

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Official Publication  
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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION  
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Whole No. 31

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"Year Round suet"

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Volume VIII, No. 4

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## President's Page



**R**ECENTLY we have re-read Bird Notes, from volume 1, number 1, on. This re-perusal of the magazine enthused us and we urge all our members to pick up their old Bird Notes and to go through them again. It is not

only interesting, but also very profitable. It brought us some very definite ideas.

1. We were amazed at how cursory our original reading had been,—at how much we had missed entirely or had failed to remember. This time the reading was more thorough, and we hope it fixed bird facts permanently in mind.

2. This re-study also fed us a little humble pie. Anyone who may feel that he is one of a very few bird-watchers in South Dakota will be awakened to the realization that there are many in the state who feed birds, or watch birds, or study birds.

(This prompts us to urge that each person who has had an interesting bird experience or valuable observation, help our editor by reporting it to him for publication in Bird Notes.)

3. We are convinced there are many

bird watchers in South Dakota who are not, but should be, members of our group. (Let us each work at the membership problem 12 months a year without let-up.)

4. We believe SDOU has come to the end of an epoch. The organization work has been done. We late-comers owe much gratitude to those who founded SDOU and made it a going organization. During those formative years some of our members worked prodigiously at various phases of bird study. We have some experts at bird identification, some who are skilled with the camera, several who are bird banders, others who are keen observers of bird behavior.

We believe that SDOU and Bird Notes have served as inspirations to lift a coterie of our members from the status of simple amateur to the rank of semi-professional,—yes, of expert ornithologist. We are ready for other or bigger things. Perhaps the first should be the new annotated check-list of South Dakota birds. SDOU has reached the end of an epoch; bigger accomplishments are on the way.

5. This is to remind generous spirited people of the new class of membership, Sustaining Member. The fee is \$5.00. If you have already sent in \$3.00 you may still get a Sustaining Members card by sending \$2.00 more to Treasurer Moriarty.

—Charles P. Crutchett

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Plan To Attend The Annual Meeting At  
LaCreek Refuge, Martin, S. Dak., May 18-19, 1957

# To Observe Gray-Crowned Rosy Finches

Whitney and Karen Eastman

**A**LTHOUGH WE had been in the territory of the Gray-crowned Rosy Finch several times in both summer and winter, the species had always evaded us. So in June, 1956, we decided to pay them a visit on their nesting grounds in Florence Pass in the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming.

Dr. Oliver K. Scott and John C. Workley, Casper, Wyoming, told us how to plan our trip, and we arrived at the Lodge on Meadowlark Lake on U. S. highway 16, 40 miles west of Buffalo, Wyoming, on June 26.

The lodge is at 8,500 feet elevation and our guides advised us to adjust ourselves to the altitude before climbing up to the Pass. So they took us on a jeep and horseback ride the next day to about 10,500 feet, and then we rested the next day.

Our guides recommended making the round trip in one day, and so we left our sleeping bags behind, got up at 3:30 A. M. on the 29th with the temperature close to freezing and started out in a truck. One guide had started a day ahead and about 5:30 we met him with four horses near West TenSleep Lake. There we began a 20-mile round trip horseback ride following a beautiful chain of lakes into Florence Pass.

At and above timber line (about 10,000 feet) we observed many horned larks, American Pipits, Mountain Bluebirds, White-crowned Sparrows, and a sprinkling of Robins, Pine Grosbeaks, Canyon Wrens, Rock Wrens, Clark's Nutcrackers, and 2 Golden Eagles.

We began to see the Rosy Finches at about 10,500 feet. From there to Florence Pass (elevation 11,000 feet) there was a great deal of snow with some drifts 25 feet deep, but the temperature was below freezing and

we could ride our horses across the snow. Between 10,500 feet and 11,900 feet we found about 600 Rosy Finches, mostly in flocks of 25 or 30. They seemed to be moving up the mountain following the receding snow.

They were feeding on succulent seeds at the very edge of the snow. It appeared that these summer wind-borne seeds provide food for the finches until a crop is produced at high elevations or more seed is blown to the mountain top from the valleys below. We did not see any mated birds until we reached Florence Lake at about 11,900 feet. There we found them feeding in pairs. They appeared to be too busy to notice us and so we could get very close to them. There were also numerous American Pipits singing their nuptial song suspended high in the air.

