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Moose-Bird Resents Moose

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South Dakota Ornithologists' Union

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President's Page

HERMAN CHAPMAN'S very thought provoking article in the most recent issue of South Dakota Bird Notes is an excellent review of a number of questions which should be considered in formulating general SDOU policy.

Shortly after the September, 1959, issue was published, I received a letter from Harry Woodward, Director of the Game, Fish and Parks Department, who showed great interest in meeting with us to discuss our ideas concerning some of the problems which come before the State, Game, Fish and Parks Department.

I have suggested that a member of the department attend our meeting in May, and, of course, we will also want to meet with the Department at other times whenever problems arise.

During the 1959 legislative session, I was startled to learn at a meeting sponsored by the Rapid City Izaak Walton Chapter, how many bills related to our native birdlife were being introduced into the session.

At that time, I thought, and since have felt even more strongly, that SDOU should have a standing committee to deal with such problems; to consider all legislation related to birds which are introduced into the State Legislature; to draw up similar programs, as necessary, and to meet with the Game, Fish and Parks Department and with the State Legislature in order to formulate policies.

Our viewpoint may differ from that of the sportsmen, as a group, although I realize that a lot of sportsmen are members of SDOU, but the aims of both groups are more similar than different, and we will have to work together for those points which we feel our interests are similar.

Along this same line of thought, I want to report to the membership that I have recently received from Miss Shirley Briggs of the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, a transcript of a meeting held in Washington, D. C., in November, to correlate the activities of the State Audubon and Natural History Societies.

Although we did not have a representative at the meeting, I believe, after reading the contents of the letter of the proceedings, that we have a great deal to gain by associating with this group.

The meeting covered many subjects, including the value of having such a council, problems of conservation such as the albatross situation on Midway Island and the insecticide problems and many administrative problems which the larger Audubon societies have encountered.

I strongly recommend that we give this problem further consideration, that we give the possibility of our joining such a group further consideration, and that we bring this matter up at the May meeting.

I want every member of SDOU to study Chapman's article thoroughly and to decide, each in his own mind,

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The Harris' Sparrow In The Missouri River Valley

Wm. Youngworth

WHILE all the members of SDOU know the fine Harris' Sparrow as a common migrant and occasional winter visitor, I wondered if many of them knew of the early history of this sparrow and when urged by your editor I took up his challenge.

My own acquaintance with this bird goes back to about 1923, but it was not until 1926, upon the urging of the late Dr. T. C. Stephens that I began to keep regular records of its appearance.

Dr. Stephens outlined a program to follow and it included feeding, flight, calls, and relationship with other species, particularly the White-throated Sparrow.

One fall I made numerous trips to a brushy area where these sparrows stayed. I would reach the area before dawn, so that I could catch the first sleepy calls.

From then on I would sit quietly and watch the sparrows as they fed, preened or sang. This program was also carried on in late afternoon and I saw the birds to bed.

I carried out this assignment most of October and part of November during one fall and discovered some interesting things about this sparrow.

For instance I learned that the Harris' Sparrows usually fed on the weed seeds, which were already on the ground, while the more active White-throated would sometimes fly up on a weed stalk and knock down some of the seed.

On occasion, when disturbed, some of the Harris' Sparrows would fly up to the top of a weed stalk to look at the intruder and then some of the birds would take a few pecks at the seeds.

At dusk the Harris' Sparrows would desert their feeding grounds and fly a short distance to a dense wild plum thicket. This thicket, which was cleared recently for a four-lane highway, was about five hundred feet long and from fifty to sixty feet wide.

The same thicket was also the scene of another one of my many bird projects. It was here that I came morning and evening to check on a Robin nest.

The Robins roosted quite low, often not more than three or four feet off the ground and I found that some of the Harris' Sparrows roosted at the above height, but more often lower down.

On their fall feeding grounds, the Harris' Sparrow is a rather noisy bird and is almost always calling or carolling. They also enjoy chasing one another wildly over and through the bushes.

Their common alarm note is loud "clink," which is usualy repeated three times, altho sometimes it is only given once. The carol is a musical long drawn out series of "weet, weet, weet" calls usually given three times, but occasionally four times.

One subdued call was often given when two birds were sitting near each other and it was a short twsweet, twsweet call, which one would give and then the other repeat.

One call was very puzzling until I

Harris' Sparrow

Drawing, through the kindness of Earnest W. Steffen.
Halftone, a gift of Wm. Youngworth

discovered that both the Harris' Sparrow and the White-throated Sparrow gave it.

It is a single sort of lisping twsweet call and it wasn't until I deliberately flushed Harris' Sparrows when I heard the call and found not a single White-Throated Sparrow, that I decided that I had better check for the bird and not take that particular call for granted anymore.

Dr. T. S. Roberts, in Birds of Minnesota, states that this sparrow is friendly and confiding. I found that to be true in my studies and often had birds feed within a few feet of me and sometimes they would sit and preen at distances from ten to fifteen feet.

I have noticed in the fall that some of the immature birds are too confiding and will hardly move when a stray house cat comes prowling around. Many of them must be the victims of cats.

As to food they seem to like most weed seeds and will spend hours on a lawn feeding on crab-grass seed.

