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Greater Yellow-legs

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The Cover

Photo ..... Roger Tory Peterson
Engraving ..... Massachusetts Audubon Society

President's Page

IN this final message of my executive year with SDOU, I would like to mention briefly some thoughts concerning the future welfare and progress of the society.

The existence of long-established ornithological unions in a number of states and the recent organization of several state-wide societies, including SDOU in S. Dak. and the Kansas Ornithological Association, both established in 1949, reflect a growing interest in bird-study which should contribute much to the field observations and knowledge of our native birds.

The unexcelled opportunities for bird-watching and study in South Dakota may well be re-emphasized. Favored by geographical location and diversity of habitat, ranging from the east-river lake district across the short-grass prairies and pine ridges to the Black Hills of the extreme west-river area, SDOU members may observe one of the largest avifaunas of interior North America. In this connection, members of SDOU are invited to visit the National Wildlife Refuges within the state where there is opportunity to observe an especially wide variety of bird-life ranging from waterfowl to songbirds. These refuges include: Sand Lake near Aberdeen, Waubay in the northeast lake district and Lake Andes in the lower Missouri Valley, and west-river Lacreek near Martin in the sandhills-border country where ranges of many eastern and western species overlap.

One of our immediate problems involves the building-up of membership in order to provide more observation and coverage in all sections of the state and to accumulate sufficient revenue through annual dues and subscriptions to meet the cost of publishing our official bulletin. There are undoubtedly many hundreds of people within the state who are sufficiently interested in birds and bird-watching to affiliate with SDOU, and it would be well to continue every effort to locate and enlist as many of these prospective members as possible. Members are urged to continue soliciting new membership applications whenever convenient, forwarding them, with dues, to J. S. Findley, 1201 South Center, Sioux Falls, S. D.

Another problem involves securing material for our publication. It is most desirable to build up an adequate file of bird-notes from various sections of the state, short articles and news items for reference by the editorial staff as each issue of **Bird Notes** is being prepared for publication. All members, particularly those residing within the state, are urged regularly to contribute material suitable for publication, forwarding notes to H. F. Chapman, 516 Security Bank Bldg., Sioux Falls, S. D.

I again express deep appreciation for the honor conferred on me by election to the office of President. It is my sincere belief that SDOU and its official publication, South Dakota Bird Notes, will continue to serve as sources of information for all who share a mutual interest in the birds of South Dakota.

Greater Yellow-legs

Alfred Peterson, Brandt, S. Dak.

WE have under consideration here a bird of the shores and beaches, a member of the group known as Shore Birds or Waders, which is aptly named Greater Yellow-legs by those who prefer the language of ordinary speech. But, and this is true of each and every species in the world of Ornithology, it also bears a name in Latin form, the "scientific" name, which is to be recognized and employed by the naturalists of all countries. In other words, the universal language, **Totanus melanoleucus** (a kind of snipe black and white). It is well. Two names are provided. One is for everyday use; the second to be taken on more formal occasions, and as a "handle of a fact" picked up and handed over to any of diverse languages, where it readily drops into place.

The Greater Yellow-legs stands up tall on yellow legs long and slender. The back is blackish and gray, speckled with white in a lace-like pattern, and a patch of white shows at base of tail. The two, Greater and Lesser, are nearly alike in markings, but the Greater is greater and the Lesser is lesser—by about four inches in length; by weight, 6 to 10 ounces, and 3½ to 5 ounces, respectively. When the two are seen together this difference in size is almost startling at first glance, as it at once carries out the impression of increased size, weight and power. It is said that the eye and ear can detect slight variations in flight movements and in their calls. Both birds are noisy, restless, suspicious, giving perception and memory an opportunity to come into play. Either seen alone at some distance might require nice judgment in identification. The larger bill of the Greater could help here. A. C. Bent, in his **Life Histories of North American Shore Birds,** writes: "The Greater Yellow-legs resembles the Lesser so closely in color pattern that the two can not be readily distinguished except by direct comparison in size. The bill of the Greater is relatively larger, and it is rather more boldly marked. The voices of the two are somewhat different." Again, by Bent: "It is not as gregarious as the Lesser Yellow-legs; it is most often seen singly or in small parties, but I have counted as many as 40 in a flock on rare occasions."

In their migrations the Yellow-legs move along both Coasts and through the Interior. Their summer home extends from extreme northern United States to Alaska and Labrador. They winter from southern California and the Gulf Coast to southern South America, and both are accidental in Great Britain. A. C. Bent says, in speaking of the Greater Yellow-legs, "it seems to avoid prairie regions of southern Canada. William Rowan tells me that he and C. G. Harrold regard it as probably the scarcest of the regular waders. In years of steady collecting during the height of the migration, spring and fall, he (Harrold) has seen the Greater Yellow-legs only half a dozen times." Dr. Thos. S. Roberts, in his **Birds of Minnesota,** (1936) introduced a list of later-year records by remarking that "for some years past the Greater Yellow-legs has been an uncommon or even a rare bird in Minnesota. It is only occasionally that one is seen and it is always an object of special comment among present-day bird-students."

