

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Official Publication  
of  
SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION  
(Organized 1949)

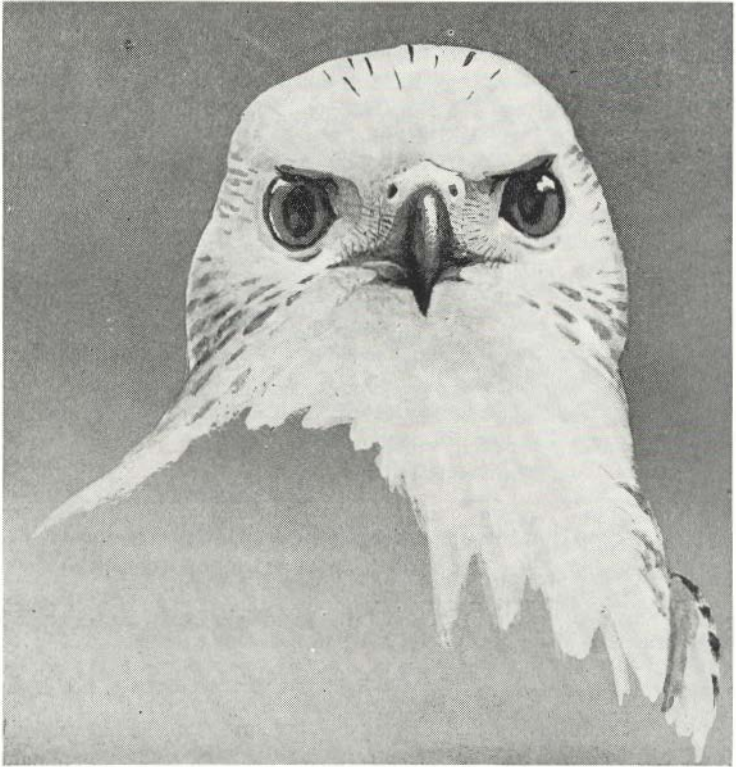
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Vol. XIII, No. 4

DECEMBER, 1961

Whole No. 51

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WHITE GYRAFALCON

—Wayne Trimm

South Dakota Bird Notes, the Organ of South Dakota Ornithologists Union, is sent to all members whose dues are paid for the current year. Adults, \$3.00; Juniors (10-16) \$1.00 per year. Single and back copies \$1.00 to non-members; \$0.50 to members. All dues should be remitted to the Treasurer, Dr. L. J. Moriarty, 302 New Midland Building, Watertown, S. Dak. All manuscripts for publication should be sent to the Editor, J. W. Johnson, 1421 Utah Ave. SE, Huron, S. Dak. Orders for back numbers should be sent to the Librarian, Herman P. Chilson, Webster, S. Dak. Published Quarterly.

Vol. XIII, No. 4

December, 1961

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# President's Page

FOR years S. D. O. U. members have been asking for two semi-annual meetings of the organization in place of the one annual meeting we usually have in late May. They would like to add a mid-winter meeting mainly for papers, forums and the like. This would mean that the time we usually spend inside for papers in May could be used to better advantage outside with more field work.

Eventually much of our business and election of officers could also be done at the winter meeting. Because of the difficulty of travel in winter in our state it has been suggested that we divide the state in two parts and have two places to meet in the winter.



In compliance with these requests we are initiating a "paper-session" for this January in Sioux Falls with the hopes that it will be a success and that some of our western members can attend this year and help formulate a plan for a similar session out west.

The Community Room of the Home Savings Association in Sioux Falls has been reserved for January 27th from 8 to 10 p. m. and again on the 28th at 9 a. m. to 3 p. m. with time out for Sunday dinner on your own.

The program arranged by Dr. Holden

sounds most interesting. You will find the outline of this program in this issue.

At 3:30 the final treat of the session will be the Audubon Screen Tour (75c) at the High School Auditorium "Teton Trails" by Charles Hotchkiss. Let's all make a special effort to come to the January meeting.

In our eleven years of history we have become increasingly active in promoting preservation and conservation practices in South Dakota. Valuable records and observations on our bird populations have been made. In some parts of the state however, observations of bird life are untouched, and new members can help us in these efforts.

Inspection of our membership list shows at once that a higher percentage of members is located in the larger cities of the state. Probably this is to be expected. We might safely assume also that these locations would be the more promising for new members and act accordingly.

But we must not lose sight of our great need for members in other places, particularly among people living in the country.

A dollar Junior membership is a wonderful gift and often gets youth started on a lifetime avocation. A membership is also an ideal gift for shut-ins, and for many of your bird-minded friends.

It would also be a fine thing for our members to surprise Dr. Moriarty by immediately paying their 1962 dues.—  
**Ruth C. Habeger.**

# Shore Birds in 1961

Alfred Petersen

**E**VERYTHING is change. When this series of Shore Bird observations (of which this is the ninth) began in 1953 a trend toward drought conditions, more or less, had reduced many ponds, and even portions of larger waters, to a depth beloved of Shore Birds that like to pick and probe. As the process continued from year to year pond after pond dried out of existence, for weeds and sedge to take over. Fox Lake, Salt Lake and Bitter Lake itself are dry, Rush Lake badly affected, as are the Waubay Lakes, but happily the Oakwood Lakes and Lake Norden area has improved to nearly normal.

And so we come to the records, compiled from my daily jottings.

**Piping Plover.** May 8, 2 on Rush Lake.

**Ringed Plover.** April 21, 2 north of Florence; 5|6, 2 same place; 5|8, dozen or more Rush Lake.

**Killdeer.** March 15, 1; 3|30, 1; 3|31, 4; 9|20, common.

**Golden Plover.** May 14, 11 south of Altamont.

**Black-bellied Plover.** May 25, 2 at school 4 miles east of Brandt.

**Ruddy Turnstone.** May 20, 2 near Thomas; 5|21, 20 Rush Lake; 5|22, 3 east of Thomas and 20 on Lake Albert.

**Common Snipe.** Sept. 20, 4 near Clear Lake; 9|29, 12 near Thomas; 10|9, 4 at Clear Lake; 10|3, 1 at Hayti; 10|18, 1 Clear Lake.

**Upland Plover.** May 7, 1 at Altamont; 5|8, 1; 5|9, 3; 5|12, 2; 5|15, 5; 5|16, 7 on trip; 5|20, 2; 5|22, 5|30, 7|1 and 7|7, 1; 7|15, 3; 7|19, 2; 8|9 and 8|19, 1.

**Spotted Sandpiper.** May 8, 1; 5|12 and 5|15, 1; 5|16, several; 5|17, dozen

or more on Clear Lake; 5|18, the same; 5|19, 7|24 and 9|6, 1.

**Willet.** April 26, about 20 on Rush Lake; 5|6, 1; 5|8, 12 Rush Lake; 5|22, 2 Lake Albert; 7|19, 2 Rush Lake; 7|28, 3 at Altamont; 7|30, 1 young; 8|1, 1 near Thomas; 8|11, 2 Hayti.

**Greater Yellowlegs.** April 21, 1; 4|22, 1; 4|29, 2; 5|19, 10 at Bitter Lake; 7|23, 1 Fox Lake; 8|2, 1; 9|20, 2; 10|17, 3 Clear Lake; 10|21, 5.