Our first knowledge of the Harris' Sparrow dates back to April 28, 1834, when Thomas Nuttall and J. K. Townsend collected the first specimen in northwest Missouri. In the same year on May 13, Prince Maximilian of Wied collected another specimen near Omaha, Nebraska.

On May 4, 1843, Edward Harris, who was financing Audubon's trip up the Missouri River, collected a "new Sparrow" near Fort Leavenworth.

Whether the specimen came from Missouri or Kansas would be a moot question, as the military reservation at that time included several thousand acres on both sides of the river.

Audubon in honor of his friend named it the Harris' Sparrow, although they were really the third party to collect a specimen.

Now comes an interesting fact; for the first fifty or sixty years after the discovery of the Harris' Sparrow this bird was almost entirely confined to the Upper Missouri River Valley as a spring and fall migrant. But during the last sixty years, it has gradually spread eastward to include much of the Upper Mississippi River Valley in its migration route.

Elliot Coues, Birds of the Northwest, 1874, gives the habitat as the region of the Missouri River.

Today the Harris' Sparrow is a regular migrant down the Mississippi River valley, but the main wintering area still seems to be about as it was in Audubon's time, with the states of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas being the main wintering ground.

The practice of keeping complete migration records often become a laborious affair; but I think in the end it is usually justified if only for personal satisfaction.

To a diligent birder it is interesting to go back through twenty or thirty years of records on a given species and see how closely fall arrival dates or spring departure dates coincide.

For instance, on May 20, 1929, the last Harris' Sparrow was logged and thirty years later on May 23, 1959, we find our last entry for that year.

Arrival dates in the fall are very similar and the observer can almost guess within the week on the exact arrival date, as for instance, the Harris' Sparrows arrived on October 9, 1927 and on October 7, 1958.

Of course an early or late storm can disrupt records in either fall or spring and such a record could be an extra early date for the Harris' Sparrow as on September 23, 1928, or a very late

spring departure date, such as that of May 26, 1956.

The question of the Harris' Sparrow as a winter resident is an interesting one and I think is based a great deal on settlement of the prairie country and the resultant planting of trees and shrubs, all meaning more food and shelter for this hardy sparrow.

Since the inception of South Dakota Bird Notes there have been a number of winter Harris' Sparrow records from South Dakota, which is in direct opposition to the statement by Elliott Coues, Birds of the Northwest, 1874, in which on page 158, he states that because of the bitter winter the Harris' Sparrow did not pass the winter in that vicinity. (Fort Randall).

My own records on this species which includes the McCook Lake and Big Sioux River areas of Union County, show that I have seen Harris' Sparrows forty three times during December from 1926 to the present.

My January records number six, with the largest number of birds, a flock of nearly twenty sparrows seen not far from the Big Sioux River on January 28, 1953.

I have a feeling that during the terribly bitter cold weather we often have during January and early February, some species of winter birds move farther south.

I have found this true with the Pine Siskin and my single February record for the Harris' Sparrow might so indicate. This record was made with William R. Felton, Jr., at Vermillion, on February 21, 1953, when we saw a small flock of these sparrows.

Early March records are probably wintering birds and I have only one such record, on March 9, 1955.

Since the Harris' Sparrow is a hardy bird and has a long way to go to its nesting grounds as far north as the Barren Grounds in central Canada, it starts to migrate north very early and the first flight can be expected any time after mid-March.

On March 19, 1957, I encountered a flight of several dozen birds. Other early spring flight dates were March 27, 1927; March 23, 1929; March 21, 1939; March 17, 1940; March 22, 1942; March 29, 1946; and April 1, 1952.

My records would show that there is a very definite flight in mid-April and certainly another one in early May. From Mid-May to the end of the month it is definitely a case of stragglers, as is best illustrated by the following 1956 field trips: May 13, Woodbury County, Iowa, one Harris' Sparrow; May 14, Woodbury County, Iowa, ditto; May 15, Dakota County, Nebraska, ditto; and May 16, Union County, South Dakota, ditto.

The fall flight is even more interesting than the spring flight, because the birds are with us longer and among them are the many-patterned immature birds. These immature birds are interesting to watch and are especially welcome, because they are the singers in the fall, when not much bird song is heard.

My earliest fall arrival date is September 23, 1928, with other early dates being Sept. 25, 1926; September 29, 1930; and September 30, 1932. The average arrival date is about October 6th, or a day or two later.

To summarize, we could say that, from being an almost wholly migrant in Missouri River region only in the days of Elliott Coues, the Harris' Sparrow has now broadened its migration belt from western Ontario to Eastern Colorado. However, it still winters in about the same area, namely in Missouri and Kansas.

(Continued on Page 79)

SANDHILL CRANES
In Eastern South Dakota

SANDHILL CRANES AT SIOUX FALLS--According to Adrian Larson's "Birds of Sioux Falls, South Dakota" (1925. WILSON BULL., 37:24-25), Sandhill Cranes were still "common tranients" both in spring and fall migration in the Sioux Falls area as late as 1916.

