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Fox Sparrow

—L. B. McQueen

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President's Page

SDOU has passed its 21st birthday. As such organizations go, it is no great age. Yet we are old enough to consider for a few moments where we are going—and from where.

The formal objectives were set out in the Constitution: "... to encourage the study of birds in South Dakota and promote the study of ornithology by more closely uniting the students of this branch of natural science" (Vol. I:16). But we have no doubt at all that a great deal more was expected to follow from these few words.

To most of us the friendships, not only across South Dakota, but adjacent states, even the entire North American Continent, as a result of our membership and activities are most appreciated. We look forward, from one meeting to the next, to greeting old friends again. Regrets, for lack of time, and for those no longer with us only add to their value.

That the study of South Dakota birds has greatly increased in the past 21 years is beyond question. Though we often feel the growth has been all too slow, it has been steady. We have no reason to doubt it will continue.

More tangible results of SDOU is the wealth of information on birds accumulated in the 20 volumes of *South Dakota Bird Notes*. But for SDOU, little of it would have been available, or even known. To make it quickly accessible, a five-year index has been made for

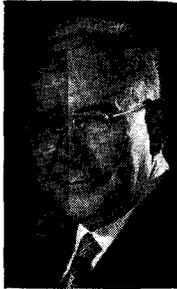
each of the first three periods and no doubt Nelda Holden will have completed that dreary task for the fourth five-year section before too long. We should not fail to appreciate the work of the indexers—while we are enjoying ourselves in the field, looking for new and strange birds, or quickly finding references to past observations in the indexes. Such work requires a particular kind of courage and persistence not given to many.

Then there is the cap of the pyramid: *Birds of South Dakota*, an annotated check-list. It was a dream of the founders. At long last it is seriously in hand, though much work is still to be done. And, of course, the funds for printing are yet to be found.

As has been pointed out, we do not know enough about South Dakota birds for this book to be, in any sense, the last word. Our lack of knowledge is a sad fact of life to each of the members of the Check-List Committee. Yet the book can be expected to serve as a tool for further study, making future work more productive, eliciting previously unreported material, pointing up areas of the unknown. To an extent this is true of all such works. But, with our large territory, comparatively few workers, our need for such a book is all the greater.

At the worst, there will be errors, unjustified assumptions, omissions that seem inexcusable in the light of existing published material—brought to attention as a result of the Check-List.

But waiting 10 or 20 years for publication is not likely to change this a great deal.—J. W. Johnson



1969 Breeding Records for Gulls and Terns

Bruce Harris

THIS group of birds has been of special interest to me for many years. Widely distributed throughout the state, particularly in the east, they are familiar to many people as "sea gulls." They are generally acknowledged to be beneficial birds, especially by farmers who recognize the hordes of Franklin Gulls that follow the plow, both spring and fall. But, as with many common birds, we have little documentation of their nesting colonies in South Dakota, and in 1969 I decided to make a special effort to pin down nesting records for our gulls and terns. This was as much for my personal satisfaction as for SDOU records, for I had never seen South Dakota nests of any of the Lariidae Family.

Although not many colonies were found during the summer, I did better than expected, finding nests for Black, Common and Forster's Terns, and colonies of Franklin and Ring-billed Gulls. The experience gained has been valuable to me, and will make future nest-finding much easier. I found that in most cases, nesting activity of gulls and terns is easily determined by their actions around the breeding territory. The exact location of tern nests (except for the Common Tern) in marshes or sloughs, are difficult to find, but nesting gulls are easily located. The toughest job is sometimes getting out to the nests, fighting through heavy shoreline vegetation.

My technique in finding nests in sloughs includes mud-slogging and travel by boat or canoe. If the slough is small with a firm bottom, wading is best where water levels permit. I wear

old clothes and tennis shoes, and find it a cool and efficient way to locate nests. Occasionally a person can surprise a bird on the nest while wading in deep water, but this is not often. I was amazed at the dexterity of Pied-billed Grebes in covering their nests, leaving not a hole to indicate that eggs are in the nest. More than once I almost walked past a grebe nest covered so cleverly that it was mistaken for a mass of rushes. In large sloughs, such as Bullhead Lake and the Peever Slough, where some distances had to be covered, it was convenient to travel by boat or canoe to the nesting areas, after which I usually got out and waded about to find nests. It is very helpful to have someone along to handle the bow paddle and to record data.

BLACK TERN—These birds are widely distributed, and probably nest in most counties where suitable habitat is available. They do not require large sloughs, as I have found them on areas no larger than two to three acres during the breeding season. Most of the gulls and terns display aggressive behavior when you come near their nesting grounds, and the Black Tern is one of the most aggressive, so usually one has no problem knowing that nests are nearby.

I visited LaCreek Refuge in Bennett County rather early in the nesting season, on June 6th, and the Black Terns were evidently just settling down to their nesting activities. Guided by Donald Hammer, graduate student from South Dakota State University, I located three nests containing one to three eggs. The nests were widely sep-

arated, and there was not much action from the terns to indicate maximum nesting activity. Several Forster Terns were present at LaCreek, and Hammer assured me that they nest regularly on the Refuge—he had seen nests, and Forster Tern eggs were included in an egg collection at Refuge Headquarters. It was a pleasure to see the Trumpeter Swans on their nesting grounds, and to find that the introduced birds are doing well in Bennett County, in spite of some poaching activity in the area several years ago. One violator was apprehended and heavily fined, I was told. Redhead ducks, Western and Eared Grebes, Willets and many other species were present and would be nesting soon, according to Hammer.

On June 22, aided by my two boys, I located two Black Tern nests at Bullhead Lake, Roberts County. They held one and three eggs. Our trip to Bullhead came a few days after a severe wind and rain storm, and I believe many nests must have been destroyed during the storm period, because quite a number of adults were in the area. This visit was made under adverse weather conditions, and we did not stay in the area more than two hours. Western Grebes are common nesters here, and a small Double-crested Cormorant colony was observed. I am sure that Forster's Terns nest at Bullhead Lake, but nests have not been located. It is a wonderful breeding area for many birds. There was little evidence of Redhead or Canvasback ducks nesting in 1969, although I am sure that in past years it was a fine breeding ground for these ducks.

