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Mountain Bluebird

—E. W. Steffen

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President's Page

A SPECIAL feeling of comfort prevails as I compose these remarks. For some months following our former editor's resignation, there was a bit of crisis about securing a replacement to prepare this September issue. But to the joy of all, in due time two good people came forward to assume responsibilities as co-editors of BIRD NOTES. This unique arrangement gives favorable promise for the ongoing excellence of our journal.

Don Adolphson's qualifications hardly need mentioning to active members and regular readers. For several years his contributions to BIRD NOTES and his other services to SDOU have been outstanding. Don will be responsible for the technical ornithological judgments relative to accepting material for publication in BIRD NOTES.



Winona Sparks is a relatively new SDOU member. Currently, she is periodicals librarian at Black Hills State College. In addition to having a lively interest in birds, she has had wide-ranging experiences working on newspapers in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana. Mrs. Sparks will be in charge of the journalistic affairs related to publishing BIRD NOTES, and her time-

ly affiliation with SDOU is exceedingly fortunate.

While our co-editors are competent people with the confidence to undertake their tasks, they cannot help sensing some uncertainties in their new venture. As Jim Johnson suggested in the last issue, SDOU members can help the new editors immensely by sending material for publication—both feature-length articles and brief notes.

I dare not name the SDOU members I know who have a wealth of material worthy of appearance in BIRD NOTES. Please let your concern for the success of the new editors be your initiative to send them your material. For those of you with an "I can't write for publication" attitude, please rely on your editors. Send them the raw facts, and they will write the account with due credit to you. Since this material should be sent to Don Adolphson, please note his and Winona's new addresses in the masthead.

Elsewhere in this issue you should find an announcement about the details of the coming fall meeting in Huron. I hope many of you will attend this meeting. You will have a special opportunity to visit with the new editors—to let them know how you may help them and what innovations you would like to see in BIRD NOTES. The meeting itself will have its usual rewards in the various presentations, especially the observation of SDOU's twentieth anniversary.—L. M. Baylor

The Mountain Bluebird, a Beautiful and Congenial Guest

D. G. Adolphson

THE mountain bluebird is the most common bluebird found in South Dakota. He is seen in the summer months from the highest to the lowest elevations in the Black Hills, the pine covered buttes of the northwest, and the cedar scattered badlands of the southwest.

They begin arriving in February, although their main spring migration does not occur until March, and then return south again in October. Some stragglers stay until mid-November. Abandoned nest cavities left by woodpeckers are favorite nesting spots although cavities in fence posts, a hole in a cliff, or even a mailbox along a country road will be used. They also respond to man-made nesting boxes. Bluebirds usually raise two broods yearly. Insects and thirty percent vegetable matter, made up of wild fruit of no commercial value, are their main diet. During the breeding season, the male is very colorful when his back and breast take on a deep azure hue.

Bluebirds are beautiful and beneficial and our countryside would be richer if there were more of them. They were formerly more abundant over the western part of the state, but they have been reduced in number by severe competition with House sparrows and starlings. These destructive pests drive bluebirds from nesting cavities.

We can help bring back bluebirds

by erecting nesting boxes in our yards and along country roads in the Black Hills and in the Badlands. These areas have hundreds of miles of habitat for mountain bluebirds and other cavity nesting species. Bluebirds, tree swallows, house wrens, and chickadees will use the houses.

Establishment of bluebird trails would be a rewarding and inexpensive project. The houses can be made of unpainted, old or rough lumber—the closer to the color of natural surroundings the better. The houses are 4"x4" inside measurement and 8" deep with the 1½" entrance hole 6" above the floor. Perches are unnecessary and paint or stain is optional. They can be nailed to the top of fence posts along country roads and in open areas on farms and ranches. The houses should be erected at shoulder (or fence post) height and be placed about 500 feet apart for privacy. Also, try and place them "sun facing" (south or southwest) so that they front on a clearing. The houses should be cleaned out every year.

Anyone who is interested in placing houses on their land or can assist in making houses, or can contact ranchers for permission for trails is asked to write to the address below. We will send the plans on house construction

(Continued on page 69)

Summer Bird Watching at Wind Cave National Park

J. Richard Gilliland

WIND Cave National Park, occupying about one percent of the area of the South Dakota Black Hills, contains a unique remnant stand of the upland mixed-grass prairie environment that once typified a large part of the north central United States. About three-fourths of the 44 square miles of the park are composed of this rolling prairie and the remainder is wooded Ponderosa Pine forest or moist, shrubby canyon bottoms (Tyers, 1966). These three environments are the principal avifaunal habitats of Wind Cave National Park.

Many visitors to the park come with the notion that the cave, itself, is the only feature of the park worth seeing. Indeed, the unique boxwork formation found in the cave makes a cave trip a most rewarding and worthwhile experience. However, in the last decade, a concerted effort has been made by the National Park Service personnel to develop the surface features of the park in order to make the visitor's trip through the park even more meaningful to him. Today, numerous conducted trips such as motor caravans, nature hikes, and bird walks are employed to exploit the surface features for the visitor's enjoyment. Now, it is remarkably easy to observe the American Bison, the Pronghorn Antelope, and the Black-tailed Prairie Dog. Also, if the visitor gets up early enough, he should see the

American Elk or Wapiti and the Rocky Mountain Mule Deer.

As the bird watcher knows, the crepuscular habits of birds means that early morning and early evening are the prime times for observing bird activity, too. My experience in watching birds at Wind Cave National Park certainly bears this out. Since my bird watching was confined mostly to the months of June, July, and August, I found that the birds normally avoided the heat of midday, preferring to feed during the cooler hours. In the late spring and early fall this schedule is rearranged slightly as migrating birds tend to feed longer in the morning, perhaps until noon, then demonstrating only moderate activity in the evening hours.

