

# SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION  
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Young Ferruginous Hawk

—Photo by George Jonkel

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## President's Page

I SHOULD like to think that S.D.O.U. has ripened to maturity, shed its swaddling clothes, advanced from plain bird watchers to ornithologists, with the knowledge that we are but a small segment of the conservation picture, and deeply aware of our responsibility to help preserve our natural resources.

We may not have a "Listening Point" like Sigurd Olson, a "Walden" like Thoreau, or a barren candy farm such as Aldo Leopold owned, but I am confident that each one of us has his own private "Shangri-la" for communing with nature. One of the rewarding features of deer hunting is the privilege of sitting on a mountain peak overlooking a large territory. As we enjoy God's handiwork we humbly realize what an infinitesimal speck man really is, the gentle breeze clears the cobwebs from our mind; and we leave with a fresh outlook on life and its problems.

These moments of peace, solitude and freedom enable us to think problems through for ourselves and we are less apt to be tranquillized with the spoon-fed conservation theories based on expediency and greed. Goethe once said, "What you have received from your father earn for yourself, so you have the right to enjoy it." Freedom is not free, neither is our heritage of the great outdoors. How many letters have you written to congressmen and elected officials? How many times have you expressed your ideas at a meeting?



Secretary Udall urges, "Legislators should be bird-dogged by concerned citizens."

Man is the greatest predator ever introduced on this planet. When the earliest white men arrived they found the Indians "living off the country," killing and taking just enough for food and clothing. They were probably the first conservationists. Samuel J. Brown, the "South Dakota Paul Revere" and Military Scout at Fort Wadsworth, estimated 30,000 buffalo in one herd in Day County in 1865. Scott Bates, who carried mail to Frank, S. Dak., in 1899, reported ducks and geese so plentiful they darkened the sky. He told of one hunter who came home with a double wagon box full of geese.

Over 80 million motor vehicles spew out 350,000 tons of leaded fumes into the air each year and meteorologist Morris Neiburger predicts, "Man will smother in smog before he cremates himself in an atomic holocaust." Dr. Lawrence Gould, retired President of Carleton College, now research specialist in Antarctica research writes, "In Antarctica snow and ice, scientists have found traces of first atomic explosions and far earlier, man's first use of leaded gasoline." Dr. John L. George with the National Science Foundation delivered a paper which stated, "The entire globe, including remote Antarctica, appears to be contaminated to some extent by DDT. Discovery of trace amounts have been made in seals, penquins and fish."

Water is our most abused resource; Lake Erie is said to be a dying stagnant pool of water without oxygen.

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# Sandhill Cranes Pick '65 Route Over Black Hills

Kathery Serr

**T**HOUSANDS of sandhill cranes flew over Rapid City during the fall migration period from Aug. 15 to Nov. 30.

The big migration day was Oct. 8 with the flights estimated at 12-13,000 flying about 35 miles per hour at 1,500 to 2,000 feet high. So concentrated was the migration on that day that children on their way home from school were attracted by the loud trumpeting in the sky and attempted to imitate the calls.

The South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department and Black Hills Audubon Society members agree they were cranes.

Total sandhill crane migration Oct. 4 through Nov. 12 over Rapid City Oct. 4 through Nov. 12 over Rapid City was estimated to be nearly 15,000. Generally, the sandhills follow the Missouri River Basin—a part of the central flyway.

Walter A. Larsen, district game manager at Mobridge, reports about 2,000 sandhill cranes seen in the Pollock area on Sept. 7. Otherwise, he noted the sandhills went by in small numbers.

Larsen speculates that this could be due to all the water and grain left in the fields in North Dakota and a lack of loafing areas along the Oahe Reservoir.

James B. Monnie, Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge manager near Martin, believes the migration of sandhill cranes was normal over that location. During October he observed about 1,200 with 500 going over Oct. 8—the

day of the big migration over Rapid City.

Paul F. Springer, Department of Wildlife Management, South Dakota State University, projects the idea that unusual weather disturbances may have forced crane migration farther to the west.

Springer reports a major migration of Canada geese and sandhill cranes occurred along the Missouri River in North Dakota, Nov. 5.

Most sandhill cranes seem to winter in Texas, along the coast and inland. The total 1964 Christmas count in Texas and New Mexico was nearly 25,000 which is only a part of the unknown sandhill crane population. The Stanton, Texas, group had the largest count of 9,265 and Midland, Texas, counted 2,366. These places are 19 miles apart in west-central Texas and almost directly south of Rapid City.

The area is described as 60 per cent short grass plains with mesquite thickets and isolated stock tanks, 20 per cent cultivated fields and 20 per cent draws with growths of mesquite, soapberry and hackberry.

What do the cranes use for food? Dr. N. R. Whitney, Rapid City ornithologist, speculates that insects are a big part of the diet at this time.

The sandhill crane has a wing spread of 40 to 48 inches; stands about four feet; feathers are blue-grey in tone with a bald red forehead. In flight his long rudderlegs trail far behind, the

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SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

# Mourning Dove Nesting in a Shelterbelt Near Huron, S. Dak.

D. G. and Marion Adolphson

## INTRODUCTION

A STUDY was made covering the summers of 1964 and 1965 to obtain nesting data on the breeding population and production of mourning doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) in a shelterbelt area in the vicinity of Huron, South Dakota.

An attempt was made to examine all possible nesting sites in the area. The nesting attempts recorded represent a minimum count because it was impossible to find all nests, and some weekly visits could not be made.

The shelterbelt area studied is located 5 miles south of Huron and is typical of windbreaks that are planted in the prairies. The belt is U-shaped around a farmstead, on the north, south, and west sides. The north side (about 2 acres) and south side (about 2 acres) were planted about 1955. The west side (about 4 acres) was planted about 1950. The shelterbelt consists of 5 or 6 rows of American elm, Siberian elm, and Russian olive trees ranging in height from 10 to 20 feet in the two younger belts and 15 to 30 in the older. The north side also has an outside row of juniper ranging from 2 to 5 feet high.