**Lesser Yellowlegs.** April 21, 3; 4|22, 6 or 7; 4|26 and 4|28, few; 5|2, 12 Sioux River at Castlewood; 5|6, 15 Brandt and 10 northeast; 5|7, 5|8 and 5|15, several; 5|16, 7; 5|18, 5|19 and 5|21, few; 7|15 few near Thomas; 7|19, scattered; 7|23 and 7|28, a number; 7|30 and 8|1, few; 8|2, a dozen; 8|19, several; 8|22, many; 9|4, few; 9|20, 20 at Lake Alice; 9|21, 2; 9|25, scarce; 9|29, some near Thomas; 10|4, 1; 10|7, few Hayti; 10|12, 10 Lake Alice; 10|13, 5 on trip; 10|18, 2.

**Pectoral Sandpiper.** April 21, 2 or 3; 5|2, 2; 5|6, about 25 in sheep pasture at Brandt feeding 100 yards from my doorway and in line of sight. 5|8, not many; 5|14, about 80 again in the sheep pasture; 5|15, the same; 5|16 and 5|19, few; 7|15, 2; 7|19, 7|30, 8|1, 8|19 and 9|21, 2 or 3.

**White-rumped Sandpiper.** April 26, 4 Rush Lake; 5|8, several; 5|21, 1 or 2 Rush Lake; 5|22, 1 Lake Albert.

**Baird's Sandpiper.** April 3, 2 at Clear Lake; 4|26, few Rush Lake.

**Least Sandpiper.** May 16, 2 Lake Oliver; 7|19, some Rush Lake; 8|11, few at Hayti; 8|19, several Rush Lake.

**Dunlin.** May 8, 1 Rush Lake; 5|14, 1 at Brandt; 5|19, 20 or more at Bitter

(Continued on Page 141)

# Notes on Nest of Short-eared Owl

Chas. P. Crutchett

AS A BOY, in the first decade of the century I kept a nature journal. Most of my records were burned in 1926.

Looking over some remaining journals, I found these notes.

May 23, 1906—About sundown I was crossing a piece of newly-broken prairie, when a Short-eared Owl got up about fifty feet ahead, flopped off in a straight line, then swung away and lit on a nearby hill.

At that time I was surprised to see this owl in our county in the summer. Two different farm boy friends had reported to me finding an "owl's" nest on the ground, but I had felt it was a marsh hawk's nest and written off the reports.

From what I had seen of these owls they usually appeared in the coldest part of winter, coming in pairs in the latter part of December and the early part of January.

The owl's small body appeared much larger than it really was, due to the long, heavy feathers which protected it from the cold. I thought that all the short-eared owls nested far to the north of Douglas County.

With the idea in mind that I had found a straggler, a late migrant, I nevertheless held my eyes carefully on the place where the bird was flushed, and walked quickly to the spot.

The plow had laid two or three furrows together with the grass side up, forming a patch of grass about forty feet long and three feet wide. At about the middle, half-way from either end of this strip of sod, I found a nest. In it were three, pure white, chalky-



Nest of Short-Eared Owl

—Chas. P. Crutchett, May 24, 1906

looking eggs. There was little nest—so little that it seemed doubtful if the owner had even bothered to bring one single extra blade of dry grass for her home. She may have dropped her eggs there without troubling at all to make a nest.

May 24, 1906—When I approached the nest the freshest-looking egg was gone. There were no signs of egg-shell nearby.

I heard a sound something like a mouse squeaking. About five feet in front of me on the ground, was the owl. She was a fearsome sight. The feathers of her head and body were all fluffed out. As she uttered the queer squeaking sound, she spread her tail and beat her wings on the ground. This, with her large, grotesque face, made quite a frightening appearance.

I thought that she might fly at me. As I held my ground, she gave up in a minute or two and flew off. As she

flew, she would occasionally beat her wings rapidly for a moment, as if to demonstrate her anger at my intrusion.

I started toward home, but had not gone far, when I saw a marsh hawk eating something on the ground. I investigated and found the prey to be a cottontail rabbit.

The hawk flew east, toward the owls' nest. At the same time another marsh hawk came from the east westward toward the nest. As the two marsh hawks met near the owls' nest, probably accidentally, the pair of owls rose to defend what seemed to be a danger to their home.

The pair of marsh hawks and the pair of short-eared owls then put on a fight. It was easy to tell the owls from the hawks, the owls' flight being much more buoyant. Each species, hawk and owl, seemed to try to get above its antagonist. However, as the attacker approached, the other bird would quickly rise and let its adversary pass beneath it.

No actual contact was made. It looked less like a battle—more like a mock fight. Finally one hawk lit near the owls' nest. An owl chased it away.

Thus ended the fight. The two hawks left and one owl lit at the nest.

**June 4, 1906**—On arrival at the nest I found that one egg was pipped. A little, dead field mouse lay at the side of the nest.

I returned to the nest an hour or so later and found the egg had hatched.

The mother owl lit a few feet from me and, spreading her wings on the ground, she squeaked and tried valiantly to frighten me away. The bluff did not work.

The young owl was practically naked. It had white down thinly scattered over the body. Its head was not overly large, not as much out of proportion

as are some young birds. It had a large eye and was blind.

**June 11, 1906**—There was still only one young owl. It was just one week old. It could nearly open its eyes. It was now very large. It could not hold its head up. It was a clumsy-looking bird. The downy covering was now thicker.

The mother owl, as usual, put on her squeaking act.

**June 16, 1906**—Before I reached the nest both adult owls flew over me close and snapped their bills. One owl was squeaking before I reached the nest. The young one snapped his bill at me. He lay a few inches from the nest.

The youngster now had brown and yellow down. He also had a few pinfeathers.

The egg was still unhatched. I took it home. It was the least bit rotten, but blew nicely.

**June 20, 1906**—The young owl was gone from the nest. One of the parent birds came over the hill and took a look at me, but made no fuss and went right back again. I walked over in the direction where it lit but found no young one. The owl reappeared, flew over toward the nest, but went way beyond, then flew back and lit on a distant hill.

It was now sixteen days since the young owl hatched. Possibly the young one had been seized by mink, hawk, or other predator.

A letter from Mary Barstow, Assistant Librarian, National Audubon Society, dated 9/1/1961, quotes A. C. Bent: "According to Urner (923) the young fly in from 31 to 36 days after being hatched and remain in the vicinity of the nest for six weeks, although they stray from it and hide in the surrounding grass long before they can fly,

(Continued on Page 102)

# Birds' Nests of South Dakota

L. J. Moriarty

## A. O. U. #316. MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaidura macroura*)

THE Mourning Dove is the only member of this family in our area, being a plentiful nester throughout the state. Formerly it did not nest in numbers west of the Missouri River. Now, with many stock water ponds and more trees, it has become common there.

Nests are usually found at levels of less than 10 to 12 feet above ground, being commonly placed in plum thickets, low trees, and, especially, in spruce and cedar shelter belts, and in thickets along streams. They take advantage of almost every sort of location, even nesting on the ground within a few feet of trees.

