

# South Dakota Bird Notes

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Whole No. 97



American Bittern in Pennington County

—Photo by Keith E. Evans

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Vol. XXVI, No. 2

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*In This Number . . .*

President's Page, Byron Harrell	19
Horned Grebe Breeding Records in North-Central South Dakota, H. F. Duebbert and J. T. Lokemoen	20
Goshawk Nests in the Black Hills, Fred Wild	22
Golden Eagle Correction	23
Notes on the 1972 Hawk Migration in Northeastern South Dakota with Observations on Gyrfalcon, Prairie Falcon and Goshawk, Bruce Harris	24
Burrowing Owls in Mellette County, South Dakota, Charles A. Berdan and Raymond L. Linger	26
Roster of Participants at Lacreek NWR May 25-27, 1973	28
Birds Seen at SDOU Meeting May 25-27, 1973, Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge	28
General Notes of Special Interest—Hybrid Pintail-Mallard in Lyman County, Brant in Sully County, Songs and Sounds of Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-bellied Woodpeckers Observed at Burke Lake, Townsend's Solitaire Sighted at Lake Burke, Deuel County Notes—Specimen Records in Barred Owl and Le Conte's Sparrow, Whooping Cranes in Codington County, Red Crossbills Wintering at Lake Burke	30
The Early Birds	33
In Memoriam, Herman F. Chapman	34

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## President's Page

IT IS with great pleasure that I announce that the SDOU Board of Directors have appointed June Harter of Highmore, South Dakota, as the new editor of "South Dakota Bird Notes" beginning with the next issue. I am sure she would appreciate some good contributions.

When the Board met at our field meeting at Martin, there was considerable discussion of editorial policy. We are concerned with errors that get into print, but we are also interested in



aiding the editor and also in aiding the authors of papers and short notes. One action taken by the Board was to authorize the president to appoint an Editorial Committee of five members to whom manuscripts will be referred. The members will be selected on the basis of

their experience, their knowledge of the bird life of a particular part of the state, and their willingness to review and return promptly the papers sent to them. We hope to announce the committee in the next issue of Bird Notes.

For the author who submits a paper, the sequence of events will be the same, but after the editor receives the paper, she will examine it, do some preliminary editing, determine which member of the Editorial Committee would be most appropriate reviewer, and send it. Someone not on the committee might also occasionally be asked to help. The reviewer will read the paper carefully and then write out his comments which may include evaluation of identifications reported, listing of additional information needed, suggestions for the editor, and suggestions to the author. We

hope that the work can be spread around the committee so that both careful thought and promptness of return can be accomplished. The editor will then determine whether or not the paper needs to be returned for additions or changes by the author. In that case pertinent reviewer comments will be sent along. When everything is clarified, the editor will complete the work on the manuscript—further editing, spelling correction, marks for the typesetter, and so forth. When material for an issue is complete, it will go off to the printer.

We hope these new procedures do not discourage readers from writing up their observations, and we hope no one is offended if they are asked for further information. Even our reviewers' papers will be sent to other reviewers. The comments and questions raised will hopefully help the novice prepare a better paper and remind the old timer that something alone is not a guarantee that something important may be forgotten. If it turns out that the reviewer misunderstood what the author wrote, then that should be a warning that something needs to be rewritten with greater clarity. I think these new procedures will be valuable from everybody's point of view.

I would also like the Editorial Committee and others to think about the best ways to handle mistakes that have already appeared in print. Since Bird Notes regularly prints an index at five-year intervals, it might be especially important to get corrections in at the end of that period so that the user of the index will be exposed to a correction that he should be aware of. The Editorial Committee should periodically review the procedures to see that they are doing the job of making "South Dakota Bird Notes" a journal we can all be proud of.—  
Byron E. Harrell

# Horned Grebe Breeding Records in North-Central South Dakota

H. F. Duebbert and J. T. Lokemoen

FOR OVER 80 years, the exact status of nesting by Horned Grebes (*Podiceps auritus*) in South Dakota has been uncertain. Thus, we believed it was desirable to publish our three records for 1972, one of which was verified by a photograph (Figure 1). On May 22 we observed a pair of Horned Grebes constructing a nest in a seasonally-flooded freshwater wetland in McPherson County. The wetland was within a square mile of native mixed-grass prairie utilized for grazing in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 24, T. 126N., R. 71W., about 12 miles east of Eureka. On June 8 we visited the nest and found that it contained seven eggs. One adult was observed at the nest site on that date. The pond was about two acres in size and contained 18 inches of water at the nest. Vegetation surrounding the nest was predominantly common spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*) which was also used to construct the nest. Spikerush comprised about 75 percent of the vegetation in the pond and occurred in association with shortawn foxtail (*Alopecurus aequalis*), sloughgrass (*Beckmannia syzigachne*), and false-aster (*Boltonia latisquama*). Emergent vegetation covered about 80 percent of the water surface in an open stand that permitted unrestricted swimming by grebes. The nest site was visited again on June 13 when it contained one pipped egg and four unpipped eggs. Shell fragments in the nest indicated the other two eggs had hatched. A blind was set up near the nest on June 13 and photographs obtained of the adults and two young.