## 1964 NESTING

In 1964 the first nesting count was made on May 30, when 10 active nests (with eggs or young) were recorded. The greatest number of active nests found on a single day was in August when 11 were observed. This was considered to represent the approximate

nesting population in the area. Nesting intensity remained fairly high through June, July, and early August. There appeared to be four nesting periods in the area, starting early in May and extending into September. The last nest containing eggs that hatched was observed on September 9.

A total of 35 nests were examined during the period. Twenty (57%) were successful, fledging at least one bird. Thirty-four young were counted, giving an average of 1.7 birds per successful nest. There were probably other nesting attempts in the area and some may have been successful.

Most of the unsuccessful nestings, especially of nests that contained eggs were due to strong winds and heavy rain. Young birds can grasp the nest with their feet and survive most wind storms. On June 8, winds of 60 to 80 MPH destroyed 5 nests that contained eggs. During the summer 2 nests were observed with eggs that had been destroyed by predators and 5 nests that were checked had eggs missing or abandoned.

The height of the nests ranged from 2 to 25 feet above ground and averaged 7 to 8 feet. Twenty-two of the nests were in Siberian elms, 8 in Russian olive, 3 in American elm, and 2 in juniper. No nests were found on the ground. Most were located between the first two rows of either side of the shelterbelt. The nests in the outside rows usually were lower to the ground than those in the middle rows. The difference in height gave easier flight access to the nests in the middle rows.

Most nests in the middle rows were old grackle nests.

Use of old dove, robin, and grackle nests were common practice among the doves in the area. One grackle nest was used for 3 successful nestings and many dove nests were reused 2 times. Robins, Common Grackles, Eastern, and Western Kingbirds, and Brown Thrashers also nest in these shelterbelts.

### 1965 NESTING

Only four pairs of doves were found using the area for nesting in the first half of the 1965 breeding season and only 2 pairs for the last half. Again 4 nesting periods seemed probable.

The first active nest was found May 13 and the last on September 6. During May, 6 dove nesting attempts were observed but none were successful. Not until the end of July was the first young dove fledged here. Twelve nesting attempts were observed during the season and 4 of these (33%) were successful. Five young were fledged, giving an average of 1.2 birds per successful nest. Severe weather was one of the causes of nest failure in May and June.

Competition with other birds may account for the low number of doves that nested in the area in 1965 and probably was another cause of low success in nesting attempts as compared with 1964. In early May, 25 common grackle were found in the shelterbelts and only 2 in 1964.

The grackle nests in 1965 had a very low success per nest attempt also. Only 6 nests had young fledged. Heavy rain during hatching probably was the cause of their low production. On May 13 there were 90 grackle eggs in the 25

nests and on May 22 there were only 10 young and 8 eggs in 6 active nests. The other 19 nests were empty and were still wet from the 2.41 inches of rain that occurred on May 20. The nests that were unsuccessful were those in the crotches at the top of American elms. They were more exposed than the more successful nests that were on the lower branches of the junipers and Siberian elms.

Results from trapping banded young Mourning Doves in the area show that young hatched in June and July stayed in the area until the middle of August, when they collected in small flocks and moved away. Band returns indicate the young travel to Texas and Mexico. One 90 days old was recovered on September 1, near Austin and another, 62 days old, was recovered on September 1, near Pueblo, Colorado. Two returns of doves 6 and 7 months old were recovered from Atlixco, Puebla and Arcelia, Guerrero, Mexico in January.

During a study on Mourning Dove nesting in a shelterbelt in North Dakota, Randall, R. N. (*Jour. of Wildlife Management*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Jan., 1955) found that 77.4% of the nests were successful. The high success was attributed to the lack of predators and little evidence of nest loss from strong winds.

A study in Minnesota by Harris, S. W. et al (*Am. Midland Nat.*, Vol. 69, Jan., 1963) determined that fledging rates were 38 to 51% prior to July 21, 78 to 85% to September 1, 16 to 27% to September 10 and 10 to 17% after September 10.

Evidently nest success varies greatly during the season as well as from year to year.—Huron.

# A Lark Bunting Year?

Wm. Youngworth

ON JUNE 14, 1965, Mr. and Mrs. John Lueshen of Wisner, Nebraska, were still looking for their first Lark Bunting of the year. They had made frequent trips in the field to inspect numerous bluebird boxes, which they had put up, but the trips were void of Lark Buntings.

Yet on May 13, 1965, Harold Turner of Holstein, Nebraska, reported by letter that, "Lark Buntings are here again, plentiful as ever, it seems." On June 2, 1965, another observer reported a Lark Bunting. This time an Iowan. On May 28, Donald Gillaspey of Lamoni, Iowa, had a male Lark Bunting feeding on his farm all day. He very kindly took time out from his busy farm work to call birdspotters from Lamoni and no less than five persons responded in short order and all had a grand time watching the bunting at close range and for as long as they wished.

May 29, 1965, was a fine day for birding and Mrs. Youngworth and I drove to Bon Homme County, South Dakota for the day. We first saw scattered Lark Buntings west of Vermillion and several more as we neared Tyndall. After leaving Tyndall for Scotland we ran into flock after flock of Lark Buntings of mixed sexes. Many flocks ran as high as twenty-five birds and several of them up to sixty or seventy birds. Of course the local nesting population was already settled and we saw numerous pairs. East of Scotland for more than twenty miles we continued to see pairs and small flocks of Lark Buntings and suddenly they were not seen anymore as we proceeded eastward.