On June 13th I found more than 30 adult Black Terns on the Rubindall

Slough in southeastern Sanborn County. They were very aggressive in following my movements around the slough, with much raucous calling and "dive bombing," but I could not find an active nest, although I waded about for nearly an hour. Several empty nests were found, and it appeared that these birds were just getting a colony established. But on the 15th when I returned to the area there was not a Black Tern to be found. A severe storm during the period may have discouraged the birds from nesting, but they seemed well established on my first visit.

The Rubindall Slough is another fine breeding ground for various waterfowl and shorebirds. With the enthusiastic help of my two boys, Gordon and Mark, many nests of Pied-billed Grebes were found, along with a small colony of Forster's Terns and Black-crowned Night Herons. Willets and Marbled Godwits were present and obviously established on territory, but diligent search turned up nothing on these shorebirds. One Wilson's phalarope nest was found.

All of the Black Tern nests were located in medium to light stands of bullrush, the nests were in loose colonies—none within 10 yards of another. I suspect that this may be typical of the species, but cannot say for sure because I have not yet located a colony at peak production. All nests were composed of dead bullrush, with occasional green material included. They were so shoddy as to construction that you would have to look very close to find a nest, and then it did not appear possible that it was a nest, except for the presence of eggs, which camouflage wonderfully with the nest

material. It seems very likely that there would be high nest mortality among Black Terns as a result of hail, wind and rain storms.

FORSTER'S TERN—I found only one small colony during the summer, but this species undoubtedly nests in many locations around the state, especially in the eastern half. I have observed them during the breeding season in Aurora, Bennett, Kingsbury, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Miner and Roberts counties, in addition to several areas in Sanborn County. On June 13th, I found a colony of six Forster Tern nests on a large muskrat house in the Rubindall Slough, Sanborn County. The muskrat house was about six by 10-feet in diameter, and the nests were clustered closely, most being within two feet of another, and none more than eight feet apart. Nesting chronology was evidently well advanced, because each nest contained three eggs that were probably being incubated. The colony was located in an opening of bullrush, with narrow-leaved cattail nearby. The terns revealed their nesting activity by much hovering over the nest site, and by loud calling and dive bombing even when I was a quarter of a mile away from the nests. Four or five birds would fly out to greet me even if I was not making a direct line for the nest site. The only other nesting data we have on this species, to my knowledge, was reported by Lundquist in 1951 (Bn's, 3:41).

COMMON TERN—My only experience with nesting Common Terns came as a pleasant surprise, while checking Cormorant nesting at North Drywood Lake, Roberts County. However, I am sure this species is widely distributed where larger lakes and Type V marsh-

es are available, at least in the north-east quarter of the state—but it's unlikely that they are anywhere as abundant as the Forster's Tern. The two species are easily confused in the field, and it is probably for this reason that we have little information on breeding colonies in South Dakota. The nesting habitat of the Common Tern is typically much different from the marsh-dwelling Forster's—they prefer lakes or deep marshes with rocky islands or peninsulas, and a sandy shoreline, although I believe there has been at least one exception to this recent literature.

On the 22nd of June, accompanied by sons, Gordon and Mark, we canoed out to a rocky island on North Drywood Lake where Cormorants were obviously nesting. The island was about 250 yards off shore, and was bare of trees or shrubs except for three small trees (two Willow and one American elm), none of which were over four feet in height. There was a continual line of adult Cormorants going to and from the island, and several White Pelicans were resting on the south end. The island was no larger than 50 by 100 yards, tapering to rocky points on either end. It was covered with a very heavy growth of Nettles (*Urtica gracilis*), but there was no bird activity to suggest that it would offer cover for a variety of nesting birds. The nettles ranged from one to two feet in height, and along the shore were a few clumps of a tall reed that I tentatively identified as Reed Canary Grass.

When we came to within 50 yards of the island I was amazed to see dozens of Common Terns and Ring-billed

Gulls rise up out of the thick growth of nettles. By this time all of the adult Cormorants had flown from the island, leaving large masses of young clustered here and there on the south end, which was entirely bare of vegetation, due to the heavy guano accumulation. The tern and gull nests were all located in heavy nettles growth, but there was a noticeable grouping of the two species. The tern nests were located on the far end of the island, away from the Cormorant nests on the south end. The nettles on the north end were slightly shorter than in the central area inhabited by the Ring-billed Gulls. We found no nests on the edge of the nettles, in the immediate proximity of the Cormorant nests.

It was difficult to walk around in counting nests because of the burning caused by the nettles, the many rocks, and for fear of stepping on nests. Camouflaging of gull and tern eggs with their background was almost perfect, making nest counts all the more difficult. I doubt that we got a complete nest count, but 36 Common Tern nests were located and the following data recorded: six nests contained one egg; 17 held two eggs each; 13 nests had three eggs each, and chicks were found in two nests. Judging from this, incubation probably had not started in the majority of the nests.

The Common Terns were not as aggressive as the Forster's Terns in their behavior around the breeding grounds—they paid no attention to us until we were within 100 yards of the island, and while we were investigating the nests only a few birds harassed us. In fact, most of the adult terns left the area when we landed on the island, this was also the case with the Ring-billed gulls.

I have found Common Terns during the nesting season in Brookings and

Kingsbury counties, and along Big Stone Lake in Roberts County. I suspect that they may also nest on sand bars along the Missouri River. Alfred Peterson reported on nesting Common Terns at Lake Poinsett in 1930 (BN's 12:59); this is the only information in the literature on South Dakota nesting, to my knowledge.