Two other breeding records were obtained in 1972 on the basis of flightless young with a pair of adults. One was recorded on June 29 when a pair of

Horned Grebes and one recently hatched young were observed in a 25-acre seasonally flooded wetland in Edmunds County. This pond was in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 20, T. 122N., R. 72W., about five miles southeast of Bowdle. The ecology of this pond was similar to the one in which the nest was observed except that the pond was bordered by cropland. Another record was obtained on July 27 when we observed a pair of adult Horned Grebes with two flightless young (two-thirds adult size) on a semipermanent, fresh, openwater pond with a fringe of cattail (*Typha* spp.) in McPherson County. This pond was in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 15, T. 125N., R. 71W., about 12 miles ESE of Eureka.

A thorough search of the ornithological literature indicated that recent nesting by the Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) in South Dakota has not been well documented. Earliest records were obtained during the 1880's and 1890's by egg collectors within the state. Card records for 12 sets of Horned Grebe eggs collected in South Dakota are on file at the Migratory Bird and Habitat Research Laboratory, U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Laurel, Maryland. Nine sets taken on June 23, 1885 at Huron were in the collection of J. P. Norris, Jr. Two clutches collected on June 4 and June 23, 1885 at Cavour were in the collection of J. W. and J. Mailliard. One set, collected on June 25, 1895 in Lugenbeel County by I. S. Trostler was in the collection of Fred Dille. The above data were from the files of A. C. Bent. Present location of the eggs is unknown.

According to the Check-list of North American Birds, Fifth edition (American Ornithologists Union, Baltimore,



### Nesting Horned Grebes in McPherson County

—Photo by Duebbert and Lokemoen

Maryland, 1957, 691 pp.) the breeding range of the Horned Grebe in the central United States extends as far south as northern Nebraska and northeastern Iowa. A. C. Bent (Life Histories of North American Diving Birds, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1963, 239 pp.) listed two Nebraska nest records but none for South Dakota.

In the fall of 1972, managers of all U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, National Wildlife Refuges, and Wetland Management Districts in South Dakota were contacted about possible horned grebe nesting in their areas. Managers of

the Sand Lake NWR, Waubay NWR, and Madison WMD stated that breeding had been indicated by observation of nests or occurrence of adults during the nesting season. Lacreek NWR and Lake Andes NWR supplied negative responses. As experienced ornithologists are well aware, the close similarity between horned grebes and eared grebes has often led to difficulty in making positive identification. Because of this fact, and since we did not personally observe the above records, we cannot verify the authenticity of them—Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, North Dakota 58401

# Goshawk Nests in the Black Hills

Fred Wild

AN EARLY observation of a nesting pair of Goshawks near Keystone was made in 1938 by Behrens according to Pettingill and Whitney in "Birds of the Black Hills." A nesting pair was seen near Sylvan Lake in June 1965 by members of the Wilson Society. During 1972, I observed three nests in the Black Hills National Forest in Lawrence County.

## THE FIRST NEST

On March 21, 1972, Jim Furnish was administering a timber sale on the Nemo District south of Middle Boxelder Creek when a Goshawk passed near his head. The bird came within five feet of Jim, who took cover behind a tree. His description of the large pronounced eye



The First Nest, 1972

stripe identified the bird as a Goshawk. The bird perched approximately 50 feet from him and gave several distress calls. (See South Dakota Bird Notes, vol. 24, p. 42).

I went with Jim to the area on March 27, 1972, when we found a newly started nest 30 feet above the ground in the crotch of a forked pine. The sticks were stacked about one foot deep. The pine was on a north-facing slope and was marked for cutting. We did not see the hawk during the morning. We removed the marking paint from the tree and discussed the situation with the timber contractor. He said he would keep his operation out of the small pocket and try not to disturb the nesting area.

Returning several days later to photograph the nest, I walked beneath the dense forest canopy. The light was subdued and my eyes were not fully adjusted to the light. As I approached the nest, I heard several loud high-pitched cries similar to a short human scream. A dark form hurtled down close to my face. The rush of air moved the hair on my head. Instinctively I was ready to run from the area. I fought back the impulse and positioned myself behind a large tree when I heard the second series of warning cries. The Goshawk made several dives at me but was deterred by a stick held over my head. The bird persisted diving at me until I was 100 yards from the nest. At this point the bird must have felt I was sufficiently repulsed and returned to the nest. My actual fear of the attacking goshawk made photography nearly impossible. I found a need for the protection of a stick in one hand while trying to focus a camera with the other.

Jim climbed the nest tree in late July to find only the remains of egg shells with a thin leathery consistency. There were no

bones at the base of the tree to indicate the remains of birds and mammals brought in to feed the young.