The above South Dakota records of the Lark Bunting sparked us into an

all day trip on July 14, 1965, just to find this bunting. We drove up the eastern border of the state and near the entrance to Newton Hills Park we saw one lone female Lark Bunting. This was the only Lark Bunting seen all day. Our course took us up the Iowa side of the Big Sioux River to Gitchie Manitou Park, but no Lark Buntings were seen. We turned southward and kept a sharp lookout all the way to Ruble, Iowa. Here we stopped to see Eldon J. Bryant and were shaken to our roots when he climbed down off of his tractor and told us he had been seeing Lark Buntings, not a few, but many flocks and had had between fifteen and twenty days when he had recorded the birds. Most of the records were in May and early June. In recent weeks he had not seen any and since our observations for the one day were nil, it is fairly safe to assume that these Lark Buntings had not stayed to nest as they did in earlier days, but had gone on to South Dakota and Minnesota to nest.—Sioux City, Iowa.

## MORE ON LARK BUNTINGS

Most of the years of our experience in Huron—since November 1939—the Lark Bunting has been observed only west of here. Usually the corner a mile and a half south of Wolsey was where we saw the first one as we went west. Usually they were common along the country roads west of Wolsey, often numerous.

From 1963 on, an occasional Lark Bunting would be seen east of Huron a few miles. But still they were rare and bobolinks were more frequent.

But 1965 changed all that—completely. For many miles Lark Buntings

were the most common birds. Generally there were more of them along the country roads than of all other species combined. Certainly, they were the most numerous single species—more of them even than the redwings.

It is regrettable that some counts were not made for the record. But ten to twenty per mile of country road would be a fair estimate of their numbers during the season. They were present all summer, appearing in flocks of 25 to 50 in late summer.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron.**

**Editor's Note:** It will be recalled that Dr. Willard Rosine gave a paper on Lark Buntings and their populations in relation to weather and habitat at the Winter Meeting at Augustana, Janu-

ary 24, 1965. In the *Loon* of June, 1965 (Vol. 37:63) a six-page study of **Lark Bunting Occurrence in Southwestern Minnesota** by Bertin W. Anderson and S. Peter Getman gives support to their conclusion that "... precipitation may be an important environmental factor in determining the acceptability of habitat for nesting populations of Lark Buntings." Twenty-one items of literature cited generally refer to birds other than Lark Buntings.

Thus work done on this aspect of the species seems not to have been extensive. The violent changes in populations of these birds in a given locality is intriguing. Perhaps someone will feel it worthwhile to go further into the question.

## Date of First Brown Thrasher Arrivals Observed in Huron . . . 20-Year Record

J. W. Johnson

Year	Month Day	Year	Month Day
1946	April 30	1958	May 4
1947	April 30	1959	May 4
1948	May 4	1960	May 5
1949	May 3	1961	May 8
1950	May 10	1962	May 2
1951	May 5	1963	May 3
1952	May 2	1964	May 2
1953	May 7	1965	May 2
1954	May 8		
1955	May 5		
1956	May 11		
1957	May 2		

Perhaps not as precise as a certain swallow, but not too bad either.—**Huron.**



# Predator Control?

J. W. Johnson

**A**T THE suggestion of L. M. Baylor, President Chilson polled the Board of Directors soon after intention was expressed of proposing legislation to transfer predator control functions from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

Herman expressed his pleasure in having been associated with such a group: With no exception and no equivocation, each at once expressed his opposition to any such measure.

Accordingly the following resolutions were prepared expressing the position of the organization in the matter.—  
**Editor.**

## RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, at its meeting January 23-24, 1965, adopted a resolution urging all governmental units concerned to administer wildlife-management programs in accordance with sound biological practices; and

WHEREAS, the United States Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has for many years been the main wildlife-research branch of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture is primarily an agency for the economic improvement of agriculture;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union OPPOSE any move to transfer responsibility for predator control from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to the Department of Agriculture.

## RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the population of Ring-necked Pheasants in eastern South Dakota has apparently declined markedly since the population peak of 1963; and

WHEREAS, preliminary reports released by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks have indicated a correlation between the intensity of Red Fox control and the Pheasant population in certain areas of the state; but

WHEREAS, scientific studies have repeatedly shown that predation is seldom a significant factor in regulating the size of any population under natural conditions;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union URGE CONTINUING SEARCH for factors other than predation which may be limiting or reducing the pheasant population.

\* \* \* \*

## Membership List Correction

Somehow, in spite of careful checking, but as usual, a couple of errors got into the membership list. They are: Address of Esther Serr should be 615 8th St. and not 18th St.

Harold V. Whitmus, 5800 Saylor St., Lincoln, Nebraska, 68506, was omitted entirely.

Sorry. If any others, let the editor know and corrections will be published.

# Birds' Nests of South Dakota

L. J. Moriarty

## A. ●. U. #540. VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*)

**T**HIS little sparrow nests on the ground in dry areas in eastern South Dakota. The bird is really hard to find when it is incubating, unless you happen to nearly step on it and then look closely at the spot from which it flushed. It always flies up to a fence or weed and not down into cover as does the grasshopper sparrow. The nest is often by a rut or against a clump of soil which protects it on one side. However, I have also found them on flat ground in short alfalfa.

The nest is in a depression in the soil with the rim flush with the ground. It is generally about 1½ inches deep and about 2 inches across the cup, constructed of circularly woven grass, alfalfa stems and rootlets, also circularly woven. The rim is fairly thick.

The eggs are grayish white, finely speckled with brown, usually with some larger splashes of brown, about .75 x .50 inches or slightly larger. Usually the nest contains 4 or 5 eggs.

The nest is easier to find when young are hatched by watching a parent with a bug or grasshopper in its mouth, that it is not eating. Sit down and watch closely with glasses to see where the bird goes to the ground. Usually alighting a little way from the nest, it walks the rest of the way. When the bird reappears without the food you may be sure the young have been fed. You may have to watch more than one feeding to pinpoint the nest, for it is very hard to see at even 2 or 3 feet

on rather open ground. The young, being grayish, blend to near invisibility with the dead grass and soil.