A common location is the tops of the timber caps of pile bents under open deck railway bridges. On this flat surface, some 30 inches below the passing wheels of the trains, they lay their two eggs, with only a few straws or weed stems laid around to keep them rolling off the top of the foot wide timber.

They nest commonly in towns, even using toughs and platform projections on buildings. Many nests are built on top of nests of almost any other tree-nesting bird, late in the season, when the former owner is through with the nest. They are frequently found on old nests of grackle and robin in spruces. Two or three broods are reared in our state, new eggs being found as early as late April and as late as September.

The nest is a simple platform of twigs and weed stems but often simply

twigs, and so loosely laid that, at times, the eggs can be seen through the bottom of the nest. The nest has no real cup which is slightly dished like a coffee saucer and of much the same size, being from 5 to 8 inches across.

Two pure white eggs always complete the clutch. The eggs are ovate and about  $1\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{7}{8}$  inches. Often, at about the time the young leave the nest, a new nest is built and a second pair of eggs is laid.

In town or where Blue Jays are plentiful, I have often seen the Jay force the dove from the nest after a gallant fight, taking the young, up to half grown, and promptly ripping the crop open to eat the contents and then carry the young to another tree and devour it. It appears to me that nearly half the Mourning Dove nests are unsuccessful due to the Blue Jay. I have also seen the House Wren puncture their eggs whenever one nests in the Wren's territory.

Lowry Elliott of Milbank believes many more than half the Doves nesting in his area lose out to the Blue Jay. However, they try again and again and, sometime during the season are successful in rearing a family.

They are not colonial nesters but defend a very small territory. Sometimes their nests are no more than 6 to 8 feet apart.

You will never find a Cowbird egg in a Dove Nest. The young Dove is fed by regurgitation and the Cowbird by placing the raw food in its open mouth.

# S.D.O.U. Winter Meeting - 1962

January 27-28, 1962

## Place

Community Room, Home Savings Association, 11th & Main Avenue,  
Sioux Falls

## PROGRAM

Saturday 8:00 p. m., January 27

1. BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES - Willis Hall, Holden's, Mrs. Wheeler, Dr. Moriarty, and Dr. Rogge.
2. Informal reports on highlights of 1961 Christmas Bird Count by Compilers.

Sunday 9:00 a. m., January 28

1. Registration  
9:30 a. m.
2. NATURAL REGULATION OF BIRD NUMBERS - Dr. Don Progsulke.
3. Additional Papers.
4. Sandhill Crane Forum - Moderator, Dr. Moriarty.  
11:30 a. m. to 1:00 p. m. Lunch
1. EUROPEAN BIRDS AND BIRD CALLS - Dr. Olof Eyberg.
2. Additional Papers.
3. Informal Reports from banders on 1961 highlights - J. W. Johnson, L. Elliott, Nelda Holden, N. Whitney, S. Findley, and others.  
3:30 p. m.  
Audubon Screen Tour "Teton Trails," Charles Hotchkiss, at Washington Auditorium.

## Hotels and Motels

The Town House Motel, 415 South Phillips Avenue, is a nice new place. It is located about 2½ blocks from our meeting place. I have a letter from the manager quoting the following rates:

One person, single room	-----	\$ 7.50
Two people, one double bed		10.50
Two people, twin beds	-----	12.00
Two people, larger twin	-----	14.00

I was told these are year-round rates as they have no others. Check-out time is usually one o'clock but will be extended to three o'clock on request.

The Sheraton-Carpenter Hotel is just a block and a half from the Home Savings and also located on Phillips Avenue. Mr. Henry Ditmanson has this morning quoted me the following rates:

Room without bath, single,	<b>\$3.50;</b>
double,	<b>\$6.00;</b>
Room with bath, single	<b>\$4.85</b> and <b>\$5.85;</b>
Room with bath, twin beds,	<b>\$10.00.</b>

The Sheraton-Carpenter has free parking. Check-out time is usually 3 o'clock but will be extended to 4 or 5 on request.

Mr. Ditmanson suggested that attention be called to the Continental Dinner served at the Carpenter from 5 to 8 p. m. on Sundays.



# General Notes of Special Interest

## BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE EAGLE BUTTE AREA, SUMMER OF 1961—

Pied-billed Grebe  
Great Blue Heron  
Cooper's Hawk  
Marsh Hawk (2)  
Osprey  
Prairie Chickens (3 broods)  
Pheasants (few)  
Killdeers (abundant)  
Wilson's Snipe  
Spotted Sandpiper (few)  
Willet (Old one with three young seen 2½ miles east of Timber Lake. We stopped to admire them and what a fuss she made.)  
Mourning Doves (many)  
Black-billed Cuckoo  
Barn Owl  
Great Gray Owl (See Note below)  
Nighthawk (many)  
Red-headed Woodpecker (many)  
Downy Woodpecker (3)  
Red-shafted Flicker  
Eastern Kingbird  
Western Kingbird  
Crested Flycatcher (several)  
Cliff Swallows (few)  
Blue Jay  
Magpie (2)  
Black-capped Chickadee (several)  
Meadowlark (abundant)  
Baltimore Oriole (pair)  
Dickcissel (many)  
Goldfinch (pair)  
Lark Bunting (Abundant)

(Note on Great Gray Owl—This bird was found dead in the road near Timber Lake, apparently struck by a car. The head was almost totally destroyed. It was identified by Mrs. Linngren as a Great Gray Owl. When questioned for detail, with the suggestion of a

Barred Owl, she described it further: "As I approached it on the highway, I saw a huge slate-colored heap of feathers. I stopped, turned the bird over. Its wing-spread must have been at least 50 inches. The feathers on its legs completely covered the foot. Its feathers on the front were dark gray and white. The back and wings were very dark, slate-colored."—Ed.)

Except as noted otherwise most of the above birds were seen in the Eagle Butte vicinity. We had our camp very close to a small creek and most of the birds were right there.—Mrs. Elmer Linngren, Strandburg.

\* \* \* \*

CATTLE EGRETS—I have seen the cattle egret in Florida and also in Europe. It is a small white heron-type bird seen near the feet of cattle eating insects from the cattle manure or flushed by the grazing animals. Sometimes they are even seen riding on the backs of cattle. In the breeding season the head and back show buffy patches of feathers and the beak and legs are yellow.

They are native of southern Europe and northern Africa. Unaided by man they have expanded their range to northern Europe and Asia, and some have gotten across the Atlantic.

They were first reported about 1930 in British Guiana. By 1950, there were small colonies in Florida. Since then they have migrated northward to New Jersey and then southward to Texas. A few individuals have been reported in Maine, Minnesota and Kansas.

This fall Lyle Schoonover, manager of Waubay Refuge, reported to me the

sighting of a cattle egret and wanted to know if it was the first seen for South Dakota. His expanded note appears in this issue. S.D.O.U. members should be aware of this unusual migrant and report it to your editor.—**Ruth C. Haebe**ger.

\* \* \* \*

**FIRST CATTLE EGRET IN SOUTH DAKOTA?**—A cattle egret sighted at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge from July 17 through July 20, 1961, was observed by several members of the station staff. These include Lyle J. Schoonover, Refuge Manager; Kenneth Larsen, Assistant Refuge Manager; John DeGrazia, Research Biologist; Timothy Dilworth, Student Assistant and Elmer Podoll, Refuge Mechanic.

