

# South Dakota Bird Notes

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Whole No. 102

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Solitary Vireo

—Drawing by L. B. McQueen

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*In This Number . . .*

President's Page, Bruce K. Harris	47
Glaucon Gulls in South Dakota, B.J. Rose	48
Birds of Prey Banding in South Dakota, 1965 to 1973, D.G. Adolphson	50
Northwestern South Dakota: Nine Decades of Change, Alfred Hinds	53
General Notes of Special Interest—Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Oakwood Lakes Park, Snowy Egrets in Eastern South Dakota, Notable Spring Migrants in Southern Meade County	58
Winter Meeting at Pierre	60

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## President's Page

THE APRIL issue of "American Birds," with its 1973 Christmas Bird Counts, arrived late in August. The vast amount of work that goes into publication of the 584-page Christmas Count magazine must be formidable, and it is a credit to the Audubon Society that they are including more information each year, based on data obtained from the compilation of counts made throughout the United States and Canada.

Those of you who participate know that some major changes in count procedure and recording of data were made last year, along with a change in fee schedules that still seems to raise some controversy, but should be more acceptable to most participants. Beginning with the 1974 counts, the fee will be two dollars, but feeder-watchers will not be required to pay the fee as they have in the past. I trust that South Dakota will be well represented, as always, and that all involved will begin thinking now about this enjoyable and worthwhile activity in order to improve the quality of the counts.

South Dakota had only nine counts in 1973, but in some years we have reported 12 or 13 counts. It seems unusual that communities such as Mitchell and Watertown do not have annual counts, and I hope that some active birders will get enthused enough to initiate counts in those areas. Both cities have been represented in past years, and information is available to anyone who would like to organize counts for the coming season.

The trend nationwide is to have at least 10 participants on each count, and I know from personal experience that this can be quite a job. We simply do not have the population to draw from, particularly when one is asking people to get out in sub-zero temperatures for an eight-hour period during the busy holiday season. But persistence usually gets results, and I hope that we can get better state coverage during the next few years. I plan to try to get a count started in Watertown.

Any compiler will tell you how much he appreciates the time and effort it takes for people to come out on wintry days, but the successful count demands at least four participants, and double that number is barely adequate for minimal coverage of the required 15-mile diameter circle. It is possible that the Audubon Society will rule that counts must have at least 10 participants before they will be accepted for publication—this has been considered for several years. However, if your count is done with less than 10 people it still is a worthy project; we need the reports for South Dakota records.

It is important that each habitat type is covered, and this makes it almost necessary to have at least one person for each quadrant of the census area; two people would be better, with an experienced birder in each party. Many Christmas Counts have been turned in without such easily identified species as Blue Jay, Common Crow, American Robin, or blackbird listed, merely because the count did not have enough participants to cover all areas and habitats. Additionally, careful preparation and scouting the area two or three

(Continued on Page 59)



# Glaucous Gulls in South Dakota

B. J. Rose

THE GLAUCOUS Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) breeds on the arctic coasts and islands from northern Alaska, the Northwest Territories to Greenland. Wintering birds are found from the southern portion of the breeding range to southern California, through the Great Lakes region, to New York, and casually to Georgia. This species is accidental in the interior of the United States and Canada in winter, with records from Alberta, southern Manitoba, Minnesota, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Texas, and Mississippi (the A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds, fifth edition).

The first South Dakota records of Glaucous Gulls were reported in South Dakota Bird Notes (Dec. 1967). August Hoeger of Sioux Falls reported observing two second-year plumaged birds below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River, on Feb. 17, 1967. The following day, Feb. 18, Mr. and Mrs. Delbert A. Nelson, Sioux Falls, apparently observed these same birds below Gavin's Point Dam.

R. V. Summerside, Pierre, reported to me that he recalls seeing a Glaucous Gull at Pierre during December, 1969.

The following Glaucous Gull observations were taken from my notes:

April 3, 1971—Second-year plumaged bird with Herring Gulls at Farm Island State Park below Pierre. Photographed.