We were the first group to enter Florence Pass this season. The lake was about one-third frozen over. The snow starts to melt about mid-day which would make it impossible to ride our horses over it and so we had to leave the pass about 11:00 A. M.

This trip was an experience long to be remembered, a little rugged, but we recommend it as the thrill of a lifetime.

—Minneapolis, Minn.

\* \* \*

## THE COVER . . .

This picture of a Mourning Dove nest was taken by W. A. Rose, Clear Lake, South Dakota. It is typical with the two eggs, but its location might be thought unusual until one remembers that these birds nest on the ground or in trees, build their own flimsy nests or use old nests of other birds.

# About That Warmer Weather

William Youngworth

**D**URING RECENT years considerable publicity has been given a statement that our weather has been warming. It seems to be based on the records jotted down during the few score years that records have been kept. Nothing has been said of the possibility that the weather had been colder than the "normal" in the period between the time John Alden shot his first Heath Hen near Plymouth village and the start of weather record keeping.

This has been all to the good for investors in the North, although they probably overlook that the rise since weather records have been kept has been only three degrees. But it seems that ornithologists are getting interested and are saying that since the weather is getting so much warmer in the United States the birds are moving north of their normal ranges. However, I doubt whether there is much factual evidence to indicate that these species are moving north because of a three degree rise in the mean temperature over a period of seventy-five years. Probably it is based on mere statements of observers, located here and there, that the birds are moving north. Yet I doubt whether many of these observers have been in their areas for say 50 years and have kept records that long and can honestly say that certain species have moved into the area, not for any reason of food, shelter, or what have you, but because the weather has warmed up three degrees.

I have gone back into the published reports of the upper Missouri River valley to learn who reported what about some of the species thought to have come recently. I came up with some surprises for anyone who has not been very familiar with the literature.

Another fact that is easily overlooked by the younger bird watchers is that the area east of Sioux City formerly was a vast long grass prairie and that west of Sioux City was an immense short grass buffalo pasture which must have seemed to early settlers to stretch to infinity.

Cardinals, titmice, and whip-poor-wills were found here in the Sioux City area when Lewis and Clark stopped to bury Sergeant Floyd in the yellow loess soil of the bluffs. (In later years that prince of American ornithologists, Elliott Coues, dedicated the fine Floyd Monument in splendid manner.)

The homesteading settlers proved up on their tree claims, and those trees provided food and shelter for the widely scattered native birds. Such birds as the cardinal and the orioles must certainly have increased in numbers at first. The next generation of settlers bolstered the shade tree plantings with fruit trees,—more bird shelter and food. Later came the drouth of the 1930's and many of the trees died. Bird life must have died a bit, too.

The shelter belts came next when millions of fine hardy trees and shrubs were planted on prairie farms and ranches, and many survived to give shelter to animals and birds. There must have been an up-surge in numbers of brush and tree loving birds, but whether these rather unnatural increases in bird life are permanent is a moot question.

Recently Dr. Francis W. Reichelderfer, Chief of the U. S. Weather Bureau, said, "Our mean year-round temperature is 1½ degrees warmer than it was 50 years ago." But there might be a cooling trend in the next 50 years, and that, according to the

(Continued on page 62)

# Shore Birds In Review

Alfred Peterson

"Shore Birds in '53" and "Shore Birds in '54," published in Bird Notes December, 1953 and March, 1954, respectively, may stand as record of observations in the Lake Region up on the high land of eastern South Dakota. These articles show in considerable detail manner of occurrence of the various species as related to dates, numbers, locations, etc. Repitition of all this is not required in summing up the recordings of 1955 and 1956, these two years being the second half of a four-year course, and not varying greatly from the first half. Hence the brevity of the comments which follow.

**PIPING PLOVER.** A rare summer resident. 1955: Aug. 7, 10, 15, one parent with 4 young at Bitter Lake. 1956: None seen.

**SEMPALMATED PLOVER.** 1955: Spring, more than usual. Fall, scarce. 1956: Spring, few seen. Fall, none.

**KILLDEER.** Widespread and abundant, spring, summer and fall.

**GOLDEN PLOVER.** 1955: Spring, somewhat scarce, and did not loiter. Fall, none. 1956: Spring, reduced in number. Fall, a flock of 20 and a single.