This bird was first observed on a fence post near the open shoreline of a bay in the refuge pool. The pasture in the area was quite closely grazed. Other observations were made when the bird frequented the open shoreline of a small pond in a pasture within one-eighth mile of the first sighting. When disturbed, the egret usually flew to the nearest fence post. Cattle were present in the pastures used by the egret, but it was never observed with them.

Due to the wariness of this egret, most of the observations were made with the aid of a 20-power spotting scope. The plumage was white with rufous markings on the back, breast and crown of head. When perched or flying the bird's head was not extended, but held close to the body similar to that of a black crown night heron. A number of searches by refuge personnel for additional observations proved fruitless after July 20th.—**Lyle J. Schoonover, Refuge Manager, Columbia.**

**MANY DEAD BIRDS FOUND**—Many dead birds have been found in Watertown since last spring, more than half of them under a certain school window that faces north. Under this window these birds have been found dead: 5 Swainson's Thrushes, 1 Junco, 2 Chickadees, 1 White-throated Sparrow, 1 Phoebe and one Red-breasted Nuthatch. Earlier in the spring two other birds were found under this same window, a Redstart and a Gray-cheeked Thrush.

This strange window, facing north, is two stories high, with no shades. The birds seem to be hitting the window during migration.

The school has no first story windows but has eight of the two story windows in the two rooms above. You cannot see through the building because there are no windows in the other three sides of the school rooms.

Two spruce trees stand about 20 feet north of the windows and are about the same height. Between the trees and the school are shrubs about three feet high.—**Bill Talen, 909 N. Maple NW, Watertown. Age 11.**

\* \* \* \*

**AMERICAN BITTERN STOPS AT BELLE FOURCHE**—Every migration time, spring and fall, has brought to our little lake some bird that, except for an accident in flight might never have been there.

This year it appeared there would be no strangers—until Sunday morning. And there it was. An American bittern.

No bittern, unless forced to do so, would stand in the open on the bank of a lake in full view of the house. We watched it feed on the small crustaceans and once dart out with its big bill to catch a frog and gulp it down. The bird fed around the lake until it

came to the cattail draw, where it disappeared. Probably it is there now. One of its wings appeared to hang slightly lower, and this may have caused the bird to drop to the spot of water on our hill.—Irma G. Weyler, **Daily Belle Fourche Post**, 9-17-61.

\* \* \* \*



### Robin Apartments, Brandt

—W. A. Rose, Clear Lake

A ROBIN FANTASY—The Robin is not an expert nest builder, nor is it finicky about its location. But to find four nests in a row, one to each step of four, as seen May 15, 1961, on an outdoor stairway of an old frame building at Brandt, was very much of an oddity. Bent Bulletin 196, page 20, says: "Several cases have been reported in the literature where Robins have built a series of nests placed on a row along a beam."

The four nests as seen on the stairway is equivalent to this statement by Bent. Six low steps were vacant; next in order were the nests, of which No. 2 and No. 4 were occupied by two Robins incubating two eggs each, the two odd nests being empty. It would have been interesting to check earlier to find if four individuals chose this unusual site, two to abandon their shares, or if

the two on eggs each had an extra nest of its own.

W. A. Rose, from Clear Lake, took many pictures of the scene.

The Robins? They left. Couldn't take the publicity.—Alfred Peterson, **Brandt**.

\* \* \* \*

### MARKED GOOSE AT RUSH LAKE—

On June 4, 1961 Kate and I were at Rush Lake and, in looking over a flock of Lesser Canada Geese, Kate discovered one with a pink plastic neck ribbon. I reported the observation and was told that this bird was tagged, one of 146, on the west side of Hudson's Bay in 1960.

This was the fourth sighting, plus 17 shot and reported. I expect to get the completed reports from the man from Cornell who did the marking.

Just an observation of how the amateur can contribute—by making his observations known.—L. J. Moriarty, **Wartertown**.

\* \* \* \*

BIRD HAVEN NOTES—Have had very few warblers this fall, both in numbers and species. Although lots of berries and apples for robins they have been much fewer here than last year. Have only banded 59 this year. About 25 to 30 seen here daily now.

Harris' Sparrows, Slate-colored juncos and Tree Sparrows have been plentiful.

October 29. Banded a Northern Shrike. Rough-winged Hawks seen daily, a Blue Heron here yet, also Yellow-legs, Chickadees, Blue Jays, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, a White-breasted Nuthatch coming to feeders now.

BOOKLETS (For Juniors, perhaps, or beginners):

"Bird Stories" by Wm. T. Cox and Dietrich Lange. Over 100 pages full of

interesting bird lore by two great naturalists.

Many illustrations, stories about many kinds of birds, how to attract, how to identify and about migration.

Nowhere can you get so much interesting information about birds for so little money. Obtain it from the "Farmer Bird Club", 55 East 10th St., St. Paul, Minn., for thirty cents.

**"Introduction to Our Bird Friends."**

Text by L. B. Carson and illustrations by Orville O. Rice. Contains 100 black and white drawings of common birds and four natural color plates (32 birds). Beautiful natural illustrations of each bird and information text with a bit of poetry. Very good. From Capper Publications, Topcka, Kansas, for fifty cents, postpaid.—Lowry Elliott, Milbank.

\* \* \* \*

**LEAST TERN AT RUSH LAKE**—On September 7, 1961, I saw my first Least Tern: smaller than a black tern, flight different and distinctive, bill mostly dark, tail more square, forehead white, forewings darker, and having white underparts.

I had an excellent view as it fed back and forth over favored feeding areas of shallow water.

Herman Chilson told me that he and Herbert Krause had seen Least Terns in that area in spring.—Lowry Elliott, Milbank.

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**GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN NEAR WATERTOWN**—On August 27, about 1:30 p. m., Mrs. Moriarty, Mrs. R. K. Newcomb and I were driving on Highway 20 about 1½ miles northwest of Watertown when a bird flew from the corner of the Municipal Airport directly across in front of the car.

Mrs. Newcomb and I simultaneously said: "Prairie Chicken." The bird alighted between the rails of a railroad

track which was bordered by a soilbank field of brome grass.

As I had shot many prairie chickens, both the Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) and the Sharp-tail (*Pedioecetes phasianellus*) I feel certain it was the former. There was a lot of traffic, but I stopped as soon as I could and went back for a better look: however the bird went into the brome grass field and I was unable to flush it again.

The airport has about 1500 acres in grass that is mowed once a year in late July and August. I wondered if this large undisturbed grass area, along with the soilbank, had not attracted a few of the remaining Prairie Chickens.

This bird does not like trees or brush for summer as does the Sharp-tail which is still fairly plentiful in spots west of the Missouri. I checked with the airport manager, asking if he had seen any large strange bird there. He told me that he flushed two birds as large as pheasants that had short tails and were not the same color and wondered what they were.

I intend to do some more watching and checking for these birds in the future. I had not seen one for 25 years but shot many within 5 miles of Watertown up to the time the season was closed on them in the late 1920's. I feel very sure of what I saw but will try to find more evidence.—L. J. Moriarty, Watertown.