Yellow-legs fly in orderly, compact flocks, but on alighting they scatter, each individual going its own way without much regard to its fellows,

picking at the surface as it goes. Characteristic of Yellow-legs, Greater and Lesser, is the habit of tilting the body and nodding; leisurely perhaps if not much disturbed, as if in faint acknowledgement; but let danger crowd upon them, then their agitation plainly shows, until with a note of warning they are up and away.

The Stilt Sandpiper probes with head submerged; the Yellow-leg feeds at the surface. A. C. Bent says, of the Stilts, "the broad stripe over the eye is conspicuous in any plumage." And Prof. William Rowan goes on to say: "A flock of Stilts is the most characteristic sight . . . They feed practically shoulder to shoulder, seldom scattering. The Yellow-legs of a flock are always scattered. . . . Stilts never bob their heads after the manner of Yellow-legs."

A way of feeding by the Yellow-legs, which seems to be unusual for it is not mentioned in the books of general circulation, is noticed in Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, **Water Birds of North America.** Mr. N. B. Moore, at Sarasota Bay, in Florida, quoted indirectly, informs us: "When the ponds are quite low, in June and July, both species feed in a very curious manner. A mass of black ooze lies just below the surface of the water, on the hard sandy bed. As many as six or eight birds, of one species alone, or of both together, may be seen running at full speed, one behind the other, and sweeping rapidly from side to side, so as to describe a half-circle, with their bills immersed in the water. This is continued for a certain distance, and then the birds all turn around and go back over the same ground, repeating this advance and retreat a second time even. No one can doubt that they are procuring food of some kind in 'an impetuous and giddy race,' yet no halt is made either to snatch or swallow anything, neither can they be assisted by their eyes in finding their food. Mr. Moore believes this to consist of the animalculae which abound in the oozy matter, and that it is taken in by mere suction."

Dr. Paul Bartsch, in A. C. Bent's **Life Histories of North American Shore Birds,** says he has "watched the Greater Yellow-legs wade out into the shallow water of the bars, moving along with tilting gait, suddenly lower that long head and neck and proceed to run through the water at a speed which would have done credit to a college sprinter, quickly striking to right and left with his bill." Mr. Bent states that others have noted a similar performance. Mr. Moore has recorded the Stilt Sandpiper as feeding in much the same manner, differing by stepping along slowly, and sweeping its bill slowly from side to side.

These occurrences belong to the "far away and long ago", but have their counterpart in the present at near-by places. Look for it when the water is at easy wading depth on a bed of soft, smooth silt. The birds step forward at a brisk pace, with a swaying motion of the bill in the water, as if to trace a zigzag pattern upon the mud, in playful exercise; never stopping, so far as one can see, to pick up any morsel of delight.

The following records indicate conditions of ponds and mud-flats attractive to Greater Yellow-legs, up on the top of the Coteau des Prairie, —the Prairie Hills, or "Mountains of the Prairie", and more particularly in Deuel County, during the season of southward migration just past. To the recording of my personal observations I now proceed.

On Aug. 5, 1952, I found two Greater Yellow-legs at Lake Poinsett and the next day, two at Strandburg. Then, Sept. 1, seven were seen at Tunerville, in close rank with two

of the Lesser and nine Blue-winged Teal, resting on a mud-flat beside a bank sheltering them from a brisk, cool wind. This was the first chance to compare the two Yellow-legs that I had had since becoming interested in them more than casually, and I spent a full half hour with them at close range. Size and length of bill were noted carefully as the two birds stood side by side. Becoming restless, the Yellow-legs bestirred themselves to a short flight and some wading in the shallows. Several times a Greater hopped along on one foot as if crippled, but suddenly the one not seen would drop into place—everything okay. In passing by, one of the Greater picked at the feathers of two Teal. No annoyance was displayed, and amusement occurred to me. A. C. Bent has written that the Greater Yellow-legs seems to be particularly fond of companionship of the Teals when feeding in shallow water.

Twelve days later, Sept. 13, 25 were located beside Highway 77 at Tunerville, in the company of many Lesser, some 25 Stilt Sandpipers and nearly 40 Pectoral Sandpipers. During Sept. 14, 15 and 16, the count remained the same, excepting the absence of the Pectorals on the 16th, and the departure of all but a few of the Lesser at the end of the first day seen. They were not, however, always found at the same place. As each pond in its turn lost its last skim of water the birds moved over to another not far away, which by that time offered the proper inducements to tarry awhile.