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER.** 1955: Spring, up to 4 or 5 several times. Fall, 1 and 1. 1956: Spring, only 2 seen. Fall, several records, the best 5 at Fox Lake.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE.** 1955: Spring, several times, the best 60 at Dry Lake beside Lake Poinsett, and 42 at Rush Lake. Fall, 2 only. 1956: Spring, few scattered, then on May 27, in Waubay region, 60 and 20. Fall, none.

**WOODCOCK.** One has been reported at Bird Haven farm, Milbank.

**COMMON SNIPE.** 1955: Spring, none seen. Fall, 1 and 1. 1956:

Spring, none. Fall, a number of times, from 1 up to 7. Good enough.

**UPLAND PLOVER.** A fairly common summer resident, especially northward.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER.** Always at hand during the nesting season.

**SOLITARY SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, scarce in migration. Fall, few seen. 1956: Spring, singles only. Fall, 8 records, all singles.

**WILLET.** 1955: Summer resident and plentiful at nesting grounds in Waubay region. 1956: Often seen.

**GREATER YELLOW-LEGS.** 1955: Spring, seen frequently but were not numerous; the largest number, 16. Fall, few, generally 1 or 2. 1956: Spring, scarce. Fall, no improvement, the best a flock of 10.

**LESSER YELLOW-LEGS.** 1955: Spring, abundant, without reservation. Fall, likewise. 1956: Spring and fall, always common.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, very many. This and the preceding are our most abundant birds of this group. Fall, as usual. 1956: Normal.

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, plentiful. Fall, none checked out. 1956: Spring, common. Fall, scarce.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER.** 1955: three records, 10 the most. Fall, few. 1956: Spring, few. Fall, 1 only.

**LEAST SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, seen many times but far from being plentiful. Fall, never more than 10 seen. 1956: Spring, as in 1955. Fall, several times, once 11 together late in season.

**RED-BACKED SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, a better showing than in other years; rather common. Fall, none checked. 1956: Spring, dozens and 1 at Salt Lake. Fall, none.

**DOWITCHER.** 1955: Spring, many

good records. Fall, again in goodly numbers, 100 the best lot. 1956: Spring, not quite so many. Fall, fine movement. 105 at Fox Lake, and some of these stayed eleven days.

**STILT SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, frequent sight. Fall, seen at many places. 1956: Spring, again plentiful. Fall, often seen.

**SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER.** 1955: Spring, abundant. Fall, likewise. 1956: Spring many on their way north. Fall, 200 plus at Bitter Lake Aug. 5, elsewhere not particularly noticeable.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER.** Hardly to be questioned as present in migration, with Semipalmated Sandpipers perhaps, for after all it is "semipalmated." But proof of this would be difficult and open to doubt without a permit to collect specimens.

**BUFF-BREADED SANDPIPER.** 1955: May 16, 1 with 16 Golden Plover. 1956: None seen.

**MARbled GODWIT.** 1955: Nests from Bitter Lake, north and west. Also occasionally in Deuel county. Common and approachable to a great degree. Gathers into large groups as the young near maturity.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT.** 1955: Spring, has been rated as rare, but is almost common in spring. I do not seem to have seen it on any fall dates. 1956: Spring, 30 at Hayti April 19. Found at several locations later, the last date May 29, 4 at Salt Lake.

**SANDERLING.** 1955: Spring, found at Salt Lake, Sutton's lake and Dry Lake at Lake Poinsett, once 8 together. Fall, none. 1956: Not seen.

**AVOCET.** 1955: Another beautiful summer resident, more attached to water than the Marbled Godwit. Not scarce. Social with its own kind. 1956: Numerous records, the last Sept. 23, 3 near Lake Poinsett.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE.** 1955: Spring, common, but I believe that all but a few of them are transient. Fall,

could not find them at this season. 1956: Spring, very many more than usual. Fall, continue to be plentiful after the middle of July until Aug. 20.

**NORTHERN PHALAROPE.** 1955: Spring, scarce, 10 the most seen at any time. Fall, none. 1956: Spring, May 14 about 200 at Salt Lake, otherwise scarce. Fall, Aug. 31, upward of 20 at Bitter Lake.

June 3, 1949. A shelving sand beach on Enemy Swim lake, pounded by the waves coming directly down the lake attracted some 300 Ruddy Turnstones. There was no turning of stones. Something floated in by the waves was picked by the birds in close rank, ranged along the water's edge a distance of nearly 100 yards. Truly astonishing.