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**MOCKINGBIRD AT HIGHMORE**—A bird appeared here, in our back yard, on April 23, 1960. I watched it through the binocular and then wrote in my bird notes:—A relative of the Brown Thrasher, apparently. Gray with white on wings and tail. Same size and habits as the Brown Thrasher.

Then I searched through our books

for a Thrasher that would fit that description. It never occurred to me at the time to consider the Mockingbird because it isn't supposed to be here. Later I was reading about it and realized my bird had to be a Mockingbird. We are familiar with shrikes and catbirds and it couldn't be either of those.

On September 20, 1961 Nanci was scouting around the place with the binocular. A good variety of birds was here at that time and she saw the Mockingbird. It was in a tree and close enough she could observe it carefully. The description she gave was definitely of the Mockingbird. The next day Lois was home from school with a cold. She spent most of the day watching birds in the back yard. Apparently she saw the bird also.

We have learned from experience,

when we see a new bird, to assume that is the only time we will see it and to check everything possibly needed for identification. Then, if it doesn't leave, we call others to see it. For that reason I didn't get to see the Mockingbird this fall.—Mrs. M. Harter, Highmore.

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EARLY STOCKING OF FEEDING TRAYS SAVE BIRDS IN EARLY STORM AT BELLE FOURCHE—A winter wonderland on Oct. 29. Trees weighted down with white after a day of sprinkles which increased to showers and steady rain which turned to snow at sundown. The snow clung to side surfaces as well as tops because it formed from rain up, and was so solidly fastened that it did not dislodge in the light breezes but clung until the ice



BOBWHITE

—E. W. Steffen

which held it was melted by the warm sun Monday morning.

Birders who stocked their feeding stations early so that birds knew where to come in a storm, were paid for their effort with a bird show. Our station was host both Sunday and Monday to all the regular visitors and a number of newcomers.

There were the bluejays and chickadees who liked the suet tacked up in the elm tree over the terrace, though the jays fed too on the peanuts and the grain on the tray. There was the evening grosbeak flock, feeding at the terrace tray for the first time in all the years we have had them as regular visitors. They prefer the Russian olives, now on the ground under the hedge, but the olives were covered with several inches of ice and snow. They undoubtedly had located the stocked feeding tray weeks before and knew where to come in a storm.—*Irma G. Weyler, Daily Belle Fourche Post. 10-31-61.*

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**SPRAGUE'S PIPIT**—On September 29, 1961, I saw six Sprague's Pipits north of Clear Lake at Thomas. These were my "first" of this species. McCown's Longspur and Baird's Sparrow are still absent from my list.—*Alfred Peterson, Brandt.*

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**BONAPARTE'S GULL AT RUSH LAKE**—April 25, 1961, I took the R. B. Caves of Watertown to Rush Lake. It was raining and the wind blowing 45 miles per hour from the east.

We saw an estimated 150 Hudsonian Godwits, 20 Marbled Godwits, and 50 Avocets.

But the thrill was to see a Bonaparte's Gull at about 30 feet, sitting and flying. There was no question in my mind: Smaller than a Franklin's, with a black head and no eye-ring, black not reaching as far behind the

head as with the Franklin's, no window in the wing tip, slightly larger than the common tern, all-white, rounded tail, orange-red legs.

And, to clinch it: A white triangle taking up most of the primaries of the wing, with black tips showing on its trailing edge.

I note it is not on our check list, but "Over" says it migrates through here in the fall.

It is the smallest of our gulls. Coues says, under 'Habitat': "Middle America but no valid reference seen." I feel certain this was a full plumaged Bonaparte's Gull and should be included in our new check list. I do not doubt others in our group have seen them, but this is a first for us.—*L. J. Moriarty, Watertown.*

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**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE IN BEADLE COUNTY**—October 14, 1961, in the late afternoon, we saw a Townsend's Solitaire near the west end of a tree strip about one mile north of the south line of Beadle County and two miles east of Highway 37.

Miss Blanche Battin, Mrs. Johnson, and I saw and studied the bird for some thirty minutes at distances from a hundred down to fifty feet with 7 x 50 binoculars. All the usual marks and attitudes of a Solitaire were noted, except that the white eye-ring was much less distinct than usual, though present.

Part of the time the bird was in a Russian olive tree bearing fruit and would occasionally pick and eat an olive. However it sat on the same limb during the feeding period, never hovering in the air with beating wings to pick the fruit and then going to some solid perch or to the ground to eat it as we have seen them do regularly when eating juniper berries.

After showing signs of nervousness at our closer approach, the bird took

off toward a big lone tree a quarter mile to the northeast and was lost to sight.

A trip to the same area the next day failed to locate the bird a second time, though careful search was made.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron.**

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**URBANIZED SNIPE AT WATERTOWN**—As most of you know, I am not the ornithologist in this family—just tag along—and I seldom contribute anything to our Bird Notes.

Well, this experience was so unusual, and a first for me, I decided to let you in on it. On October 7, 1961 a friend of ours here in Watertown called my husband's office and described a bird that had been around his yard for about a week. He gave a good description and Mory said, "It sounds as if you had a Wilson's Snipe, but I have never seen one in town."

When Mory described the bird to me I was a total blank, for I was thinking of birds one would see in our yards. We drove to this yard and here was the Wilson's Snipe complacently digging for worms, and paying no attention to us.

I stood while Mory drove it toward me until it was within six feet of me. This yard was being watered regularly and the bird would go from the front to the back, following the watering program.

Snipes do like earth worms and it was really busy pulling them out with its specialized beak.—**Mrs. L. J. (Kate) Moriarty, Watertown.**

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**CROSSBILLS AT WAUBAY REFUGE**—The first record of Crossbills at the Waubay National Wildlife Refuge was in early November 1954 when a flock of 50 White-winged crossbills fed in the spruce trees at the Headquarters site. These birds were exceedingly tame and



Myrtle Warbler

—E. W. Steffen

would permit the manager to pick them up in his hand. When released they would continue feeding as though nothing had happened.

It was not until 1957 that this species returned. About 30 White-winged crossbills fed on the seeds of the spruce cones during November and most of December. The antics of these birds were very amusing, reminding one of a flock of parrots when they would hang upside down while opening the cones with their crossed mandibles. On a calm day they were easily located by listening for the sound of their feeding activities and falling cones. They would allow one to approach within a few feet but would not allow themselves to be picked up.

On October 7, 1960, Crossbills returned to the Waubay Refuge but this time it was the Red species rather than the White-winged. This is the first record for the Red Crossbill at the Waubay Refuge. Since we were familiar with the previous visits of the White-winged, special care was used to be certain of identification. The brick red body of the males was much darker than the

rosy pink of the White-winged and then too there were no markings on the dark wings. The flock of 20 to 25 fed in the spruce trees until the blizzard of Nov. 27th drove them out.

It may only be coincidence but each of the three years that Crossbills have been observed here, have been years when the spruce trees produced an abundant supply of cones. In 1958 and 1959, which were dry years, there were few cones and no Crossbills were seen.

Red Crossbills were observed several times in nearby Webster during the fall of 1960 as reported by Mr. Herman Chilson in Bird Notes.—**J. C. Carlsen, Refuge Manager.**

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#### WOOD DUCK SOUTH OF HIGHMORE

—With Bob Hawkins we went on a field trip the morning of August 26, 1961. There is a marshy area about six miles south of Highmore where a great variety of waterfowl can be seen each summer. We were checking that area and saw a duck standing on top of a fence post that was nearly submerged in the water.

