# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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Page 41
Bitter Lake

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## *In This Number . . .*



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# President's Page

DISCUSSIONS at the annual convention of SDOU last spring underscored clearly the imperative need for an annotated check-list of South Dakota birds. Excellent as the present list (BIRD NOTES, 1956:13-19) is it does not include migration dates or relative abundance. However, the task of gathering information for a check-list and assembling it is tremendous. It will require the cooperation not only of every member of SDOU but of everyone interested in the bird life of the state. And it will take time.

Specifically, it means the assembling of items in important published historical reports, such as Baird's; published state and county lists, such as Visher's; literature in ornithological and other periodicals; unpublished state lists and private records as yet inaccessible to workers. Information is needed about all collections of specimens within the state and the records of all collections or individual items outside the state, such as specimens in the National Museum. Data on waterfowl and upland game birds, efficiently kept by state and federal wildlife managers, by Department of Fish, Game and Parks and by personnel of the Pittman-Robinson office should be a part of the material. Bird banding records, too, must be included.

This mass of material must be recorded on file cards or in some organized fashion so all reported information about a given species is readily available. It must be maintained somewhere and kept up to date. Such a species file system has be initiated this year in Department of Biology, Augustana College, Sioux Falls. Intended primarily for departmental use, it naturally has much wider implications.

Once completed, this file should throw much new light on such problems as range, relative abundance, nesting, and dates of arrival and departure of all resident species. It should suggest answers to questions about migratory species, especially their ranges, about which too little is known. For instance, how far westward in South Dakota does the flyway of eastern wood warblers extend? How often do Cinnamon Teal and Black Duck occur? Do sparrows of the Genus **Zonotrichia** (Harris', White-crowned and White-throated) migrate in broad or narrow lanes across the state? What are the arrival and departure dates in spring and fall of non-resident birds?

Right now, please jot down the arrival of fall birds and their departure with resident birds. Next spring, note the first appearance of all species and the last sight of non-residents. During the winter, list any northern species. By sending these reports to SDOU, you will be contributing immeasurably to the forthcoming annotated check-list.

—Herbert Krause

# Biological Features Of Cascade Valley And Vicinity

By Arthur C. McIntosh

Dr. McIntosh's complete article was published in The Black Hills Engineer, 1928, pages 68-83, and included discussions of the flora, reptiles, insects of the Cascade Valley as well as the avefauna. South Dakota Bird Notes is now glad for the opportunity to print the introductory paragraphs, one on the mammals, and the section on birds.

ON THE southern edge of the Black Hills nine miles southwest of Hot Springs, South Dakota lies a small secluded valley. Cascade Creek, which has formed this valley, originates in a few large, bubbling springs of sparkling, warm water and flows rapidly down a narrow gorge towards the west, past Cascade village, once the rival of Hot Springs, and then turns southward through a more open valley until it mingles its clear waters with the yellowish flood of the Cheyenne River. The creek is three miles long and averages ten feet in width and three feet in depth. A mile north of the Cheyenne it tumbles over a limestone cliff forming a beautiful cascade fifteen feet high. The main, north-south valley of Cascade Creek is bounded on the east by a rocky, pine-clad ridge towering six hundred feet above the stream, while toward the west the country rises gradually to an upland underlain by sandstone, covered by the buffalo grass association and dissected by a labryinth of steep-sided ravines.

A series of uplifts in past geological ages has increased the speed of Cascade Creek to such an extent that the stream has cut down through a light yellow clay or loess-like deposit on the old valley floor to form a trench-like valley within a valley. The main valley is more than a mile wide, the smaller averages perhaps two hundred yards in width and lies from twenty to fifty feet below the main valley. In passing along the road near the rim one would hardly suspect the presence of this narrow inner valley were it not for the sound of the rushing stream or the crowns of elms and cottonwoods protruding conspicuously from below. At present the swift creek is cutting still another trench, already five feet deep, within the inner valley. A geologist could not wish for a better example of the process which he calls "rejuvenation."

During spring Cascade Valley and vicinity is an especially attractive region. In May the air is laden with the spicy fragrance of golden currants and the leafing trees are astir with birds. Coyotes are seen rarely. A few prairie-dog colonies survive on the valley terraces. Jackrabbits are common in the uplands and cottontails abound in the valley thickets. Muskrats frequent Cascade Creek, and one rainy afternoon we passed the time observing them gathering watercress and swim with it to their burrows.

In the springtime, however, birds are the most noticeable inhabitants of the Cascade Valley country. The clear air resounds with the loud ringing call of western meadowlarks. About May 15th the vanguard of kingbirds, Bullock orioles, cliff swallows, and western tanagers arrives from the South and during the next few weeks the countryside is literally

alive with birds. In point of number of individuals and species the avifauna of Cascade Valley and environs probably excels that of any other equal area within the Black Hills region.