May 23, 1953. A thousand Northern Phalaropes seen this day at Bitter Lake must rate special mention. This Phalarope is not uncommon in its migrations over the Lake Region, but to find 1000 riding the waves is an event of more than ordinary interest.

May 18, 1954. A flock of 150 to 200 Golden Plover made a pass or two over a closely-cropped pasture, then rushed on. A beautiful performance, and a fine lot of Golden Plover.

Aug. 15, 1955. 75 Marbled Godwit is not a high record. Nevertheless, one cannot help being thrilled by such a sight.

Aug. 5, 1956. That southwest tip of Bitter Lake cut off from the main lake by Highway 22, and which during the three years previous to 1956 provided so many good Shore Bird records, has this year been dry. Water from recent rains was flowing in a stream several yards wide, but only one to two inches deep. 200 and more Semipalmated Sandpipers crowded in for position in this running water. They found food especially good for little sandpipers, as I should judge from their vivacity.

—Brandt, South Dakota

## Christmas Bird Count 1956

x — Species Reported	Armour	Cantor	Huron	LaCreek	Milbank	Madison	Rapid City	Sioux Falls	Springfield	Vermillion	Wall Lake	Waubay	Webster	Winner	Yankton
Canada Goose	3000			106											
Mallard	3000			10122			815	2	11000		60	100			800
Gadwall							4								
Pintail										1					
Redhead							1								
American Golden-eye				17									1		
Sharp-shinned Hawk							1								
Red-tailed Hawk								1	12					1	1
American Rough-legged Hawk				11			1	3							
Golden Eagle				3			1		2						
Bald Eagle				1					x						
Marsh Hawk				2											
Duck Hawk						1									
Sparrow Hawk					1		1	1		1					x
Sharp-tailed Grouse				1											
European Partridge							3								
Ring-necked Pheasant	14		6	208	53	382	7	111	2	20	9	x	x	x	23
Wilson's Snipe							1								
Mourning Dove	1	1				1		13	x	2					
Horned Owl	1			1	2	4	2	6							
Long-eared Owl			1					1							
Short-eared Owl			1							1					
Saw-whet Owl														1	
Kingfisher							2								
Flicker		1			1	6		13	6	2					
Red-shafted Flicker				3				2							
Red-bellied Woodpecker										1					2
Hairy Woodpecker		2	1		3	1	4	22	4				x	1	x





## Christmas Bird Count

**T**HE GENERAL complaint this year was of the few birds in spite of the warm weather that prevailed in most of the State until after the count period. The tabulation shows 65 species, 3 less than last year and 13 less than in 1954. Somewhat remarkable are the species that were not found, although they usually are present: the only Robins were 3 at Madison and some seen at Springfield during the period but not on the day of the count, Redpolls scarce except at Waubay, the only Red-breasted Nuthatch at Huron, few "blackbirds", no Pine Siskins except at Rapid City, no Cross-bills.

However, there are several very unusual reports: the Canyon Wren at Rapid City reported by Mrs. Charlotte G. Snyder and watched for 5 minutes through binoculars at close range; the Brown Thrasher wintering at Sioux Falls and seen almost daily at Clifford Pay's feeding station; 2 Townsend's Solitaires wintering at Huron far east of their normal range (see J. W. Johnson's note on page 64); Saw-Whet Owl at Webster, the Duck Hawk seen at Madison by Miss Ruth Habeger.

M. E. Bungi and John Wiederholtz, Springfield, turned in a report that is particularly interesting because of the changes in habitats brought about by the Gavin's Point Dam.

Kenneth Krumm was by himself at LaCreek and was disappointed that for the first time he did not see a Prairie Falcon.

Perhaps the East-River bird watchers will be surprised at Rapid City's Dipper and 80 Pinyon Jays; but on the other hand the West-River people may wonder about the Harris's Sparrows that were in the eastern part of the State. It is this meeting of east and west that contributes so much to South Dakota's long bird list.

## Weather

(Continued from page 57)

reasoning of some of our ornithologists, would chase those come-lately birds to their more southern homes. Some observers think that cooling trend is on the way.