The eggs are usually laid in the latter half of June and the young leave the nest by July 15. Some nest later, seeming to indicate second attempts.—**Watertown.**

\* \* \* \*

**OBSERVATIONS OF COLOR-MARKED GULLS**—"We have released 82 yellow-dyed gulls (May 5-12, 1965) near Fort Collins and are again soliciting assistance in reporting observation you may have made of these birds. Of this number, 80 were Ring-billed Gulls and two were California Gulls. All were captured with a cannon-projectile net, banded with standard Fish and Wildlife Service bands and dyed with a harmless yellow dye. After being held 12 or more hours to dry, all gulls were released at the trap site on Timnath Reservoir about six miles southeast of Fort Collins.

"In the past we have had sightings and recoveries of our dyed gulls from the Gulf of California in Mexico; near Flagstaff, Arizona; Carlsbad, New Mexico; ●klahoma City, and several places in Nebraska, North Dakota, Montana and Saskatchewan.

Please advise us of any yellow-dyed gulls you may have seen as well as where, when, and an estimation of the number of normal-colored gulls with which they were associating."—**Dr. Ronald A. Ryder, Department of Forestry, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colo. 80521.**

## Book Reviews

J. W. Johnson

**PORTRAIT of a Desert.** By Guy Mountfort, Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 1965. 174 pages plus appendix, bibliography and index, a total of 192. Profusely illustrated by photographs by Eric Hosking, many in color.

This beautiful book will be enjoyed by all who value wildlife and appreciate the interdependence and complex relationships of living things, including ourselves.

It describes a distant land, the Kingdom of Jordan, inhabited by people whose scale of values differ from our own. This gives the book particular merit: We can read it without the color of our local bias. And the terrible conditions it describes, we can hopefully say, are not likely to happen here, at least in our time. Yet, so overwhelming is the story of what has happened to the land of this country in the past ten years to make it nearly uninhabitable and destroy its recently abundant wildlife and vegetation, no one can read it and remain objective.

The author is one of two British ornithologists who, with our own Roger Tory Peterson, compiled the **Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe**, using the Peterson system of identification. He headed an expedition of twelve, each an expert in one or more of the life sciences, making an intensive study of the Kingdom of Jordan, to learn what, if anything, can be done to save the area from quickly becoming a nearly complete desert.

Sir Julian Huxley, who was one of the group, has a brief foreword on its thinking and intentions. The plan from the beginning was to use birds as ecological indicators. They were studied thoroughly but never to the neglect of

other wildlife, insects, and plants, climate, geology, possible resources, and archeology.

"Special reports on various subjects," he writes, "are appearing in the appropriate scientific journals. This book is a record of the combined endeavor of the group."

And it has so much of intense interest, making a selection for this review becomes a test of one's own interests. On the whole it is a heartbreaking book. With the already poor land of this little country, now so nearly desert beyond recovery, and most of its people seemingly doing all possible to hasten the day of disaster, there is evidence for little hope.

Yet this study group did end their work in hope and their reports to King Hussein and his government, as well as to sponsoring organizations are almost optimistic.

Central to the region's ecology is its almost non-existent rainfall. And the people from prehistoric times have ruthlessly exploited every surface resource with animal-like disregard for tomorrow. A single exception was the people called Nabataean, who lived in the southern part, around Petra, their capital city, carved out of red and yellow sandstone cliffs during Roman times. In conserving the meager rainfall for crops, they have never been equalled. Under them the area supported many times the population possible now. Their methods have not been lost and could still be used.

But, in general, the people of this region, throughout its history, have taken all the land offered and went their way. Still, somehow, in spite of it

all, even fairly large game was able to survive in numbers until within the last ten years.

Modern guns, even machine guns, and big automobiles in the hands of the idle and oil-rich poachers from nearby kingdoms have aided Jordan's own in nearly wiping out the gazelles, ibex, oryx, cheetas, and the larger birds, after finishing that of their own countries.

Thousands of domestic goats are destroying even the rough and hardy vegetation of the desert. In the once timbered areas the goats—and their owners—see that no sprout or seedling survives for long.

Jordan is the migration route of the birds from east Africa to Europe each spring. Now these migrants come down, exhausted from their long ocean flights—into unrelieved desert, where only a fraction of them can recover enough to move on. Children catch them easily and pull out their wing feathers.

But the expedition found hope that much could be done and in time. Their search was also for ways to make the country self-supporting. They found an important element of the problem in the land's own antiquities. The much larger population of Greek and Roman times built cities whose ruins are well preserved and now nearly unknown to tourists. Pictures of their buildings, forts, and castles with bits of history and associations bear out their belief that reasonable roads and accommodations for tourists would bring them to Jordan in numbers.

The people of Jordan are likeable and hospitable to foreigners. Even the Beduins, dwellers in the desert and usually a problem to settled communities are strong supporters of King Hussein. He may well be able to persuade them to make their traditional desert

hospitality a tourist attraction and a paying business.

The government hopes to rapidly eliminate the goats in favor of the less destructive sheep and protect problem areas by fences while their vegetation is recovering.

Admittedly outside help will be needed and soon or it will be too late. Intensive work by government with the full enlistment of the people will be essential if plans are to work out.

But whether or not hope is realized, this book, with its entirely understandable theme and relatively small scale of attention, is a monument to man's destruction of his environment—and himself.

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**The Birds of Kentucky.** By Robert M. Mengel. Ornithological Monograph No. 3. Published by the American Ornithologists' Union. 1965. xviv plus 581 pages, including 35 pages of Literature Cited and 20 of Index. Illustrated with 43 figures, maps, drawings, and 4 beautiful water colors made on the site, all by the author. Coated paper. 6½" x 10." Bound in pale blue cloth. \$10 (\$8 to members of A. O. U.). Publication made possible by gifts of Mrs. Carl Tucker and the Marcia Brady Tucker Foundation, Inc.

This is not a picture book. Instead it gives data on each bird in relation to its presence in Kentucky. The arrangement is straightforward: Status, Spring, Fall, Winter, Geographic variation, each in considerable detail, followed with evidence for subspecies, and a list of specimens examined. The treatment on each bird runs about a page, or more, where subspecies are considered.