Sept. 28, two of the large Yellow-legs worked along the water's edge at the highway running through Rush Lake at Waubay. On a sunny afternoon, Sept. 29, ten Greater, with one Lesser, were found resting on a sandbar of Lake Mary, near the town of Lake Norden and lake of the same name. Now came a lapse of 15 days during which none were seen.

It was on Oct. 16 that I found the best gathering of all—not less than 55 Greater—near Altamont and Lake Alice, on a pond at roadside which was half frozen over at a temperature of 26 in the early hours of the morning. One day later ice had driven the birds away. But, somewhere in the vicinity, they had found a haven in time of trouble, for when I looked at the pond the morning of Oct. 19, they were at hand again—59 of them—in the company of two Lesser, seven Stilt Sandpipers and one Snipe. Moreover, just a mile beyond, 12 of the Greater brought the total to 71 "rare" Yellow-legs. Later in the day four were seen at Waubay and one at Watertown. Oct. 21 the best spot was again frozen over, but 13 Greater held out at a larger body of water a mile distant. Oct. 22 and 24, the 70 faithful were back at the favored pond, and Oct. 26, 30, to which were added eight seen several miles away. Finally, Nov. 2, a late date, four lingered at the now nearly dry bottom, probably their last day in South Dakota in the year of 1952.

The Upland Plover received its other name, Bartramian Sandpiper, from William Bartram (1729-1823) who was generally regarded, according to Donald Culcross Peattie, as probably the best ornithologist between Catesby and Wilson.

In the event SDOU publishes a checklist of Birds of South Dakota there should be some indication as to status, (resident, migrant, etc.) Do you like the system described in the June, 1952, issue of Bird Notes at page 20? (Editors)

Eastern Meadowlark In South Dakota

Kenneth Krumm, Martin, S. Dak.

THE range of the (Eastern) Meadowlark, **Sturnella magna,** is usually given as including Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. Over and Thoms (1946 Birds of South Dakota) list the Meadowlark (distinguished from the common Western Meadowlark, **Sturnella neglecta**) as "very rare in our state." They base this statement chiefly on field notes and specimens collected by G. B. Saunders of the Biological Survey, Biologist with that agency and with the present Fish and Wildlife Service.

Consequently, the presence of the bird in some numbers along the rim of the sandhills in Bennett County, in the extreme southwest-central section of South Dakota, is of some interest. Field observations of somewhat general nature have been undertaken during the past two seasons to obtain, if possible, further information relative to the presence of the bird and the limits of its range in this territory.

The eastern bird is generally considered to differ slightly in appearance from the familiar Western Meadowlark by the more prominent black breast-band and somewhat brighter yellow breast, and by the yellow of the throat region being more restricted below the base of the bill. These characteristics are not readily discernible in the field where ranges of the two forms overlap. The presence of **magna** is best recognized through the distinctive call, a drawling, slightly wheezy "seeh-ahh-tee-aah-tare" or approximation thereof, easily distinguishable from the loud, clear, ringing calls of the western bird.

With further reference to the specimens he took in this locality, Dr. Saunders, in correspondence dated April 18, 1952, advises: "Two male **magna** were collected in the area now comprising Lacreek Refuge in Bennett County on May 28, 1938. Both specimens were in breeding plumage. The two specimens possessed typical **magna** plumage and were designated (for collection reference) as Lacreek No. 2637, wing 121.2 mm. and Lacreek No. 2638, wing 121.0." Other specimens, both male and female, were observed by him in the locality at the time but were not collected. Extending this field trip southward through the Nebraska sandhills, Saunders noted **S. Magna** in several localities of that region, including the valley of the Niobrara south of Hay Springs, Nebr., and the North Platte valley near Bridgeport.

In reply to the inquiry as to possible hybridization of the two forms, Saunders advised that the range preference of each of the two birds appears to be very distinct, with **S. magna** occupying the lowlands and **neglecta** occupying the nearby, more elevated and arid grassland, and that his field work and specimens did not indicate evidence of interbreeding.

Oberholser and McAtee (1920 Waterfowl and their Food Plants in the Sandhill Region of Nebraska) mention the Eastern Meadowlark as occupying the lower valley meadows, with **neglecta** ranging on the higher lands. Saunders also noted these range preferences of the two forms farther southward in Oklahoma where **S. magna** dominated as far west as El Reno on the margin of the broad grassy plains, with **S. neglecta** present from there westward, with a few **neglecta** following the stream valleys.