Dec. 2, 1971 to Jan. 19, 1972—Many observations of at least two birds, one first-year plumaged and one second-year plumaged. Both observed together on

Jan. 9, 1972. Seen from Oahe Dam to below Pierre. Photos.

April 2, 1972 to May 10, 1972—At least one second-year plumaged bird seen through period. Observations from Oahe Dam downstream to Farm Island State Park.

Dec. 3, 1972 to Dec. 26, 1972—R. V. Summerside reported the early and late observations. On Dec. 20, 1972, I photographed the only adult-plumaged bird that I have seen in the area. The bird was feeding with Herring Gulls on ice between Pierre and LaFramboise Island.

No spring observations in 1973.

Nov. 11, 1973—First-year plumaged bird picked up below Farm Island State Park. The mounted bird is on display at the Department of Game, Fish and Parks office in Pierre.

Nov. 23, 1973—A second-year plumaged bird observed with many Herring Gulls and about 150 Bonaparte's Gulls above the Missouri River highway bridge at Pierre.

March 23, 1974—Second-year plumaged bird at Oahe Dam.

April 21, 1974 to May 2, 1974—Second-year plumaged bird below Oahe Dam.

The earliest fall observation was Nov. 11, 1973, with the latest winter observation on Jan. 19, 1972.

The earliest spring observation was on March 23, 1974; the latest was May 10, 1972.

Although Glaucous Gulls are observed singly, most observations are made in





## Glaucous Gull

—Photo by B. J. Rose

company with Herring Gulls. When with Herring Gulls, the larger size of the Glaucous is apparent; in flight the pale (first-year) and white (second-year) primary wing feathers are pronounced.

Perhaps the construction of the main-stem dams on the Missouri River has initiated an annual migration of these large pale gulls through South Dakota, and they might now be considered regular winter visitors. They should be looked for when the large reservoirs freeze over, causing the gulls to congregate in the open water below the larger dams on the Missouri River. Spring migration occurs at ice break-up on the reservoirs.

During the more open winters, the

birds may tarry longer and may actually winter as far north as Pierre. The February, 1967 observations were possibly of wintering birds.

Incidental to these South Dakota records, a second-year plumaged bird was photographed at McKenzie Slough (east of Bismarck, N.D.) on April 6, 1971. In addition, a first-year plumaged bird was photographed on Cheyenne Bottoms near Great Bend, Kans. on April 13, 1974.

Other large water species should be looked for along our Great Lakes of South Dakota.—Staff Game Specialist, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre

# Birds of Prey Banding in South Dakota 1965 to 1973

D. G. Adolphson

## INTRODUCTION

DURING THE period of 1965 to 1973 I banded 218 birds of prey of 11 species in South Dakota. Banding was concentrated in the eastern part of the state from 1965 to 1967 and in the western part from 1968 to 1973.

Most of the banded birds were unfledged; five adult birds that had been injured or had been trapped in mist nets were banded and released. The banded adult birds in Table I are enclosed in parentheses.

## NEST SITES AND AVERAGE BANDED

Data on the type of nest sites and average number of young banded per nest for Red-tailed, Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks, and Great Horned Owls are given in Table 2. The average number of young banded at the nests are given in parentheses.

Red-tailed Hawks were banded at eight tree nests with an average of 2.25 young per nest. Additional data collected from various sources on nest sites of the Red-tailed Hawk indicate that tree nests are greatly preferred over cliff nests; 24 tree nests and five cliff nests.

Banding was done at 13 Swainson's Hawk tree nests with an average of 2.15 young banded per nest. During this period the locations of 48 Swainson's nests were found, all in trees.

Ferruginous Hawk banding was done at three tree, three ground, and one haystack nest sites. An average of two young per nest were banded at the tree and haystack nest sites, and three young at the

ground nests. The data in Table 2 are not sufficient to give nest preference sites. However, during the nine years, the following data was collected from various sources on nesting sites: 30 nests were located on the ground, 15 nests in trees, and three on haystacks. Although a comprehensive study would have to be done to find nest site preferences, this limited data seems to indicate that ground nests are used more often and with greater success than other types in South Dakota.