Over a hundred pages in the forepart of the book are given over to descrip-

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SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

# SDOU Spring Convention . . . 1966

Brookings, South Dakota

May, 13, 14 and 15

## —PROGRAM—

Friday, May 13, 1966

7:00 p. m.—Registration, Community Room, First National Bank.

8:00 p. m.—Informal Get-together. Movie "Look Down." Coffee and cookies.

Saturday, May 14

4:30 a. m.—Breakfast at Sandy's White Spot Cafe, Highway 14 West.

5:00 a. m.—Group A: Prairie Tour, David Holden, leader.

Group B: Oakwood Lakes Tour, Nelda Holden, leader.

Late risers or arrivers may join either of these groups. Maps of tours will be available at the Sawnee Hotel or the Brookings Motel.

11:30 a. m.—Group A will have sack lunch by slough on east edge of Astoria.

Group B will have sack lunch at Oakwood Lakes.

12:00 Noon—Group A will take a tour to Altamont Prairie.

Group B will tour other interesting areas near Brookings.

4:00 p. m.—General Business Meeting at Community Room, First National Bank.

6:30 p. m.—Banquet, First United Presbyterian Church Basement, 405 7th Ave.

Speaker: Milt Reeves, Regional Office of U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sunday, May 15

4:30 a. m.—Breakfast at Sandy's White Spot Cafe, Highway 14 West.

5:00 a. m.—Group A: Oakwood Lakes Tour, Nelda Holden, leader.

Group B: Prairie Tour, David Holden, leader.

This tour does **not** include Altamont Prairie.

1:00 p. m.—Catered lunch at picnic shelter at Oakwood Lakes State Park.

2:00 p. m.—"Call Out" listing of species seen.

2:30 p. m.—Bon Voyage.

# Ferruginous Hawks Nesting Near Holabird

By George M. Jenkel

ON APRIL 28th, 1965, Don Fitzgerald, of Huron, sighted a pair of Ferruginous Hawks building a nest on the ground in an open prairie pasture in Hughes County. To avoid disturbance, Don kept away, but observed that the nest was built up several feet in height and was located next to a rock just below the crest of a hill. It was about three-fourths of a mile to the nearest farmstead and nearest trees.

Rolf Wallenstrom from Aberdeen and I visited the nest June 28th and banded the four young present. They were mostly down-covered but were starting to feather out.

James Johnson, Herb Anderson and I left Huron on July 3rd and visited the nest again. The young had become well-feathered. They still had down on the head and between some of the feathers. Noticeable plumage markings on all four included a dark buff or light brown patch on the front of the neck.

The back and upper wing had dark brown feathers with rust red margins. The tail was white tipped with a dark band and white above the band. The adults came in, screamed and then alighted a half mile away. One was a dark phase with rusty-red shoulder patches. The other was a light phase.

The dark phase plus our unfamiliarity with this species had us confused, but Dr. Paul Springer, of Brookings, identified an adult Ferruginous at the nest site shortly after the young had left. On examining slides, prints and a feather, Dr. Dean Amadon also thought the birds to be Ferruginous Hawks.

A study of Ferruginous Hawk habits and habitat, plus photo comparison in Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey* confirms identification.

The only evidence of prey at the nest was one cottontail rabbit leg bone and numerous small tufts of rabbit fur on the nest material.—Huron.



Young Hawks at Nest—July 3

—Photo by George Jenkel



Phillip Jonkel with Young Hawks  
—Photo by George Jonkel

# Little Blue Heron in Day County

Herman Chilson

ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1965 Don Miller of Eden saw a Great Blue Heron, an American Egret and a small pure white bird in a pothole  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile east of the fur farm. The smaller bird, which he couldn't identify, was about one-half the size of the American Egret.

When I arrived the birds were standing still, preening themselves, enjoying the warm sunshine, evidently all done feeding for the present. The American Egret stood on only one leg during the time I observed this group, the other two rested on both legs; their legs were not parallel but spread apart. The snowy white plumage against the background of green marsh created a beautiful pastoral scene. The heavy traffic going by did not noticeably disturb the birds.

I glassed the smaller white bird, which I thought was a Snowy Egret, for a long time. Eventually it decided to move and I carefully watched the legs and feet, but failed to see any yellow slippers nor could I detect any shuffling motion. The latter may have little significance when the bird is not feeding. I do not know.

Peterson says of the Little Blue: "legs, dull greenish," but these were definitely greenish-yellow all the way up and the same color as the feet. Peterson continues, "bill bluish, tipped with black," so I concentrated on the bill and, even with perfect light conditions and 7x35 binocular, I could not determine whether the bill was black or blue, but it was definitely dark.

Bent records the plumage of the Little Blue: "primaries tipped with bluish-black when they first appear, but the

rest of juvenile plumage is all pure white. This plumage, wholly white except the wing tips, is worn during the first fall and winter without much change." To me the primary tips appeared grey, like the color of the cat-bird and not distinctly black.

The Little Blue Heron is not listed in Robert's *Manual of Birds of Minnesota*. Gromme's, *Birds of Wisconsin* and Peterson's *Guide* both show the Snowy Egret with a shaggy plumage. They are also agreed in both illustrations showing a shorter neck on the Snowy Egret than on the Little Blue Heron. The bird I saw had very smooth plumage, with a rather long neck and a slender build.

After forty-five minutes of study I finally concluded this had to be an immature Little Blue Heron; and after looking over the Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret and Cattle Egret skin collections at the Minnesota Museum of Natural History I am convinced. It is quite possible that other immature little Blue Herons have been reported as Snowy Egrets in our area.

American Egrets were almost common here this year for a month and have been seen in increasing numbers for the past few years. Bert Anderson of the Minnesota Museum of Natural History told me that they have now been reported in Minnesota for the first time. Probably the postbreeding dispersal and migration patterns of the birds have changed during the past few years.—Webster.