With reference to the range of the eastern bird in southwest-central South Dakota, the writer has ob-

(Continued on Page 16)

Christmas Bird Count 1952

	Pierre	Hot Springs	Madison	Springfield	Huron	Wall Lake	Spearfish	LaCreek	Ft. Thompson	Sioux Falls	Jefferson	Vermillion	Armour	Lake Andes Refuge
Goose, Canada	80												800	
Goose, White-front	1													1500
Teal, S. W.														1
Mallard	300	50					1500	6727		17			10000	75000
Pintail							3							200
Bald Pate														1
Wood Duck	2													
Am. Golden-eye	43						20	50						
Am. Merganser	2							11						10
Hawk, Sharp-shinned	1	1												
Hawk, Cooper's			1											1
Hawk, Marsh					1				2	4				5
Hawk, Red-tailed										2				
Hawk, Red-shouldered	1													
Hawk, Rough-legged	2		1	4			2	9		1				1
Hawk, Sparrow										2				
Eagle, Golden				1			1	4						
Eagle, Bald	1							2						18
Prairie Falcon								2						
Prairie Chicken	3								2					
Sharp-t. Grouse	330	1						10	2					
Pheasant	12	2	176	10	6	32	12	528		146	9		1	63
Turkey		2												
Wilson's Snipe							1		3					
Owl, Horned	3		1		1		2	2	1	10	2			3
Owl, Barn										1				
Owl, Short-eared										1				
Flicker, Yellow-s	1		4	4		1				12	2	3		
Flicker, Red-s										1				
Mourning D[illegible]e										55	3			1
Woodpecker, Hairy	2	1	3	6	1				4	32	4			
Woodpecker, Downy	4	3	9		1		1	4	4	83	12	1	1	
Kingfisher		2					1			1				

Horned Lark	30	70	202		25	15			1	10	1		30	120
Blue Jay			10	4	2		15			35				
Magpie	40	15					3	1	24	1				
Crow			16	25	3			13		33	6		1	20
Pinon Jay		15												
B-c. Chickadee	91	15	16	50	3	13	25	3	105	406	15	6		
Nuthatch, White-b.	1	2	14	9	1				1	40	6			
Nuthatch, Red-b.										11				
Brown Creeper		1	1	1						10	3	2		
Marsh Wren, L-b.											1			
Robin	10	3												
Townsend's Solitaire		2												
Kinglet, Gold-cr.	4									30	12	2		
Cedar Waxwing		7								5				
Grey Shrike	1						1							
Starling	18		126	102	20	14	1		2	74			89	
House Sparrow	200	20	303	100	400	20	75		30	352	100			11
West. Meadowlark	22		1			7							2	6
Red-wing			1						1		2			
Rusty Blackbird									5					
Cowbird	1													
Cardinal	3			3					11	32	2			
Grosbeak, Even.		10												
Grosbeak, Pine					1									
Redpoll	10				3									
Purple Finch										6				
Pine Siskin							5			10				
Goldfinch	9		1	20		15	30		20	32			33	
Red Crossbill		7					18							
Red-eyed Towhee				1										
Junco, White-w							1							
Junco, Slate-color	26	8	14	16		7	6		18	387	60		26	
Junco, Oregon		2					1							
Sparrow, Tree	223		184	20		51		226	475		50		67	
Sparrow, Harris's			20						3	9	1			
Sparrow, Song	6								1					
Sparrow, Lark														60
Longspur, McCown's					200									
Longspur, Lapland			70		200			82	60		4			
Snow Bunting										6				

Spring Migration and Nesting Data In Stanley County, South Dakota

Lytle H. Blankenship, Ingalf G. Bue and Wm. H. Marshall
University of Minnesota

ONE of the striking changes that has occurred in the grassland regions of western United States during the past twenty years is the establishment of temporary water holes known as stock ponds. These small areas are recognized as of importance as waterfowl breeding habitat (Bue, Blankenship and Marshall, 1952). While certain phases of waterfowl use of these ponds were being studied in detail on fifty stock ponds in 1950 and 1951 (Bue, 1952 and Blankenship, 1952), notes were also taken on the arrival dates and nesting of non-game birds. Although these data are incidental to those on waterfowl they are presented to add to the information on the birds of the area and to indicate the value of stock ponds to species other than ducks.

The stock ponds and upland areas studied are situated in the short-grass prairie area within two miles on either side of U. S. Highway 14, for a distance of 38 miles west of the Missouri River Bridge near Pierre, the state capitol. Not all of the ponds within this area were visited regularly nor were the surrounding grassland areas searched consistently. The topography is flat to rolling with several fairly deep canyons draining to the Bad River on the south. There is slightly more than one stock pond, of one-fourth to ten acres in size, to the square mile. Within and bordering these ponds sparse growths of emergent plants, such as cattail, water plantain, bulrush, spikerush and willow, are present. The remainder of the habitat is relatively dry upland, supporting stands of western wheat grass, green needle grass, buffalo grass, blue grama grass and a variety of weeds. Vegetative cover of any type is scanty.