Great Horned Owl banding was done at 65 nesting sites. Trees are preferred locations but buildings and cliffs are commonly used. Data shows that 16 nests had one young, 33 nests had two young, 14 nests had three young, and two nests had four young.

## BAND RECOVERIES

The band recoveries, for two hawks and five owls, do not meet expectations for the number of birds of prey banded. A young Red-tailed Hawk banded 10 June 1968 near Wasta, Pennington County, was recovered April, 1971 in the central part of Mexico. A young Swainson's Hawk banded 19 July 1966, in Beadle County, was recovered May, 1973 in Spink County, South Dakota. The recoveries are remarkable because of the contrast in distance to the banding sites. The Red-tailed Hawk was in migration about 1700 miles from its banding site, but the Swainson's Hawk had returned from migration to within 15 miles of its banding site.

The owl recoveries came from five Great Horned Owls. Three of these were

Table 1—Number Banded Per Year

Species	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	Total
Marsh Hawk								4		4
Red-tailed Hawk		1	1	5	11					18
Swainson's Hawk		12	4	6	5			1		28
Rough-legged Hawk					(1)					1
Ferruginous Hawk		2	1	8	3	3				17
Golden Eagle					1(2)					3
										71
Barn Owl					6					6
Short-eared Owl				1				9		10
Screech Owl	(1)									1
Great Horned Owl	12	14	14	33	38	7		4	7	129
Snowy Owl				(1)						1
										147
										Grand Total 218

Table 2—Type and Number of Nest Sites and Average Young Per Nest

Species	Tree	Cliff	Ground	Building	Bridge	Haystack	Total
Red-tailed Hawk	8 (2.25)						8
Swainson's Hawk	13 (2.15)						13
Ferruginous Hawk	3 (2.00)		3 (3.00)			1 (2.00)	7
Great Horned Owl	57 (2.00)	2 (1.50)		1 (3.00)	5 (2.50)		65

from young birds found the first year within 10 miles of their nest. The other two were from Nebraska; one owl had traveled 30 miles and the other had gone 300 miles. The first bird was banded near Ardmore, Fall River County, and recovered six months later near Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska. The second bird was banded near Midland, Haakon County, and recovered seven months later near Clay Center, Clay County, Nebraska.

#### SUMMARY

There is not enough data on nest sites or number of young for more than a limited number of conclusions, but the following observations on bird of prey are noteworthy.

The Great Horned Owls were the most versatile in their nesting, followed by the Ferruginous Hawks. The owls have adapted to the world around them and have changed their nesting sites to include bridges and buildings. Nests were



## Young Great Horned Owls

—Photo by D.G. Adolphson

found in buildings and trees in cities, in barns and trees in yards in the country. Nests were also found in solitary trees on the prairies, miles from wooded areas and on sheer cliffs a hundred feet high. The owls used old nests of the Red-tailed, Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks, the Golden Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, Common Crow, and squirrel.

The ground nesting sites of the Ferruginous Hawks include the areas in the northwestern part of the state east to about Hand County. Only one nest was found outside of this area. Nests were located on slopes of hills, tops of haystacks, sand dunes, and mud buttes.

Many Red-tailed Hawk nests were found in large cottonwood trees throughout the state. It was noted that the nests were higher above ground than the Swainson's nests were.

The Ferruginous would not use old ground nests but would re-nest very close to the area the next year. Most stick nests in trees, however, were reused year after year by all birds of prey species. Occasionally, a Great Horned Owl pair would move into an area by taking over stick nests before the hawk owners would return in the spring, and the same pair would sometimes use the same nest year after year.