**Editor's Note:** Palmer's *Handbook of North American Birds*, vol 1, pp. 428-438 says in regard to the Little Blue

(Continued on Page 21)



## *General Notes of Special Interest*

**INDIGO BUNTING AT HURON SECOND YEAR**—It was July 5, 1965, before we actually had a close view of a singing male Indigo Bunting. The bird was on a high wire below the end of 5th Street and left as we drew nearer. The color was well seen and the song distinctive, however.

It was seen twice in the same vicinity on July 6, but again did not permit a near approach. It was definitely more timid than the males of last year that allowed us to photograph them from a point nearly under their perches on these same wires. (B.N. XVI:97.)

Because the birds were timid, we did not bother them again until July 25. This time two singing males were seen on the same wires, one north of 6th St. and the other south of 7th St. Both were more timid than those last year, leaving as we neared their perches.

On August 1, Jean and George Jonkel, with Don Adolphson, caught an adult female Indigo Bunting with a mist nest and banded it. The location was near the end of 5th St.

On August 2, I saw a female at a point some 200 feet northwest of that location.

On August 8, Lucille and I had an excellent view of a singing male at 6:10 p. m., full in the light from the low sun at our backs. The light brought out the varying shades of his full color. The bird moved about on the low trees below us and finally up to the high wire where one had sung regularly last year.

Also, on August 8, 1965, at a point 6 miles north of Huron and a mile west of Highway 37, we saw another singing

male Indigo Bunting for several minutes in good light. This is the place where one was seen in 1958, on one occasion only. Here, on August 15, 1965, a singing male and another, young of uncertain age, only partly blue, were seen.—**J. W. and Lucille Johnson, Huron.**

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**OBSERVATIONS ACROSS SOUTH DAKOTA**—From September 1 to September 8, 1965, Charles Easterberg, Stan Hedeem, Kim Eckert, and myself conducted extensive field work in South Dakota, primarily in the Badlands and central Black Hills. We are all college and graduate students in Minnesota and have all had previous experience in western birding. All of the observations were made by at least three members of our party.

### **East River**

**Wood Duck**—6 birds observed on a pothole near Mt. Vernon, west of Mitchell. Sept. 1.

**Burrowing Owl**—A family group of 7 were observed for over an hour in a hay field along U. S. Route 16, two miles west of Mt. Vernon. Western Kingbirds and Lark Sparrows were common here also. Sept. 1.

**Prairie Chicken**—A group of about 20 adults and young were found along a road two miles south of White Lake, Aurora County. Sept. 2.

### **West River**

Near Presho, Lyman County, a group of 5 unidentified falcons were sighted directly south at an extremely high elevation, at least 1000 feet up.

Wind was moderate and north at the time.

Peregrine Falcon—An immature was carefully observed in the Badlands National Monument on Sept. 2. Good mustache contrast was evident.

Philadelphia Vireo—The first Badlands record of this vireo was made on Sept. 3 at Cedar Pass. Good yellow wash, vireo bill and actions, and lack of wing bars were all noted and we are all quite familiar with this species. Swainson's Thrushes and Brown Thrashers were also recorded at the Pass.

Bank Swallow—Recorded near Scenic.

Golden Eagle—Two adults observed two miles east of Scenic on the ground and one adult carrying a jack rabbit, 10 miles east of Scenic on September 3.

Sprague's Pipit—Perhaps the best find of the trip was made one mile north of Scenic on Sept. 3 when 4 of these birds were identified at close range. Yellow legs, thin bill, white tail feathers, and slender body were all observed. With a strong wind blowing these pipits do not wag their tails but use the tail as a prop. The chance that these birds may nest here a couple of hundred miles from their known range, should be checked out.

Killdeer—Around Creston for several miles along the highway, 40 of these birds were seen sitting in the roadway in small groups. Sept. 3.

#### Black Hills

Mt. Roosevelt near Deadwood—Pigeon Hawk, Pine Siskens, and a group of Eastern Bluebirds at the rather high elevation of 6000 feet were seen on Sept. 4.

Red Crossbills—Were recorded in at least 6 areas in the Hills in flocks of 6 to 25 birds. We saw them in Spearfish Canyon, Jewel Cave, Comanche Peak, and Harney Peak.

Canada Jays—Were found at Spearfish

Canyon, Comanche Peak, Nemo, and around Pactola Lake in numbers from one to four birds. This is a rather surprising amount of observations.

Lewis' Woodpecker—One observed at the McVey burn north of Hill City on Sept. 6.

Northern Three-toed Woodpecker—A rather messy-looking immature was carefully observed working on some pines along the trail to Harney Peak. There was much white on the face like a Hairy but the barred sides and the white back stripe proved its identity.

White-throated Swift—Still present in the Badlands (Sept. 3) and at Harney Peak (Sept. 6).

LaCreek Refuge, Martin, South Dakota  
Refuge manager reported 6 pairs of Cinnamon Teal present on the refuge during a duck census in July but no positive nesting could be established. 16 cygnets of the Trumpeter Swan were produced on the refuge this summer.

Some of the uncommon birds we saw there on Sept. 8 are: Solitary Sandpiper—One bird for the first fall refuge record. Hooded Merganser—One female observed. Common Merganser—Refuge manager reported one on Sept. 7. Long-billed Curlews and Avocets were reported as very scarce all summer due to high water which prevented any shorebird build-up. Bobolinks—Several hundred birds feeding in a field at LaCreek.—**Robert P. Russell, Box 214, Collegeville, Minn.**

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BIRDLIFE OF HAWAII—The main islands of the Hawaiian Group, being over 2,500 miles from any of the continents, have fewer native birds than any other part of the land surface, with the possible exception of the polar regions. One would think that tropical

area such as this would be rich in fauna, however the field identification book of the Audubon Society of Hawaii lists only 34 native birds still in existence and 6 of these are almost extinct. Twenty of the native birds are decedded from accidentals and casuals from the North American mainland. In addition, there are 23 introduced species, from the Orient, Far East, West Indies, Europe and South America, some of which do very well.