Without question the best areas of the park in which to see birds are the moist, shrubby canyon bottoms. Many birds, particularly the passerines, avoid the open grassland areas. Similarly, the pine forests support little bird residence or activity. The preference for canyon bottoms appears to stem from the greater availability of food, escape cover, nesting sites, and water.

Following is a list of 93 species of birds observed during the summers of 1967 and 1968 in Wind Cave National Park. The main information source is the writer's personal observations and records. About 45 bird hikes were tak-

(EDITOR'S NOTE—Dr. Gilliland spent six summers as a seasonal naturalist in the USNPS, five of them at Wind Cave National Park. He is an administrator at Santa Fe Junior College, Gainesville, Florida.)



Airborne View of Typical Ponderosa Pine Forests

—Picture by Dr. Gilliland

en; each hike averaged an hour and a half in duration. All three avifaunal habitats were visited at least 10 times during the two-summer period. Pettingill's and Whitney's **Birds of the Black Hills** served as a general reference and is the source of subspecies where they are listed (Pettingill and Whitney, 1965). The listings and nomenclature are those used in the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds, Fifth Edition, 1957.

The following abbreviations used in the listing designate relative abundance and principal habitat for each bird species:

a—abundant, seen daily in large numbers

c—common, seen most every day

u—uncommon, seen only occasionally or locally

r—rare, seen only once or a few times each summer

t—transient, seen in migration

R—riparian areas or canyon bottoms

P—ponderosa pine forest

O—open, upland mixed-shortgrass prairie

DUCKS

Mallard. *Anas platyrhynchos*. u; R—in small ponds in Beaver Creek Canyon.

Pintail. *Anas acuta*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon in the sediment pond.

Green-winged Teal. *Anas carolinensis*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon in the sediment pond.

VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

- Turkey Vulture. *Cathartes aura*. u; R—throughout the Park.
Marsh Hawk. *Circus cyaneus*. r; O—N.P.S. 5 near Lone Pine Point.
Red-tailed Hawk. *Buteo jamaicensis*. c; O—Park headquarters area.
Swainson's Hawk. *Buteo swainsoni*. r; O—N.P.S. 5.
Golden Eagle. *Aquila crysaetos*. r; R—Shirttail Canyon.
Prairie Falcon. *Falco mexicanus*. c; O—open areas in Beaver Creek Canyon.
Sparrow Hawk. *Falco sparverius*. c; O—N.P.S. 5 near corrals.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

- Turkey. *Meleagris gallopavo*. u; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.
Sharp-tailed Grouse. *Pedioecetes phasianellus*. u; O—N.P.S. 5.

RAILS

- Virginia Rail. *Rallus limicola*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon on the banks of the sediment pond.

PLOVERS AND SANDPIPERS

- Killdeer. *Charadrius vociferus*. c; R—maintenance area and near the sediment pond in Wind Cave Canyon.
Upland Plover. *Bartramia longicauda*. c; O—N.P.S. 5 near the corrals and throughout the Park.
Solitary Sandpiper. *Tringa solitaria*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon on the banks of the sediment pond.
Spotted Sandpiper. *Actitis macularia*. u; R—on the banks of small ponds throughout the Park.
Pectoral Sandpiper. *Erolia melanotos*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon on the banks of the sediment pond.

DOVES

- Rock Dove (domestic pigeon). *Columba livia*. u; R—rocky cliffs in Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
Mourning Dove. *Zenaidura macroura*. c; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.

CUCKOOS

- Black-billed Cuckoo. *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

OWLS

- Great Horned Owl. *Bubo virginianus*. u; R—rocky cliffs in Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
Long-eared Owl. *Asio otus*. r; P—wooded areas near Elk Mountain campground.

GOATSUCKERS

- Poor-will. *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*. u; R—residence and maintenance areas.
Common Nighthawk. *Chordeiles minor*. c; O—N.P.S. 5 at night, throughout the Park.

SWIFTS

- White-throated Swift. *Aeronautes saxatalis*. u; R—near the residence area.

KINGFISHERS

- Belted Kingfisher. *Megaceryle alcyon*. u; R—Beaver Creek and Wind Cave Canyons.

WOODPECKERS

- Yellow-shafted Flicker. *Colaptes auratus*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon.
Red-shafted Flicker. *Colaptes cafer*. c; R—Wind Cave and Beaver Creek Canyons.
Red-headed Woodpecker. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. u; R—burned area in Wind Cave Canyon.
Lewis' Woodpecker. *Asyndesmus lewis*. u; R—burned area in Wind Cave Canyon.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. *Sphyrapicus varius*. r; P—wooded areas near Elk Mountain Campground.

Hairy Woodpecker. *Dendrocopos villosus*. u; R—burned area in Wind Cave Canyon.

Downy Woodpecker. *Dendrocopos pubescens*. u; R—paved trail between the cave entrance and the elevator building.

FLYCATCHERS

Eastern Kingbird. *Tyrannus tyrannus*. c; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

Western Kingbird. *Tyrannus verticalis*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

Say's Phoebe. *Sayornis saya*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.

Western Flycatcher. *Empidonax difficilis*. a; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

Western Wood Pewee. *Contopus sordidulus*. a; R—paved trail between the cave entrance and the elevator building.

Olive-sided Flycatcher. *Nuttallornis borealis*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.

LARKS

Horned Lark. *Eremophila alpestris leucolaema*. u; O—N.P.S. 5 and 6.

SWALLOWS

Barn Swallow. *Hirundo rustica*. t; O—on grasslands above Wind Cave Canyon.

Cliff Swallow. *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*. c; R—rocky cliffs in Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.

Violet-green Swallow. *Tachycineta thalassina*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.