Larson gives Sept. 27 as the earliest date of fall arrival and Oct. 22 as the latest date of fall departure. He tells of "large flocks during migration, circling and wheeling about high in the air; their loud bugle-like cries heard for miles on still days."

The region under his study included the city of Sioux Falls and the surrounding area "for a radius of about five miles," except toward the west and northwest where it extended "about twenty miles."

This would encompass Wall Lake, Grass, Beaver and Lost Lakes. Considering the agiculturalized condition of this region today with its drained sloughs and receding lakes, it seems almost incredible that Sandhill Cranes were seen as commonly in migration on the uplands surrounding the lakes and potholes in 1916 as geese are today.

In 1921 the first edition of Over and Thomas' BIRDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA, appeared, but the authors remark only (p. 61) that the Sandhill Crane "is abundant in migration" without being specific.

However, in the second edition (1946:89) they add. "Once very common in migration over the eastern part of the state" but "of recent years the Sandhill Crane has shifted its migratory route to the west . . . flying over the eastern foothills of the Black Hills."

Just when this westward shift began is uncertain but presumably it occurred after 1921, and, as far as Minnehaha County is concerned, it must have been completed, if records (or lack of them) are indicative of status, sometime before 1946.

My records, begun in 1949, are not as optimistic as those of Stephens-Youngworth-Felton (1955. BIRDS OF UNION COUNTY, 9-10).

These authors call the Sandhill Crane "uncommon," but do have a record during the first week of November, 1950, of "several flocks" seen along the Missouri River bordering on Union County. No such recent record seems to be available for Minnehaha County. In fact, one feels inclined to regard Larson's 1916 records as the latest for the area.

Therefore, it was with some excitement that I observed and recorded the appearance of three Sandhill Cranes flying over Woodlawn Cemetery, Sioux Falls, on Oct. 9, 1959.

Wide-spread storms beginning on Oct. 5 had brought heavy snow to western Montana; sleet, rain and heavy snow with strong winds on Oct. 7 and 8 to a wide belt extending from Saskatoon, Sask., to Minot, Kenmare and Devil's Lake, N. Dak.; a cold front with heavy winds to the Sand Lake Refuge, Columbia, S. Dak. area on Oct. 8; and rain, lowered temperature and a crust of snow to the Sioux Falls vicinity on the

8th and 9th (AUD. FIELD NOTES, Summaries, in press).

On the morning of the 9th I was walking my customary beat in the cemetery when I heard the loud "Kr-r-rooo" call —the roll and the bugle sound. I saw them high up, three birds, but not so high that my binocular could not bring down distinctly the outstretched legs and neck and the darkish-colored bodies.

These points and the call made the identification positive, in my opinion. I have seen and heard Sandhill Cranes in Upper Michigan (with Dr. ●. S. Pettingill, Jr.) and on the Platte River in Nebraska, where with Dr. John Bliese and Herman and Lois Chapman, I saw literally thousands of these birds, some no farther than a couple of car's lengths away from me—saw them and heard them, too.

Once heard, the call is not likely to be forgotten. It was a real thrill to see them and hear them here in the Sioux Falls sky.

Perhaps the strong northwest winds accompanying the storm of the previous days drove the birds off course and over Sioux Falls.

For those flocks which migrate through Sand Lake and Waubay Refuges in Brown and Day Counties, (and they did again this year) apparently go to the east and the west of Minnehaha County. At least it seems that no one has reported their passage since Larson.

Or, apart from the influence of the storm, is it the scarcity (or inattentiveness) of observers, or the height of their flight which permits these birds to escape detection in their migration over the Minnehaha County area?—**Herbert Krause, Dept. of English, Augustana College, Sioux Falls.**

SANDHILL CRANES SIGHTED AT VERMILLION, CLAY COUNTY—The afternoon of November 5, 1959, at 4:15 p. m., the day of the season's first and early snowfall, I happened to look upward from a north window in our home, into the dull, overcast sky, and caught sight of a large flock of huge birds, flying high over town, approaching from the north.

Picking up the binocular, I hastened out to the northeast corner of the house and focused on the dramatic view of a great flock of Sandhill Cranes, which I estimated to number nearly one hundred. They flew in a wavering, massed formation, rather evenly spaced in three or four lines.

While the adult Sandhill Cranes are uniformly gray, the bodies of these appeared dark against the gloomy sky, their huge wings rose above body level and fell in a flapping manner; and their long slender legs trailed in a nearly horizontal plane.

Impressive and weird was the loud, trumpeting "gar-oo" they uttered, and that I continued to hear fadingly, after their forms vanished in the leaden overcast sky. They moved leisurely in a southeasterly direction, several hundred feet high, and likely settled down for the night on the Missouri River bottom, removed from human sight.