I expected to see many pelagic birds in driving completely around the island of Oahu's 120 mile shoreline but I never saw a gull or tern. I did see a number of Golden Plover and the Wandering Tattler both of which winter there. Most of the pelagic birds are on islets and other islands to the north-west. The exotic tropical birds are found in the inland mountain forests which are not easily accessible.

Wanton killing of birds, introduction of predators, and draining of ponds and lagoons has greatly reduced and practically eliminated several species. Thousands of birds of certain species were killed for their feathers to make capes for the early rulers of the islands and by poachers in later years for the millinery industry. Rabbits and Mongoose that were introduced and rats that escaped from ships have also done great damage to birds on some islands. Even today if the present rate of drainage of ponds and lagoons continues on the main islands certain species, such as the Hawaiian Duck and the Stilt, will probably be lost in the near future.

However, the islets and the less inhabited islands offer good breeding grounds and sanctuaries. These places are difficult to reach and practically impossible for the average bird watcher who is vacating in Hawaii. Therefore, if one wants to study birds only, the island of Oahu, where Honolulu is

located, is not the place to visit, but it does offer excellent climate, grass skirts, scenery and points of interest.—**L. J. Moriarty, Watertown.**

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**BLUE GROSBEAK NORTH OF HURON**—Again, after 7 years (B.N. X:22) we again saw a pair of Blue Grosbeaks at the same spot we had known them in 1958. The place is 6 miles north of Huron and a mile west of Highway 37, on a gravel road.

Both male and female were well seen at close range and we have seen enough of them here and in the Missouri Valley to have no doubt of the identity.—**J. W. and Lucille Johnson, Huron.**

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**WEATHER AND MIGRATION**—The note from **The Passenger Pigeon** in the December issue prompts me to call attention to my articles in the *Wilson Bulletin*, September, 1929 and December, 1957. I have repeatedly noted that birds tend to depart in the fall at the end of a cold wave rather than the beginning. Spring migration receives the most attention but fall migration is a different problem. In spring the birds have a powerful urge to go north and nest and are held back by cold weather. In fall there is no such urge and weather favors delay, yet there is a quite definite calendar.

In 1928 the fall weather was unusually mild and steady but departures were pretty much on schedule. Arrivals in spring are likely to be checked in migration and may be due to weather conditions some distance above ground. Fall departures should be governed by weather at ground level. Regular trapping in the fall affords a measure of departures.—**O. A. Stevens, Fargo.**

ENDANGERED WILDLIFE WARNING—Interior Secretary Udall has warned that the battle to save America's endangered wildlife is still being lost, "despite unprecedented conservation action in 1965."

Unless the Nation as a whole soon becomes aroused over the environmental crisis which threatens these species, we run the risk of further damaging these and other forms of life as well," said the Secretary. "The sheer power of the population and technological revolutions may make man himself an endangered species in many parts of the earth."

"During 1965, despite a reawakened interest in natural beauty, and in environmental problems generally, we Americans continued to encroach on priceless habitat with dredges, bulldozers, pesticides, fire, explosives and concrete, destroying the places and the food supply our wildlife needs for survival," he said.

"The estuaries and marshy shallows, where biologists tell us that life itself began, are being filled, polluted, drained, and otherwise altered irrevocably, from Chesapeake Bay to the Golden Gate."—**Conservation Guide.**

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CARDINAL NEAR BRANDT—The first snow storm of the season left a cardinal at a farm 2½ miles north of Brandt. This bird has been there ever since (Feb. 6) well provided for at a feeding station, with chickadees, downy and others. The Cardinal is the last to leave for the day. The area is well sheltered by trees on the north and west, less so on the south.—**Alfred Peterson.**

## President's Page

(Continued from Page 3)

Our God given heritage of clear, sparkling rivers have been turned into flowing sewers and dump grounds for garbage. With the passage of the Water Quality Act of 1965 there seems to be a glimmer of hope. Lyndon B. Johnson says, "This cannot be done by Federal Government alone. All of us must put the bit into our teeth and act, and we must begin to act now."

Today, more than ever, we need statesmen in the halls of congress, who can walk tall and think tall; who are more interested in the welfare of our country than they are in cash payments from oil and chemical companies.

In the words of my favorite, Teddy Roosevelt, "Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords."—**Herman P. Chilson.**

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YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER NEAR ARMDALE—A male Yellow-Throated Warbler was seen April 19, 1964 at old Armdale on the east side of the James River. This location is about four miles south of the Brown-Spink County line. The bird was in the tops of trees, was seen well and was studied for about five minutes.—**B. J. Rose, Aberdeen.**

NOTE—A quick check of indexes shows only one mention of this bird in S.D.B.N.: Krause, Vol. XII:48, an account of its observations at Sioux Falls.—**Editor.**

## Little Blue Heron

(Concluded from Page 16)

Heron: "bill appears bicolored—grayish at base, terminal third blackish, and this can be seen even in younger birds, which have all white plumage except blackish tips of primaries, legs and feet greenish-yellow." The accompanying map shows the postbreeding dispersal range including only the southeastern corner of South Dakota.

Over and Thoms says: "Perhaps only a summer straggler as no nests have been found."

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**BONAPARTE'S GULL IN BROOKINGS COUNTY**—On May 3, 1965, I went with Mrs. Thomas Murphy and son from Minneapolis, Minn. on an early field trip to Oakwood Lakes. Entering the park, we saw a gull standing on the shore of Tetonkaha Lake. At once I recognized it as an immature Bonaparte's Gull. It had the conspicuous black dot behind the eye. This is the first one I have seen since the ones I observed in the Chicago area. As far as I know this is a first for Brookings County.

The bird was quite tame and allowed our approach to within 25 feet before it flushed, when the wing pattern and the dark band at the end of the tail of the immature bird were clearly seen. Mrs. Murphy had seen the Bonaparte's Gull in Minnesota and agreed with the identification.—**Nelda Holden, Brookings.**

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**WOOD DUCK ON JAMES RIVER IN NORTHERN SPINK COUNTY**—Two pair of Wood Ducks were seen April 18, 1964 along the Spink-Brown County line. One pair was nesting near the house of Lou Smith in Spink County.