Western great horned owls are the earliest nesters, and although the writer has not found them nesting in Cascade Valley the birds are present and doubtless do nest there. Twenty-five miles northeastward, on Lame Johnny Creek, near Buffalo Gap, full sets of eggs are laid by March 15th and the young are ready to leave the nests early in May.

Magpies are nesting by the middle of April, and their huge nests are conspicuous in Cascade Valley. Although the nests are found in cedars, pines and other trees, the birds seem to prefer the dense, thorny thickets of buffalo-berry or wild plum.

By the end of April English sparrows and bronzed grackles have taken possession of the available nesting sites under the bridge over the Cheyenne, though a few of the grackles select natural cavities in cottonwoods for their nests with four or five pale blue eggs scrawled with brown or black markings.

Sparrow hawks are very common. They begin nesting early in May in natural cavities or deserted woodpecker holes in cottonwoods and pines. These beautiful, little falcons are exceptionally quiet during the early part of their mating season, but later, when the young are learning to fly, they are equally as vociferous.

By the middle of May, the nesting activities of the following are in full swing: western mourning dove, red-shafted flicker, kingfisher, Say's phoebe, western meadowlark, red-winged blackbird, yellow warbler western chipping sparrow, lark sparrow, chickadee, western robin, bluebird. Robins and doves nest in trees, the former constructing a sturdy nest composed largely of mud and weed stems, the latter building a very shabby platform of twigs and rootlets. On the plains the dove frequently nests on the ground. Bluebirds occupy natural openings or deserted woodpecker holes in snags, and the flickers chisel their own nesting sites in telephone poles or dead trees. Red-winged black-birds lay their four or five eggs in a woven nest placed usually in shrubbery or cattails over or near water. The little chest-nut-crowned chipping sparrows favor the red cedar for their nests of plant stems and horsehair. Meadowlarks and lark sparrows conceal their nests in natural depressions on the ground. The kingfisher deposits its shining white eggs at the terminous of a three or four foot tunnel, which it excavates in some high bank along Cascade Creek or the Cheyenne. A deserted farmhouse in Cascade Valely invariably harbors a pair of nesting Say's phoebes. A pair of chickadees chose for a home a knothole in an elm.

By the first week in June the common kingbirds, Arkansas Kingbirds, long-tailed chats and arctic towhees are nesting. During the season of 1925 six or more pairs of kingbirds resided in Cascade Valley, preferring the box elder trees as nesting sites. No Arkansas kingbirds were found nesting in Cascade Valley, though they as well as the common kingbirds hested abundantly in cottonwoods along the Cheyenne River. Both of these birds show the typical flycatcher characteristics of restlessness and of habitual perching upon dead twigs, where they have an unobstructed view, in preference to leafy branches. The common kingbird has a weak but shrill note, while that of its relative is much different —a sort of clattering noise reminding one of the sound of rusty gate

hinges. The breast and underparts of the Arkansas kingbird are yellowish, those of the other, white. The towhees or chewinks, which apart from their more conspicuous black and white markings, resemble diminutive robins, are often seen on the ground scratching among dead leaves or flitting about in the underbrush. The chats, like their eastern cousin the yellow-breasted chat, are great mimics more often heard than seen.

Red-headed woodpeckers, black-billed cuckoos, Bullock orioles, western tanagers and lazuli buntings have full sets of eggs by June 15th. Red-headed woodpeckers nest in holes, which they dig in telephone poles or snags. Ornithologists have noted that "red-heads" are often killed by automobiles. Indeed, in touring the country east of the Rockies dead red-headed woodpeckers are invariably seen more frequently than other featured unfortunates. The birds are still common, however, and it is possible that the advantages of a more abundant food supply, along with an unlimited number of nesting sites afforded by telephone poles, more than balances the toll taken by the automobile. Black-billed cuckoos are more numerous in Cascade Valley than their stealthy behavior indicates. Their shabby nests with chalky blue-green eggs were found in wild plum trees. Although most nesting birds lay an egg every day or two until the full complement is laid, the cuckoo has the peculiar habit of allowing several days to intervene between deposition of eggs, with the result that a half-grown fledgling, a well-incubated egg, and a fresh egg may be found in a nest at the same time. One nest in Cascade Valley contained five eggs—one more than the maximum number for the species given by most bird manuals. One of these eggs was partly incubated, the others were fresh, perhaps unfertilized. Bullock orioles are very abundant along the Cheyenne River. It seems that almost every cottonwood has its nest, although these pendant pouch-like structures suspended from the tips of leafy branches are not as easily discovered as one might expect. The bird is our western counterpart of the well-known eastern Baltimore oriole. The males are conspicuously marked with orange and black, though the coloring of the females, as in most birds, is much more subdued. The lovely western tanager adds still another touch of tropic color to our summer landscape. In the male the head is bright orange, almost red, the wings and tail black, and the rest of the body is yellow. This songster nests in pines and elms in Cascade Valley and occurs also in the pine forests of the Black Hills. Three or four pale greenish blue eggs marked with brownish specks are laid in a frail nest of twigs and rootlets placed near the tip of a horizontal branch. Although of a retiring nature, the male lazuli buntings, with their vivid blue heads and throats, are among our handsomest summer residents. The females are much less brilliantly colored. The buntings build most frequently in wild rose bushes.