RING-BILLED GULL—We found 26 nests at North Drywood Lake, described above, and the following data is presented: two nests with one egg; eight nests with two eggs; 13 nests with three eggs, and three nests (3-2-2 eggs, respectively) destroyed by some unknown predator—possibly Common Terns. The gulls were even more docile than the terns at our intrusion onto their breeding grounds. There was very little calling from them, and most left the island at once when we began walking about. Three dead gulls were found, but only the heads and some feathers remained. They might have been killed by neighboring gulls or cormorants, but it's difficult to account for the carcasses being missing. Possibly these birds were killed prior to the nesting season—a hawk or an owl could have preyed on them, but it's unlikely that a mammalian predator was involved.

Ring-billed Gulls probably nest in various other places in the northeast where habitat is suitable, but to date the only known colonies have been at Waubay Lake and at Bitter Lake, Day County, reported by Chilson (Bn's 9:41), and Lundquist (BN's 7:37). The Drywood Lakes are ideal waterfowl breeding habitat. During my visits to the area I noted Gadwall, Baldpate, Redhead, Ring-necks, Lesser Scaup ducks, and Eared and Western Grebes, among other species.

FRANKLIN'S GULL—On the 8th of July, on a very hot and sultry afternoon, I managed to get my canoe

through the heavy shoreline vegetation surrounding Peever Slough, Roberts County, and out into the open water where waterfowl were conspicuous in all directions. I was assisted by my niece, Kathy Smith, who handled the bow paddle and the record-keeping; she also made various comments on the heat, the smell of the marsh, the vegetation, etc. Kathy vowed she would not be talked into such an expedition again, but I hope this is not true, because a person needs a recorder in such places, as well as another paddler.

My primary objective was to locate a nesting colony of Black-crowned Night Herons that I knew was nesting in the slough. I suspected that Franklin Gulls were also nesting here. The gulls were drifting over the center of the slough as we headed toward what appeared to be the largest concentration. I was about two weeks late in finding nests with eggs; all young were flying, albeit rather wobbly, with the exception of one downy young, which I was able to capture. I also found two dead downy young, both badly decomposed. Most of the nests had been broken up by wave actions or downpours, but I managed to count at least 30 among the heavy cattail and bullrush growth where there had probably been several

hundred. The nests were floating structures as described in the literature, and they were in rather close proximity in the heavy vegetation. The colony had evidently covered more than 100 square yards. I found it most convenient to get out of the canoe and wade about in the water, which was chin-deep in places, calling nest counts back to Kathy in the canoe. Along with the Black-crowned Night Herons, we noted Black and Forster's Terns, Eared and Pied-billed grebes, Redhead, Canvasback and Gadwall ducks, among many other species. This fine slough extends for more than two miles just north of the town of Peever. I certainly plan to visit it again in the future, but will do so earlier in the breeding season when more nest data can be collected.—
Woonsocket

Cover Picture

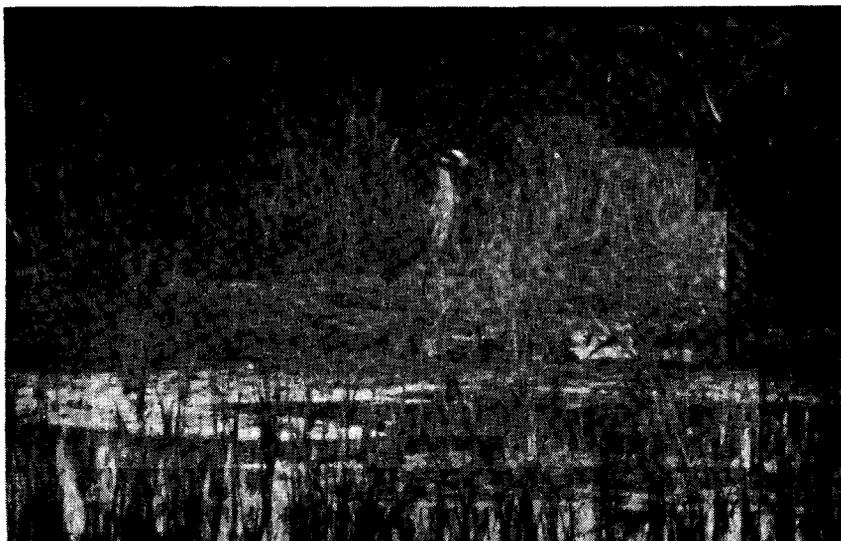
L. B. McQueen, an artist and skilled ornithologist presently residing at Eugene, Oregon, painted the watercolor of the fox sparrow from which the cover picture is taken. The bird's fluffed-out posture is in response to the cold as the artist saw the species during the remarkably snowy 1968-69 winter at Eugene (39 inches of snow in January). In contributing the drawing to BIRD NOTES, Mr. McQueen remarked that the watercolor is of the western gray-headed or slaty form of the fox sparrow found, at least, from the Rockies westward. Thus, it may not be the characteristic form observed in South Dakota. The editors gratefully acknowledge Mr. McQueen's generosity in sharing his picture.



Lark Bunting

—E. W. Steffen

Yellow-Crowned Night Heron Reported



AN ADULT Yellow-Crowned Night Heron was observed on the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge from June 8, 1970 to June 19, 1970. Although a few observations of this species have been recorded in eastern South Dakota, this is believed to be the first record for the western portion of the state.

The observations reported herein occurred each morning (6:00 a.m., MDT) and evening (8:00 p.m.) from June 8 to June 19 during conduct of routine refuge activities. Each time a vehicle approached, it flushed from the vicinity of a small water control structure which was also frequented by Black-Crowned Night Herons. Much shyer than its larger cousin, the Yellow-Crowned Night Heron always flushed far in advance of a vehicle and landed within visual range on only one occasion. In flight, the Yellow-Crowned Night Heron appeared less robust and its neck was more obvious than that of a Black-Crowned Night Heron. General

body color was also considerably darker, enabling the authors to readily distinguish it from numerous Black-Crowned Night Herons which flushed simultaneously. The absence of any vocalization was also quite distinctive. Black-Crowned Night Herons commonly squawk loudly when flushed but the Yellow-Crowned Night Heron did not call during any of numerous observations.