During almost daily field work in the periods March 15 to September 20, 1950 (Bue) and March 25 to September 10, 1951 (Blankenship), the following arrival dates of non-game birds were noted: The dates for 1951, being more numerous, are cited first while the available 1950 dates are in parenthesis.)

Pied-billed Grebe	4-20	(4-20)
Eared Grebe	4-23	(4-22)
White Pelican	5-2	
Double-crested Cormorant	5-3	
Black-crowned Night Heron	None	(5-2)
American Bittern	5-10	
Red-tailed Hawk	4-11	
American Rough-legged Hawk	4-2	(4-2)
Golden Eagle	4-3	
Marsh Hawk	3-26	(4-1)
Sparrow Hawk	4-14	(5-9)
Sandhill Crane	4-14	(4-12)
Virginia Rail	5-11	
Sora Rail	5-8	
Coot	4-17	(4-24)
Semi-palmated Plover	5-18	(5-10)
Killdeer	4-2	(4-6)
Ruddy Turnstone	6-6	
Long-billed Curlew	4-19	
Upland Plover	4-30	(5-10)
Spotted Sandpiper	6-5	(5-10)
Solitary Sandpiper	5-4	(5-10)
Western Willet	5-3	(5-8)
Greater Yellow-legs	4-21	(4-27)
Lesser Yellow-legs	4-19	(5-10)
White-rumped Sandpiper	5-18	
Least Sandpiper	5-4	
Stilt Sandpiper	5-18	
Sanderling	6-2	
Avocet	4-23	(4-14)

Wilson's Phalarope	5-1	(5-12)
Northern Phalarope	6-2	
Herring Gull	4-3	
Franklin's Gull	5-8	
Black Tern	5-16	
Mourning Dove	4-23	(4-27)
Burrowing Owl	4-17	
Flicker	4-17	(4-8)
Red-headed Woodpecker	5-17	
Eastern Kingbird	4-30	
Western Kingbird	5-11	
Phoebe	5-16	
Say's Phoebe	4-28	
Least Flycatcher	5-16	
Tree Swallow	5-17	
Bank Swallow	5-4	
Rough-winged Swallow	5-11	
Barn Swallow	4-26	(5-12)
Cliff Swallow	5-7	
American Magpie	4-9	
Raven	5-4	
Crow	5-4	
Brown Thrasher	5-2	
Olive-backed Thrush	5-10	
Grey-cheeked Thrush	5-10	
(Greenland) Wheatear	5-9	
Eastern Bluebird	4-26	
American Pipit	5-3	
Sprague's Pipit	5-3	
Loggerhead Shrike	4-24	
Nashville Warbler	5-16	
Yellow Warbler	5-10	
Yellow Throat	5-3	
Bobolink	6-2	
Western Meadowlark	3-26	(4-1)
Red-wing	4-2	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5-9	
Brewer's Blackbird	4-4	
Bronzed Grackle	5-18	
Cowbird	4-24	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5-16	
Indigo Bunting	6-8	
Towhee	5-3	
Lark Bunting	4-20	
Grasshopper Sparrow	4-18	
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	5-9	
Vesper Sparrow	4-3	
Lark Sparrow	4-3	
Slate-colored Junco	4-4	
Oregon Junco	4-26	
Tree Sparrow	4-18	
Clay-colored Sparrow	5-10	
Harris's Sparrow	5-9	
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	5-3	
White-crowned Sparrow	4-26	
Lincoln's Sparrow	4-28	
Swamp Sparrow	4-24	
Song Sparrow	4-19	
Lapland Longspur	4-18	
Smith's Longspur	5-1	
Chestnut-collared Longspur	4-17	

(Horned Lark—present in the area each year at the initiation of field work.)

As the season progressed, non-game birds' nests, in addition to those of waterfowl, noted were as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe—Nine nests were found on seven stock ponds (three were on one pond). All of the nests were on mats of floating vegetation about a foot in diameter and half a foot thick. In five cases water plantain composed the surrounding cover, while one each of the other four nests were found in bulrush, spike rush, cattail and flooded western wheat grass. Two of the nests (with three and two eggs each) failed, because of desertion. The other seven nests with clutches of six (2 nests), seven (4 nests) and eight (1 nest) all hatched successfully between July 2 and July 25, 1951. The incubation period cannot be estimated, but the period of hatching varied from three days (1 nest) to six days (2 nests) with four nests hatching over a four-day period. Two nests had one infertile egg each so that the total number of nestlings produced by seven successful nests was 46.

Marsh Hawk—A nest, with three young and one egg, was found on June 26, 1951 in a stand of western wheat grass.