On December 28, 1954, A. E. Harrison, an engineer at the University of Washington, reported that the glaciers in the Cascade Mountains have become noticeably larger in recent years and there are signs of growth in other ice deposits in the mountains of Montana and Wyoming. This certainly might indicate a cooling trend. During the winter of 1955-56 in the upper Missouri valley temperatures have been low and the cold continued, with a result that the ice on the Missouri at Bismarck, North Dakota, was the thickest within human memory, 41 inches. In South Dakota the temperature dropped below zero on 40 nights, compared to 28 nights in an average winter. Perhaps that winter has set back the warming trend.

I do not believe that the Cardinal and Red-bellied Woodpecker are late arrivals that have come to this area with the warmer weather. Let's look at the records.

Cardinals were reported from Minneapolis in 1875, and there are Dr. Charles E. McChesney's several records from Fort Sisseton, South Dakota, in 1877. These were long before the warming trend in this area.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker has been advertised as a newcomer in the upper Missouri valley, but it seems to me the records were not searched. Back in 1884 W. W. Cooke reported that species in South Dakota. Alfred Eastgate collected it at Stump Lake, North Dakota, in 1897. Collector Henry V. Williams, Grafton, North Dakota, just short of the Canadian boundary, told me on June 1, 1934, that he had seen it in that area.

and had taken a specimen. As far back as 1873 it was collected in eastern Colorado and in Minnesota.

The Tufted Titmouse may today be a rarer bird along the upper Missouri than it was in the early days before the warming trend was supposed to push all those birds north. The first published Minnesota's reports were from Minneapolis in 1879, and as observers got sharper it soon was reported from most parts of the state, even in the northwest at Fosston, not far from Grand Forks, North Dakota. More than 45 years ago collector John T. Zimmer reported it at Neligh Antelope County, Nebraska.

The Whip-poor-will is another species which long has been a summer resident of the Missouri River Valley and on up into Canada where there are many records in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Coues found it common along the international border back in 1878, and many observers have found it since in North Dakota. In the Sioux City area it has become uncommon and seems to have deserted all but the most favorable timbered areas. Such an area is Ponca State Park, Nebraska, where William F. Rapp, Jr. tells of hearing numerous individuals calling during summer evenings.

The Turkey Vulture was a common summer bird in the southern prairie provinces of Canada, and in Montana and the Dakotas in the days of Lewis and Clark. Early observers stressed that as the buffalo began to fade so did the vultures. Today in the warming trend conversations, this species is mentioned as one moving northward. The reverse is true here on the great plains. Aretas A. Saunders considers it rare today in Montana.

Perhaps the warming trend is more noticeable in the weather of some other parts of the country than it is out here, but I think it is a fact

there are many more observers than there were 50 years ago and that more reports are made of birds that have been here all the time. Out in this western area the records do not support a belief that the species mentioned above are recent additions to our faunal lists. I think many people will agree with me that there are a lot of fine folk on these northern plains who are interested and are doing things to encourage birds to come to their homes. I would cite Mr. Lowry Elliott, Milbank, South Dakota, who, in the last 10 years, has planted more than 10,000 trees and shrubs of many dozens of varieties, just for the birds. His reward has been the response of the birds. His migration bird lists are something to be envied!

—Sioux City, Iowa

\* \* \*

Miss Ruth Habeger, Madison, is taking a bird guide on her trip to Europe this Spring and expects to add a lot of birds to her life list.

\* \* \*

Recently an Associated Press dispatch from Gettysburg, S. D. told of many sparrows being found with smashed heads. The theory was that a freezing mist had frozen the birds' eyes shut and they were the victims of blind flying.

\* \* \*

J. P. Barrett, Ponca City, Oklahoma, renewed his membership in SDOU and wrote of wanting to take color pictures of the Burrowing Owl found east of Redfield, S. D., by Whitney and Karen Eastman. (See Sept. 1956, Bird Notes.)

\* \* \*

Charles A. Nash, Platte, S. D., says that his Flickers were not frustrated when the cold froze a layer of ice on the water in the bird bath. They promptly chiselled a hole through it and got their drinks.

## General Notes of Special Interest

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRES AT HURON**—Two Townsend's solitaires were found in the cemetery located at the south edge of Huron on December 1, 1956. Since neither Mrs. Johnson nor I had ever seen one of these birds or heard of their being in the vicinity, we were puzzled no little by them.