Almost simultaneously the four of us said, "There's a Wood Duck." It was a male in eclipse plumage. We watched it through the binoculars until it left the post and swam in among some reeds where we couldn't see it.

The post it was on was close to the road, so we had a good view. Because he lives in Connecticut, Bob had seen wood ducks before but Nanci, Lois, and I had seen only pictures of them. The bird had the typical face markings and red eye of the male Wood Duck.—**Mrs. M. Harter, Highmore.**

\* \* \* \*

#### COMMON EGRETS AND BLUE HERONS VISIT BIRD HAVEN

—In late afternoon of September 5, 1961, I drove down to the garden on the banks of the North Fork of the Yellow Bank River. Near the garden a

long pool in the river has dried low and shallow, with mud banks.

Noticed some large white birds as I came in sight of the pool and stopped the car. They did not fly and I watched them for some time. There were 7 Blue Herons and 7 Common or American Egrets scattered around the pool.

They all seemed to be young birds. Two of the Egrets, with their snow-white plumage and bright yellow bills kept feeding closer to the car until they were not over 35 feet away. A beautiful sight and I watched until I had to leave. When the car started they rose gracefully and flew upstream. I did not see them again.—**Lowry Elliott, Milbank.**

\* \* \* \*

#### KINGLETS AND BROWN CREEPERS IN THE BLACK HILLS

—While fishing and birding near Rockford in the Black Hills, I observed many Golden-crowned Kinglets, one carrying a beakful of small bugs, which made me suspect that they breed here at about 6,000 feet elevation, in spruce. "Over" says we see them in migration only. Maybe Dr. Whitney can elaborate.

I also saw some Brown Creepers, which makes me wonder if they do not breed there also. This was in the last week of July and first part of August, 1959.—**L. J. Moriarty, Watertown.**

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#### EVENING GROSBEAKS GO NATIVE AT BELLE FOURCHE

—Chickadees and juncos have been feeding at our tray as long as we can remember. But the evening grosbeak is a newcomer. Until the past few years, this gloriously colored bird has been something to call the neighbors to see. At first the flocks were seen only in late February or early March when mild stretches of weather broke the winter's cold. Now they are seen all year long, less noticeable in the summer when they



are in nesting pairs than in fall and winter when they flock.

A few years ago the telephone rang daily after the grosbeak flock arrived, friend and stranger asking: Have you seen the gold, black and white birds with the big bills that make them look like little parrots? Now the calls have stopped. The newcomers have become natives like the robin and meadowlark.

Apparently the grosbeak hatch was good this year. The flock on our hill shows numerous young birds in proportion to adults.—**Irma G. Weyler, Daily Belle Fourche Post, October 21, 1961.**

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**KRIDER'S RED-TAILS FIGHT**—On April 15, 1960, near the east boundary of the Waubay National Wildlife Refuge in Day County, three Krider's Redtails were observed soaring in a northerly direction. Two of the hawks were soaring close together as though they were a pair. The third hawk made

repeated advances at what was presumed to be the female Krider's. The bird assumed to be the male of the pair attempted to drive off the intruder without success.

On one of his passes the intruder was attacked by the male and they locked talons in mid-air, buffeted each other with their wings and tore at each other with their beaks. They started fighting at an estimated 150 feet in the air and tumbled to the ground. The male of the pair appeared to get the best of the fight as he stood on top of the intruder and glowered at him. The intruder lay perfectly still and after about a minute the male flew off to rejoin its mate. The intruder lay on the ground for a few moments longer and then set off in another direction.

This incident was especially interesting since Krider's are uncommon in this locality.—**J. C. Carlsen, Refuge Manager, Waubay.**



## RED-TAILED HAWK

—E. W. Steffen

APPARENT MIGRATION OF LARK SPARROWS—On September 26, 1961, hundreds of Lark Sparrows were seen in an area in Marshall County, north of Britton and east to north of Lake City. The birds were in the roadside weeds and grass and, when approached, would fly off into the fields. No large groups were seen. Most were flushed as lone birds or flocks of half a dozen or so in one location. But the total present was large for the species.—**George Jonkel, Huron.**

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BARN OWLS NEST IN SIOUX FALLS —Barn Owls are listed in South Dakota as permanent residents in the southeastern part of the state although there has been little evidence to support it; as summer residents probably, but not necessarily breeding, in the Prairies and the northwest; as summer visitants, not breeding, in the southwest; and not listed in either the northeast or the Black Hills. (*Bird Notes*, VIII, 16.) However, there are few records of them in the State.

Bent's Life Histories (U. S. National Museum Bulletin 170, page 151.) says, "The range as above outlined includes the regions of more or less regular occurrence. Actual breeding, however, has been recorded only as far north as northern California; Omaha, Nebraska; Sioux City and Laporte City, Iowa; southern Michigan; southern Ontario; Winsted, Connecticut; and Chilmark, Massachusetts."

In view of this it will be of interest to know of a definite South Dakota breeding of Barn Owls somewhat farther north than those listed by Bent, and also unusually late in the year.

On September 11, 1961, Mr. H. F. Chapman telephoned me saying that he had been told of workmen at the Cargil Elevator, Sioux Falls, who had found

some unusual and unidentified young birds in the top of one of the storage bins. The men wanted the birds identified, and then were going to dispose of them unless someone wanted the little birds. Mr. Chapman asked me to phone others who might be interested. The next morning Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Melvin Wheeler went to Cargill's office and got the three young birds and took them to Wheeler's garage in a box.

The white, downy birds were identified as Barn Owls. They were of three sizes. The smallest appeared to be only a few days old and the largest to be perhaps a week older. Available literature says the eggs are laid at intervals of two or three days and incubation begins when the first egg is laid.

The birds quickly learned to take hamburger after it had been put into their mouths a couple of times. Mice seemed to be scarce but house sparrows were very acceptable and provided necessary roughage. After the hunting season opened the "cleaning" from game were promptly cleaned up.

The owlets grew rapidly and soon began to shed down and to grow feathers. One of them appeared on TV. All of them put on a show for the many interested people who came to see them, and the development has been faithfully recorded by half a dozen photographers.—**J. S. Findley, Sioux Falls, S. D.**

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SUMMER RECORD OF SANDHILL CRANE IN SOUTH DAKOTA—On July 19, 1961, a Sandhill Crane was observed on a pothole of about 70 acres, 6 miles southeast of Eureka, in McPherson County. The marsh is about 50 percent open water with the remainder largely round stemmed bulrush, flooded with a few inches of water.

The bird was seen feeding for a few

minutes after which it started walking off across the prairie. It took flight at our closer approach, seeming to be a healthy individual. Mr. Milt Reeves of Aberdeen also observed the bird.—**Jim Pulliam, Aberdeen.**

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**LATE CHIMNEY SWIFT MIGRATION**—On September 25, 1961, from about 5:30 p. m. until dark a flight of Swifts passed over Huron. Our attention was called to the flight by Jean's recognizing the calls. During the time we watched the birds, at least several hundred were seen, 10 to 20 being in sight at one time. They seemed to be in a sort of feeding flight but the drift was quite rapid to the south.