I made inquiries and watched the daily newspaper, hoping to learn that some other person or persons had seen these aristocratic creatures, but so far have heard nothing. The early November storm had undoubtedly forced them east of their usual migratory course, a sight rare in the southeastern section of the state, although Sandhill Cranes were "once very common in migration over the eastern part" of South Dakota, according to Over and Thomas in "Birds of South Dakota."—**Adelene M. Siljenberg, Vermillion.**

Christmas Bird Count, 1959

x Species Reported	Armour-Lake Andes	Brookings	Huron	LaCreek	Milbank	Rapid City	Sioux Falls	Webster	Winner	Yankton
Canada Goose	15			125						
Mallard	20000			4250		269				2683
Gadwall						4				
Baldpate						4				
Common Goldeneye				9		17				
Old Squaw										1
Hooded Merganser						2				
Common Merganser						7				16
Red-tailed Hawk										1
Rough-legged Hawk			1	2			1			
Golden Eagle				4		3				
Bald Eagle										11
Marsh Hawk		1		5			1			
Prairie Falcon				1						
Sharp-tailed Grouse									10	
Killdeer										1
Pheasant	2	221	58	510	16	3	52		66	40
Mourning Dove							1			
Screech Owl							1			
Great Horned Owl	1	7	3	5	1	1	15			2
Short-eared Owl							7			
Belted Kingfisher						2				1
Flicker, Y. S.		1		1			12			2
Red-bellied Woodpecker		1								
Lewis's Woodpecker						7				
Hairy Woodpecker		2	2	2	3	4	13	1	1	1
Downy Woodpecker		6	7	4	5	4	39	4		7
Horned Lark	18	241	15	8			9	x	499	

Blue Jay		2			2	38	16	1		
Black-billed Magpie				6		25			15	
Common Crow	2	12	3			13	346		10	1
Pinon Jay						13				
Black-capped Chickadee	2	48	8		7	44	178	20	8	14
White-breasted Nuthatch		8	5			3	58	1	1	1
Red.breasted Nuthatch		1	2				1			
Brown Creeper		1	2			3	11			
Dipper						1				
Brown Thrasher							1			
Robin						12	4			
Townsend's Solitaire						16				
Golden-Crowned Kinglet						3	4			
Bohemian Waxwing					8					
Northern Shrike										1
Loggerhead Shrike									1	
Starling	16	21	251		2	115	125		3	272
House Sparrow	20	124	300	27		158	602	25	94	226
Western Meadowlark				1				8		
Red-winged Blackbird				12			1			
Brewer's Blackbird										1
Purple Grackle							1			
Cardinal		1					26			2
Purple Finch		29					2			
Common Redpoll		75	26		20	300	7	6		
Pine Siskin						1	7			
American Goldfinch							1			
White-winged Junco						18				
Slate-colored Junco		4	2			13	9	4		11
Oregon Junco			1			19				
Tree Sparrow		4	17	15		4	7			5
Field Sparrow										2
Harris' Sparrow							10			
White-throated Sparrow										5
Song Sparrow							1			2
Lapland Longspur	225	61	59				2	x		
Snow Buntings								40		

Unusual Migration Waves At Sioux Falls

Herbert Krause

TWO unusual bird waves, one of hawks, the other of passerines, occurred at Sioux Falls, S. Dak. during mid-September. Both may have been influenced by meteorological conditions.

On the 16th a hawk flight of rather spectacular proportions drifted across the city. Up to that day the migration of all species had been thin almost to nothing.

For the five days previously, winds were southerly and temperatures rather high—in the upper 70's and lower 80's.

On the night of the 14th the wind swung to the northeast, bringing overcast skies, some precipitation, lowered temperatures and winds at 25-35 here. Rain fell to the north of us in both Dakotas.

On the 15th I noticed 4 Broad-winged Hawks flying low over our part of the city and later one perching—an unusual occurrence, I thought.

The 16th brought more precipitation and continued coolness. At 12:15 p. m. as I left the house, I happened to look northwestward and saw the sky dotted with dark bird forms.

I was reminded of movies of parachute drops with troops by the scores floating along on a broad front. By the time I hurriedly brought out my binocular, the birds were much closer: an unusual concentration of hawks.

A sampling number of quick observations and I realized that I was looking at one of those flocks of Broad-winged Hawks occurring in migration, which Pough describes in AUDUBON WATER BIRD GUIDE (1949:141-143) as sometimes numbering in "hundreds or thousands."

In the next forty minutes—from 12:15 to 12:55 p. m.—I managed to count and identify 112 hawks as they came somewhat leisurely from the northwest, flying or rather soaring—I saw little spiralling—against an easterly wind.

My count was 94 Broadwings, 16 Redtails and two which I thought were Sharpshins.

How broad the flight was, I don't know. But in that portion within my view I estimated there were between 400 and 500 birds. I'm sure there were many more than that.

The flight came in three large waves with scattering numbers in between. I had the impression that at least 75% were Broadwings. Although most of the birds seemed to be flying fairly low—perhaps at 150-200 feet—some volplaned from considerable heights and disappeared behind the trees of McKennon Park and the cemetery to the east.

Some moved so slowly and seemed to be slanting downward that I wondered whether they were coming in for a rest. Later I learned that for some individuals this may have been true.

Though I'd often heard Herman and Lois Chapman and the J. Scott Findleys tell about the hawk numbers aloft during the Duluth, Minnesota, flights in mid-September, and I'd read about the drifts of hawks over Hawk Mountain in Kentucky, I was hardly prepared for the breath-taking sight of row on broken row of birds sailing to the right and the left and overhead, a passage

as soundless as owls in their flight.