We suspect pesticides may have weakened the shells of these eggs. If the pair return this spring we will collect an egg shell for analysis at the State Pesticide Laboratory in Brookings.

#### THE SECOND NEST

Guy Virkula was walking through a small opening while cruising timber south of Buskala Creek in mid-April. He was attacked without warning by a large bird and was forced to protect himself with a stick.

One evening after work, Guy agreed to take me to the opening. Guy was reluctant to leave the truck, but he gave me directions to the nest. I was able to obtain several pictures before an adult returned to protect the nest.

I returned in early July and climbed the nest tree. The nest was the same unlined layer of sticks as the first nest. The nest was 12 inches in depth and 30 inches across. It was very strong with a slightly concave surface. The tree was straight (unforked) and the nest was supported by the lowest live branch and another dead branch.

#### THE THIRD NEST

Darkness kept Guy Virkula and me from searching for another nest he had discovered near Tilson Creek. I was anxious to see the third nest site to compare similarities with the other two.

After several hours of searching, my wife and I found the third nest on July 28, 1972. Later at dusk, on August 11, a young Goshawk was observed in the opening near the nest.

Bent in "Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey" (1937, p. 125) describes fresh juvenal plumage "... The underparts are white, strongly tinged or washed with vinaceous cinnamon or pinkish cinnamon and broadly

streaked on the breast, less broadly streaked on the belly with hastate spots of bone brown."

I found no "butcher blocks" in the vicinity of the nest and feel that most food is brought whole to the nest. Bent makes no mention of the butcher blocks. The appearance of the young bird and identification of bones beneath the nest led us to believe that one or more young had been fledged. Carcasses of four squirrels and two cottontails were found intact with wing feathers from two Ruffed grouse and feathers from a turkey. The nest dimensions were not measured since the tree was limbless to the nest. The structure was estimated to be 45 feet from the gound.

#### SIMILARITIES IN THREE NEST SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. Nests were on north or east facing slopes in dense strands of Ponderosa pine (180 to 220 square feet of Basal Area).
2. A typical nest was in the top third of a Ponderosa pine tree. The diameter breast height of two trees was 14 inches and the third tree was 15 inches.
3. All nests were 75 feet from unimproved roads.
4. The openings associated with the nests were one-eighth to one-half acre in size and within 75 feet distance. All openings were bisected by a road.
5. All nests were one-half to one mile from a live stream.—Black Hills National Forest, Custer, S. Dak.

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#### CORRECTION

Inadvertently, the photographer's credit was in error for the golden eagle on the cover of the March 1973 (Vol. XXV, No. 1) issue of "Bird Notes." Interpretive Specialist John Stockert actually took the picture, and the credit should have been: "National Park Service Photo by John Stockert." Thanks go to Don Higgins for calling this fact to the editor's attention.

# Notes on the 1972 Hawk Migration in Northeastern South Dakota with Observations on Gyrfalcon, Prairie Falcon and Goshawks

Bruce Harris

THE 1972 FALL migration was an outstanding one for hawks in the north-eastern counties. The flight of Red-tailed and Marsh Hawks was exceptional, but there were also several observations on the rare species such as Gyrfalcon, Goshawk and Prairie Falcon. In contrast to this, Rough-legged Hawks and Bald Eagles were not nearly so numerous as in the fall of 1971. Bald Eagles were observed only twice, compared with 10 observations during a similar period in 1971.

The flight of Red-tailed and Marsh Hawks began about September 25, and was unusually heavy through October 10. I cannot remember seeing more of these species during a fall migration in South Dakota. Unfortunately I did not keep a record of numbers observed on any given day, but it was not unusual to see 25-30 of these hawks during a day in the field. It appeared that most of the birds were moving through the area; the total must have run into the hundreds during the peak flight period. I have seen mass movements of Red-tailed Hawks during spring migrations in South Dakota, but this constant fall movement over a two-week period was a new experience for me. Marsh Hawks were observed throughout the month of November (several on Nov. 30th), an indication of the unusual numbers of this species found in the area during the period.

My first 1972 observation for one of the rare raptors occurred on October 7 when

an adult Goshawk soared over our home at Altamont. The bird was also observed by Gary Marrons and my son Mark. This record was the first of a series of observations during the fall and winter that was to include Goshawk, Gyrfalcon, Prairie Falcon and a probable Peregrine Falcon. Four of these records occurred in Deuel County during the first week in October, suggesting that there was an unusual flight of rare raptors in the area during that period.