Before the last week in June arrives the cliff swallows and western wood pewees will be nesting, and by that time some of the earlier nesters, such as the mourning doves, bronzed grackles, chipping sparrows, and bluebirds, will have started a second brood. Great numbers of cliff swallows nest in the faces of the sandstone cliffs in the southern Black Hills. A cliff swallow colony occupies the concrete piers under the Cheyenne River bridge and a mile upstream beneath an over-hanging cliff is a colony of one hundred or

(Continued on page 44)

# A Day In Harding County

N. R. Whitney, Jr.

THE WHITNEYS spent the day of September 27, 1955, exploring Harding County, the northwest corner of South Dakota. The weather was clear and mild, although we had had rain the day before and a light snow a few days earlier.

At dawn, I drove a few miles north of Buffalo to observe the prairie birds. Horned Larks were the most numerous, being scattered over the prairie in groups of 2 to 15. I estimated their density at roughly 150 per square mile. The next most numerous species was the Western Meadowlark, of which I saw 15, or about 50 or 60 per square mile. Then half way up the banks of a 20-foot mud ravine in the prairie, I found a Robin, three Canyon Wrens, and an owl that I identified after several brief glimpses as a Barn Owl.

Later in the morning we drove north seventeen miles to the Cave Hills. We spent several hours at the Picnic Spring Campground, where an impressive natural feature is the presence of a dense growth of deciduous trees and brush around a spring in a forty-foot hollow. In this thicket were several warblers, most of them Audubon's in fall plumage. A few were MacGillivray's and at least one appeared to be Wilson's. Accompanying the warbler group were two Robins, one Catbird, two Chickadees, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and several White-crowned Sparrows. The open pine forest that covers the top of the Hills had few birds at this time of year, and the only ones we found were two Mourning Doves, one Red-breasted Nuthatch, and two Mountain Bluebirds.

We also looked especially for Sage Grouse, but succeeded only in finding a single dead individual on a county road west of the Cave Hills. East of the Slim Buttes, we found a group of five Sharp-tailed Grouse in sagebrush plains. We found no other grouse and no pheasants.

The most numerous prairie birds seen later in the day, after the Horned Larks, were Vesper Sparrows. They were widely distributed throughout the county. Magpies were also widespread, especially around the edges of the Cave Hills.

We visited the Slim Buttes briefly in the afternoon. We stayed, though, close to the road, and saw no birds in the Buttes. We did see several species in the prairies in the vicinity of the Buttes, and have mentioned most of them above.

In summary, the complete list of species seen in Harding County on September 27, 1955, was as follows: Red-tailed Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sage Grouse, Coot, Mourning Dove, Barn Owl, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Magpie, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Canyon Wren, Catbird, Robin, Mountain Bluebird, Audubon's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Vesper Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow.

* * *

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT . . ..**

The annual Christmas Bird Count conducted by the National Audubon Society will be held this year on a day between Saturday, December 21, 1957, and Wednesday, January 1, 1958, under the same rules as have applied heretofore. Many SDOU members cooperate in this activity and will also submit their counts to Bird Notes for a tabulation of South Dakota winter birds that can be compared with the tabulations for former years. We would like counts made in as many South Dakota localities as possible whether or not they are submitted to the National Audubon Society.

# Editorial Comment

**NEW AOU CHECKLIST . . .**

The American Ornithologists' Union has completed the revision of the Check-list of North American Birds and published the long-awaited volume earlier this year. It is the first revision of the list since 1931.

We find common names are given only to the species as a whole. The subspecies follow the species with the scientific name in slightly smaller type and the range described in detail.

A few of the changes are: the Redpoll becomes Common Redpoll to avoid confusion with Hoary Redpoll; the Crow becomes Common Crow in order to distinguish it from the Fish Crow where both are found; American Merganser becomes Common Merganser because the species ranges around the World in the Northern Hemisphere and is not strictly an American bird; likewise American Egret becomes Common Egret and Florida Gallinule, the Common Gallinule; Holboell's Grebe becomes Red-necked Grebe; the Duck Hawk is Peregrine Falcon, a world-wide term, and the Red-backed Sandpiper is the Dunlin.