Fortunately, during the last part of the flight, I had the assistance of Mrs. Richard Smith, a colleague in the English Department, who came by and joined me.

At 3 p. m. that day I saw 4 Broadwings perched in trees near the college and 5 in flight. At 5 o'clock I saw 3 Broadwings in flight over the campus.

On the 17th I found one perched in the locust near our house, 6 in trees in and near McKennon Park and 7 at the cemetery. Two short flights occurred that afternoon. Between 12:30 and 1 o'clock, I counted 26 Broadwings; between 1:20 and 2:45 I listed 31 hawks, of which 26 were Broadwings, 2 Redtails, 1 Sparrowhawk and 2 Turkey Vultures, the first I've seen in this area.

The number of perching Broadwings indicated that apparently some individuals were indeed resting or searching for food. In the next four days I saw several in trees in the twelve blocks between my apartment and the college. On the 21st, the last sight date, I saw five.

In the light of existing records for South Dakota, this wave was apparently rather extraordinary. Agersborg (1930. "Birds of Southwestern Dakota," PROC. SO. DAK. ACAD. SCI., 13:15-33) does not mention the Broadwing in his early list (1869-1885) although his study area included parts of Minnehaha County (p. 15).

Coues (1874. BIRDS OF THE NORTHWEST, 360-361) says that it was not found in the Upper Missouri region (1856-1873). McChesney, acting assistant surgeon at Fort Sisseton during the years 1875-1878, did not include it in his "Notes on the Birds of Fort Sisseton, Dakota Territory" (1879:71-103).

Neither did Larson (1925. "Birds of Sioux Falls, South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 37(1):18-38; 37(2):72-76) in his 1906-1916 study. Visher calls the Broadwing (1915. "A List of Birds of Clay County, Southeastern South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 37 (No. 91):-321-325) "a regular but uncommon migrant" (p. 328).

However, Stephens (1918. "Notes on the Birds of South Dakota, with a Preliminary List for Union County," PROC. IOWA ACAD. SCI., 25:85-104) does not list it.

Over and Thomas (1921. BIRDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA, 85; 1946. Ibid., rev. ed., 124) say merely that it "is only fairly common in South Dakota. The range is farther east."

Youngworth (1935. "The Birds of Fort Sisseton, South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 47:209-235), reviewing McChesney's 1879 list after sixty years, calls the Broadwing "a rare summer visitor" (p. 216). And Stephens, Youngworth and Felton (1955. "Birds of Union County, South Dakota," OCC. PAPERS NEB. ORN. UNION, 1:1-35) are of the opinion that it "is an uncommon migrant" (p. 7).

My own unpublished notes for Minnehaha (1949-1959) pretty well agree with this opinion. Sight records for the period indicate that the species is generally present but never abundant, either in spring or fall, appearing in numbers from one to five or six.

It is interesting that in none of the above reports is any mention made of concentrations, at least for South Dakota, either for spring or fall migration. Therefore, the wave of September 17, 1959, appears to be most unusual.

However, the flight was small compared with the size of flocks reported

in Minnesota by Roberts (1938. LOG-B●●K OF MINNESOTA BIRD LIFE). On Sept. 14, 1924, between 6000 and 7000 Broadwings appeared over Mound, a suburb of Minneapolis (pp. 114-115).

The "tendency to travel together in considerable numbers," as Alexander Sprunt, Jr., describes it in NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS OF PREY (1955: 70), probably often results in tragic destruction, especially at the hands of human beings.

In April, 1925, "immense numbers" of this species appeared in spring migration at Wheaton, Minn., many "settling in trees and flying over the buildings" of the city.

Trigger-happy gun-toters, engaged in a crow-shooting contest, left crows and turned to hawks. They brought in 1500. According to a local resident, "at least 3000" Broadwings were shot in the two-day migration over the town (Roberts, 130-131).

Fortunately, as far as I know, none was shot from the September, 1959, flocks. But there may be a dire significance in the small size of this concentration—an estimated 400 to 500 compared with 6000 to 7000 in 1925.

The weather disturbances which probably influenced the hawk flight on Sept. 16 may have been a factor in concentrating a wave of passerines at Sioux Falls on Sept. 17.

The day began with northerly winds driving in light precipitation. ●n the way to the cemetery, I saw in a vacant lot 4 Nashville Warblers in a tangle of Russian thistle, and two Orange-crowns in McKennon Park.

But when I came to Woodlawn Cemeery, I ran into a swarm of birds, apparently all passerines with warblers and kinglets predominating. From 8 until 11:15 a. m., perhaps as many as 500 birds streamed through the trees or fluttered in the bushes.

Sometimes so many were around me that I gave up in despair and studied only those that were handiest. I saw several Warbling Vireos, one Red-eyed Vireo, a lone Brown Creeper, a dozen or so flycatchers (of which 3 were Wood Pewees) and a great flutter of Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

A lively curtain of movement, the wave (it was really a series of waves with thin stretches of few birds in between) drifted unhurriedly through the elms, ashes and conifers, generally in a rather straight southeasterly direction.

There was some diving and several instances of hovering at twig ends, especially among the kinglets, Nashville and Orange-crowned Warblers and Redstarts.