JAYS, MAGPIES, AND CROWS

Blue Jay. *Cyanocitta cristata*. u; P—throughout the Park.

Pinyon Jay. *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*. u; R—wooded canyon near the intersection of N.P.S. 5 and N.P.S. 6.

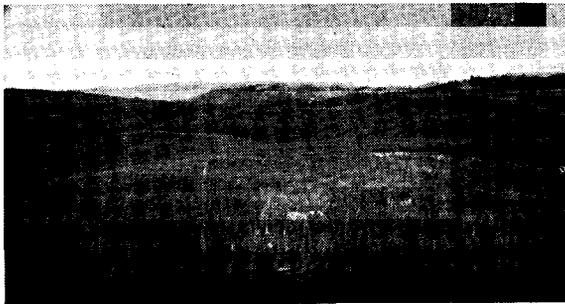
Gray Jay. *Perisoreus canadensis*. u; P—near the pigtail bridge.

Black-billed Magpie. *Pica pica*. c; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.

Common Crow. *Corvus brachyrhynchos*. u; O—N.P.S.5.

CHICKADEES

Black-capped Chickadee. *Parus atricapillus*. a; R—Wind Cave Canyon.



View of Upland Mixed-Grass
Prairie Environment

—Picture by Dr. Gilliland

NUTHATCHES

- White-breasted Nuthatch. *Sitta carolinensis*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon.
Pygmy Nuthatch. *Sitta pygmaea*. r; P—wooded areas near Elk Mountain campground.

WRENS

- House Wren. *Troglodytes aedon*. c; R—Beaver Creek and Wind Cave Canyons.
Rock Wren. *Salpinctes obsoletus*. c; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
Canyon Wren. *Catherpes mexicanus*. r; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

THRASHERS

- Catbird. *Dumetella carolinensis*. c; R—paved trail between the cave entrance and the elevator building.
Brown Thrasher. *Toxostoma rufum*. c; R—near the elevator building.

THRUSHES, SOLITAIRES, AND BLUEBIRDS

- Robin. *Turdus migratorius*. a; P—throughout the Park.
Townsend's Solitaire. *Myadestes townsendi*. u; P—wooded areas near Elk Mountain campground.
Eastern Bluebird. *Sialia sialis*. r; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
Mountain Bluebird. *Sialia currucoides*. a; R—residence area and Wind Cave Canyon.

SHRIKES

- Loggerhead Shrike. *Lanius ludovicianus*. u; O—N.P.S. 5 south of the intersection with N.P.S. 6.

VIREOS

- Solitary Vireo. *Vireo solitarius*. c; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.
Red-eyed Vireo. *Vireo olivaceus*. c; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.
Warbling Vireo. *Vireo gilvus*. u; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.

WARBLERS

- Tennessee Warbler. *Vermivora peregrina*. t; R—near the elevator building.
Yellow Warbler. *Dendroica petechia*. u; R—near the elevator building.
Audubon's Warbler. *Dendroica auduboni*. c; R—paved trail between the cave entrance and the elevator building; Beaver Creek Canyon.
Ovenbird. *Seiurus aurocapillus*. u; P—wooded areas near Elk Mountain campground.
Yellowthroat. *Geothlypis trichas*. u; R—Beaver Creek Canyon.
Yellow-breasted Chat. *Icteria virens*. c; R—from the cave entrance to the maintenance area.
American Redstart. *Setophaga ruticilla*. c; R—Beaver Creek Canyon near the runoff from Peter's Puddle.

BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES

- Western Meadowlark. *Sturnella neglecta*. a; O—throughout the Park.
Yellow-headed Blackbird. *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. t; R—Wind Cave Canyon on the banks of the sediment pond.
Red-winged Blackbird. *Agelaius phoeniceus*. u; R—near the sediment pond in Wind Cave Canyon.
Brewer's Blackbird. *Euphagus cyanocephalus*. c; R—near the sediment pond in Wind Cave Canyon.
Common Grackle. *Quiscalus quiscula*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon.
Brown-headed Cowbird. *Molothrus ater*. c; R—maintenance area and sediment pond.
Bullock's Oriole. *Icterus bullockii*. r; R—near the elevator building.

TANAGERS

- Western Tanager. *Piranga ludoviciana*. c; P—throughout the Park.

GROSBEAKS

- Black-headed Grosbeak. *Pheucticus melanocephalus*. r; R—near the elevator building.

BUNTINGS

- Indigo Bunting. *Passerina cyanea*. r; P—burned area in Wind Cave Canyon.
Lazuli Bunting. *Passerina amoena*. r; R—Wind Cave Canyon.

SISKINS AND GOLDFINCHES

- Pine Siskin. *Spinus pinus*. a; P—throughout the Park.
American Goldfinch. *Spinus tristis*. c; R—residence area and Wind Cave Canyon.

CROSSBILLS

- Red Crossbill. *Loxia curvirostra*. a; P—Wind Cave Canyon.

TOWHEES

- Rufous-sided Towhee. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus arcticus*. a; R—paved trail between the cave entrance and the elevator building.

SPARROWS

- Grasshopper Sparrow. *Ammodramus savannarum*. r; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
Lark Bunting. *Calamospiza melancorys*. u; O—N.P.S. 5 south of the intersection with N.P.S. 6.
Vesper Sparrow. *Poocetes gramineus*. a; O—throughout the Park.
Lark Sparrow. *Chondestes grammacus*. u; R—Wind Cave Canyon past the sediment pond.
White-winged Junco. *Junco aiken*. u; P—throughout the Park.
Chipping Sparrow. *Spizella passerina*. a; R—residence area and Wind Cave Canyon.