Of particular interest to us is that the eastern and the western groups of towhees are now found to constitute one species to be known as the Rufous-sided Towhee. However, since our old Red-eyed Towhee and our Spotted, or Arctic, Towhee can be identified in the field many of us probably will continue to list both rather than two Rufous-sided Towhees.

The new check-list is a 691-page book that can be obtained for $8.00 sent to The Treasurer, American Ornithologists' Union, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

**NUTHATCH-CROSSBILL WINTER**

After an absence, or at least a scarcity, for several years Red-breasted Nuthatches seem to be with us in considerable numbers. This follows after a Fall when more people saw more Purple Finches and Pine Siskins than usual, at least in the Sioux Falls neighborhood. Then came Brown Creepers and Crossbills, both Red and White-winged, (see page 42 Crossbills, Herbert Krause), followed in the week of November 18 by reports from John Tuthill of a flock of Pine Grosbeaks. Another flock of 15 or 20 Pine Grosbeaks was seen in a spruce grove near Worthington, Minn., 60 miles away on November 26 with White-winged Cross-bills, Redpolls Orange-crowned Kinglets and many Juncos. There was even a report of a Snowy Owl.

This does not seem to be a local situation confined to the Sioux Falls area. Similar reports are coming from other places: Mrs. Breen tells of Brown Creepers and Red-breasted Nuthatches at Hurley; Lowry Elliott has White-winged Crossbills at Milbank; reported at Webster by Herman Chilson; J. W. Johnson, Huron, wrote as follows to alert us for what might be on the way:

"Northern birds are arriving in the Huron area in unusual numbers this fall.

"Redbreasted Nuthatches are more numerous than in any year since 1951. Pine Siskins are common after being absent, or nearly so, the past few years. Redpolls were first seen November 16 and are present in numbers of a dozen or more. They often mingle with the siskins, making the separation of the two species a matter of checking individuals. Their

arrival is a month or more earlier than we have noted in the past.

"White-winged Crossbills have been seen in increasing numbers by various members of the SDOU, and others, as follows:

| | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| Nov. 16, 1957 | | 1 |
| Nov. 17 | 1 | 1 |
| Nov. 22 | 1 | 1 |
| Nov. 23 | | 5 |
| Nov. 24 | 2 | 5 |
| Nov. 25 | 7 plus | 25 plus |

"On the last date a Red Crossbill male was frist identified, although the species had been looked for from the 17th on.

"Crossbills are quite rare in this region, not having been seen by me in 18 years of residence here.

"All the above birds were seen in the cemetery just south of town. There the spruces are heavy laden with a remarkable crop of seed. On these cones the Crossbills are feeding busily.

"It is believed that November 16 represents the arrival date of the first of these crossbills. The one seen that day was in the elms and remained in their tops, flying high from one to another. On later days they were always relatively low in the spruces and indifferent to our proximity."

* * *

**BITTER LAKE—A REFUGE?**

Bitter Lake is located in Day County 2 miles south of Waubay. The State of South Dakota owns about 2500 acres around it, most of which now is public shooting land. Geese do not use the lake now because they have been shot at while sitting on the water and on shore and have learned to avoid the lake entirely. However, it has what is probably the only South Dakota nesting colony of Ring-billed Gulls. The area around the lake is also used for nesting by many other species including a number that are not too common, such as: Avocet, Marbled Godwit, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Most of the farmers who own land bordering on the shore of Bitter Lake favor making the lake a waterfowl refuge. On November 19 some of the land-owners met with the Day County Sportsmans Club in Bristol and on November 21 at Webster at the regular meeting of the Day County Chapter of the Isaak Walton League and discussed the proposal. It seemed to meet favor with most of those present at both meetings.

I telephoned to SDOU President Herbert Krause to get his viewpoint before I went to those meetings. At the meetings it was announced that the project is one than can be supported whole-heartedly by SDOU. No immediate action was taken at the meetings, but petitions are being circulated by the farmer landowners. The petitions will be presented to the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission and a public meeting will be held later.—Herman P. Chilson, Webster, S. D.

* * *

A bee can sting only once because it loses its stinger, but wasps and hornets can give a repeat performance.

## THE COVER

The Cover picture is another by J. O. Johnson. It shows fledglings in a Junco nest which was under a piece of stump that was removed while the picture was being taken.

# General Notes of Special Interest

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL AT SIOUX FALLS—On October 5, 1957, I heard the notes of what I was sure was the White-winged Crossbill in several western yellow pines not far from McKennon Park, Sioux Falls. I had heard this species several times previously on the Hayes River, near Hudson Bay. The notes were a rapidly-uttered "shib-shib, shib-shib, shib-shib-shib," sometimes sounding almost like a soft rattle. Mingled with these notes were the sharp, clear "kip, kip" calls of the Red Crossbill. However, the birds flew before I could make a positive identification.