Following the sighting on October 7, I observed Goshawks (all adults) on four more occasions in three neighboring counties: October 22 in Hamlin County, a fine specimen found DOR and brought to a local taxidermist for mounting; December 16 on the Brookings CBC, a sighting shared with Dave Holden; January 28 in Roberts County, a bird first sighted by Mark Harris as it was hunting pheasants near a F & WS Game Production Area (no kill was observed); January 23 in Deuel County, when a fine adult came whistling over my head, apparently after pulling out of an unsuccessful attack on some prey. These five sightings in four counties were certainly unprecedented for me. It is possible, but unlikely, that duplications occurred. My impression that these sightings represented part of an overall invasion of Goshawks into our region was confirmed by correspondence with birders in North Dakota and Minnesota. Observers at Duluth saw a large number of Goshawks during the hawk count on



the shore of Lake Superior, far exceeding anything recorded to date at that location (pers. comm. Kim Eckert). In South Dakota Goshawks nest in the Black Hills and occur regularly in the west-river country (although in small numbers) each winter; in the east-river area no nests have been recorded and there is a sight observation about every 3-4 years, usually one or two at the most. I had seen them only once prior to 1972.

A red letter day came for me on October 8, 1972, when I saw my first Gyrfalcon, a life bird. This individual (gray phase) flushed from a dead tree 2 N. and 3 W. of Tunerville in Deuel County. The bird was no more than 100 yards away, and I clearly noted the long tail, sharply pointed wings and the very large size as it flew off with rapid wing beats. I followed the route taken by the bird, and saw, through binoculars, what I assumed to be the same falcon about one mile from the first sighting. It flew across the road ahead of me at a distance of some 300 yards. I noted light speckling on the back of the bird as it flew away. Although this area was searched for more than an hour on that day and the following, the bird was not seen again. But another observation on this rare species came for me on October 29 at Rush Lake Public Shooting Area, located 3 E. and 5 S. of Tunerville (about nine miles SE of the first observation area). A Gyrfalcon (also gray phase) flew out from a stand of mature juniper trees overlooking the lake, which was black with migrating waterfowl. My sons, Mark and Gordon, also saw this bird as it came within 40 yards of the car. We noted the long tail, sharply pointed wings, striping on the breast and the very large size. It flew to a shelterbelt about one-half mile away where it was flushed by Mark; it came directly over his head, giving him the opportunity to confirm the contour of the bird. It is possible, but again unlikely, that this could have been the same individual I observed on October 8.

On November 15, I saw a bird at Lake Cochrane, Deuel County, that must have been either a Gyrfalcon or a Goshawk. Weather conditions were poor, with overcast skies and a brisk wind blowing across the lake. I was duck hunting when the bird was observed flying some 400 yards away, low over the water. My binoculars were fogged up and of no assistance to me, so I did not get much of an impression of the bird other than its being a large hawk with a long tail. It flew directly toward a raft of mallard, and they flushed several hundred yards ahead of the hawk, something that rarely would occur if the bird was a Marsh Hawk. I concluded it was probably a Gyrfalcon, as that species would be most likely to harass ducks in the manner described, and to get the reaction from the ducks that I observed. There have been at least eight records of Gyrfalcon in South Dakota over the years, the most recent one in 1968. But Gyrfalcons are considered one of the rare hawks in South Dakota.

The other Deuel County observations on falcons during the first week of October were a Prairie Falcon near Goodwin on October 4, and an unidentified falcon on October 8 near Fox Lake, east of Brandt. The latter bird was about the size of a crow, and I thought it looked like a Peregrine Falcon, but light conditions were bad and I did not have a satisfactory view of the bird, even though the range was only about 200 yards.

During the fall of 1960 in northeastern South Dakota, Lowry Elliott (SDBN, 1967, vol. 19, p. 4) observed 40 Red-tailed and 55 Marsh Hawks. Goshawks were observed on August 23 and October 1; whereas, a Peregrine Falcon was seen on September 28, 29 and 30 (same bird). Elliott kept a daily account of the hawks seen in the area. From the large number of hawks I observed in the same area I can only conclude that the 1972 fall migration was greater than the 1960 fall migration. This indicates that during

certain years a mass migration of hawks still occurs through eastern South Dakota.

The 1972 migration was certainly one of the most memorable I have ever

recorded. I have recently received the February, 1973 issue of *American Birds*, in which most regional editors commented on a heavy flight of Goshawks throughout the country.—Altamont, South Dakota

## Burrowing Owls in Mellette County, South Dakota †

Charles A. Berdan and Raymond L. Linder  
South Dakota Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit † †  
South Dakota State University, Brookings

† Funds to support this study were received from the National Audubon Society.

† † The Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit is supported jointly by South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks; South Dakota State University; U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife; and the Wildlife Management Institute.

A SURVEY of black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) towns was conducted in Mellette County during the summer of 1972. The primary objective of the survey was to determine the number and acres of prairie dog towns as a portion of a black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) study (Linder et al. 1972). Prairie dog towns were located by interviewing all ranchers. All towns were visited and 26 percent of them were mapped and measured; the number of prairie dogs was estimated by counts of animals above ground (Sheets 1970). All burrowing owls (*Speotyto cunicularia*) observed were recorded. During most of the summer, it was impossible to determine whether owls were young or adult.