Chimney Swifts have seemed to stay here longer than usual this year, with occasional late sightings; however, the migration should have been through here about a month before this date.—**George and Jean Jonkel, Huron.**

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**NOTES ON RUSH LAKE**—Throughout August this year of 1961, there has been a large concentration of birds on Rush Lake. The lake has become quite shallow so that thousands of shore-birds are found.

Of particular interest to the motorists on the highway was a flock of a couple hundred pelicans. They could always be seen at some point of the lake.

Another unusual visitor in large numbers was the great blue heron. There would be one here and there over the entire lake.

This lake had had a large winter kill of fish during the winter of 59-60. No fresh water has come to Rush Lake the past two years. Its depth varies from six inches near the rushes to about fifteen inches near the highway.

Many people asked "What are the

pelicans eating?" I thought it probably was mud puppies. A state fisheries employee thought it was carp.

So on September 8, Col. Arthur von Rohr and I, with permission from the state warden, pulled a sieve to investigate. The day was very windy and if we had had more time we would have delayed the trip.

Col. von Rohr was in a duck boat and I at the other end of the sieve along the shoreline of the highway. Handling the duck boat and hauling a sieve in a high wind is a task for one man. However, we went only a short distance before we looked hopefully to see what we had.

We were surprised to find a nice catch of shiner minnows.

Now my theory is that a large number of adult minnows wintered in a spring-fed area somewhere in the lake, probably along the grade. These minnows put out a vast amount of spawn. With no fish competition, the hatch must have been enormous.

Rush Lake is two miles long by a mile and a half wide. Minnows seem to be thick throughout the whole lake.—**Art Lundquist, Webster.**

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**WARBLING VIREOS AT ARMOUR**—On May 22, 1961, I saw the first warbling Vireos of the season in the Armour Cemetery, one of them singing. Nearly every day from then on I heard and saw Vireos once or twice for several weeks, always in some tall elms and ashes at the end of a row of trees.

On June 6, at noon, two Vireos were singing at the same instant; one in a tall ash tree, the other in a locust about 80 feet away. I located the Vireo's nest on June 25, about 50 feet from the tall trees I had been watching, in a small ash whose topmost twig was only 35 feet from the ground. It was a

poor tree, with several large dead branches.

Although I visited the nest once or twice a day, it was July 14 before I saw a Vireo take food to the nest. Since the bird was singing I assumed the male.

I was watching on July 16, at noon, when a Vireo approached and entered the nest with food. After 3 or 4 minutes the bird darted out and I heard the male approaching with song. Fixing the binocular on the nest, I saw, clinging to the bottom of the nest, a young Vireo. After several spells of fluttering the youngster succeeded in climbing up the side of the nest and quickly disappeared within.

Two visits to the nest on July 17 revealed no signs of vireos. On the following days I heard the male Vireo singing in various nearby trees, but never glimpsed the young ones. They must have abandoned the nest on July 16 or 17.

On August 21, Mr. J. Armstrong, manager of the Armour Telephone Co., sent a man with me to the cemetery to recover the vireo nest. From the length of the pole holding the knife we determined that the nest was about 20 feet from the ground.—Chas. P. Crutchett.

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**THE BIRD WATCHER'S GUIDE** by Henry Collins, Jr., The Golden Press. 123 pages. Index. Color photographs and drawings. \$3.95.

Here is a new book for bird watchers with detailed discussion of "How to watch birds, Bird watching trips, Using binoculars and telescopes, Attracting birds, Bird Photography, Conservation," as listed on the jacket. But the table of contents shows 20 chapters and even a glance through the pages will show that there is much more from avocet and camera to squeaking and zoos. The many full color photographs and the drawings are good.—J. S. Findley.



Blue-Headed Vireo

—L. W. Steffen

**BLUEBIRDS**—It is always a pleasure to see them here. Never plentiful and very scarce for several years, they seem to be coming back.

On October 7, 1961. As I stood by the front gate, I heard Bluebirds. Whistled their plaintive flight call and they answered and came nearer. Soon there were 3 birds on the television aerial answering the calls. In a few minutes 3 more lit on the electric wires near the yard light pole. There were two adults and four young (a family?).

For about five minutes they answered my whistling and tried to locate where sounds came from, then flew away.

On July 29 I saw two families of Bluebirds along a road in South Shore area. Here at Bird Haven heard Bluebirds Aug. 6 and Aug. 29. On July 16, saw five one mile north of home.

September 21, six at foot of Marvin Hill along Highway 12.

For years I have seen Bluebirds in the following favored areas. This year, near Ed's mail box, two miles west of home, I saw them July 29, 2; October 8, 4; Oct. 9, 5.

Four miles west of here Sept. 11, 5; Sept. 17, 4; Seven miles west of home, July 29, a family.—Lowry Elliott, Milbank.

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## Shore Birds - 1961

(Continued from Page 84)

Lake; 5|20, 3 near Thomas; 5|21, about 100 Bitter Lake; 5|22, 1.

**Dowitcher.** May 7, 3 near Altamont; 5|8, about 100 Rush Lake and 1 near Castlewood; 5|15, 1; 5|16, 7 Lake Oliver; 5|19, 6 Rush Lake; 7|15, 20 Thomas; 7|19, 2 Thomas and 100 Rush Lake; 9|4, perhaps 20 at Hayti; 9|21, over 200 Lake

Albert; 9|25, 50 at same place; 10|7, some 100 at Hayti; 10|12, 3 Lake Alice; 10|13, 50 on Clear Lake at Thomas.

**Stilt Sandpiper.** May 21, 1 Rush Lake; 7|19, 12 near Thomas and some Rush Lake; 7|28, few at Altamont; 7|30, about 100 Altamont; 8|2, 50 at Altamont; 8|19, 20 Rush Lake; 8|22, many at Hayti; 9|4, 200 Lake Marsh.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper.** April 23, few Rush Lake; 5|2, 2 near Castlewood; 5|8, few Rush Lake; 7|19, several on trip; 7|29, 50 at Altamont; 8|1, 50 near Thomas; 8|2, few; 8|11, 20 Hayti; 8|19, few; 9|4, 5.

**Western Sandpiper.** May 20, on field trip to Clear Lake at Thomas, Dr. L. J. Moriarty found one of these held tightly in grille of his car. We can now be on the lookout for this species with renewed hope.

**Marbled Godwit.** April 26, 4 Rush



## FORESTER'S TERN

—Courtesy Wilson Bulletin, via Fred Pierce

Lake; 5|6, 1 at home; 5|8, 10 Rush Lake; 5|15, 1; 5|19, 6 at Bitter Lake and 4 elsewhere; 5|21, on field trip, 2 or 3 seen a time or two; 7|19, 1 near Thomas and 2 Rush Lake; 8|11, 1 Hayti; 9|4, 1 Hayti.

**Hudsonian Godwit.** April 26, 11 on Rush Lake, etc.; 5|8, 20 Rush Lake and 3 near Castlewood; 5|4, 2; 5|15, 4 Brandt; same date, 13 at Clear Lake and 17 near Clear Lake dump grounds; 5|16, 5; 5|19, 3 Altamont and 2, then 1 Rush Lake; 5|21, some 75 in restless flight at Bitter Lake.