On October 8, I heard the notes again, this time in Woodlawn Cemetery. I found two White-winged Crossbills, males in full adult plumage. The white bars were conspicuous in the dark wings, the rump and upper tail coverts were richly light-colored wine, the head and back a slightly darker red. They were with 20 Pine Siskens, twisting out the seeds of the spruce and eating them.

On October 9, I found a male and two females where I had seen them previously. The olive or greenish-gray of the body, the yellowish rump and upper tail coverts and the white bars on the wings identified them. On Oct. 10 I saw a single male in Woodlawn with six Red Crossbills. Red Crossbills seem customarily to utter single "kip" notes or a succession of notes precisely separated, but the White-winged appears to run them together. Whether these birds represent two groups, or one group utilizing the conifers in at least two localities in town, I haven't been able to determine.— **Herbert Krause, Sioux Falls.**

GREAT HORNED OWLS IN BARN—On March 27, 1957, Robert Bigge reported Great Horned Owls nesting in an unused barn on an abandoned farm. The next day, as we entered the barn an owl flew from the mow. Hay was piled six bales high with sides so vertical we could not get up to see the nest. Emil Bigge said it contained 3 warm eggs.

We told Willis Hall, Yankton, about the nest and he came up on March 31 to try to photograph it. We went out to the barn and as I climbed to the mow the owl left the barn. We found 3 white eggs in a little hollow on the top of a bale of hay. No nest was built. The owl did not return to the nest although we waited for about an hour, however she did light once on the sill of the open window that she uses for entrance and exit. Hall left a coat draped over a tripod so the owls could become accustomed to it.

On April 3 the owl left the barn as we parked the car. Still 3 eggs in the nest. As I sat on the hay about 5 feet from the window the owl lit on the sill but left immediately and went to a fence post nearby. As we left the barnyard it apparently returned to the nest.

April 6, 5:30 p. m. there were two young owls in the nest. I did not see the parents. The young peep musically like they might be songbirds! Eight inches from the south side of the nest were two mice, one of which looked like it might have been chewed some. On the north edge were four more mice, all nice and fat. All six were white-footed mice and only the one showed any signs of having been chewed.

On April 7 Mr. and Mrs. Hall found

there were still only two young. The old owl returned to the nest after Hall got into his blind but before he had his camera ready. It stayed about half an hour. Then after the camera was readied Hall waited for a long time but the owl did not come back.

On April 10 both the young owls and the unhatched egg were gone. Mr. Bigge thinks a cat got them. We concur because we have seen a big cat hunting occasionally in the nearby pasture.—**Mr. and Mrs. Chas. P. Crutchett, Armour, S. D.**

* * * *

SORA RAIL IN THE BLACK HILLS —Aquatic habitats in the Black Hills are relatively few, and therefore we have a very limited variety of water birds. For this reason, the following observations seem to be of interest.

On May 9, 1957, while we were watching birds at a stock pond on Deer Creek, near the junction of US 85-A and SD 40, in Pennington County, we found three Sora Rails feeding in the cattail marshes. They were watched for some time, but could be glimpsed only when they emerged from the cattails for a minute or two. We could see no evidence of breeding. We did not check the pond again until June 27, and at that time we could not find them.

On August 3, 1957, two of the neighborhood boys brought me a full-grown but immature Sora that had been brought in by a cat, apparently captured at a pond just northwest of the city limits of Rapid City. This individual was badly injured, and died in spite of care. It has been preserved as a specimen by Harry Behrens.

To my knowledge, there are no other records of Soras in the Black Hills. So secretive a species, however, could easily have been overlooked. Bird-watchers in the Black Hills should be alert for rails.—**N. R. Whitney, Rapid City.**

NORTHERN NESTING OF CARDINALS—Here only a few miles below the southern end of Big Stone Lake and less than a mile from the Minnesota-South Dakota line, for two years we enjoyed our Cardinals and they nested in our trees, apparently a happy family. But now, where have they gone?

For two winters and two summers the handsome pair was a source of much pleasure. We first noticed them in the fall when they stopped to eat at a feeder a short distance from our house. After the first snow they fed frequently. The brilliants Cardinals and Blue Jays eating yellow corn at a snow-covered feeder was a sight to thrill anyone.

As spring approached they seemed more friendly and began perching on trees near our big window. Then one morning, just at dawn, I heard a thud. I looked. There was the gorgeous male Cardinal flying against the big window. Again and again he dashed against the window, only resting for a moment on the window sill between dashes. When he saw me he darted away. A few mornings later both the male and female were flying against the window, perhaps to challenge their reflections. That was the beginning of two summers and two winters of the Cardinals flying against our windows. Not always was it our big window, sometimes it was against a basement window, sometimes against the middle-sized bathroom window.