As mentioned above, the morning and evening are the best times to observe birds in Wind Cave National Park. I would recommend that no one go bird watching by himself, particularly if he

goes very far from the paved roads in the park. If ranger guided bird hikes are scheduled, go on one of them. Rangers are familiar with the terrain and the avifauna. If such hikes are not scheduled, talk to a ranger about where to go in the park. It is advisable to check out with someone before going "off the beaten track." It is reassuring to know that someone will be looking for you in the event you become lost and do not return on time.

One other item to keep in mind concerns bird watching in residence areas or areas in which conducted trips are taking place. I recommend that bird watchers respect the residence areas; avoid interfering with the privacy of the residents. If a conducted trip approaches, merely step to the side and allow the group to pass.

Following is a brief discussion of some of the areas of the park that have proven to be the best for bird watching. For exact directions concerning how to get to these areas, talk to a ranger.

WIND CAVE CANYON

This is the best overall area in the park to see birds. Starting from the old campground near the cave entrance and walking down the trail past the elevator building, maintenance area, and sediment ponds, the bird watcher should see around 35 species of birds on a typical morning. The best method I have found to observe this area is to split it up over two mornings. Spend a morning walking from the old campground down to the elevator building. You should see the Downy Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Yellow Warb-

ler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Pine Siskin, and Rufous-sided Towhee in this region. Also, I have had good luck sitting motionless on the stone wall outside the elevator building, particularly when the berries are ripe on nearby bushes.

The second morning, start at the sediment ponds and work your way gradually down Wind Cave Canyon. If you can, time your trip so the sun is just hitting the tops of the trees; bird activity should begin to peak at this time. Watch for ducks and shorebirds in the sediment ponds. Great-horned Owls nest in the cliffs just past the sediment ponds. Evidence of their presence may be seen in the form of uric acid stains on the rocks. Flickers will be seen throughout the canyon; it is thought that many of these birds are hybrids of the Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted Flickers. Both the Eastern and Western Kingbirds may be seen; the Say's Phoebe is uncommonly seen far down the canyon. Other species that should be encountered include the Western Wood Pewee, Cliff Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Western Meadowlark, Redwinged Blackbird, American Goldfinch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Lark Sparrow, and the Chipping Sparrow. Red Crossbills should be heard in flight making their characteristic two and three note flight call as they fly in flocks over the canyon.

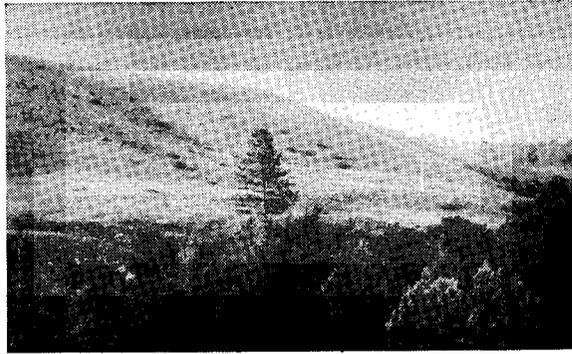
BEAVER CREEK CANYON

This area is somewhat more moist and open than Wind Cave Canyon. Although not as many birds will be seen here as in Wind Cave Canyon, some interesting birds should be seen. An excellent bird watching area to start a bird hike down Beaver Creek Canyon is the runoff pond across the road from

Norbeck Puddle. Warblers and vireos frequent this riparian environment. Continuing down the canyon, Mallards should be flushed from the small artificial ponds. I recommend walking about a mile down the canyon from the road. Species of birds you should see are the Prairie Falcon, Turkey, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Western Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Robin, Solitary Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Audubon's Warbler, Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Western Meadowlark, Western Tanager, and Rufous-sided Towhee.

SHIRTTAIL CANYON HIKE AND ELK MOUNTAIN CAMPGROUND AREAS

These two areas are probably the best areas in the park to observe species of birds that are found in the Ponderosa Pine forests. It is advisable to check with a ranger in order to get exact directions to these areas. The Shirttail Canyon Hike is about three miles in length; the walk around the perimeter of the Elk Mountain Campground is about a mile in length and is mostly in shaded areas. Birds that should be seen in this environment are the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Western Wood Pewee, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Ovenbird (you will hear his characteristic "TEA-CHER, TEA-CHER" nine times for every one time you will see him!), Western Meadowlark, Western Tanager, Pine Siskin, and White-winged Junco.



Wind Cave Canyon from the Elevator Building

—Picture by Dr. Gilliland

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ROADS 5 AND 6

The best way to see the birds that reside in the grassland regions in the park is to drive down NPS 5 or 6 starting from the northern boundary of the park. Again, as in the pine forests, bird residence is sparse. However, when a bird is sighted in this area it is normally a fairly uncommon species. This is the best area in the park to see hawks; the Marsh Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and Sparrow Hawk may be seen soaring over the road. Other birds that may be seen in these grassland areas include the Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Plover, Common Nighthawk, Horned Lark, Pinyon Jay, Common Crow, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Meadowlark, Lark Bunting, and the Vesper Sparrow.

Other species of birds may be sighted in the park. Of the 93 species enumerated, most are summer residents. It

is highly possible that you may observe birds that are not listed herein, particularly during the months of bird migration. Also, of course, quite different species will be seen in the winter. Pettingill and Whitney suggest birds that should be seen in the area in the winter (Pettingill and Whitney, 1965). The Chief Park Naturalist of Wind Cave National Park will appreciate knowing of your avifaunal observations, particularly if new species are recorded.

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Tyers, John A. **The Natural History Story of Wind Cave National Park**. Wind Cave Natural History Association: Wind Cave National Park, Hot Springs, South Dakota, 1966.