Sora Rail—Ten nests of this bird were found on five ponds (four were on one pond, three on another). Seven of the nests were in cover stand-

ing in water 2-12 inches deep while three were built in cover 6-8 inches above dry ground. In seven cases western wheat grass was the plant used (four were in flooded stands of this grass) while spikerush sheltered two nests and water plantain one. Three of the nests were known to have failed because of trampling by cattle (2 nests) and flooding following heavy rains (1 nest). The fate of one nest was unknown. In five successful nests the clutch sizes were 16, 12, 10, 9 and 8. The total clutch of one nest was not determined, but three young were frightened from it at the time of discovery. These nests hatched during the period July 20 to August 20, 1951. Four eggs were infertile, three of these being in the nest with 16 eggs. Thus five successful nests were known to have produced 51 young.

Killdeer—Three nests were found on July 6, 1950, July 8, 1950, and June 12, 1951. These nests were on bare ground and contained four, three, and four eggs, respectively.

Upland Plover—Three nests were found on May 28, June 8 and June 21, 1951. All were in western wheat grass and contained four, three, and four eggs.

Wilson's Phalarope—Ten nests of this bird were found between May 23 and June 18, 1951. Eight were in stands of western wheat grass while two were in green needle grass. Seven clutches were of four eggs and three of three eggs each. One recently hatched nest was found on May 29 although hatching dates were spread evenly to July 2. All nests found were successful.

Mourning Dove—Three nests, all built on the ground in very scant grass or weed cover, were found. Each nest had two eggs. The fate of two nests, found on June 20, 1951 was not known, while one nest hatched within two weeks of its discovery on June 22, 1951.

Eastern Kingbird—A nest of this species, containing four eggs, was found in the willows at one pond on June 7, 1951.

Horned Lark—Five nests, containing three or four eggs each, were found between April 18 and May 7, 1951. Three were located in western wheat grass and two in green needle grass.

Crow—One nest containing three eggs was found in a willow tree 12 feet above the ground on April 18, 1951. This pair made up the resident population of crows on the area in that season.

Western Meadowlark — Thirteen nests were found in the two years. Of four nests, found between May 19 and June 17, 1950, three had five eggs and one six eggs. One of the former hatched before July 8. Each of six nests that were found between May 11 and June 16, 1951 had three or four eggs. One nest, found on May 24, had three young and one egg; and of two found on May 28, one contained five young and one four young and one egg. All of these nests were placed on the ground in western wheat grass.

Red-wing—Nests of this bird were most commonly found. In 1950, ten nests containing 3-4 eggs each were found between June 5 and June 27. Two nests with three young were found on June 16 and June 27 while two nests and two young each were found on July 1 and July 26 of that year.

In 1951, 78 nests were found. Of these, 17 found between June 4 and July 2 were empty; two, found on June 18 and June 20 contained one egg; five, found between June 6 and July 2 had two eggs; 23, found between May 24 and July 2, had three eggs; and 25, found between May 29 and June 22 had four eggs. Of six nests with young that were found between June 5 and July 7, two contained three nestlings and four contained

four nestlings.

The cover relationships of these nests were of particular interest. Thirty-eight were in western wheat grass, of which 21 were over dry ground and the others in recently flooded areas of shallow water. Fourteen nests were built in cattail over water, 13 were in dock. Of these 3 were built about a foot above dry ground and the remainder were over shallow water. Five nests, in willow bushes, were at heights of 3 to 4 feet over water. Two nests were similarily located in cottonwood saplings growing in water. Two were in clumps of green needle grass (one dry, one flooded), while one each was found in water plaintain (over water) and over dry ground in gumweed and ragweed.

Thus, while 51 nests were located in cover above open water, over half as many (27) were found on dry land situations. Most of these were in low growths of western wheat grass—a plant form very different from the heavy growths of emergent vegetation chosen in most regions. Although the nests were often on the ground, the shape and construction were very similar to those built in cattail or other emergent vegetation. They were open above rather than partially under cover as with ground-nesting birds such as the meadowlark.

Bronzed Grackle—On May 29, 1951 a nest of this species was found on the rafters in an abandoned farm shed on the area. The nest contained four eggs.

Lark Bunting—On June 19, 1950, a nest with four eggs was found and five days later three of the eggs had hatched. Five nests were found between May 26 and June 15, 1951. All were located in western wheat grass stands and contained three or four eggs.

Grasshopper Sparrow—Four nests, found between June 12 and June 26, 1951, contained four or five eggs each and were located in stands of western wheat grass.

Chestnut-collared Longspur—Two nests, containing three and four eggs each, were found in western wheat grass stands on June 4 and June 11, 1951.

It is interesting to note that 31 of the 90 migrants reported were probably attracted to the area by the newly-established stock ponds. These, of course, are the birds commonly associated with aquatic habitats such as the grebes, herons, rails, coot, and the many shore birds.

