awareness of their potential mid-summer breeding in the state could lead to a clearer picture of their status in Nebraska.

I wish to thank my wife, Susan, for her help, and Gary Lingle for reviewing this manuscript.

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--- Paul A. Bedell, 5118 Sylvan Road, Richmond, Va. 23225

NOTES

YELLOW RAILS. On 21 September 1986, while conducting a waterfowl survey on the Jack Senn WMA, near Ceresco, Lancaster Co., I flushed a small rail-like bird, which flew a short distance before landing in heavy grass. Although its flight was very similar to the Virginia Rail and the Sora, which I was accustomed to seeing, the light color and white wing patches were very distinctive. Later I checked a field guide and found that the description most closely matching this bird was that of the very secretive Yellow Rail.

I had planned to do some rail and snipe hunting the next day, so the following morning I returned to the area with my brother and my springer spaniel. Within four hours we flushed approximately 12 rail and collected 5, 3 of these were Yellow Rails.

What I have found in subsequent outings in the marsh is that the Yellow Rails tend to be even more difficult to flush than the Virginia and Sora rails. Their flight distance is generally much shorter (10 to 15 yards) and in several instances when I observed them landing they immediately dove under the vegetation and began running. On several occasions when I saw the exact spot a bird landed I was unable to reflush it, even with the help of my dog.

During summer nest drag surveying of the area Sora and Virginia Rail were flushed on a regular basis, but it was only during a 2 to 3 week period in late summer that I saw Yellow Rails. I am assuming these were all migrating birds, and none nest in the area.

--- Charles Lesick, Sr., Box 377, Cedar Bluff, Neb. 68015.

PECTORAL SANDPIPERS. Eight Pectoral Sandpipers, coming into alternate plumage, were feeding in a roadside pool near Lowell, Kearney Co., 4 April 1987.

--- Graham Chisholm, 2605 Haste St. #305, Berkley, Cal. 94704

ALBINO ROBIN. This albino Robin was found as a fledgling in northwest Lincoln. The bird had completely white plumage, red eyes, and pale yellow legs and bill. The parents were feeding it, but someone caught it to give to the Folsom Children's Zoo on 28 May 1985. The Zoo turned it over to Sue Graupner of the Wildlife Rescue Team to raise. She took the picture when it was banded. It was released in east Lincoln 17 July and two days later it was seen once more in a park in the same area.

--- Bill Garthright, 2240 N. 31st St.
Lincoln, Neb. 68503



PARTIAL ALBINO ROBIN. A partial albino Robin, with a red breast and a white back, head, tail, and wings, nested in Auburn in 1986. A first nest was destroyed by a windstorm and a second nest was then reportedly built.

--- John Row, (now) 1837 Cassell Road, Manhattan, Kan. 66502

ANOTHER PARTIAL ALBINO ROBIN. My daughter, Carol, and I saw a Robin, creamy colored where it should be black, with a red breast (which was the clue to identification), in Carter Lake, Iowa (which is on the Nebraska side of the river) 25 April 1986. It was not seen on later trips.

--- R. G. Cortelyou, 5109 Underwood Avenue, Omaha, Neb. 68132

RED CROSSBILLS. From 22 to 24 August 1986 from six to eight Red Crossbills were off and on visitors to our hackberry tree in Auburn.

--- John Row, (now) 1837 Cassell Road, Manhattan, Kan. 66502

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