Cruise Down the James River

Kent N. Olson

ON July 21, Don Black, Dick Moore and myself canoed down the James River entering one mile south of the Sanborn-Beadle County line. About six hours later we exited near the Highway 34 bridge east of Forestburg. Twenty-plus miles of scenic river had been covered.

Along the way we flushed three great-horned and one short-eared owl. Several dozen mallards were observed as was a brood of teal. The adult female teal, determined to lead us away from her young, frantically swam and flapped ahead of us for a good half mile before she lifted off the water to fly back to her brood.

A modest-sized great blue heron rookery was seen with three still active nests. Nearby, we watched several dozen of the big birds feeding in the shallows of the river. We also caught sight of an American merganser cruising low in the water as it attempted to outflank us. This was the first time I had seen this specie in South Dakota

during the summer months. Perhaps it had been shot and crippled during migration and thus was forced to summer here.

This was a most enjoyable outing made at a time when the river was high enough to keep our canoe well above underwater obstacles and provide us with helpful current.

I compared this scene with channelized river I had seen recently in Iowa and Minnesota. For example, Iowa's Little Sioux River has been stripped of all character by dredging out and straightening the channel. In the process, all bush and trees along its banks have been cleared away. It now resembles a gigantic open ditch. Fish and wildlife find little to live by in such areas. Fortunately the James River still flows within a natural, meandering channel edged by stands of brush and trees that afford food and housing for wildlife. May the scenic "Jim" continue to flow along a graceful pathway to the Missouri.—Huron, S. Dak.

Camera Captures Illusive Woodpecker

Willis Hall

IN 1954 a friend showed me where a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers were nesting about two miles east of Yankton. He had been seen since May 12. The entrance to the nest was 40 feet from the ground in an old dead willow—so unsound I did not attempt to climb it. On May 18, I observed both the male and female taking food to the cavity. On the 19th, I went up an elm tree and managed to get within about fifteen feet of the nest. I could hear the young, but had difficulty getting a clear view of the nest from the frail elm branch. I spent a lot of time trying to get a cord over some of the branches that obstructed the view. The next day I had more trouble trying to clear a camera view; but the female came to the nest several times while I was up in the tree. On the 21st, I finally was able to pull the foliage aside so I could take some pictures—most of which were quite worthless because of camera movement, from the strong wind tossing my elm branch about and making me decidedly seasick. Three times both the male and female came to the nest at the same time. The female, however, did much more feeding than did the male. It was indeed a disappointment not to be able to get some good pictures of these birds.

My second experience of photographing the Red-bellied Woodpeckers came in 1958. The nest was again in an old dead willow tree, this time only about



Red Bellied Woodpecker

—Willis Hall

thirty feet from a dry stream bed in a heavily wooded ravine half a mile from Lewis and Clark Lake. It was May 25 when I found the nest and I was able to photograph both the parent birds and the young until June 12, when the young left the nest. Examination of my pictures showed that these woodpeckers fed about 35 percent millers.—Yankton

Audubon Wildlife Films

presented in

HURON

by

James Valley Nature Club
(formerly Huron Bird Club)

and the

National Audubon Society

Twentieth Season

1969-70 Program

Thursday, September 25, 1969

Monday, October 27, 1969

Tuesday, December 2, 1969

Wednesday, February 11, 1970

Monday, April 6, 1970

presented in

ABERDEEN

by

Aberdeen Garden Club

and the

National Audubon Society

Eighth Season

1969-70 Program

Wednesday, September 24, 1969

Tuesday, October 28, 1969

Wednesday, December 3, 1969

Tuesday, February 10, 1970

Wednesday, April 1, 1970

General Notes of Special Interest

BLUE GROSBEEK AT HURON—Almost daily from the first days of June, 1969, a strange bird song had been sounding about the yard, particularly in the early morning. It reminded us of an oriole, though not enough to be one. We had often tried to see it but the stranger was able to slip away without our catching even a glimpse of any unfamiliar bird.

At 12:10 p.m., June 8, 1969, I saw a male Blue Grosbeak in the locust tree near the bird bath, smooth dark blue head, brown wing markings, clear in the bright sun, and not more than 30 feet away. Lucille didn't get to the window in time to see it.

On June 11, we heard it again. I went out to look for it and soon saw it on the wires at the west end of our lot, still singing at intervals. Lucille verified the song while I watched the thrown back head, the beak opening, the vibrating throat. It was the song we had been hearing, though she didn't get to see the bird until a later occasion.

Our records now show that we saw or heard the same bird on five later days, the last being June 27, 1969.

We had hoped for evidence of nesting in our area but never had a sight of a female, and now believe it must have been a lone wandering male.—**J. W. and Lucille Johnson, Huron**

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WOOD THRUSH NESTING RECORDS FROM CHARLES MIX COUNTY—During the summer of 1969 Bertin Ander-

son and Ray Daugherty, graduate students at the University of South Dakota, conducted bird studies along the Missouri River near Greenwood, Charles Mix County. They reported finding Wood Thrushes rather regularly during their field studies—as many as four or five singing males could be heard along a mile of the heavily wooded shore. Two nests were located during the summer. On the 7th of June a nest with four eggs was found about seven feet up in a small bush, and on the 23rd of June a second nest, also containing four eggs, was found in a bush about ten feet off the ground.

These are the only recent records we have for this species nesting in the state. In fact, they are evidently the only specific nesting records for South Dakota. Over and Thoms (*Birds of South Dakota, 1921*) reported Wood Thrushes as common breeding birds in the southeast corner of the state without giving specific nest records, and Stephens, et al, did the same in reporting on the birds of Union County in 1955. The 1957 AOU Checklist includes Sioux Falls, Yankton, Vermillion and Fort Pierre in the breeding range for the species, but the source of this information is not known.