Some of the stick nests were repaired and used during the nine years of banding. One nest was used alternately by Great Horned Owls, Red-tailed Hawks, and Swainson's Hawks. The eagle nest in Custer County, in which a young bird was banded, had been intermittently used by Golden Eagles for more than 50 years as reported by ranchers in the area.—1780 Alcalá, College Park, Rio Piedras, P.R. 00921



# Northwestern South Dakota: Nine Decades of Change

Alfred Hinds

MY DAD came to this state from Otsego County, New York, in 1880 or a few years before. He worked in Rapid City for a year or so for a company that was building a railroad. It was called the "Windy and Dusty." Being a boy in a strange land and among strange people, he drew little wages and was saving them for the fall when the company went broke.

Soon thereafter my dad went to work on the range. In about 1892, he and his brother started their own cattle business at the southeast tip of what is now called the Slim Buttes, in Harding County.

At that time an occasional Audubon's bighorn sheep could still be seen there or in the Cave Hills to the northwest. Both mule and whitetail deer as well as antelope were quite plentiful. However, according to my dad and others, there were no raccoons in this country although they did occur along the Belle Fourche River. Also there were no red foxes, but today they and raccoons are common. Coyotes were plentiful; at times they followed the wolf, feeding on what he did not consume. The wolves were very smart, and seldom ate carrion. However, they took their toll of cattle. Striped skunks and badgers were uncommon, but no doubt increased with the settlement and farming.

The fight with wolves was continual, and my dad and uncle had to ride with the cattle much of the time. So, in the fall of 1899, dad moved over to our present location in Perkins County along Antelope Creek. My uncle stayed on the Slim Buttes ranch and went into the sheep business with another man.

Cattle ranching was my dad's life-work—hay, cows, and fences. He was a

squatter at the Slim Buttes ranch, but water was a problem for the big cattle outfits so they did not move in and clash as happened in other places. In Perkins County, however, dad was a homesteader. The farming equipment was not too efficient in those days, and 10 acres of corn or oats was a big operation in my father's view.

Life was soon to be interrupted by the finishing of the railroad from Aberdeen west. People came in to file for this valuable, free land. It was a thorn in the side of the big cattle companies. Many of them were financed by money from foreign countries, and they did not own any of the land they used.

As the homesteaders flocked in and acquired land, small ranchers like my dad, who were just starting out and had not had time to gain a large amount of wealth, found themselves in a struggle to exist. But in 1910 a drought started and was worse in 1911. So as soon as the homesteaders 14 months of tenancy were up and they received the deed to the land, they mortgaged it for the \$700 value and left. Almost all of the land went that way. In later years the county resold it for the taxes, or less, just to get it back on the tax roll. As the people left, the country became open grazing land again but was never quite the same. The remaining homesteaders were really sort of scavengers, and would haul off the shacks of those who had left, sometimes that very night. As a result, people quarreled over who should have what, and they began moving shacks by day. But the supply was not large enough for the demand, so that did not last too long.

In order for the homesteader to get his deed from the government, he was

required to plow a certain number of acres. This requirement was flagrantly violated. One ruse was to step off some acres on a strip and plow around it, and maybe plow an acre or two in between, and then claim they had plowed the whole tract. For many years afterwards one could ride over the prairie and find those strips across many homesteads.

During the past 10 years there has been a great decline in farms and ranches in this area. They are taken over by conglomerates of corporation ranching and farming, leaving fewer and fewer private ranches. The old pioneering spirit and the old rancher hospitality have mostly vanished from the once friendly West where the door was never locked, and friends and others came and went as they pleased. People liked company and felt badly if others did not stop by to visit.

As an illustration, I cite a true story of an old bachelor friend of my dad. It had been a hard winter and this man had not had company for many weeks. Toward spring the weather broke for a while, and one evening a horseback rider passed close to the man's house and started to pass on. The old fellow got out his rifle and "smoked" the rider with a close shot. He then motioned him into his house. Although he did not know the man, they visited far into the night. When the stranger left next morning, he apologized for his breach of etiquette.

So went the West and the East took over.