We were able to closely examine and photograph it at 8:00 p.m., MDT on June 10 when it landed on the shoreline of a small bay about 30 yards from our vehicle. The accompanying photograph, although taken after sundown and of poor quality, clearly shows the identifying characteristics of this species. The top of the head and cheek bar appeared white under prevailing light conditions while the sides of the head were jet black. Eye color was not apparent. White plumes projecting be-

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Bird Observations on Lake Francis Case (Randall Reservoir) South Dakota, 1965-70

Ralph H. Town
Wildlife Biologist
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

SURVEYS primarily concerned with Francis Case (Randall Reservoir, Missouri waterfowl have been conducted during five of the last six years. These surveys were made possible along 76 miles of shoreline of Lake Missouri River) during five of the last six years. These surveys were made possible

Table 1. Observations of some birds and nests along 76 miles of shoreline transect on the lower portion of Lake Francis Case (Randall Reservoir) South Dakota, June, 1965-70.

Date:	6-16-65	6-17-66	6-20-67	6-16-68	6-03-70
Lake Level	13.52.4	1357.8	1364.8	1354.0	13.56.3
SPECIES	—NUMBER OBSERVED—				
Western Grebe	1		2	2	
Common Loon	1				
Ring-billed Gull				7	3
Franklin's Gull				3	
Common Tern					1
Least Tern			1		
Black Tern					6
Double-crested Cormorant	14	25	18	2	32
Mallard	29	62	34	37	26
Gadwall	2				1
Blue-winged Teal			2		5
Wood Duck	3		1		1(2)
Lesser Scaup					1
Canada Goose	1				
American Bittern				1	
Great Blue Heron	1	5	5	4	4
American Coot	1	3	2		2
Killdeer					5
Prairie Chicken					5
Turkey Vulture		2		5	9
Marsh Hawk				1	2
Red-tailed Hawk	2(1)			4	3
Osprey					1
Great Horned Owl				2	5
Common Nighthawk					1
Black-billed Magpie				18	
Common Crow				4	2
	55	97	65	90	115

(1) One active nest in cormorant colony at Odenbach Bay.

(2) One active nest at Spring Creek Bay.

ble through the cooperation of South Dakota State Game Warden, Les Nelson, who provided a 16-foot "Mercocruiser" boat which allowed the entire shoreline transect to be surveyed in approximately eight hours. David Olsen, former Refuge Manager, Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge, assisted with the survey in 1967. Results of the survey are indicated in Table 1. The intent of the surveys was to record use of the lake by waterfowl and ob-

servations of other birds were recorded only incidentally. The 27 species recorded in Table 1 therefore probably represent a minimum number of species and individuals that would be observed along the reservoir if more intensive surveys were conducted.

A comparison of spring duck populations in 1954-55 and 1965-70 indicates that populations have declined considerably since impoundment in 1953 (Table 2). Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Table 2. Comparison of spring duck populations, Lake Francis Case (Randall Reservoir) May-June, 1954-55 and 1965-70.

Year	Miles of Shoreline	Total Ducks	Ducks Per Mile
1954	36	180	5.0
1955	60	312	5.2
1965	76	34	.4
1966	76	62	.8
1967	76	37	.5
1968	76	37	.5
1970	76	34	.4

have remained the most common duck species observed (Table 1).

The decline in waterfowl populations has followed the decline in food supplies as the newly flooded areas became barren mud flats. The late sum-

mer drawdown and heavy siltation have precluded invasion of nearly all aquatic types of vegetation. Fish production has also been affected.

Even though excellent nesting cover

(Continued on Page 106)

Table 3. Double-crested cormorant and great blue heron nesting activity on a portion of Lake Francis Case (Randall Reservoir).

Year	St. Phillips Bay	Odenbach Bay		Whetstone Bay
	Active	Active	Inactive	Inactive
	—NUMBER OF NESTS—			
	Double-crested Cormorant			
1965	14		40	
1966	4	1	20	
1967		10		
1968			14	1
1970		14		
	Great Blue Heron			
1965				
1966		3		
1967		1		
1968				
1970		2		

1969 Breeding Records for Black-Crowned Night Herons & Double-Crested Cormorants on Lacreek Refuge

Donald A. Hammer and Joan M. Hammer

MY FIRST experience with nesting Black-crowned Night Herons came on June 14, 1969 when I located three nests in the Rubindall Slough, three miles southeast of Artesian, Sanborn County. With the aid of sons, Gordon and Mark, I canoed and waded over much of this fine marsh, finding many nests of Pied-billed Grebes, Coots, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a small colony of Forster's Terns. The heron nests were located well in the center of the marsh, in heavy stands of bullrush. They were constructed of bullrush, were quite bulky, and in an area where the water was about two feet in depth. The nests were more than 50 yards distant from other nests, in a loose colony; two held three eggs and the third four eggs. We had spotted the general location of the nest by observing the adults dropping down to the nest sites. In each case the adult bird flushed from the nest when we were within about 20 yards, giving away its exact location. We saw a total of 12 herons circling around the slough at various times during our visit, and I am sure that there were more nests present.

On July 8th, accompanied by my niece, Kathy Smith, I found nests of the Black-Crowned Night Heron in the Peever Slough, Roberts County. This colony was also located well out in the large marsh, and the nests fit the description given above, being constructed from adjacent bullrush over water that was from three to four feet in depth. Contents were as follows: three nests with one egg each; three nests with two eggs each; three nests

with three eggs each; one nest with one young and one egg; two nests with one young each, and five nests with three young each.

The young were of all age groups, but the majority appeared to be about one-half grown. I had observed a good many adults shuttling over this slough several times earlier in the season, and I am convinced that there were many more nests in the colony.