The Black and White Warblers were the least mobile, quietly slipping from large limb to large limb, their well-marked bodies white streaks creeping along the dark wet wood. The vireos seemed to be the rear-ward birds without being completely left behind.

But the flycatchers were either last of all or far ahead of everyone else, their habit of perching immobilely, then darting out in quick sorties and returning to perch again delaying their progress until, with a quick burst, they launched off to perch once more a dozen trees ahead to wait for the crowd to catch up.

Three were good enough to sing an incomplete song—"aa-wee" instead of "pee-aa-wee"—plaintive as in summer, giving me an additional identification mark besides the yellowish or lightish lower mandible and the wingbars. Other smaller individuals, too difficult to

recognize in the field, I recorded as "flycatchers."

The warblers made the day memorable in its challenge. Could I identify these nondescript flutterers in their often drab autumn plumage? Nashvilles, Redstarts, Black and Whites—these were easy. But the difficult ones—talk about holding one's breath. I did, almost prayerfully, concentrating on backs and legs and the color of under tails.

Suddenly I found that the stray bits of information I'd noticed in these years of rather careful observation now gathered into focus. The difficulties of washed-out and puzzling fall plumages became a little less baffling. Among the many similar greenish forms I was able to distinguish between the light legs and streaked back of the Blackpoll and the dark legs, the streaked back and buffy under tail of the Bay-breasted (though fortunately, most of these individuals had the easily-recognized tinges of bay on the sides); between these two species and the plain or unstreaked back and dark legs of the Pine Warbler (when that always difficult bird confounds the difficulty by appearing with a grayish breast faintly washed with buff and practically unstreaked).

Recognition did seem easier, though some stumped me completely. I wrote them off as "warblers." But I remembered Roger Tory Peterson's sage remark: "If at the end of 10 years of field work you can say you know the fall warblers you are doing very well." As it happened, this autumn was my tenth year of warbler-study. But I doubted that I was doing well.

Nevertheless in something better than the next three hours I identified and counted 17 species of warblers, numbering 170 individuals and ranking them in the following order:

Nashville	36
Orange-crowned	29
Bay-breasted	25
Black and White	24
Wilson's	15
Tennessee	10
Redstart	5
Parula	5
Chestnut-sided	3
Blackpoll	3
Canada	2
Pine	2
Black-throated Green	2
Myrtle	2
Blackburnian	1
Yellow	1
Yellowthroat	1

A dire note appears in the Myrtle numbers—I saw only two when in previous years this species was among the most abundant.

The surprise came with the 5 Parulas, a bird uncommon in Sioux Falls. Larson (1925. "The Birds of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Vicinity," WILSON BULL., 27(2):72-76) does not mention it in his ten-year study (1906-1916), but Over and Thomas' revised edition of BIRDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA (1946:179) contains the statement that it "has been seen in Yankton and Minnehaha Counties" without indicating sources or dates.

Stephens, Youngworth and Felton (1955. "The Birds of Union County," ibid., 1:27) consider it a rare migrant, citing a spring observation made by Youngworth on May 11, 1934. Published fall records seem to be unavailable. I have one unpublished occurrence, Oct. 3, 1955.

Four of the birds in the 1959 concentration had chestnut breast bands only slightly obscured in the fall plumage.

(Continued on Page 79)

General Notes of Special Interest

UNUSUAL BIRDS AT YANKTON—We especially missed the Harris' Sparrows this year on the Christmas count and the Tree Sparrows were certainly scarce. We did not, however, cover our area so well as formerly because of the interesting stragglers near the dam of Lewis and Clark Lake. It was something new for me to be watching an Old Squaw, Killdeer, sandpiper, Field Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow at Christmas Count time.

On the 10th of January, when I was on my way out to the dam, I was surely surprised to see a Red-headed Woodpecker—the first I have seen here in winter. That day I saw six Meadowlarks too. I had missed them on the count.

On the 3rd of January the sandpiper and Killdeer were again at about the same place near the dam as on December 30. It was not until the 24th of January that I returned again. The Sandpiper was there and looked lonely without his companion, the Killdeer. But not far away I flushed a Wilson's Snipe from the weeds at the water's edge. A second time it flushed and I had a good view of it.

The afternoon of January 31, going out to the dam for a few minutes, I was glad to find the sandpiper still there. He was not so lively that day and allowed me to get quite close. Besides his slight limp, which he had acquired since I first met him, he now had something wrong with his right wing. It stuck out over his back a couple of inches.

When I got quite close he called a couple of times and fluttered three or four feet. I slowly advanced, thinking perhaps I could capture him and take him home until the wing healed.

A second time he fluttered a short distance. I could see now that it was a Least Sandpiper. Suddenly he was in the air and continued to fly very well for about a hundred yards.

I did not disturb him again and am hoping he can hold out for the rest of the winter, which must be hard on him. **—Willis Hall, Yankton.**

* * * *

PRAIRIE FALCON IN MINNEHAHA COUNTY—Published records of the Prairie Falcon in eastern South Dakota are not very plentiful.