One hundred fifty-one prairie dog towns that covered a total of 3171 acres were located in the County (Fig. 1). One hundred fifty-five burrowing owls were seen on 57 (36 percent) of the towns

between June 29 and July 31. Location of towns where owls were seen and number observed are shown in Fig. 1. These counts are not meant to be an estimate of the population of burrowing owls in Mellette County; however, they do show that many prairie dog towns are used by burrowing owls. Since prairie dog towns are used by both burrowing owls and ferrets, it is important that they be managed wisely.

### LITERATURE CITED

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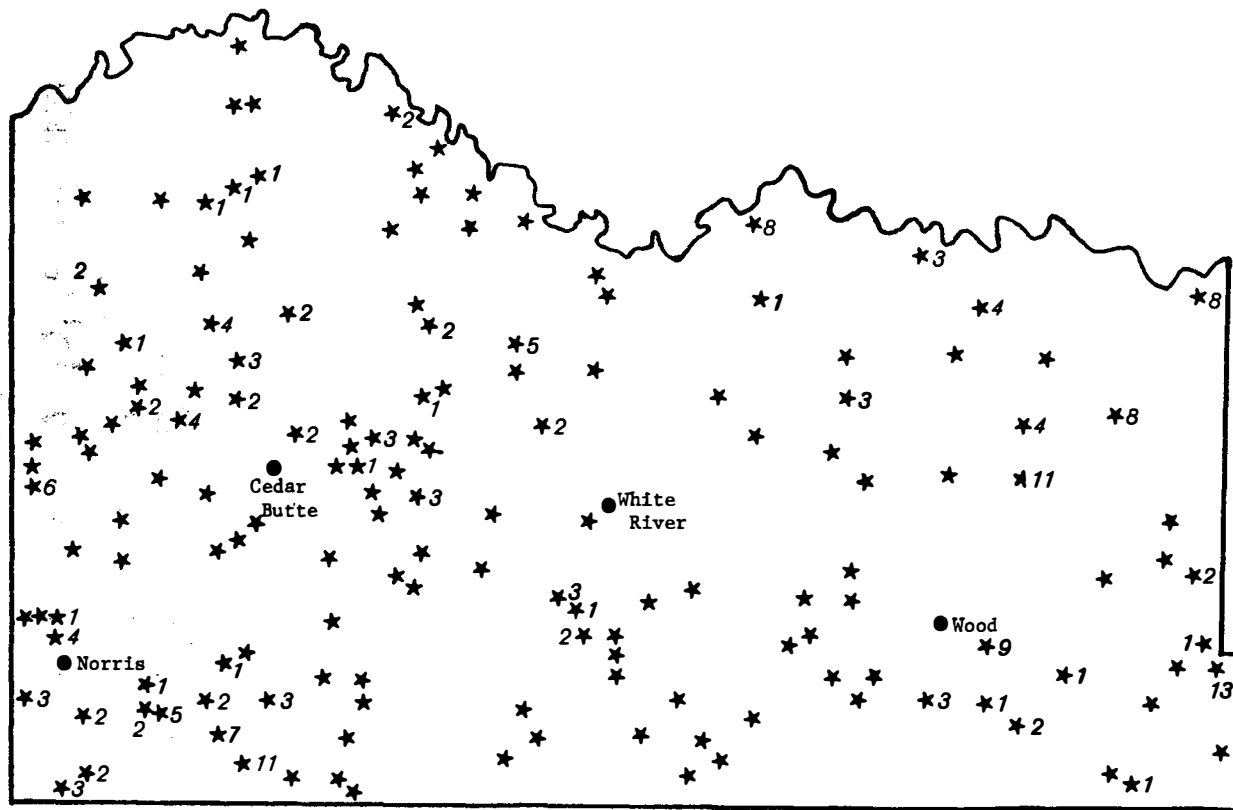


Fig. 1. Location of 151 prairie dog towns in Mellette County. Numbers indicate each prairie dog town where burrowing owls were observed and number observed on that town.