Two cormorant colonies were found in Roberts County during the 1969 season, giving me a first experience with the nesting activity of these birds. On the 22nd of June, accompanied by my two sons, we canoed out to a flooded group of willow trees in Bullhead Lake, four miles east of Wilmot. In years of lower water levels the trees were located on an island or peninsula, depending on water depth. We found 10 nests in the trees, none of them being more than 15 feet over the water. Only four nests were checked: two were empty and two held two eggs each. The remaining nests would have been more difficult to check, and as heavy rains were threatening, we satisfied ourselves with this data.

Enroute to Woonsocket in the afternoon we drove to North Drywood Lake, in the western part of the county. Canoeing out to an island about 250 yards from shore, we found a large colony of Cormorants numbering about 250 adults with 165 nests, sharing the island with nesting Common Terns and Ring-billed Gulls. We found very few eggs, and most of the young Cormorants were more than one-third grown. It was a

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SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

Red Crossbills at Huron

J. W. Johnson

HERMAN Chilson's paper, given at the Huron meeting, on the appearance in the state in modern times, of Red Crossbills, brought to my attention our own records on the species, which for some inadequate reason, were never prepared for publication. The data was not available for Herman's paper and is here submitted as a supplement thereto and with apologies.

Our first observation of Red Crossbills was at Riverside Cemetery, south-east of Huron, November 22, 1957. An adult male was found with a White-winged Crossbill. One, possibly the same individual, was seen in the same area November 28, December 1, and on December 21 (Christmas Count).

In 1960, nine were seen October 16 and four on October 23, also at Riverside Cemetery. No other record appears that year.

The winter of 1963-4 was marked by a spectacular incursion of these previously rare birds that remained all winter and spring. Their first appearances in our yard are recorded in our notes for October and November.

October 27, 1963	3
October 28, 1963	1
November 3, 1963	7
November 6, 1963	1
November 8, 1963	2
November 9, 1963	2

We were then away for a week and none were observed after our return until January of 1964.

On January 24, two were seen eating sunflower seeds under the window feeder. They found the feeder the next day, and were noted daily until Febru-

ary 9, when three were seen, and almost daily until February 26, when four were recorded. Up to four at one time were seen nearly every day until March 13, when five appeared.

One observation with these birds at the feeder was interesting to us. They were clearly not familiar with sunflower seeds. Several different methods of opening them were tried by different birds. Some started by slitting the seed lengthwise with a single slash of a mandible, then inserting the closed beak with its spreading points, to pry the shell open, as with a pair of partly open scissors. In time, all settled on the simplest system of cracking the shells by direct compression of the beak and removing the kernels with the tongue.

On March 14, another flock appeared to have joined them about the feeder, for we counted 13. No more than six were noted daily until March 25, when nine appeared together.

We left early on the morning of March 26 and did not return until April 5.

On April 6, we counted 12 crossbills. The number seen at one time varied from six to 13 until April 18, when 25 were present. For the next 10 days the greatest number seen together varied from five to 12. On April 30, 25 were present in a flock.

From May 1, to May 15, flocks of four to 16 were about daily, with 12 to 14 being the most common. Our study of the details of coloring of the birds led us to believe the flocks seen on successive days often did not consist of

the same individuals. So, we infer that the neighborhood population was at least that of our greatest number seen daily. After May 15, 1964, the numbers observed fell to four on May 18, two on May 19, and one on May 21. One or two were seen daily until May 29, after which they appeared no more.

In 1968, a single Red Crossbill, female or juvenile, appeared at our window feeder on January 20 and ate sunflower seeds several times each day until its last appearance on March 1.

At various times in the years since the 1964 influx of these birds, there have been reports of them in the area at all seasons. An adult male, found eating with a flock of sheep, was brought to us from out in the country one summer day. The date and location allowed the bird to escape before it have now been lost and my carelessness could be banded or photographed. Small flocks have been heard and recognized in this area many times, usually without written records being made.

In 1969 Lucille had heard crossbills about our yard several times during the first part of July but no record was made. Then, on July 12, 1969, an adult male and two females or juveniles were seen and recorded. A note from June Harter about the same time mentioned a flock being seen about Highmore.

A small flock was heard clearly in the yard, without being sighted, on September 4, 1969. On November 18, three, Nov. 19, seven and on November 20, one crossbills were seen about the yard, though none came to the window feeder. On Novemebr 25, a single

adult male was eating under the crab apple tree in the yard. I was not able to see whether it was eating the fallen apples or only their seeds. On November 30, a single adult male, probably the same individual, was in the yard again.—Huron

Yellow-Crowned Night

(Continued from Page 93)

hind the head were obvious but appeared shorter than the plumes of a Black-Crowned Night Heron. Neck and breast were gray and wings appeared black streaked with white. The black bill and yellow legs were similar to those of a Black-Crowned Night Heron.

On June 19, the last day it was seen on the refuge, we noticed it near another water control structure about one mile southeast of the first location. This bird may have remained on the refuge or in the vicinity for some time later if it frequented areas less commonly entered by human observers. On the other hand, it seemed to prefer the pools below water control structures for its hunting activities. Control structures are located within dikes and all dikes were traversed at least twice daily until June 30 without further observations.

Observations were made with 7x50 Bausch and Lomb binoculars and verified with Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds. Both authors had previously observed this species in Arkansas.

DETECTIVE

She collects the songs of birds,
the flash of wings
And with one feather of a note
one song he sings
One twitter that she lately heard
She reconstructs the bird.

With shining eyes, binoculars,
and patient waiting under trees
She keeps a record of the birds
she sees
And the dark silhouette of flight
She'd know, like fingerprints
or tracks on snow.