**Sanderling.** May 8, 1 Rush Lake; 5|19, 3 Rush Lake; 5|21, 3 Rush Lake; 5|22, 2 Lake Albert.

**Avocet.** April 26, 25 Rush Lake and vicinity; 5|8, dozen or so at Clear Lake near Thomas and Rush Lake; 5|19, 4 Bitter Lake.

**Wilson's Phalarope.** May 2, 8 at Sioux River near Castlewood; 5|7, 10 near Altamont; 5|8, many on Rush Lake; 5|15, about 25 on School Lake north of Goodwin; 5|19, several, and a dozen at Bitter Lake; 5|21, few seen on field trip; 6|2, a pair at Clear Lake; 7|19, 1; 7|28, 1; 8|2, 2; 8|22, 12 at Hayti.

**Northern Phalarope.** May 19, 6 at Bitter Lake.—**Brandt.**

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## Notes on Short-eared Owl

(Continued from Page 86)

sometimes as early as two weeks from hatching."

When, on June 16th, I found the young owl a few inches from the nest, he was probably just taking off for the "tall timber"—the long grass which afforded better concealment.—**Armour.**

**PRAIRIE WARBLERS AT BIRD HAVEN**—September 7, 1961. As I made my early morning visit in our shelter belt trees to look at my bird traps, I heard a strange alarm chirp. In a few minutes saw a warbler in a nearby tree. It was dark-greenish on back with bright yellow under parts, heavy dark streaks or broken lines on the sides and a dark streak running through the eyes and on the cheek.

I had never seen a warbler like that before. It seemed unafraid and soon another one appeared. It was like the first one except colors duller and slightly smaller. They fed near each other and answered each other's calls, undoubtedly of the same species.

They were easily identified as Prairie Warblers by referring to Peterson's **Guide to the Birds**. I did not see them again.—**Lowry Elliott, Milbank.**

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**CASSIN'S FINCHES AT STURGIS**—In March Dr. William E. Jones called me to say he was sure they had the Cassin's Finches in their back yard. I went over several times, and had a chance to see them through the scope and field glasses. I was convinced he was correct. However, one day, a female flew into his picture window and we had a chance to study it in our hands. It was a Cassin's Finch. It revived and I banded it. It was a real thrill to watch these birds.—**Harrold W. Wagar, Sturgis.**

## THE COVER

This feathered personage could only be by Wayne Trimm. The halftone is a gift of the owner of the original: H. F. Chapman.

### BLUE GROSBEAK NEAR ALCESTER

—At the second railway crossing, about 2½ miles west of Alcester, June 9, 1961 about 8:30 a. m., a male Blue Grosbeak flew up from a low thicket to perch on the telegraph wires as I sat in a parked car near the track. I was able to study him for several minutes with a 7x50 binocular at a distance of 50 feet.

My attention had first been attracted by the notes sounded from concealment for five minutes or more, but I didn't immediately remember them as the song of this bird. I had looked about, trying to find the singer.

When the bird appeared, the bright blue of the head and brown marks on the wings were obvious to the naked eye. It flew almost vertically up to the wires and perched with its back to me. The glasses were in my lap and were on the bird an instant after it had settled.

The standing car evoked curiosity but not alarm. The bird turned its head sideways as though to study the strange object, while I checked the characteristic shape of the large white beak, noted the almost luminiscent blue of the head, when the feathers happened to pass through the angle of maximum reflection of the bright sun.

The brown on the wings was well brought out in the strong light.

After a few moments the bird flew on to a windbreak of big trees around farm buildings near the east side of the road a hundred yards south of the track.

There are two groups of farm buildings here, facing across the gravel road, both surrounded by windbreaks of big trees. These, together with the low shrubbery on the railroad right of way so near may well add up to an interesting bit of avian habitat.

A Yellow-throat was nesting here, for I both saw and heard the male, in a

thicket north of the track and on the wires. Flickers, jays, along with other birds, of which I caught only fleeting glimpses made me regret the lack of time for study.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron.**

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**ROBIN BEHAVIOR**—During a hot spell in late July (27) I noticed that a bed of dwarf red geraniums looked shaggy. Watered them and a little while later noticed a small flock of robins feeding among them. As I watched the birds feeding I saw they were not feeding on earth worms, as I expected, but were pulling off the red petals and eating them. They did this for several days and then stopped.

Have noticed Cedar Waxwings eating petals from apple blossoms several times.—**Lowry Elliott, Milbank.**

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Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

—E. W. Steffen

## Editorial Comment

Our lack of information from the north and west areas of the state has been often lamented. This time something has actually been done about it. The fact that it took new members to do it adds emphasis to the words of the president, regarding new members in this issue.

Mrs. Elmer Linnegren, Strandburg, spent the summer in the Eagle Butte area and her list of birds seen in that area is a revelation. We hope to have more material from her.

Mrs. M. Harter, Highmore, has given us our first real look at the birds of that area. Some of her notes are included in the present issue. Her total list, with some further interesting comment, is reserved for later issues. We are looking forward to more material from her and her daughters.

A friend of ours happened to be working briefly in Belle Fourche this winter, and, knowing our interest in birds, sent us clippings of editorials from the Daily Belle Fourche Post. Their subject matter was definitely bird-centered.

A letter, addressed to the writer went west by return mail, saying S. D. O. U. needed both a member and the material, or either. It turned out the editorials were written by Irma G. Weyler, wife of the publisher, who admitted that Mr. Chapman had once tried to recruit her for an observer in that area. She had declined, feeling that her material was too informal to be scientific. She has joined S. D. O. U. and given us the use of any of her writings we can use.

Parts of her editorials are printed in this issue, the part cut out being only that needed to orient the general public birdwise. The remaining part is new and astonishing to most of us, I am sure.

**SANDHILL CRANE PROBLEM**—Lester Berner wrote a letter to me last month asking the aid of S.D.O.U. in the Sandhill Crane migration problem. It seems that some Mobridge farmers are suffering great losses in their grain fields from the flocks of Sandhill Cranes which stop there to feed in spring and fall migrations.

The Fish, Game and Parks Department has tried various means to drive the flocks away, with no success. The Department is willing to give some of our members use of their facilities including airplanes for survey purposes to help them solve this problem.

I have written several directors and they have come up with suggestions.

The first suggestion is that we discuss this problem in a forum with Fish, Game and Parks men present at our January 28th meeting in order to put the problem before our members. Doctor Moriarty has been asked to be chairman of this forum and Doctor Bryon Harrell, who is chairman of the Nature Conservancy of South Dakota, Dr. David Holden and Lester Berner have also been asked to be on this forum.—**Ruth C. Habeger.**

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THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION for Conservation Information has named as recipients of merit awards: Allen Gram, Aberdeen American News; Chuck Cecil, Watertown Public Opinion; and Cecil P. Haight, Black Hills Teachers College and S.D.O.U. member.—**S. D. Sportsman. (Adapted)**

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**DUES FOR 1962:** If members will send checks for 1962 dues before Jan. 1, they can save S.D.O.U. the cost and us the work of sending out notices.—**L. J. Moriarty, Watertown.**