The nest was in a hole in a cottonwood tree and contained nine eggs. Three of the eggs were about one-half normal size.—**B. J. Rose, Aberdeen.**

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**YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT IN BROOKINGS COUNTY**—During banding operations on May 12, 1965 at my home, I found a handsome Yellow-breasted Chat in one of the nests. This is the first Chat I have seen in Brookings County but others have been reported in the past. Orana Cooper has one record from a thicket about six miles south of Brookings.—**Nelda Holden, Brookings.**

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**A GAGGLE OF GEESE**—Among the most charming and apparently the most ancient, devices of the English language is that which differentiates between groups of animals, birds and fish, both wild and domesticated.

It's appeal to the modern mind is such that one British contemporary, the London Illustrated News, declares that the invention of collective names has become an "impromptu parlor game."

The British newspaper offers a remarkable collection of authentic examples. A "gaggle of geese" is familiar enough. A "charm of finches" is deceptive today, suggesting our pleasure in looking at these birds, whereas, when first used by the Anglo-Saxon, "chirn" meant a din or chatter.

A "business of ferrets" is from the 15th century, a "clowder of cats," suggesting a clot or clutter, is from the 16th. A "walk of snipe"—a 500-year-old phrase—offers a visible impression. **Christian Science Monitor.**

HOARY REDPOLL AT HURON—In the afternoon of February 20, 1966, a Hoary Redpoll was identified among a small flock of Common Redpolls in our yard at Huron.

A few days before, Jean Jonkel had seen a bird here she believed could be of that species. So, when the flock appeared, we called the Jonkels, who brought their guests, Fred Evenden, Executive Secretary of the Wildlife Society, Washington, D. C. and Paul Springer, Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Brookings. It was not long

before they found a likely candidate among the dozen or so Redpolls about the yard. However, considerable time was spent checking the bird against the literature before all were fully satisfied they were seeing a Hoary Redpoll. For the bird was not too cooperative in displaying the unstreaked rump that must accompany the overall light color, frosty appearance, and rose breast to complete the identification. But eventually it relented.—**J. W. Johnson, Huron.**



Little Blue Heron

—Courtesy: Wilson Bulletin

## The North American Nest-Record Card Program for 1966

The first year of the North American Nest-record Card Program went very well. The Laboratory of Ornithology mailed out over 45,000 cards to individuals and regional centers from Florida to Alaska. We were encouraged at the response; over 23,000 completed cards were received from 700 individuals. We have accumulated over 500 cards each for several species; among these are Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, House Wren, Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle. The Red-winged Blackbird has been selected for a trial run on the computer, and the data from our 2,300 cards on that species are now being punched onto IBM cards.

The principal aim of the program is to accumulate a large amount of data on the breeding biology of birds of the entire North American continent. This data will be stored on IBM cards in a form ready for analysis. This data, once processed, will be available to researchers interested in many areas of avian biology, such as annual and geographical variations in breeding seasons, clutch size, fledging periods, and nesting success. We hope that the program will also play a key role in the study of man's modification of his environment through marsh drainage, urbanization, and the use of pesticides.

We need data from all parts of the country. Observations from city parks and back yards, of the commonest species, are as important as those from remote parts of the continent. We need the co-operation of all competent field observers; please get in touch with your local organization and find out if it is cooperating as a regional center for the distribution of cards. If they are not, you may want to help organize a club effort. Individuals may also ob-

tain cards directly from us. In any case, write for information and cards to North American Nest Record Card Program, Laboratory of Ornithology, 33 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850. Be sure to include your zip code with your return address.

The announcements in journals have proven a very effective means of communication with the public. We thank you sincerely for your cooperation.—**Helen Fessenden, Laboratory of Ornithology, 33 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.**

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### Book Reviews

(Concluded from Page 12)

tion of the regional vegetation and geology of Kentucky, the ecological features of each, with the type of birds to be found, and recent changes in avifauna over the state as a whole.

This is a book anyone would be glad to own. Birders of Kentucky and vicinity can indeed be proud of it.

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### Sandhill Cranes

(Concluded from Page 4)

slender neck thrust ahead and the slowly beating wings move the ponderous 15-pound body.

In fall migration the crane lives largely on grains in stubble fields. He is a slow eater as he picks heads of grain to pieces with his dagger bill. The geese can guzzle a whole grain head at a time.

Not much is known about the main breeding range in Canada; however, the crane breeds in several of the northwestern states, too. Nests are built of dead rushes in the marsh areas, with usually two eggs.

Young cranes remain with the parents until fully grown and are fed by regurgitation from the parent.—**Rapid City.**

## Comparison of Spring Arrival Dates of 15 Common Birds

### WAUBAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

#### Waubay, South Dakota

Robert R. Johnson, Refuge Manager

	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Canada Goose .....	3 9	3 27	3 10	3 10	3 14
Mallard .....	3 17	3 28	3 15	3 13	4 4
Gadwall .....	4 1	4 16	4 4	3 31	4 14
BW Teal .....	3 26	4 16	4 7	4 15	4 16
Lesser Scaup .....	3 24	4 6	3 24	3 31	4 12
Ruddy Duck .....	4 24	4 19	4 11	4 22	4 22
Marsh Hawk .....	3 4	3 29	3 5	3 16	3 18
Coot .....	4 5	4 14	4 4	3 21	4 9
Killdeer .....	3 24	3 27	3 27	4 10	4 7
Yellow-shafted Flicker .....	3 28	4 16	3 30	4 15	4 11
Purple Martin .....	4 22	4 17	4 15	4 11	4 18
Robin .....	3 19	3 27	3 19	3 26	4 8
Meadowlark .....	3 16	3 22	3 14	3 16	4 1
YH Blackbird .....	4 21	4 19	4 9	4 6	4 19
RW Blackbird .....	3 17	3 22	3 15	3 17	4 5

(See Vol. XIV:71 for 1959 and 1960 dates)