—Katherine Saunders
(Christian Science Monitor)

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White-Winged Crossbills at Huron

J. W. Johnson

OUR first of the species was on November 17, 1957, at Riverside Cemetery, southeast of Huron. The bird was a female or juvenile, working on the spruce cones. Since it was our first cross-bill, we spent time on close study and comparison with pictures, although identification presented no difficulty.

The bird was present in the same area on Nov. 22. On Nov. 23, five were seen in a spruce, all females or juveniles. The next day, Nov. 24, 1957, the five were accompanied by two adult males. On Nov. 28, their numbers had grown to about 50 total. My description of their appearance was set down immediately after the observation.

"All over the spruce tree's high branches its clustered cones moved and

worked with color. The area was so big it was hard to realize birds made up the busy surface. How could there be so many of them in one tree? Spots of yellow and red stood out against the green of spruce needles. But the yellow had everything from buff to orange and the red ran from palest pink to deepest scarlet. Between the colors, dark wings shone with wide, white bars.

"Incredibly effective was the job of camouflage it all made. Viewed from our distance, the bright colors in their irregular arrangement, broke up and concealed the forms of the birds. While they were clearly white-winged crossbills, no doubt there were red crossbills with them and we worked closer to check. While the birds ignored us, we finally were able to find one, and only one, red crossbill: an adult male. We had come so close we were able to see that the crossed mandibles were noticeably heavier, the bird larger, his red darker, and the wings without a white bar.

"As we flushed this flock and its flight drew others into the air from adjacent trees, we estimated there were 50 birds or more flying ahead of us. Many more must have been close by but too busy to fly."

On December 28, 1957, their numbers had fallen to three adult males



Lewis' Woodpecker

—E. W. Steffen

and two others. On December 21, Christmas Count, only five were found, all females or juveniles.

Supplementing the above is the following, from Audubon Field Notes of 1957-58: Vol. 12:41: "Twenty White-winged Crossbills were seen at Grand Forks, N. Dak., Nov. 1 (Lawrence Summers). Herbert Krause wrote that Sioux Falls, S. Dak. had the first large concentration in 60 years; flocks containing 15 to 50 birds were observed between October 20 and November 14." The species did not appear on the Sioux Falls Christmas Count, however.

Vol. 12:289 (Herbert Krause was now Regional Editor): "White-winged Crossbills, which had made a spectacular incursion into South Dakota in the fall months, continues to be the high point of the winter season. By contrast they were very scarce at Edmonton, Alta., where they are usually regular winter visitors (Edmonton Bird Club); they made an apparent "first" appearance at Bismarck, N. Dak. between December 22 and 29 (Robert Randall) and maintained fairly large numbers in South Dakota. They arrived at Huron on November 16, reached a peak of between 50 and 60 individuals there on November 28 and began to dwindle on December 21 (sic) (J. W. Johnson). They were common in spruce trees at Waubay Wildlife Refuge during December and early January (1958) (John C. Carlsen) and were present in flocks of 10 to 25 birds on March 22, 1958 at Sioux Falls."

White-winged Crossbills were reported even farther south: at Lincoln, Nebr. on Jan. 1, 1958 and at Bartlesville, Okla. on Jan. 11, 1958, in this issue of AFN.

This species has gone unreported after the above dates until the current



Bullocks Oriole

—E. W. Steffen

year (1969). During late November, a small flock was found, again in Riverside Cemetery. Lucille and I first saw them, three adult males and four females or juvenile, on November 21, 1969. Only the latter could be found the next day. But, November 23, we saw four adult males and two females or juveniles. On November 30 we saw none at this location on our visit in the early afternoon.—Huron

1969 Breeding Records

(Continued from Page 96)

very interesting (and odorous) experience. One can read in the literature about such colonies for years, but it takes a personal visit to really appreciate the thing—adults shuttling continuously back and forth with food, the guttural calls of the young blending into a continual droning like a giant beehive; and last, the unbelievably ugliness of the young, naked cormorants in the nests. It is a picture long remembered.—Woonsocket

Book Review

J. W. Johnson

A **NATOMY of an Expedition.** By H. W. Menard. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1969. 6¼ x 9¼ in., x + 256 pages, including references, notes, and index. Numerous maps and 32 pages of informal photos of ships, equipment, and people at work. \$6.95.

All the oceans are a long way from South Dakota and this book on oceanography mentions birds, but rarely and only in passing. In **Bird Notes** this review needs some explaining. The reasons are several, each of which I feel is sufficient.

The author was in the middle of the recent discoveries that, while they have yet had little reaction in the popular press, might be said to have shaken the scientific world. The general acceptance of their meaning has come only in very recent years.

Briefly, the once unmentionable theory about continents actually moving apart and sliding around over latitude and longitude has not only been demonstrated, but in detail and on a scale that its early proponents would never have dared to describe. Not only that but the mechanics of the process that is still going on have largely been discovered.

The author and the people he works with have done much of the pulling together of the data of many disciplines to make up our new picture of the plastic earth that is slowly but constantly changing its shape.

It has been my observation that our SDOU membership has a wider interest in the world we live in than most and, if we must learn that our once solid earth had no real existence, how better

to do it than from these who have learned to live with and enjoy its new changeability.

As the title suggests, this book is about an expedition, for exploration of a small area of ocean floor, in the fabled "South Seas," its beginning, its problems, the way its work was planned, how it was finally carried out, in spite of weather and equipment problems, with some detail of findings and how they fit with other knowledge of the earth. In this last third of the 20th century, sea adventure is not dead. A little safer for the people there, but now a multidimensional thing in its processes and its equipment failures, beyond the comprehension of the seamen of old.

The author, looking always ahead, a fraction of a modern collective Columbus, yet has sympathy for the modern old timers, the geologists and geophysicists who have been reluctant to embark on this ocean that extends so far from the shores they know: "It is hard enough adjusting to a growing flood of new work and ideas which surely are proven, without also trying to understand the implications of everything which is not proven."