Wood Thrushes have been reported during the breeding season on Farm Island, near Pierre, during the past two years (Harris, *Bird Notes V. XX: No. 3*) and it was expected that nests would eventually be found in that locality. But no more than two singing males have been located on Farm

Island at any one time, and it was the only place in the state where the Wood Thrush was known to occur during the breeding season. So the Greenwood location is all the more important as it opens up the possibility that this species might be found in other locations along the Missouri River.

Anderson and Daugherty will also be working in the Greenwood area during the 1970 breeding season, and we will hope for more records from them at that time. They reported that the Wood Thrush nests were very tough to locate, although male birds were singing consistently in the area. It was only after many hot, muggy hours of field work that the nests were found. Their primary objective during the summer was the recording of the black-headed grosbeak songs, and this work necessitated the finding of the grosbeak nests. It was in conjunction with this activity that they found the Wood Thrush nests. Anderson believes that the habitat is ideal for Black-and-white warblers, although none were seen or heard at Greenwood during their field work in the summer of 1969. This warbler is another species that has been observed at Farm Island during the breeding season in South Dakota. Over and Thoms (Birds of South Dakota, 1921) reported Wood in the state.—Bruce Harris, Woon-

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LARK BUNTING IN CLAY COUNTY—

The report of the 1968 sightings of Lark Buntings in northeastern South Dakota by Robert R. Johnson (SDOU Bird Notes, Dec. 1968) prompted me to make known my own sightings of Lark Buntings in southeastern South Dakota, Clay County.

In over twenty years of dedicated birdwatching, I first saw Lark Buntings in my native county on May 23, 1967. This sighting occurred on what I call

the Bloomingdale Road, north of the western section of the town of Vermillion.

My husband and I saw three flocks on outbound and return trips. I heard some sound from them, but very briefly. They sat on fence wires, flying on as we approached by car, but they were not very alarmed by our nearness.

On June 1, 1968, we were driving back to Vermillion on this same road between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. when I caught sight of a lone Lark Bunting. As it flushed from the roadside ditch I exclaimed: "Bobolink" and then became immediately aware of my error.

This single male Lark Bunting lit on the plowing on the west side of this north-south township road, and remained sitting, clearly visible, most of the twenty minutes we watched it. It rose quickly once, moving lightly over the dark earth.

Its seed-eating bill appeared darkish at 30 feet distance, but looked lighter or ash-grey at 20 feet. When I started the car and drove on a few feet he flew from the west to the east side of the road, and perched on a steel post, remaining as still as a black figurine with his white wing patches in lovely contrast. Again they flashed their purity as he rose in flight and left an artist's picture in my memory.—Adele M. Siljenberg, Vermillion

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UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR OF A WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH—

For several years we have had a gourd birdhouse in a young Ponderosa pine near our back patio. In 1968, house wrens nested in this gourd. This spring White-breasted Nuthatches pecked for some time to enlarge the opening and then built a nest in the gourd. Through early May we heard no sounds of young birds in the nest, but about the middle

of May, I went out at 6:30 a.m. to work in the garden and became aware of activity at the birdhouse.

As I watched, an adult Nuthatch, presumably the male, went into the gourd and soon came out with something in his beak. He flew to a 25-foot-high branch of a pine tree and dropped the object. It was a young bird, still alive. As I was attempting to pick it up in a tissue, the adult came to the same tree and dropped another little bird. This one was dead when I got to it. A little later, the Nuthatch again came out of the nest with something, but flew off into a gully so that I could not observe him drop it.

For some time thereafter, the other White-breasted Nuthatch, assumed to be the female, fluttered around the gourd, went in, and then left. The following day both Nuthatches were present; then they departed permanently. A wren carried nesting material to the gourd in June, but did not nest. Subsequently, we took the gourd down, and it contained nothing but nesting materials.

The young birds that were dropped had just a bit of gray down on their heads, bulging, unopened eyes, and large abdomens.—**Marloe Bareis, Rapid City**

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EARED GREBE IN BUTTE COUNTY—On July 26, 1967, we observed an adult Eared Grebe (*Podiceps caspicus*) with two juveniles swimming at Lake Newell, Butte County, South Dakota. The young Eared Grebes were about three-fourths of the size of the adult bird. Judging by the observation date and the immature size of the young grebes, we assume the nesting occurred at Lake Newell.

Bruce Harris, in his search of the literature on the Eared Grebe for the check list of South Dakota birds, has

not found recorded evidence that this species nests west of the Missouri River in South Dakota. Thus, the above observation appears to extend the westward breeding range of the Eared Grebe in our state.—**L. M. Baylor and Willard Rosine, Rapid City and Sioux Falls**

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KIRTLAND'S WARBLER AREA—Anyone vacationing or traveling through central northern Lower Michigan during the summer months can request a permit to visit the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area of the Huron National Forest from the Forest Service Office in Mio, Michigan. The permit system makes it possible for the Forest Service to keep track of people in the area.—**Mio District of the Huron National Forest, Michigan.**

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THE 1968 WHOOPING CRANE AND CALIFORNIA CONDOR COUNTS—The present Whooping Crane population is at a high of 50 wild and 18 captive birds. They numbered just 15 in 1941, exceeded 30 in 1947 and topped 40 in 1964. The fourth annual California Condor survey was held October 16 and 17, 1968 and 52 condors were observed. This does not indicate an increase or decrease of the condor population, but does seem to be consistent with the findings of the three previous surveys: 1965-38, 1966-51, and 1967-46.—**Audubon Society**

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PERIGRENE FALCON ON PROTECTION LIST—Perigrenes now get the same protection Golden and Bald Eagles enjoy, however, it may be too late to save this species. They no longer nest in the eastern part of the United States and they are depleting in numbers throughout the rest of their range. Pesticides are believed to be contami-

nating their food supply.—U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior

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A LEGAL MILESTONE FOR CONSERVATION—It is one of the sadder commentaries on our contemporary culture that at least a substantial segment of the public just doesn't trust its own government. Evidence of this is visible in various ways; we see it especially in terms of land given to government for park and conservation purposes. People now frequently offer land to Audubon for sanctuary preservation and flatly state that the offer is made to us because government can not be trusted not to divert the land after a few years. And this reputation is not without justification as lands given to the Commonwealth for conservation purposes are nibbled away for highways, airports, public buildings and similar purposes which are in political favor at any given moment.