# Roster of Participants at Lacreek NWR May 25-27, 1973

- Mr. and Mrs. David Holden, Brookings, S. Dak.  
 Arthur Holden, Brookings, S. Dak.  
 Harold and Ruth Burgess, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Rolf Wallenstrom, Pierre, S. Dak.  
 Lou Ann Wallenstrom, Pierre, S. Dak.  
 Jeff Wallenstrom, Pierre, S. Dak.  
 L. M. Baylor, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 Herb Krause, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Ron Nelson, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Gil Blankespoor, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Fred Klawiter, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Dave Louro, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Tom Hays, Spearfish, S. Dak.  
 Jodey Sorenson, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 B. J. Rose, Pierre, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. R. V. Summerside, Pierre, S. Dak.  
 Dr. N. R. Whitney, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 Don Adolphson, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 Dr. and Mrs. Mike Singasaas, Pine Ridge, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth H. Husmann, Brookings, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Harold V. Whitmus, Lincoln, Neb.  
 Mary Aberdeen Kettle, Huron, S. Dak.  
 Bruce Harris, Clear Lake, S. Dak.  
 June Harter, Highmore, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Johnson, Huron, S. Dak.  
 L. R. and Ruth Palmerton, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 Byron Harrell, Vermillion, S. Dak.  
 Mark Harris, Clear Lake, S. Dak.  
 Doug Blacklund, Chamberlain, S. Dak.  
 Bill Lemons, Meckling, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Rogge, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Greg Koeln, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Esther Serr, Rapid City, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Willis Hall, Yankton, S. Dak.  
 Fred Wild, wife and three children, Custer, S. Dak.  
 Wendell Long, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Linn McCoy, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Carole McCoy, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Conrad and Judy Fjetland, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Capt. Kenneth and Pat Kessler, Ames, Iowa.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Milton Schmite, Hot Springs, S. Dak.  
 Jack and Bonnie Ritts, Martin, S. Dak.  
 Dick and Esther Edie, Brookings, S. Dak.  
 Robert Gossel, Hot Springs, S. Dak.  
 Dirk Hagemeyer, Bellaire, Texas.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Max E. Pierce and son, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.  
 Stella Weuppel, Rosebud, S. Dak.

Total persons registered: 70.

## Birds Seen at SDOU Meeting May 25-27, 1973 Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge

Eared Grebe  
Western Grebe

Pied-billed Grebe  
White Pelican

Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
American Bittern  
Trumpeter Swan  
Canada Goose  
Mallard  
Gadwall  
Pintail  
Green-winged Teal  
Blue-winged Teal  
Cinnamon Teal  
American Widgeon  
Shoveler  
Redhead  
Ruddy Duck  
Turkey Vulture  
Swainson's Hawk  
Marsh Hawk  
Sparrow Hawk  
Ring-necked Pheasant  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
American Coot  
Semipalmated Plover  
Killdeer  
American Golden Plover  
Black-bellied Plover  
Common Snipe  
Long-billed Curlew  
Upland Plover  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Willet  
White-rumped Sandpiper  
Stilt Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Sanderling  
Avocet  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Ring-billed Gull  
Franklin's Gull  
Forster's Tern  
Common Tern  
Black Tern  
Mourning Dove  
Great Horned Owl  
Burrowing Owl  
Yellow-shafted Flicker  
Red-shafted Flicker  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker  
Eastern Kingbird  
Western Kingbird  
Trail's Flycatcher  
Horned Lark  
Tree Swallow  
Rough-winged Swallow  
Bank Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
Blue Jay  
Black-billed Magpie  
Common Crow  
House Wren  
Long-billed Marsh Wren  
Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Curve-billed Thrasher  
Robin  
Swainson's Thrush  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Starling  
Bell's Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Warbling Vireo  
Yellow Warbler  
Northern Waterthrush  
Yellowthroat  
American Redstart  
House Sparrow  
Bobolink  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Western Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Redwinged Blackbird  
Orchard Oriole  
Baltimore Oriole  
Common Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Blue Grosbeak  
Black-headed Grosbeak  
Lazuli Bunting  
Dickcissel  
American Goldfinch  
Lark Bunting  
Lark Sparrow  
Gray-headed Junco  
Chipping Sparrow  
Clay-colored Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow

## *General Notes of Special Interest*

**HYBRID PINTAIL-MALLARD IN LYMAN COUNTY**—On Oct. 23, 1972, when John Fennell, of Rapid City, and I were hunting at a stock dam in northern Lyman County, John bagged a strange duck that appeared to be a pintail-mallard hybrid. The speculum was that of a mallard, but the long, thin neck without the mallard's white collar, the bill color, and colorations of parts of the body plumage were those of a pintail. (Editor's Note: Mr. Summerside shared a colored photograph of this duck; the picture does suggest the likelihood that he is describing a pintail-mallard hybrid.)—R. V. Summerside, Pierre

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**BRANT IN SULLY COUNTY**—On Nov. 4-5, 1972, in western Sully County, I observed two small geese flying over winter wheat stubble frequented by several thousand geese feeding off from Oahe Lake. The small size and rapid flight, the wary behavior, and the coarse gutterall call—as described by Kortright, a three-note "car-r-rup," uttered frequently as they flew around the area at quite an altitude—suggested that these two geese were Brant.—R. V. Summerside, Pierre

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**SONGS AND SOUNDS OF ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK**—The Rose-breasted Grosbeak holds the center of the outdoors concert stage in the month of May, weaving his sensuous song pattern far into June. Millet's landscapes and Debussy's tone poems come to mind when this beautiful bird with the rose-colored breast patch sings.

Dawn is not too early to hear his rippling, rolling warble whose pleasing, formless melody evokes mental images of gentle waterfalls or playing fountains.