He calls this "a book about exploring ideas. One of the main attractions of the pursuit of ideas is that it never ends anywhere and any geographical place may be an equally logical chance to end a book about an oceanographic expedition.

"We may look to a time in the future when another expedition will come here (to the same location) with tech-

(Continued on Page 104)

General Notes of Special Interest

AVOCET, TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER, SWAINSON'S THRUSH, AND WHIP-POOR-WILL OBSERVED IN PERKINS AND WALWORTH COUNTIES—We observed a nesting avocet as well as several other of that species on a small run-off pond in a field 1.5 miles south of the intersection of Highways 73 and 20 near Meadow, Perkins County, on June fifth. We returned to the area on June sixth and saw the bird still on its nest, which was on a strip of mud between two small water puddles adjacent to the pond. No other avocets were present this time. We photographed the nest which was a shallow basin in the mud lined with grass and small weeds. It contained four dark-brownish speckled eggs. As soon as we left the spot the adult bird, which had put on a beautiful "broken wing act" returned and after carefully kicking the mud from each foot settled back on the nest. While she was trying to lure us away she was joined by a willet, which added to her noisy protest. We drove by the spot later, and she was still on the nest.

On June 8 we drove to Llewellen John Memorial Park about 10 miles south of Lemmon and did a little banding. Besides the more common birds we banded one Traill's Flycatcher and one Swainson's thrush. While there was one Traill's Flycatcher reported for the SDOU composite list on Sunday we do not recall a Swainson's thrush report.

While returning home from the SDOU meeting at Bison we spent the night of June 8 at Hiddenwood Lake near Selby, Walworth County. Early in the evening we heard a whip-poor-will call very close to our trailer. We followed the voice and were able to get

several very good observations of the bird at close range. It was a male, the white tail feathers showing plainly as it flew from tree to tree. We heard it repeatedly throughout the night and the next morning before we left the camp.

This was our second observation of this bird in the state, the other being in southeastern South Dakota on the evening of May 18, 1962 at the Boy Scout Camp in the Newton Hills, south of Canton, Lincoln County. On this occasion, too, we followed the voice and saw the bird sitting on a large rock near the old bath house repeating its call over and over—Charles and Gladycy Rogge, Sioux Falls

* * * *

BOHEMIAN WAXWING CEREMONY (?) AT HURON—Early in the morning of February 5, 1970, a little flock of Bohemian Waxwings (seven) were moving about the trees in our backyard. They worked up into the tall hackberry, which, for some reason, still held its dry leaves this winter.

A moment later they all came out into some bare branches of lower trees. One held a hackberry in its bill, while the others gathered about it. After juggling the berry around in its beak it passed the fruit to another bird, which received it with the same delicate ceremony. But not to eat it. The new holder of the berry juggled it about in its beak also for a few seconds then passed it to another. Again it was received as with lightly exaggerated ceremony and again, after a brief period, it was passed on to still another.

This performance went on for perhaps 10 minutes, while I watched through the glasses. Sometimes the berry was returned to the giver and then

passed on to a different bird. But never abruptly and always with an air of respectful appreciation.

At the end the little flock, as by common consent, retired, one still holding the berry, to the big tree where they were hidden by its leaves.

These birds showed no signs of interest in the fruit as food. It seemed the passing of it from one to another was the main point. It was certainly not the often described action of waxwings of passing fruit from one to another when a flock is eating.

Unable to find any description of this behavior in such literature as I had easily available, I judge it is not commonly observed as separate from behavior at feeding. The whole act seemed to be a set pattern in which each player took part, almost a ritual part, and suggests a useful purpose.

Noting that some birds returned the berry to the giver and some did not, I remembered hearing something of similar behavior as a sex determinative among other birds, such as some of the penguins. While this is much more complex, might it not also be sex determinative preliminary to courtship? A couple of days earlier I had noted initiation of courtship singing by chickadees and the cardinal.

With the waxwings color differences between sexes are not apparent and their notes seem not particularly distinctive. Hence it seems possible their

reaction in this ritual may be an advertisement of sex.

A good film of the action would have permitted close and repeated study with better evaluation of the possibility. Unfortunately such a film may be far in the future.—J. W. Johnson, Huron

* * * *

Book Review

(Continued from Page 102)

nology unknown to us and pursuing undreamed dreams.

"I have tried to impart some of my own wonder about the sea with the hope that others may come to feel the same way."

Lastly, important for most of us, this is a first-rate book to read, one not easily laid down. Learning was never more pleasant. The author has that priceless knack, given to the few, of catching you right up in his story, his thought, and holding you, unresisting, until the end you accept with regret.—Huron

—SPECIAL PRICE—

Birds of the Black Hills

by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr.
and Nathaniel R. Whitney, Jr.

While the supply lasts, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology offers this useful book to SDOU members and BIRD NOTES readers at the reduced price of \$1.50 (original price: \$2.50). To purchase a copy, send \$1.50 to:

James Tate, Jr.
Assistant Director
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, New York 14850



Pine Grosbeak

—E. W. Steffen

Notes from Sparks' Mini-Ranch

IF we could transport the clean, fresh air and water, the green grass and trees and the peace of our Black Hills to our cities we might eliminate a large share of their problems of drugs and crime.

And it could be done, says James W. Hudson in a fascinating article in the August-September *National Wildlife*, "We Can Build Space Age Cities Now." Ralph Winter illustrates the article with pictures showing the concrete and traffic of our large cities replaced with carpets of green grass, trees, fishing streams and shallow pools for birds and migratory waterfowl.

The traffic and drive-in businesses remain on the ground level and are covered with a roof of grass and trees containing belts of recreation areas, each planned for a different age level. Buildings are patterned after Expo 68's "Habitat" and give their residents sunlight, vegetation and space utilization, roof gardens, pools and rivers with balconies sealed off from humans but open to birds and wildlife. The magic of grass and trees keep the air pure and reduce the pressures and tensions of city life as the workers can view the beauty of nature from their office and home windows.