When my dad came to this place there were no dams and very few trees, only a big cottonwood here and there and a few gnarled willows that we called white willows. Other trees included some elms and ash, and the short-lived box elder which is a great home for the box elder bugs.

The flat-topped hills around here, even though not very high, were Indian camp grounds. There were many circles of rocks (tepee rings) on the hills, and many arrowheads were found there. The

rocks were hauled off long ago to face dams.

Antelope Creek at that time was much deeper but did not flow the year round. My dad started to build small dams that created many acres of moist ground that was used as hayland. This was not grazed much and gave the trees a chance to grow. All the trees along the creek have grown up in my time.

The rank growth of grass and brush along the creeks provided good conditions for a very hot fire in dry years. There were no fire-fighters then, and a fire would kill out the trees for years.

As a boy I listened to the old-timers talk about range grasses. One of the best for grazing and haying was western wheatgrass. Other good grasses were those on the hillsides: the threadleaf sedge, the buffalo grass, and the grama grasses. The prairie needlegrass (needle-and-thread) has needles that are much disliked by cattle. It often has a sucker growth that makes a good fall grazing grass after the needles have dropped. Green needlegrass is not like the tough prairie needle-and-thread. Its seed is palatable and has a wheat-like taste. It falls very early in the summer so is not of much value, but the sucker growth often gets long enough for hay.

The reason I started to observe birds is an interesting story. My dad went into the Angus cattle business in about 1914. The animals had to be herded since there were no big fenced-in pastures in those days. They were registered and hand bred, and the range bulls had to be kept out. It called for a herder to work very long days. We had two small pastures to put the cattle in at night. Any kid could herd the cows and see that they were bred. It was not a hard job and one could sleep a lot in the day when the cattle were on water. In short, it was a wonderful job, with a little coaxing and prodding. I was not much for politics and did not run for office, but I was favored for this job by an overwhelming majority--all of my folks,

without my consent. And if I wandered off to visit neighbor kids, I was reminded, generally from the end of my dad's boot, of my loyalty to the registered cattle. I still have a few blushed places to remind me of those days, when I was the most indispensable creature on the ranch.

Thus, my herding of the registered cows brought me to the birds, and gave me an opportunity to watch them. If I found a nest I would mark it with a pile of rocks. If rocks were unavailable I built a marker with cow chips, or noted the direction from a badger hole or an old coyote den.

I remember the first Brown Thrasher nest I found. In those days trees were scarce, and the nest was on the ground on a tiny, narrow ridge of dirt in some heavy buckbrush, or snowberry. The bird was so well concealed that I could ride by there time after time and not see her.

Most of the nests I watched hatched successfully. Hail storms caused the most damage to nests but heavy rains also resulted in some losses. Coyotes or hawks seldom seemed to get nesting birds, but now raccoons or foxes often find nests.

The house cat is another predator that comes in along the creek here and breeds. A wild house cat is as bad or worse destroyer of nests than almost any animal except a raccoon. One year I killed over 30. In later years they became less numerous and kept their distance.

My grandmother thought my interest in birds was wonderful, and she dug down deep into her savings and bought me a bird book by Chester A. Reed, published in 1912. Despite the fine photographic illustrations in bird books today, I think that Reed's paintings are about as good as any, and as reliable. But I find that to make sure of a bird it is often best to compare it in other books. I treasure this book as a keepsake, and from most any standpoint, including its price. I think it cost \$2.50.

I kept a sort of a record that I would like to have today, but I spent some time at my uncle's home in New York state in the early 1920's and while I was gone the records were lost. Most of the birds that have been seen on my ranch or in Perkins County in later years have been published in "Bird Notes" (20:53 and 22:68).

Due to the dams that have been built in this country, many water birds occur every year when there is moisture and the ponds are full. Water birds not previously published include the Virginia Rail almost every year, Common Snipe, and Franklin's Gull. There were 12 White Pelicans here for three days on the Seymour Dam about a mile east of our house in April 1973, and we have seen the Great Blue Heron several times the past few years.