The Cardinals came so frequently to the big window, we put a seed container there and kept it filled with parakeet seed. After that they did not fly against the window so constantly, but stopped to feed between flights. Always they were off in a flash if they saw us moving in the house. At rare times both birds would come to feed while we were in the room, sitting motionless thrilled by their beauty.

During their stay in our woods, their "what-cheer, cheer, cheer" or "whoit, whoit, whoit" in varying cadance, was the musical call we paused to hear. Like a brilliant red blaze, was their flight from tree to tree.

Because of the infrequent appearance of the female Cardinal during the spring and summer, we decided she nested two or three times. We looked for the nest repeatedly, and in June found it in a spruce tree approximately 100 feet from our house. It was about 5 feet from the ground and contained two spotted eggs.

Appropriately, on July 4th the eggs hatched. During the next 10 days we occasionally looked at the nest. On the tenth day only one fledgling was in the nest. On the fourteenth day the nest was empty. Had the last fledgling grown sufficiently to fly away? We hope so. Only once have we had evidence to bolster our hope. That was on August 6 when three Cardinals perched in a tree a short distance from our house. Was the third bird our grown fledgling, or the culprit that coaxed our Cardinals to another neighborhood?—**Eleanor G. Riss, Big Stone City, S. D.**

* * * *

LATE BARN SWALLOWS—On August 26, 1957, I observed a pair of Barn Swallows at the Milwaukee Railroad depot flying in and out of a roofed-over portion of the depot that was open on the north and south sides. On investigation I found a nest with four young almost ready to leave the nest in the shade of a light fixture. The parents showed no fear of the many people passing all around and below the nest, and were very busy feeding the nestlings. Evidently no one had bothered them. This is the latest I have ever observed a swallows nest here.—**W. B. Mallory, Canton, S. D.**

BAROMETER AND MIGRATION—I have a few dates to add to any data relating migration waves to low barometric pressure. My records seem to show that the major movements come when the barometer is low.

On May 14, 1957, my barometer read 29.60 and the morning temperature was 46 degrees. There was a wave of warblers in and I saw 9 species.

On May 22 the barometer was 29.45 and the temperature 42 degrees. A wave of warblers, thrushes and sparrows had arrived during the night.

On May 29, the barometer was 29.92 and temperature 50 degrees. It was vireo day with many red-eyed, warbling and blue-headed.

**—Lowry Elliot, Milbank, S. Dak.**

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## Biological Features

(Continued from page 38)

more nests. The interesting jug-like nests are made of mud pellets and lined scantily with grasses. Western wood pewees nest abundantly high up in cottonwoods along the Cheyenne. The small homes are beautiful creations of plant down and grasses saddled upon horizontal branches and harmonizing so well with their surroundings that they are seldom found except by closely watching their small gray owners. Unlike those of the eastern wood pewee, the nests examined along the Cheyenne were not ornamented with lichens. The eggs, like those of most flycatchers, are creamy white specked with reddish brown and lilac.

Other birds seen in the Cascade region during the nesting season were the killdeer, quail, turkey vulture, marsh hawk, western nighthawk, crow, blue-jay, black-headed grosbeak, white-rumped shrike, dickcissel and rock wren.

HUDSONIAN GODWITS IN MINNEHAHA COUNTY — Ordinarily in South Dakota, we see the Hudsonian Godwit sparingly, usually with Marbled Godwits, or at best in small flocks of 8 or 10. But on May 19, 1917, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Chapman, Alfred Peterson and I had the pleasure of coming upon a flock of 40 of these comparatively scarce birds. We found them in a spring-flooded grassy pasture no more than two good stone's throw from the main street of Humboldt, Minnehaha county. They were feeding on a small grassy island, their dark reddish breasts and dark wings indicating clearly their identity. But it took us a moment to realize that we were fortunate enough to see before us two score of these birds, all in one flock. When, apparently alarmed at something, they took wing and made several circles, we had a good look at the deep black tail and the conspicuous band of white on the upper tail coverts, which flashed in and out of view as the birds turned and wheeled as one in their flight. As they flew, they uttered softly-voiced calls which sounded like "ga-witt, ga-wit". Finally, as they came in for a landing, they seemed to drift easily along the shore edge, their tail bars shining white and, after their feet touched the ground, their wings held aloft momentarily before they folded them unhurriedly back. The flight and the landing were thrilling both to the eye and the ear. In the shallow water where they fed, the birds used their longish bills to probe with quick thrusting movements. It was certainly good to know that this bird, once thought to be following the luckless Eskimo Curlew to utter extinction, is now apparently returning and increasing in some numbers.— **Herbert Krause, Augustana College, Sioux Falls**

HAWK FLIGHT—Hawks, as a class, apparently do not cross big water. Accordingly, when the fall migrants come out of the Canadian Wilderness down to the north shore of Lake Superior the "ancestral pilot" turns them westward alongshore and around the end of the Lake. This results in a concentrated procession of such variety of species and in numbers so great that it is one of the ornithological spectacles of the continent.