Of the nesting birds, the Pied-billed Grebe, Sora Rail, Killdeer, Wilson's Phalarope and Red-wing were undoubtedly in the area in response to the artificial ponds. In the case of the Sora and Red-wing sparse low cover and situations over dry ground, normally quite foreign to the bird's nesting requirements, were being used.

Another interesting facet of the data is the importance of western wheat grass as nesting cover. As discussed in relation to waterfowl use of the areas (Bue, Blankenship and Marshall, 1952), stands of this plant are dependent on proper grazing intensity. Without adequate range management, nesting might be reduced because of lack of this type of nesting cover.

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General Notes of Special Interest

BALD EAGLES WINTER AT LAKE ANDES—Several Bald Eagles normally spend the winter on the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge. This winter (1952-3) 18 of these grand birds have been observed regularly. The first, arriving on Nov. 28, were soon joined by the rest of the wintering flock. The eagles spend their time perched in tall cottonwood trees on the north shore of the south lake or fly out to the edge of the open water and stand on the ice.

Several thousand Mallard ducks, wintering here, keep a large body of water open. The eagles have discovered that the crippled and sick ducks among this wintering flock make easy prey, and they appear to subsist almost entirely on duck diet.

One of my most interesting observations of eagles making their kills was recorded this winter. Two ducks, apparently cripples, were feeding on aquatic vegetation at one end of the large waterhole on the south lake. Several eagles had been standing at the opposite end of the waterhole for at least 15 minutes, apparently without paying any attention to the great number of ducks swimming about or standing on the ice near them. Without any observed preliminaries, one eagle flew directly toward the two crippled ducks, at least two hundred yards away, and struck one as it flew sluggishly away from the edge of the ice. The eagle carried this duck back to the place where the eagle had been standing and began to feed on it. The other crippled duck circled back to its former position near the edge of the waterhole.

Almost as soon as the first eagle returned with the duck a second eagle flew directly to the remaining duck and struck it in the air as it tried to evade the attack. This eagle dropped down to the ice near the water. Then a third eagle arrived and began to struggle with the second eagle for possession of the Mallard (which was still alive). In the midst of the scuffle the duck escaped to the water, only to be re-captured by one of the eagles. This happened several times until one of the eagles, evidently tiring of the argument (or sport), killed the duck. I could not tell whether the eagle that actully fed on the duck was the one that originally caught it. The loser in the argument stood on the ice nearby and made no further effort to molest the eagle which was feeding.

In all my observations of kills by eagles, the prey appeared to be chosen because it was weakened in some way and could not evade the attack. This predatory action no doubt serves to keep the bulk of the mallard population free of disease that might otherwise spread from the weakened ducks.—**Charles A. Hughlett, Refuge Manager, Lake Andes, S. D.**

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HARRIS'S SPARROWS IN SPINK COUNTY—I was especially interested in the article on Harris's Sparrow in South Dakota, by W. B. Mallory in the March, 1952, issue, and in his short item on them in the December, 1952, issue, giving Dec. 4 as his "latest date seen." Peterson, in his **Field Guide to the Birds,** states these sparrows winter from S. Nebr. well into Texas, and Pough, in his **Audubon Bird Guide,** says they winter from S. Nebr. to S. Texas. We still have Harris's Sparrows with us here on Feb. 12, 1953, four miles northeast of Redfield in a bend of the Jim River.

Late last November, in addition to suet on trees in front of the window

and a chunk in the window box, we scattered some weed seeds—screenings from grain—for the seed-eating birds on a small patch of bare ground. Within a day or two we had Harris's Sparrows, Tree Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos feeding and they have been back every day since, feeding less than eight feet away, under our window. It is difficult to say how many Harris's Sparrows are here. Some are feeding throughout the day and I have counted 18 feeding at one time. Counted over 40 Tree Sparrows feeding at one time, and 16 Juncos.

In the morning birds come to feed before it is light enough for them to see the seeds, and for ten minutes or so they just sort of sit around waiting for the light to get better. In the evening they usually leave while the light is still good, although occasionally a few remain until almost dark.

Twice the feed was covered by about an inch of snow in the morning, but it did not take them long to scratch down to the feed they knew lay beneath the snow. All three species are expert scratchers. We keep snow cleared off a spot about 10 feet in diameter so the birds have bare ground to feed on. The Harris's Sparrow seems to prefer weed seeds to oats. Seldom does it pick up a kernel of oats, and when it does, like an English Sparrow, it hulls it and eats only the inside berry.