Only after checking the color index in "Birds of America" was our attention directed to the Townsend's solitaire. Then we identified it at once with the birds we had been seeing.

The birds were quite unafraid of us, allowing us to get near enough to see all details of color clearly. The song that had led us to them was repeated regularly for some time.

Dr. and Mrs. Kettle, Miss Kettle, and Mrs. H. M. Pierce have also seen both birds.

The many cedars well filled with berries give us hope they have found a suitable haven for the winter. We have checked as often as we could and saw them together on December 9. One or both were seen separately on other days, but not together, the latest being December 22.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron, S. D.**

(They were still there on January 16, 1947.—Ed.)

\* \* \*

**ROSY FINCHES IN BLACK HILLS**—During a bird-study trip to the central Black Hills on October 20, 1956, we found four Gray-crowned Rosy Finches (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*) feeding with a flock of Oregon and White-winged Juncos. The location was an open area at the fork of a gravel road, about four miles south of Gillette Prairie, between Hill City and Deerfield. The birds were all

studied at close range through a 20-power telescope. A recheck of the same area the next day failed to show the birds again.

Harry Behrens comments that he has seen this species on a few occasions, and that his grandfather, Henry Behrens, collected several specimens fifty years ago. Rosy Finches are probably regular in the Black Hills in winter, and should be watched for.—**N. R. Whitney, Jr., Rapid City, S. D.**

\* \* \*

**RAVEN IN EASTERN SO. DAK.**—

While going about my duties as state trapper-warden on October 10, 1956, I met up with a Raven at Flandreau, S. D. We were both heading westward along highway 34 toward highway 77 nine miles out. The Raven flew low and held close to the road most of the way, now and then swooping down into a farm yard, and banking to right or left like an eagle. It was evidently partial to the roadways as it no doubt had learned with the crows that many dead rabbits, food a-plenty for all of them, are laid out on such places. It did not shy away from cars on the highway as crows do.

At first sight I thought of this bird as a crow, and then noticed its greater size and the long rounded tail, sufficient to identify it as a Raven. Killing it for a specimen would not have been difficult, and I debated whether or not to use a gun; but it was not for me to take its life. We parted company when highway 77 was reached, the Raven continuing westward, perhaps to be shot by some duck hunter who would think he had shot the largest crow he ever saw.—**W. A. Rose, Clear Lake, S. D.**

**PHOEBE AT LACREEK**—The Eastern Phoebe, generally considered an uncommon straggler west of the hundredth meridian, was observed on several occasions during the late summer at LaCreek Refuge.

On August 25, 1956, the distinctive call of the species was heard at the refuge headquarters and the bird was located in a Chinese Elm tree on the lawn. On September 10th another specimen was observed in the same area. Calls were heard during the intervening period, indicating presence of one or more straggling individuals of the Eastern Phoebe in an area where we usually expect only the Say's Phoebe. Presumably these were early migrants along the extreme western border of their range.

—**Kenneth Krumm, LaCreek Refuge, S. D.**

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**YEAR-ROUND SUET**—Don't take the suet down in the Spring! Keep some handy for the birds all summer. Now at the end of July we have had the following visitors at our suet feeder since May 1: Brown Thrasher, Blue Jay, Orange-crowned Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Grackle, Chickadee, Flicker, Baltimore Oriole.

Each summer beginning July 12 we enjoy having the Downies bring their babies to the suet. The Blue Jays feed a lot of it to their young too. This goes on for over two weeks, and do we enjoy it!—**Herman Chilson, Webster, S. D.**

\* \* \*

**SCOPE ON GUNSTOCK FOR BIRDING**—Some of us who have used a telescope mounted on a gunstock for birding think that not enough of the bird watching fraternity know the advantages of the combination. We make no claim to originating the idea, but it is so practical that we

want others to know about it.

To make the combination is simple. Take any discarded gunstock, or buy a new one, perhaps from war surplus. Attach a sling or carrying strap, which will allow you to hold the scope almost tripod steady and also permits over-the-shoulder carrying while walking afield.

Next, place the scope in position on the stock making sure it is at the proper eye-level. The eye relief is correct when the stock is at sighting position on the shoulder. To get the eye level position it may be necessary to cut out a small section of the stock, or to glue a small piece of wood to the upper surface of the stock.