For the third year we stood this fall on the rocky ridge above Duluth and joined with scientists and fellow birdwatchers in attempting to identify and record what was there for us to see. On Saturday, Sept. 28, we happened to meet there with a group from Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. In about three hours we recorded these hawks: 208 Sharp-shinned, 6 Coopers, 2 Marsh, 2 Red-tailed, one or two Sparrow; as well as 12 Ravens, 3 Turkey Vultures, and hosts of Robins, Blue Jays, Chickadees, Warblers, Starlings and many other unidentified small migrants. There were numerous unidentified hawks—sometimes they were just too many coming at the same time, others were too far away or seen too briefly to be clearly identified. The flight dwindled around noon so we went sight-seeing and fish-buying along the North Shore.

The next forenoon the professionals, ornithologists from Duluth, the Twin Cities and other Minnesota points, as well as a good sprinkling of tourists (including a family from Newell, S. D.) were on hand. The flight was good, and the ease with which the experts made identifications was really startling. Their count ran into hundreds and included additional species, such as Pigeon Hawks, Ospreys, and Duck Hawks. We were told that on September 12 the count in but a few hours ex-

ceeded 4000 individuals.

On our trips up and back we usually see a few individuals of several species, all in a general southward movement, but there seems to be no record or even a good guess as to where this vast hawk migration moves after it rounds the head of the Lakes.

The best vantage point from which to watch this spectacular flight is on the Sky-line Drive, above Duluth, about in line with 45th Avenue. The best time may be about the third week end in September, depending on wind direction, weather, etc.—**H. F. and Lois N. Chapman, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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EARLY BANK SWALLOW NESTING—On May 18, 1957, while attending the meeting of S. D. O. U. at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge, I was looking for birds near the home of Refuge Manager Kenneth Krumm when I saw a pair of Bank Swallows feeding a young bird perched on a barbed-wire fence. It appeared to be a young Bank Swallow that had just left the nest. It was able to fly although not expertly. Soon it was joined by another young bird and both were fed by adult Bank Swallows.

These birds were also seen by Alfred Peterson, Mrs. Carol Breen and others attending the meeting, but it was a "mystery" to all of us where the young birds could have come from at the time of year when old birds were just returning, or where they could have been hatched and fledged in such a cold wet Spring.—**Lowry Elliott, Milbank, S. D.**

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BITTERN IN TOWN—One day soon after the floods of the Sioux River in June, my young nearest neighbor, Martha, ran over to my garden shouting there was a duck by our front porch. On investigation we failed to find the bird, but a few minutes later it came out where it could be studied. It was not a duck but had long legs and long bill like a heron. Its plumage was mostly in the downy stage but showing the beginning of wing feathers. The fact that the plumage was in the downy stage made it nearly impossible to identify the bird with accuracy, but my guess was that it was a young Bittern, or possibly a Black-crowned Night Heron.—**W. B. Mallory, Canton, S. D.**

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MARTINS AND KINGBIRDS—An eastern kingbird was sitting on the wire near the martin. In a moment they were in the air, the kingbird after the martin.

The martin gave a continuous series of pitiful little yelps of fright or pain, more like a tiny puppy in trouble than a bird. Often he would turn and try to defend himself, standing upright in the air for a moment.

But the arrogant indifference of the kingbird, as he came straight ahead, striking hard and quick, right and left, gave the smaller bird no chance. All he could do was fall away in another direction.

Apparently it never occurred to the martin to use his greater speed to outbox the kingbird. But, to his credit, he always returned at once to his post near the house as soon as the kingbird stopped to rest.

That meant another beating as soon as the kingbird got his breath. But the martin never seemed to think of staying away from trouble. In the end he seemed to win—just by absorbing punishment. At least the kingbird went away and the martin stayed.

We were surprised by the whole thing. The territory has been claimed for three seasons that we know of by a family of western kingbirds and they have never quarrelled with the martins who are also older set-

tlers than we. What the western kingbirds were doing while their eastern opposite number was muscling in we have no idea.

It has been our observation that the two kingbirds want no trouble with each other and arrange their territories and operations that way.

The next morning the western kingbird was back. He checked over the situation, lighting on the martin house.

Two martins, at once, dropped down from their perch on the wire, taking a position, one on either side of him, to inquire what he had in mind.

The kingbird accepted the implied rebuke with good grace. With a martin on either side he flew over to the wire where they perched in a close row, the kingbird still in the middle.

After a few moments the kingbird remembered another errand and went away to take care of it. So another possible fight was dissolved by polite firmness.