A light overcast, with blue haze cloaking the Nebraska hills and hanging over the Missouri River bottom, lending a purplish hue to its black loam, creates a perfect backdrop for the grosbeak's black and white wings and back.

Or, he may be seen in a cottonwood timber of worthy length, breadth, and of pioneer age, when its virgin floor cradles a wild rose garden in the late week of May and early June. The Rose-breasted Grosbeak does not depart early for the South, as he may be heard singing in early September.—Adeline M. Siljensberg, Vermillion, S. Dak.

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**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS OBSERVED AT BURKE LAKE**—On Nov. 17, 1972, I observed a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a male and a female, at Burke Lake State Recreation Area which is located two miles east of Burke, S. Dak.

I was able to study the birds with the aid of an eight-power binocular for five minutes at a distance of 30 to 50 feet. I noted the woodpecker-like actions of the birds, as well as the ladder back and the red cap and hind neck. I could plainly see the difference in the amount of red on the head of the male as compared to the female.

I observed the female on two occasions after this, on Dec. 5 and 21, and although I have looked for the birds on my visits to the area since then, I have been unable to find either of the birds again.—Galen L. Steffen, Burke, S. Dak.

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**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE SIGHTED AT LAKE BURKE**—December 18, 1972, a Townsend's Solitaire was sighted at

Lake Burke, two miles east of Burke, S. Dak.

The first thing to catch my attention when I sighted the bird was the conspicuous white eye ring which showed up very plainly. Also noted was the slender shape, grayish color, white edging on the tail and the buff spots on the wings.

I was able to study the bird for several minutes with an eight-power binocular at a distance of 50 to 60 feet. On Dec. 21, another bird was sighted in the same area, and I would suppose it would be the same one.—Galen L. Steffen, Burke, S. Dak.

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**DEUEL COUNTY NOTES—SPECIMEN RECORDS FOR BARRED OWL AND LE CONTE'S SPARROW**—On Jan. 14, 1973 I found a Barred Owl in the ditch along U.S. Highway 77, three miles north of Clear Lake. The bird had evidently been struck by a car, and was somewhat crushed, but it was easily identified as a Barred Owl. Weather during the preceding two weeks had been marked by continuous below-zero temperatures, with a severe ice storm coating all vegetation for six days during the period. The Barred Owl evidently winters in the state occasionally, judging from the few available (8) records.

This specimen is only the third for the state, the others being from Yankton County (Twedt, V. 16:98) and Roberts County (Harris, V. 20:65). There are also sight records from Day, Union, and Custer counties; several of these records suggest nesting for the species in South Dakota. The Deuel County specimen will be deposited at South Dakota University, Vermillion.

Occurrence of Le Conte's Sparrow in Deuel County was verified by two specimens during the fall of 1972. On Sept. 12, a bird was picked up DOR in Clear Lake by Walter Rose, former GF&P employee. Walter found the bird in a location where he theorized that it

was brought in on the radiator of an automobile, thus opening the question of its being killed in Deuel County. But the weather had produced a very heavy fog on the 12th, and it is possible that the bird might have struck a nearby building, and dropped to the ground where it was picked up. Two days later, on Sept. 14, I collected a Le Conte's Sparrow at a slough two miles west and one and one-half miles north of Tunerville. The habitat was quite similar to that in which I observed Le Conte's Sparrow near Lake Alice, Deuel County, during October, 1971 (SDBN's V. 24:45), and the bird was easily observed and approached, as with the 1971 observation.

I observed Le Conte's Sparrow again Oct. 1, 1972 near Fox Lake, east of Brandt, Deuel County. On this occasion at least two, and possibly three, birds were observed. One was obviously a juvenile, accompanied by a brightly plumaged adult. My experience with Le Conte's Sparrow is that it should be rather easily identified in adult plumage by the buffy coloring that characterized the species.

I am not familiar with the Sharp-tailed Sparrow, which is also a brightly colored bird, but among the sparrows that migrate through South Dakota (excluding the Sharp-tailed) only the Grasshopper Sparrow seems very similar to Le Conte's, and that species is not nearly as bright buffy on head and breast as the Le Conte's. Habitat preference should help to identify the species in question; it would be very unlikely that the Grasshopper Sparrow, a bird of the dry, upland prairie, would occur near the wetlands that Le Conte's Sparrow favors. It is quite possible that Le Conte's Sparrow nests in some of our northern counties, and has been overlooked during the breeding season.—

**Bruce Harris, Altamont, S. Dak. Feb. 25, 1973**

**WHOOPING CRANES IN CODINGTON COUNTY**—Four adult Whooping Cranes spent nearly a week resting and feeding in fields near Wallace, S. Dak. The cranes were first observed on April 17 by Palmer Paulsen, a farmer living north-east of Wallace, who reported the observation to South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks personnel. Federal personnel of the Waubay National Wildlife Refuge were then notified, who maintained surveillance on the birds until they departed on April 23. These personnel included Refuge Manager Robert Johnson, Assistant Manager Kent Hall and Biological Technician Ed Fromelt.