To fasten the scope to the stock suit your whim and pocketbook. Friction tape holds well and costs pennies. Rubber covered scope tripod rings are ideal and cost about two dollars.

To use the rig thrust your arm between the strap and the stock and spread your arm. You will be surprised at how steady you can hold the scope while standing, sitting or even lying prone. Perhaps a rifleman friend will help you to learn how to hold the rig. You can get added steadiness by resting the assembly against a tree, post, or automobile, but usually it is unnecessary. If you bird from a car, use the window glass as a rest, rolling it up or down for convenient height.

The combination can easily be mounted on a tripod if desired without disassembling it. You can't lose.

—**Wes Cook, Clayton, N. M.**

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**NOTES FROM HURLEY**—Last week (September 21) we were disappointed to find our favorite spot for watching rail, geese and ducks posted with Public-Shooting-Area signs, and so there will be no birding there during the waterfowl hunting season.

But we did have an unusual exper-

ience this time when we drove out over the one-track road through the area. On a nearby fence post was the largest hawk-like bird we ever saw. When it flew into a large cottonwood tree its wing spread surprised us. Of course this would be the time that we did not have our binoculars, but we think we saw a Golden Eagle or an immature Bald Eagle.

While we were at Lake Madison a farmer phoned to the newspaper that he had 8 Whooping Cranes. By the time we heard the news and got out to see them 6 hours later, we could find 4 American Egrets.

One morning we drove around Swan Lake and we saw 2 large white hawks that we identified as Ospreys.

We have always wanted to see Cowbirds on the backs of cattle but this simple sight had been denied to us until the other day when we saw 5 birds sitting or walking on the backs of cattle.—Mrs. E. C. Breen, Hurley, S. D.

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**THOUSANDS OF HORNED LARKS AT HURON**—A movement of horned larks in unusually large numbers was observed a mile southwest of the city limits of Huron on the afternoon of Oct. 28, 1956.

First report came from Miss Blanche Battin of a flock of unidentified small birds. She, Mrs. Johnson and I hurried to check.

Crossing a north and south road were flocks estimated at one to two hundred. They were doing some circling, landing in plowed ground some hundred yards away from the road, taking off again and circling. The flocks came from the west and left to the east.

Black tails, visible as they crossed the road, identified them as horned larks. Unusually nervous, they would take off as soon as the flock had assembled on the ground. About a

quarter of them were landing in a low area where small pools of water stood. These drank hurriedly and took off with the flock.

Watching for stragglers, I was able to see that both Northern and Prairie subspecies were present but got no idea of relative numbers. Five of the flocks had been observed going through the maneuver when we moved to the west side of the section (a mile west of the first point).

Along the south half of this section line road flocks were now coming over that numbered between one and two thousand individuals. In a plowed field starting about an eighth of a mile to the west of the road, small birds could be seen assembling in great numbers. They were made visible by the low sun shining through their wings as they landed and took off.

In the hour we were on this road five of the large flocks came over going from west to east. In between were smaller flocks of a few dozen to a few hundred.

They moved well separated in the air, averaging about 10 foot intervals horizontally and vertically, but continually changing relative positions. The large flocks thus occupied considerable volumes of space, crossing the road on a front of about a quarter of a mile with a depth of about half as much. The vertical dimension was generally between fifty and a hundred feet from the ground.

The only identifying marks noted were the black tails and the characteristic wing beat. These were noted only on an occasional individual, of course. It has been suggested that longspurs may have made up a part of the flocks. This may have been true but we identified none.

The numbers in the staging area to the west of the road were not sensibly reduced, so far as we could tell, in the hour. Thus it appears that oth-

ers were coming in as the flocks we saw were leaving.

The total numbers we saw could hardly have been less than ten thousand birds and may well have been twice that.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron, S. D.**

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**TENNESSEE WARBLER ON SCHEDULE**—On August 27, 1956, a Tennessee Warbler visited us and we were reminded of a previous visit. We looked up our record and found that it had been on August 26, 1954. (Bird Notes VI:65). We marvel, and mark our calendar to remind us to watch next August.—**Mrs. Melvin Wheeler, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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**MOURNING DOVES IN CANTON**—On the morning of December 13, 1956, after a cold night, a Mourning Dove came to sit somewhat sheltered from the wind on the front porch of my house where the sun would fall on it. It stayed for about two hours, probably until it was warmed up. Then it left.