Last year we did not put out screenings, but about the middle of February one Harris's Sparrow appeared and fed on suet and from then until the snow went in the early April was a daily visitor at the suet. At first this bird was a shaggy, ruffled-up individual, needing food, but as time went on its feathers smoothened and it livened up. I saw a Harris's in the yard on May 4. Whether it was our winter bird still hanging around, I do not know, but I am inclined to think it was.—**H. V. Padrnos, Redfield, S. D.**

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PINE GROSBEAK—This last Fall both male and female Pine Grosbeaks were in Huron. As late as December 30, 1952, we were visited by a female which had the dull yellow crown and rump rather than the rosy color of the male. These birds are quite unusual here and so naturally we were elated at seeing them.—**Mary Aberdeen Ketelle, Huron, S. D.**

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GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET IN BLACK HILLS—In the March, 1952, issue of **Bird Notes** I reported a Golden-crowned Kinglet on Victoria Creek, Nov. 1951. Cecil Haight of Spearfish says he has never seen this Kinglet in the Hills, but F. L. Bennett, also of Spearfish, reported seeing several at Iron Creek Lake, 4 miles southwest of Spearfish in August, 1947. Dr. O. S. Pettingill, Jr., has seen Kinglets in the Hills in the late spring and summer, and has reason to believe they nest in the spruce area of the Hills, which is their natural habitat. So far as I have learned, it has not been determined whether the Kinglets found in the Hills are of the eastern or the western subspecies. I find no record of them in the Henry Behrens and Fred Dille lists. S. S. Visher in his **Birds of Sanborn County**, 1913, says this species is a tolerably common migrant. Atherton mentions them in his **Dakota Birds**, but says nothing of range or nesting records.—**Harry C. Behrens, Rapid City, S. D.**

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REDPOLLS IN UNION COUNTY—Bob Nicholson and I yesterday found 45 common Redpolls in a flock, which makes a good record, indeed, for this corner of the state. We had a time figuring out what they were as they flew away from and back to a small weed patch. This has created some

excitement among the watchers down here.—**Wm. R. Felton, Jr., Jefferson, S. D. Nov. 2-53.**

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HARRIS'S SPARROWS AT MADISON—Mrs. D. S. Baughman, Madison, had immature Harris's Sparrows at her station occasionally during the past winter, along with Redpolls, Golden-crowned Kinglets and the regular boarders.

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OSPREYS AT WALL LAKE, MINNEHAHA COUNTY, S. D.—On Sept. 7, 1952, we observed two Ospreys perched in the tops of dead trees in the marshy area adjacent to the outlet of Wall Lake, 11 miles west and one mile south of Sioux Falls. A strong wind was blowing from the south and both birds did a good bit of moving about, apparently to maintain their balance. Maybe the wind was the reason for the birds stopping there, although the lake would afford a food supply. A Red-tailed Hawk occupied another tree-top near by. In **Birds of South Dakota** the Osprey is classified as "rather rare in South Dakota."—**Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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Eastern Meadowlark

(Continued from Page 7)

served **S. magna** as a common spring and summer resident at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent valley meadows in the narrow strip of sandhills included within the southern boundary of this state in Bennett County. The distinctive calls of this species have been heard on both sides of the state line in this area, but the center of abundance appears to be at the Wildlife Refuge where the lowland meadows about the impoundments appear to have attracted a sizeable nesting population. Although there has not as yet been opportunity to explore all of the remote valley meadows in the adjacent sandhills along the state boundary, scattered birds may eventually be found along the entire southern boundary of Bennett County, which extends some 45 miles along the state line, roughly between the 101st and 102nd medidians. The South Dakota range of **S. magna** appears to be confined to the sandhills-border strip adjacent to the state line, as **S. neglecta** appears to dominate the more arid range extending northward from the abrupt northern margin of the sand dunes. The call of the eastern bird has not been heard by this writer north of the sandhills-rim, although it is conceivable that irrigation and other development of the semi-arid region to the north may eventually extend the range.

The bird has been reliably reported in the extreme southeastern part of South Dakota. Carols closely resembling its distinctive calls have also been reported in the Black Hills. However, there has not been opportunity to confer on these reported occurrences. It is the intent of this paper simply to confirm the presence of **magna** in the sandhills of the southwest-central border region of South Dakota.

Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge, Martin, South Dakota

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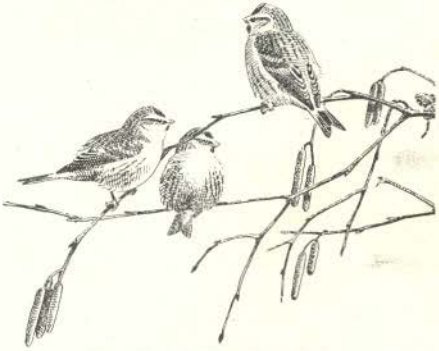
Redpolls



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