The area that attracted the cranes is located three miles east and a half mile north of Wallace, S. Dak. A slough of about 70 acres in size provided water and a roosting site, with adjacent wheat stubble and summer fallow fields providing feeding areas. At daybreak or shortly after the birds would leave the slough flying downwind a short distance into the fields. Feeding was then interrupted only by periodic visits to the slough for water and an occasional courtship display.

Although individual birds could not be recognized the foursome appeared to

have been two pair. Refuge personnel observed them displaying and feeding as such on numerous occasions. Courtship display of these rare cranes is impressive, mainly because of their large size and beauty, even though displaying was always of short duration.

Because of local news media coverage, several hundred area residents responded to the opportunity of a look at these rare, stately birds. Most visitors were impressed by a look at the cranes and those asked agreed that the species should indeed be preserved.

At approximately 11:45 a.m. on April 23, Hall and Fromelt heard one of the cranes let out several "whoops," the first that were clearly audible. Newly appointed commissioner of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission Lawrence Kellogg was also present. Soon all four birds were airborne, gaining altitude steadily while circling. Within 10 minutes they were barely visible as tiny white specks, which gradually disappeared in a northwesterly direction, leaving us to only speculate on their presence here and their next stop.—Kent F. Hall, Assistant Refuge Manager



Whooping Cranes in Codington County, April, 1973



**RED CROSSBILLS WINTERING AT LAKE BURKE**—My first sighting of what I thought to be Red Crossbills was made on Dec. 1, 1972. A small flock of 20 birds was observed on this date and on several occasions after this. However, it was not until Dec. 22, that I was able to get close enough to the birds to plainly see the crossed mandibles, and the ab-

sence of wing-bars, which would identify them as Red Crossbills.

The flock of between 20 and 25 birds has spent the winter at this area, feeding on the bumper crop of spruce cones. Mr. Don Wilson of Burke was also able to observe these birds with me on several occasions.—Galen L. Steffen, Burke, S. Dak.

## The Early Birds

For the past 40 years I have recorded the earliest dates of the most early birds to come in the spring to South Dakota. A few Robins, Grackles and Meadowlarks always stay all winter. My record is of the main migration and I have not attempted to find the first arrivals. I give the average date.

Species	Dell Rapids	Alexandria	Pierre	Brookings	Milbank	Winner	Sturgis	Aberdeen	Cresbard
Sparrow Hawk	3-26	4-1	4-1	3-24	4-1	3-27	4-10	3-25	3-20
Killdeer	3-15	3-20	4-1	4-1	4-3	3-20	4-1	3-20	3-19
Robin	3-4	3-12	3-1	3-1	3-14	3-1	3-18	3-12	3-6
Western Meadowlark	3-12	3-12	3-20	3-20	3-14	3-10	3-19	3-10	3-12
Red Winged Blackbird	4-2	3-25	4-1	3-25	3-20	3-20	4-1	3-20	3-15
Common Grackle	3-29	3-25	3-20	3-30	3-31	4-10	4-15	4-11	3-20

—Harold W. Wagard

## Editor's Note

By the time this issue is printed my family and I will be settled in Puerto Rico. Marion and I want to thank everyone in South Dakota who have been so kind to us during the past five years we spent on the prairie and the seven years we spent in the Black Hills. Please note that all manuscripts for publication should be sent to June Harter, Highmore, S. Dak. 57345.—Don Adolphson

# *In Memoriam*

HERMAN F. CHAPMAN  
Feb. 9, 1888 - April 8, 1973

During his last year, Herman's health had been steadily failing, rapidly in his last month. He died in the night of April 8.

More than any other, he was responsible for the founding of "South Dakota Ornithologists' Union," as related by Herbert Krause ("Bird Notes" 13:60) in his all too brief biography. For the next 20 years he worked tirelessly, first to keep SDOU going, later for its expansion, both in numbers and area of coverage. He was no less intent, often outspokenly so, in conserving SDOU's limited resources in time and space in "Bird Notes" for increasing and publicizing general knowledge of non-game bird species of South Dakota. Not because he was against study of game species—he was an avid hunter until his very late years, and was active in setting up the present Department of Game, Fish, and Parks. But that field was being covered by professionals. SDOU should stick to its own area, where the need was greatest: non-game birds.

Those of us who labored well or ill in that neglected field found Herman always a warm friend, a constant inspiration, often a goad to more activity, but ever a stern disciplinarian for the careless or wandering mind.

Everyone will want also to know of Lois, his wife and constant companion in the field. She is still living, though in poor health, in a nursing home in Sioux Falls. Sadly, her memory has suffered as well as her physical health.

—J. W. Johnson, Huron



H. F. Chapman, His Vision: S.D.O.U.