McChesney does not include it in his "Notes on the Birds of Fort Sisseton, Dakota Territory" (1879:71-103) which seems to cover at least a part of the northeastern area; nor does Youngworth list it in his study of the same area sixty years later (1935. "The Birds of Fort Sisseton, South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 47:209-235).

Agersborg's "Birds of Southeastern Dakota" (1930. PROC. SOUTH DAKOTA ACAD. SCI., 13:27) refers to it as "rare during spring migration." Visher (1915. "A List of Birds of Clay County, Southeastern South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 27(91):328) describes it as "occasional except in midsummer."

Stephens (1918. "Notes on the Birds of South Dakota with a Preliminary List for Union County," PROC. IOWA ACAD. SCI., 25:89) did not record it although more recently Youngworth

considered it "a casual winter visitor" in Union County (1955. Stephens, Youngworth and Felton, "The Birds of Union County, South Dakota," OCC. PAPERS, NEB. ORN. UNION, 1:8).

Neither editions of Over and Thomas' BIRDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA (1921; rev., 1946) mentions its occurrence in the east.

A recent sight record by Alfred Peterson (1953. S. D. BIRD NOTES, V:42) notes that near Brandt, S. Dak., a Prairie Falcon harried a flock of Baird's Sandpipers without however apparently actually preying on them.

Published accounts for Minnehaha County seem to consist of Larson's single May 5, 1912 record (1925. "Birds of Sioux Falls, South Dakota," WILSON BULL., 37:29).

Other occurrences there undoubtedly were but these apparently have not been published or brought to the attention of editors of BIRD NOTES.

Therefore, perhaps the following sight record may be of some interest. On January 28, 1960, I saw a hawk perched in a tree in Woodlawn Cemetery.

It appeared to be larger than crow size. With a 7x35 binocular I saw that its overall coloration was very palish with a brownish tinge shading off into grayish.

Its feet were yellow but the legs seemed short; that is, it did not seem to "stand up high" as a Cooper's or a Sharpshinned Hawk does when it perches on a limb. Instead this bird seemed more "crouched down."

What I could see of the tail seemed to have several pale bands on it. The light breast was striped.

As I approached the bird took off. The pointed wings (which eliminated both the Cooper's and the Sharp-shinned Hawks) and the dark patch where the wing and the body came together (the axillars region) confirmed my feeling that this was not an accipiter but a falcon.

Its size (crow-size or better) ruled out the smaller Pigeon and Sparrow Hawks (which are a little more than Robin-sized).

The pale lightish coloration seemed to exclude the similar-sized Duck Hawk or Peregrine Falcon which is bluish-black above, quite light below and has very prominent dark "moustaches" running down from the eye over the cheek. But the black axillars seemed to be the "clincher."

The scarcity of records probably reflects the continuing prejudice against the raptores as a group of birds.

However, an impressive array of evidence, gathered by institutional and governmental biologists alike, indicate that early reports of predations by hawks and owls probably have been highly exaggerated or based on erroneous or insufficient data, a fact which, in these days of what is sometimes called "a new enlightened look at wildlife relationships," ought to persuade even the most "die-hard" among the conservationists and sportsmen to take another look at the charge made against the raptores.—Herbert Krause, Dept. of English, Augustana College, Sioux Falls.

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AS THE OWL HOOTS—Near dark a Great Horned Owl, hooting on our back yard light pole and another one in trees south of house.

Mocked them and watched from side porch for some time. Another one answered from a quarter mile away.

They put head forward and raise the wings slightly, tail flips up when they hoot, much like actions of a Turkey when it gobbles.—Lowry Elliott, Milbank.

WARBLING VIREO BEHAVIOR — 7-12-59. Not far from Lake Onahpe, a pond in the city limits of Armour, stands a big elm where Warbling Vireos nest and sing each year. Always one of the pair sings all day, six songs to the minute. I assume this is the male. The other, completely silent, is assumed to be the female. This year the bird was across the road in an apple orchard. It flitted about, then down to a 4-foot seedling sprout, and back to the tree.

When this procedure had been repeated several times, I knew something was bothering the bird. Then a fledgling vireo emerged from the grass and hobbled up close to the base of the seedling. After several approaches and retreats, the mother vireo flew to the slender seedling and reached down to feed the young one. She then disappeared.

The male had been singing in the big tree. When the mother returned in a couple of minutes he came across the road with her. On hearing his father's voice, the young vireo crouched down several times, as though to spring into flight; but he did not try it.

But, in the next ten minutes, while the old birds moved about the trees, the young one worked himself up into the seedling sprout to the top, fell or jumped to the ground, tried again, and found a perch on a horizontal twig where his mother fed him.

7-13-59. An amazingly loud cry from one of the vireos, scolding us, in a voice loud enough for a blackbird, a powerful squall. The young one was on the ground just inside the orchard fence, where we must have nearly stepped on him.

As we stood still the mother came with a worm, voicing a low "tick-tick", to feed her young one right before us. All the while the male was singing in the big tree across the road.

During his mate's frantic squalling at us he came across the road once for a quick look at us, then returned to his post. Plainly, his duties were there. This situation, including the young one, was woman's work.