Thus we note an important milestone set recently for Massachusetts by the Supreme Judicial Court. For it we must thank not only the Court, but also the citizens from Milton and vicinity who have fought so hard to divert Interstate 95 from ruining Fowl Meadow on the Neponset River.

The citizen group went to court because land given to, or acquired by the M.D.C. years ago with the intent that it be preserved, was turned over to the Department of Public Works for the new highway. The citizen petitioners based their case on the premise that the M.D.C. (and D.P.W.) had no right to transfer the land for this new and inconsistent use without specific authority from the Legislature.

An important new conservation milestone was established when the Court agreed that public lands devoted to one public use can not be diverted to another inconsistent public use without

plain and explicit legislation authorizing such diversion, and went on to say "... We think it is essential to the expression of plain and explicit authority to divert parklands, Great Ponds, reservations and kindred areas to a new and inconsistent public use that the Legislature identify the land and that there appear in the legislation not only a statement of the new use but a statement or recital showing in some way legislative awareness of the existing public use. In short, the legislation should express not merely the public will for the new use, but its willingness to surrender or forego the existing use . . . "

Now at least the public will have the opportunity to oppose such legislative diversions without their being made at an administrative level safely insulated from citizen objection.—Allen H. Morgan—Massachusetts Audubon Newsletter.

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SHORT-EARED OWLS—A flock of about 30 Short-eared Owls was observed for about five minutes at a distance of 50 yards flying over Lacreek Refuge on March 5, 1969. The birds were flying in spiral formation from ten to thirty yards above ground level.—John W. Ellis and Alfred Radtke, Lacreek Refuge, Martin

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1969 WEST RIVER OWL NOTES—Fifty Great Horned Owl nests were found this spring and they had an average of 2.00 young per nest. Six of the nests were under bridges, four on cliffs and the rest in stick type nests. This is the fourth year owls have used a pier under the Cheyenne River bridge, Fall River County. Two owls used eyies that had been used for years by prairie falcons. Another interesting nest used by great horned owls this spring was the stick type nest in Pennington County that had been used by

red-tailed hawks in 1967 and by Swainson's hawks in 1968.

The Barn Owls under the Hat Creek bridge, Fall River County, raised six young this year. They were present in 1968 and believed to have nested.

We did not find any nests of Short-eared Owls or Long-eared Owls this year in the western part of the state.

—D. G. Adolphson, Rapid City

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YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER NESTING IN ROBERTS COUNTY—

On July 9, 1969 I drove to Hartford Beach State Park, on Big Stone Lake, to check on the occurrence of Yellow-throated Vireos and Scarlet Tanagers. While walking through the heavily-wooded area I noted a sapsucker as it flew from a tree ahead of me. Following it, I was amazed to find a nest hole about 33 feet up in an ash tree. A male sapsucker (the female was never seen) was feeding noisy young that were easily heard, but never observed. The adult made several trips to a nearby ash tree where it was getting either sap or insects from a free-flowing wound on the tree. I observed it from a distance of 25 yards with 7x30 binoculars for a period of fifteen minutes.

The nest tree was located in a boggy area resulting from underground springs; this was quite a restricted ecological niche not over one acre in size. Predominate tree species on the perimeter of the boggy area were basswood, oak, ironwood, ash and willow. The undergrowth was dogwood and willow, with various weedy plants associated with them.

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is a fairly common nesting species in the Black Hills (Pettingill and Whitney, p. 54) but it is very rare as a nesting bird on the prairies. According to the 1957 AOU Checklist it is a casual summer resident in extreme eastern Ne-

braska, and Bent (Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers, 1939) includes "Sioux Falls and probably Vermillion" in the breeding range of the species. It will be interesting to check this area in the coming years to see if Sapsuckers are regular breeders in South Dakota.—Bruce Harris, Woonsocket

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TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE IN HYDE COUNTY—A Townsend's Solitaire was one of the birds we saw at Lake Chapelle on November 28, 1968. It was not more than twelve feet from me, on the branch of a cedar tree, where an opening gave an unobstructed view. I had plenty of time to check size, color, shape, markings, short bill and eye-ring. It was clearly a Solitaire.—June Harter, Highmore

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HOARY REDPOLLS AT HURON—As a result of the deep snow of this winter of 1968-69, the redpolls have been unusually numerous in town. Normally we have plenty of gloriosa daisy and other seed for them, but, as in the country, the snow covered everything.

Noting they were eating millet and other small seed on the snow at the W. H. Youtz yard at 1287 Campbell Drive, Huron, we tried the same with the birds in our yard.

At once they were down on the snow and eating. Over the next few weeks the redpoll flock grew until we could count 30 in sight at one time. We had noted that some of them appeared much lighter colored than the rest of the flock and were encouraged to try to identify some of them as Hoary Redpolls. But they so seldom exposed their rumps, we were never able to make certain.

Then, around noon, of a warm day, March 22, 1969, the flock undertook a mass bath at our heated pool. At least twenty of them surrounded the pool, all

splashing and waving wings. We were able to count four snow-white rumps on the side next to us and there could have been others on the other side.