Peter Driscoll of the United States Housing and Urban Development, in his footnote to the article says, "all that is needed is a nationwide, personal commitment which will help channel our resources to do the job."

This has been an era of destruction; the small farm, the small town and the peaceable city, but it can be followed by an era of creation as space age cities are built.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania is the world's first refuge for birds of prey. It is a privately owned, non-profit registered Natural Land-

mark and the article in this same issue of *National Wildlife* by Donald Heuntzelman is entitled, "Wings Over Hawk Mountain."

As he describes the gliding flight of the hawks one wonders if the principle of the glider was discovered by naturalists watching a soaring hawk. Mr. Heuntzelman states that on a September day in 1948, before DDT had taken its toll, one day's estimated count of hawk flights was 11,392. I thrill to the sight of our lone bird as he soars over the pine trees along the road.

As a Sunday bonus we watched a young woodpecker pluck a chokecherry from a branch and then work his way toward the top of the adjoining telephone pole until he found a small hole. There he deposited the chokecherry and then proceeded to pluck the meat from the pit. Look, folks, no hands.

Take a look at a \$1.00 bill. It bears the image of a bald eagle, as do also coins, stamps and the Great Seal of the United States.

George Ott, in the April-May, 1970 *National Wildlife* says that the bald eagle was chosen as our national symbol because of its great strength, courage, the grandeur of its flight and because it is a native of North America. In the article, "Is the Bald Eagle Doomed" he writes, "As the bald eagle population decreases, the United States faces the possibility of being represented by a symbol which has vanished from our land," and pesticides are largely to blame.

Alaska—Life on the Last Frontier, has recently been added to our library and I find it well worth reading.

The September, 1970 issue headlines an article by Robert H. Armstrong entitled, "Four Alaskan Birds," and they are probably familiar to South Dakota

readers. They are the fox sparrow, chestnut backed chickadee, butcher bird and the smallest peep. The colored photographs in this issue are terrific, including one by Robert H. Egan showing a reindeer herd crossing the Soloman River. There is also a section of full page colored photos of the people, wildlife, birds and scenery of Alaska and they are purely beautiful.

Fall, or should I say winter, has come to the High Country. A September 9 hard freeze wiped out everything, covered and uncovered, garden and flowers except a bed of petunias and my Circus Rose, with its dozen or more bursting buds. When I dropped down Strawberry Hill the next morning, a scant 10 miles from home, I saw no signs of frost. However snow and more freezing weather is forecast for the Hills so winter will reign until Indian summer forces him out.

Have you seen the stickers decorating some of the car bumpers on the road? "Be glad you live in South Dakota." I am glad to live in South Dakota, though our population declined in this last census and our salary standard isn't among the highest. I'd like to see these stickers available to all who love "the land of infinite variety." These stickers are available at public utility offices throughout the state.

That's "30" for now.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Anyone interested in presenting a paper is urged to contact Jean Russell, 427 South Ree No. 1, Pierre, South Dakota 57501.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A resolution will be voted on at the Winter Meeting adding former presidents of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union to the Board of Directors as ex-officio members, thus allowing additional members.

Bird Observations

(Continued from Page 95)

exists along the shoreline in some areas, brood habitat is severely limited and may not be associated with nesting sites. Duck production along the reservoir has therefore been even less than what normally would be expected with the apparent breeding population.

In addition to the birds species recorded during surveys, notes on nesting by double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) and great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*) were made as to location and number of active and inactive nests (Table 3). The distinction between active and inactive nests was whether or not birds were present at the nests at the time of observation.

Previous disturbance or feeding activity may have caused the birds to leave and lead to error in determining the status of nests.

The paucity of waterfowl and other water associated wildlife along the shoreline of Lake Francis Case in early summer is striking, and is probably related to the lack of aquatic vegetation. Plant species which can withstand the wide fluctuations in water levels are needed if the tremendous potential the reservoir holds for wildlife is ever to be realized.—Lake Andes, S. Dak.

S.D.O.U. Winter Meeting

Pierre, S. Dak.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 6-7-8, 1970

—HEADQUARTERS—

Civil Defense Room in the Basement of the County Jail

Friday, Nov. 6, 6:00 p.m.—Evening get-together, registration, slides.

Saturday, Nov. 7—Registration 9:00 a.m.

Paper session

Coffee

Paper session

Lunch on your own

1:00 p.m. paper session

4:00 p.m. business meeting

Evening: Banquet at Holiday Inn

Sunday—Business meeting or whatever.

MOTELS AND HOTELS AT PIERRE

Name and Phone No.	Single Room	Twin Room	Other
Terrace Motel Pierre 4-7366	\$8.00	\$11.00-\$16.00	
Holiday Inn Pierre 4-5981	\$10.50	\$16.50	\$11.50 for two persons, one bed
King's Inn Pierre 4-5951	\$10.50	\$13.00-\$16.00	
Capital City Cabins Pierre 4-4336	\$7.00-\$10.00 with bath	\$10.00-\$12.00	One room with three beds, \$15.00
Fawn Motel Pierre 4-5885	\$8.00	\$14.00	Two rooms with three beds, \$22.00-\$23.00
Frontier Motel Ft. Pierre 3-2522	\$6.50	\$11.00	
Iowa Motel Pierre 4-7461	\$10.50		
Locke Hotel Pierre 4-7325	\$4.50 with bath \$3.50 without	\$6.00 without	
Oahe Motel Ft. Pierre 3-2531	\$9.00	\$14.00	
Paragon Motel Pierre 4-5807	\$8.00	\$12.00	
Pierre Motel Pierre 4-8626	\$12.00	\$16.75	\$12.75 for two
St. Charles Hotel Pierre 4-5961	\$6.50 with bath \$4.00 without	\$8.50 with bath	
Waverly Hotel Pierre 4-7358	\$3.50 without \$5.25 with bath	\$5.25 without \$7.00 with bath	