All of which leaves us with a group of questions and no answers. Among them: Why didn't the martins try the same treatment on the eastern kingbird? And, would it have worked?—**James W. Johnson, Huron, S. D.**

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CRESTED FLYCATCHERS NEST AT WAUBAY—While on the field trip at the 1956 annual meeting of SDOU I got lost from the caravan and drove up to Waubay Refuge headquarters instead of to the recreation area. After looking around for a while I went toward the lake and heard some strange harsh bird calls. Investigation disclosed a pair of Crested Flycatchers near a dead tree that had some holes in it. I went on up the beach and when returning later found the birds again in the area only about an eighth of a mile from Refuge headquarters.

Later in the afternoon I told Mr. Alfred Peterson about the birds and he wanted to see them, so we went for a look-see. We found the flycatchers but they seemed wilder and Peterson sat down near the dead tree to watch for them while I went back to the recreation area to return a pair of binoculars Mr. H. F. Chapman had lent me.

In about ten minutes the flycatchers were back and began carrying nesting material into a hole in the dead tree. Mr. Peterson watched them for a while and then returned to the picnic grounds.

This Spring (1957) Mr. Peterson was up there again and looked in vain for the Crested Flycatchers. However, it was a little earlier in the season and this was a late Spring so it is possible they may have nested there again. I have seen these large flycatchers a few times in migration here at Bird Haven.—**Lowery Elliott, Milbank, S. D.**

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NOTES FROM WINNER—Perhaps because little ornithological work has been done in this part of the state one may have an impression there are few birds here. However, I have found many species and some of them were species that I did not expect to find here. Most of them were birds that I had caught for banding here in town.

One unusual bird is the Carolina Wren of which I banded two individuals in 1955, and now another on October 31, 1957.

My list of warblers includes: Orange-crowned, Wilson's, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow, Black and White, Magnolia, Myrtle, Black-throated Green, Western Yellow-throat, Redstart, and Grinnell's Water Thrush, all of which were banded. In addition I have identified the Black-poll and the Chestnut-sided here.

Of the sparrows I have banded here

the Lincolns', Field, Tree, Chipping, Clay-colored, White-throated, White-crowned, Gamble's and Harris', and in addition have identified Lark, Grasshopper, Vesper and Song. Of course there also was the ubiquitous House Sparrow.

I have never banded as many Slate-colored Juncos anywhere else since I have been banding birds.

Both the Kinglets are here and both the Nuthatches. Our Towhee is the Arctic or Spotted Towhee. Many Olice-backed Thrushes go through and there are many Upland Plovers in the southern part of the county. **—Harold W. Wagar, Winner, S. D.**

(Editor's Note . . . Lowry Elliott, Milbank, banded a Carolina Wren on September 17, 1956, and tells of watching one at close range in the vines on his porch on October 12, 1957. Later that day it was seen in lilac bushes near his house by Mr. Elliott and the J. S. Findleys.)

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MAGPIE IN DOUGLAS COUNTY—On August 14, 1957, Mrs. Crutchett and I saw a magpie leave the roadside and enter some trees about 1½ miles north of Corsica. This is only the second sight record that we know of on magpies in this county.

A few years ago Clifford Fiscus saw one in the west part of the county and reported it in Bird Notes. **—Chas. P. Crutchett, Armour, S. D.**

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NIGHT HERONS IN PARK TREES—Although Black-crowned Night Herons do nest in trees, we usually think of this chunky, rather long-legged bird as a wader, standing motionless on a log half out of water or beside rushes or tall aquatic vegetation in shallow water. But on October 2, 1957, I found eight of this species perched in black walnut trees in Sioux Falls. I was walking through McKennon Park, looking for warblers, when I heard a most unwrabler-like "woc" and there among the topmost feathery branches, I saw a night heron, its wings half-lifted for flight. It settled back, however, and became motionless among the yellowing leaves. Not far away I saw a second heron and in the nearby trees, others, until in three walnut trees, I counted 8 night herons. All were immatures, their striped plumage clear in the sun. Perhaps uneasy at my approach, they suddenly left, all eight mounting above the park. However, instead of leaving, they circled for perhaps a minute, then came gliding down, braking sharply above the walnut trees and settling rather awkwardly into the top branches. From their behavior, their rather droopy and tired-looking posture, the way their heads were drawn down, I guessed that apparently they were resting after completing a leg of their migration southward. This was at 8 a. m. At 11 a. m. I returned and found them still there. While I watched, they took wing. For nearly ten minutes they circled the park area, often gliding down as if to perch again, but, perhaps alarmed by the traffic in the streets surrounding the park, they always ascended again. Finally they headed south and disappeared. I don't know how often night herons perch in trees in city parks but I suspect only to rest during migration.—**Herbert Krause, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. D.**