I did not see any more Mourning Doves until January 11, 1957, when 18 came to the driveway near the house and settled on the ground to eat gravel. They left in a short time, but they, or another group, returned for more gravel on January 21.—**W. B. Mallory, Canton, S. D.**

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**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE AT HURON**—A strange bird that has been feeding at the bird tray of Mrs. J. L. Febuary has been identified as a Green-tailed Towhee. It was first noticed early in January, perhaps as late as the 5th, and was still there on the 26th.

Mrs. Febuary told various people about the bird but its habit of feeding at irregular intervals made it difficult for others to see it. At last, on a mild day, January 18, birds were

feeding often and Mrs. Johnson and I were able to see it several times at a distance of about six feet,—closer than our binoculars would focus.

Miss Mary Aberdeen Kettle was called and at once identified it as a Green-tailed Towhee, having seen them in Colorado. The description and picture in the Audubon Bird Guide was compared, point by point, and there can be no doubt of the identification. The greenish-yellow tail, sides, rusty cap, light throat, beak shape, behavior, and size were clear and certain, although the picture was considerably lighter throughout than the bird before us. All four of us agreed there was no mistake.

There are two points of particular interest: while the bird made no visible sign of hostility, the House Sparrows and Starlings moved away instantly from whatever feeder the stranger approached; and yellow cornbread was the feed the bird ate in quantity in preference to bird seeds.

I can find no mention of this bird being sighted in the State and wonder whether it has been recorded before in South Dakota.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron, S. D.**

(The Green-tailed Towhee is listed among the Birds of the Waubay Wildlife Refuge as an "accidental visitor, rare", but we have been unable to get any specific information about the observation. Ed.)

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**MORE MOCKINGBIRDS IN PLATTE**—A keen disappointment was the failure of the Mockingbirds to frequent our orchard in 1956 as they did in 1955. I saw only one mocker there, and him only once. The next morning I discovered his feathers in our backyard. Doubtless he was the victim of a cat, and I suspect that cats are responsible for the mockingbirds absence this year.

I was talking to another man who

keeps a bird bath and he told me he had entertained Mockingbirds at his farm, less than a mile from our orchard, in the early Twenties. He had formerly lived in Kansas where Mockingbirds are common. He saw them each season while he was on that farm. He sees them often in town of late. They made their headquarters about 6 blocks east of us this season. I saw them there and another birdwatcher saw them frequently and heard them sing at night.—Chas. A. Nash, Platte, S. D.

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**BIRD COUNT AT WILMOT**—(A good report of a Christmas Bird Count was received from SDOU-member Bruce K. Harris after the tabulation of other South Dakota counts was set up in type, but we are glad there is space to print it here. Editor.)

Began at Sodak Park and drove 14 miles west, then 2 miles south and 14 miles east to Hartford Beach, all on gravel roads. Marshland, 3%, creek bottom 3%, woodland, 5%, prairie, 89%, December 27, 1956, 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. Partly cloudy to overcast; temperature 32 to 40 degrees; wind 5 mph, south; ground with scattered snow only, mostly bare. 2 observers in one party. Total party hours, 8 (3 afoot, 5 by car); total party miles,

51 (5 afoot, 46 by car).

Ring-necked Pheasant, 10; Horned Owl, 4; Flicker, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 7; Downy Woodpecker, 14; Horned Lark, 55; Blue Jay, 1; Crow, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 30; White-breasted Nuthatch, 6; Brown Creeper, 3; Starling, 8; House Sparrow, 85; Red-winged Blackbird, 1; Goldfinch, 1; Slate-colored Junco, 1; Tree Sparrow, 12; Lapland Longspur, 39; Total species, 18; total individuals, 228. (Seen on the 24th at Hartford Beach State Park, a pair of Cardinals.)—Mr. and Mrs. Bruce K. Harris.

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The University of Michigan Biological Station will conduct two courses and a research program in ornithology this summer at its permanent camp on Douglas Lake in northern Michigan, under the leadership of Dr. O. S. Pettingill, Jr. who is so well known to many of us.

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There will be 15 other courses and research under the guidance of a faculty of 16 other prominent biologists. There will be about 30 grants-in-aid, and also about 25 self-help jobs available.

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Have you noticed Starlings resting on the tops of chimneys? Are they just keeping warm?