On this basis, we estimate our flock of 30 would have nearly fifteen percent Hoary Redpolls.—**J. W. and Lucille M. Johnson, Huron**

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SOME SPRING SHORE AND WATER BIRD NOTES—While driving past the southeastern bay of the Angostura Reservoir, Fall River County, on April 28, 1969 I observed 25 Marbled Godwits feeding on the shore and 17 Double-Crested Cormorants resting on dead trees in the water.

At Timber Lake, Dewey County, on May 6, 1969 there were 56 Avocets, 47 Long-billed Dowitches, 136 Wilson's Phalaropes, and two Upland Plovers.

At the mouth of the Grand River on the Oahe Reservoir of the Missouri River, Corson County, the Double-Crested Cormorants had 100 nests and the Great Blue Herons had 25 nests in their inundated tree colony. This colony has doubled since 1965 when I first saw it. Six white Pelicans were also seen swimming in the bay.

At Sand Lake, Campbell County on May 7, 1969 there were 46 Western Grebes, four Black-crowned Night Herons, six Wilson's Phalaropes, two Double-crested Cormorants, one American Bittern and about 40 Franklin's Gulls working the fields in the area. The same day on a mud flat in central Potter County, I observed one Willet, four Long-billed Dowitches, 16 Wil-

son's Phalaropes and 10 Semi-palmated Sandpipers.

May 8, 1969 at Cottonwood Lake, Sully County, there were 32 White Pelicans, 12 Western Grebes, two Horned Grebes, six Pied-billed Grebes, one Black-crowned Night Heron, one Forster's Tern and one Double-crested Cormorant.—**D. G. Adolphson, Rapid City.**

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SNOW BUNTINGS AND LAPLAND LONGSPURS AT FAIRBURN—At times during February, 1969, on my farm just east of Fairburn, Custer County, four Snow Buntings and three Lapland Longspurs fed with about 500 Horned Larks.—**Barney Nordstrom, Fairburn**

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Mountain Bluebird

(Continued from page 52)

and will also assist in placing them in the designated trails.

It is hoped that the trails can be expanded each year and that the young can be banded. The project will not only provide nesting cavities for these species, but will also provide useful information on the number of nesting species and the nest success.

Finally, there is a great satisfaction to know bluebirds are living on your land because of an effort on your part to invite them. You will be richly rewarded with the appearance and song of these congenial "blue robins."—**Keystone Route, Box 669, Rapid City, S. Dak. 57701.**

Notes from Sparks' Mini-Ranch

Everything small today, abbreviated, is mini. And so our two acre ranch is a mini-ranch. In May of this year we moved our mobile home from Spearfish to the old mining town of Roubaix. Now we commute 60 miles a day, from over a mile elevation up and over Strawberry Hill and Deadwood Hill to drop down into Spearfish Valley.

Roubaix can hardly be called a ghost town though all that is left of its homes and streets are the tumbled down shacks and shafts of the Uncle Sam Gold Mine. A legitimate ghost town must have old buildings, slightly haunted on windy nights, and in Roubaix you find, only after diligent searching, stone foundations, filled in shafts and well holes where homes once stood.

You never know just what form nature's reward will take when you cooperate with her provisions for wild life. The corner of our two acres we restrained from mowing produced bushes bearing sarvis berries which the birds shared with us. We had already planted five tame bushes which we'll share with the birds in another year or two.

The birds are also harvesting a small crop of chokecherries along the creek.

Several times we have admired the bright orange and yellow of a Western Tanager as he flitted in and out of the bushes. Mountain Bluebirds, such as Don writes of in this issue, have also found the chokecherries to their liking.

Last week we surprised three young Turkeys in the hills above our place. We thought them Grouse at first, as they dodged through the grass. They were short-tailed and lacked the blue-black coloring of the mature birds, but once they came into full view we recognized them as half-grown turkeys.

How does a question and answer column appeal to you subscribers? If you have questions you think some reader can answer send them to my Nemo address or Don's address in Rapid City. And here's a question that probably doesn't have an answer. Is there a bird that nips the buds and blossoms from rose bushes and carries them away? Our pet white rose bush, with four buds near opening, was stripped the other night. The following morning the red bushes were bare.

Note Don's address is now Keystone, Route, Box 669, Rapid City, and ours is Nemo.

That's "30" for now.

Winter Meeting, 1969

20th Anniversary

DATES:

November 14, 15 and 16, 1969

PLACE:

The Plains, 960 4th N.E. (Highway 14), Huron, S. Dak.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM:

Friday, November 14

7:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.—East Meeting Room. Informal get together and registration.

Saturday, November 15

8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.—Business meeting. Details to be announced later. (Registration, \$1.00 fee to cover local expense.) East Meeting Room.

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.—Paper Session.

6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.—Banquet, special program on the History of South Dakota Ornithologists' Union.

Sunday, November 16

A morning schedule of papers and/or business will be arranged if necessary.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Those who plan to present papers during the November meeting should send title, name, address, length of time desired, and type of projection equipment needed to Mrs. G. M. Jonkel, 1722 Kansas S.E., Huron, South Dakota 57350, by November 5.

Huron Motels and Hotels

Headquarters: Plains, Huron, 960 4th N.E. (Highway 14)

Plains Motel, 924 4th N.E.

Marvin Hughitt Hotel, 375 Dakota S.

Hickory House Motor Inn, 3rd and Wisconsin S.E.

Bell Motel, 1274 3rd S.W.

Riverside Motel, 710 3rd S.E.

Traveler Motel, 241 Lincoln N.W.

Holiday Motor Court, Inc., Highway 27 & 21st SW

Holiday Motor Court, Inc., Highway 37 & 21st SW

Please send in your reservations as soon as possible. There is a big convention scheduled for this time.