7-14-59. This time we looked everywhere for the young vireo—then found him right beside us on the bottom wire of the fence. I sketched him and Mrs. Crutchett photographed me in the act, while he posed, utterly unworried by our presence.—Chas. P. Crutchett, Armour.

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President's Page

(Continued from Page 63)

what ideas you have on each of these questions.

If you will not be able to attend the main meeting, personally, talk them over with a director or write to me and state your position. Some tentative policies may be evolved as a result of the meeting this spring.

—N. R. Whitney

* * *

BURROWING OWLS—H. F. Chapman, 516 Security Bank Building, Sioux Falls, will run his Burrowing Owl study through the current year. The meager reports received to date are not enough for completing it, though it is hoped that owls are more plentiful than reports.

We might say that the question now is: Are the owls nearly gone, or do people know them when they see them, or, do observers just fail to report?

Again Mr. Chapman asks that anyone knowing the location of any of these birds give him a note on it, indicating if they are known to be nesting or merely sighted. Also if these are repeats of years before or seen this year for the first time.

Any material or sources of further information will be deeply appreciated.

Harris' Sparrow

(Continued from Page 64)

The Harris' Sparrow is not an uncommon winter resident in South Dakota and Iowa, where apparently in the earlier days it did not winter. In a time when many of our native birds are being depleted in numbers, here is a fine species of sparrow apparently as common today as it was in Audubon's day, over one hundred years ago.—Sioux City, Iowa.

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Author's footnote: Suggested reading for SDOU members is Elliott Coues' "Birds of the Northwest: A handbook of the Ornithology of the Region Drained by the Missouri River and Its Tributaries." 1874. This book is full of facts about early day bird work in the Dakotas and if your interests run to the history of your state you will be pleased at the many accounts and mentions of Fort Randall, the Vermillion River, Bijou Hills, Big Sioux River, the Black Hills and many more.

(Mallory's "Harris's Sparrow in S. D." BIRD NOTES IV:4, 5 is also suggested reading.—Ed.)

THE COVER . . .

Wayne Trimm writes of his speaking likeness of the Gray Jay: "The Jay and the moose are two of the creatures I collected with bow and arrow (on last October's hunting trip to Newfoundland)."

Besides his art work for the New York Conservation Department, and his other manifold activities, Trimm is about to start on the illustrations for a book.

He sends regards and greetings to all his friends in South Dakota.

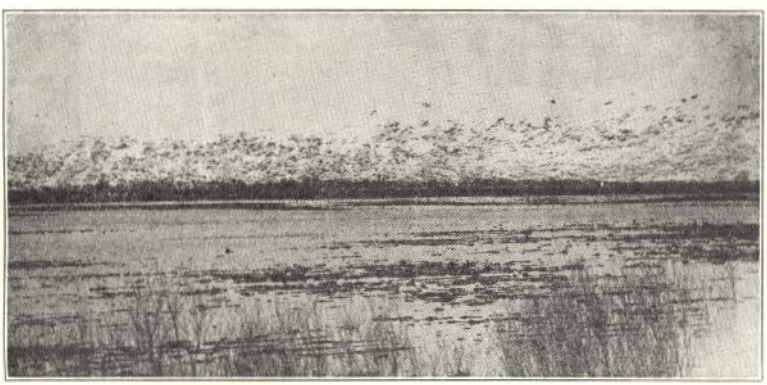
Unusual Migration Waves

(Continued from Page 71)

The fifth had only the faintest tinge on a rather bright yellow breast.

But the wingbars, conspicuously white, and the greenish patch on the back, faintly washed with a bluish tint, made the identification not too difficult. In fact, there is a hint of bluish about the bird even in this garb.

All in all, it was a warbler "day," one to break the dullness of an otherwise very inactive migration. — English Dept., Augustana College, Sioux Falls.



Blue Geese Near Sioux City, Iowa

—Courtesy of Wilson Bulletin

Editorial Comment

"Unusual" might be our theme for this number. We did not select it or invent it, had only to bow to overwhelming evidence. It was made, as these things should be, by the incoming data.

As our own observations were confirmed by material arriving for this issue, given numerical value by the Christmas Counts, filled out by accompanying details, there was no other word for it. This is an unusual year.

Our favorite and usual winter birds are few or absent altogether: Tree, Harris' Sparrows, Juncos. One of our most common warblers, the Myrtle, was hard to find either in spring or fall. The Christmas Count was down from 78 to 65 species, a drop of 13 from last year.

Had that been the whole story we would have said it was a year of disaster and hoped for better next season But it was only one angle.

The scattering of western birds reported in the eastern part of the state, the Pinion Jay and Solitaire at Huron, the Prairie Falcon at Sioux Falls, were just preliminaries to the larger events.

Four big avian shows fortunately had literate observers who would take the trouble to describe them for the rest. For those of us who have never seen anything of the sort, probably Adelene Siljenberg's view of the flock of a hundred Sandhill Cranes at Vermillion would be the top attraction.

The other acts, all observed and reported by Herbert Krause, makes it appear that Sioux Falls is a spot favored above all others. And we outlanders cannot help but agree that, for not seeing them ourselves, having Krause tell us about them is consolation at its best.

Nest of Broad-Winged Hawk

—Courtesy of Wilson Bulletin