The Golden Eagle is here the year around. I have never found a nest, but my dad told of nests in the Buttes years ago. Eagles are almost always sailing around there and provide circumstantial evidence that they still nest in that area.

The Bald Eagle is quite easily told, and is here often from November to February. By the first of February they are generally gone.

Up until a few years ago there were many Sage Grouse here, but they are seldom seen anymore. Sharp-tailed Grouse have become scarce, but sometimes in the winter a flock comes in and stays a while. I do not know how far they migrate. Habitat for the two species has been changed by grazing and a reduction of sagebrush cover. A few years ago the Gray Partridge were plentiful; they now are seen infrequently.

The Long-billed Curlew used to nest on our place, but the range is too overgrazed now, I guess, for them to nest here. But it still nests on some of my neighbor's property. When I was herding cattle I found their nests. They were simple structures, just like those of the Killdeer,

Upland Sandpiper, and Common Nighthawk, which still nest here.

The Black-billed Cuckoos have been nesting here a long time, and are quite plentiful now.

Great Horned Owls and Black-billed Magpies are permanent residents. I am sure they do more damage than is thought. When I was able to ride horseback I kept them "smoked up" with my gun and they kept their distance. I know they cause losses of the smaller birds during the nesting season.

The Snowy Owl visits us once in a while. Either food or weather brings them down from the north, I think. The Burrowing Owl is not as common as years ago when there were many prairie dog towns. The Long-eared Owl is often seen in the summer, but not in the winter. He might stay throughout the year, as could the Short-eared Owl.

The Lewis' Woodpecker has been here a few times, and some nesting birds not previously reported are the Cliff Swallows and Rough-winged Swallows.

The House Wren is always here during the summer and for many, many years has arrived about May 10. In 1972, the wrens nested in an old boot I had hung on the porch close to the door where we walked in and out a dozen times a day. They had six young. The Blue Jay and the Common Crow are here all winter during some years but not during others. Both species nest here, some years nearby, as well as to the west or even into the Buttes.

My first American Robin was observed in March or April, 1920. No one could believe robins would visit this area, but it stayed around even though there were no trees close to the house. But my grandmother knew robins and agreed with me. Now they are as common here as the Western Meadowlark. The Mountain Bluebird passes through here, but I have never seen them nest, although they were here all one summer in 1952. I believe,

however, they do nest in the Slim Buttes.

Two other birds are the Golden-crowned Kinglet that I saw once in 1969 or 1970, and the Northern Shrike that occurs here in the winter.

I have some 10 acres of shelterbelts but they are not old. All other trees are native and started on their own. Among the new trees are plums and chokecherries which provide good bird feed. Other plants include scattered silver buffaloberry bushes, wild roses, buckbrush, or snowberry, and hawthorn. Their fruits also serve as good bird feed, and if one species missed a crop on a given year another would usually produce. I find the honeysuckle to be another good source of food for the birds. They are not native here, but I planted a number of them and the Russian Olive which seems to be a great treat for the Sharp-tailed Grouse in the winter.

Although trees are easier to raise than previously one still has to combat various rodents. Rabbits and meadow voles gave me the greatest trouble. Also the slow-moving porcupine moved in, and under our very noses destroyed some pine trees that we had so much trouble getting started.

As my shelterbelts grew larger, many birds came that were not here before, and others that were migrants stayed to raise a family. Birds that the shelterbelts have attracted are the Gray Catbird, some vireos and warblers, the orioles, and the Chipping Sparrow. The Bullock's Orioles were here in the 1940's, and were present in larger numbers in the 1950's. Then their numbers tapered off and for the past 10 years they have not nested here. I see one once in a while in a season in the big cottonwoods along the Moreau Rivers, but not here. The Baltimore Oriole no longer nests with us either but the Orchard Oriole still does. The reasons for the disappearance of the Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles are unknown to me. The American Redstart nests here sometimes, but not every year. Probably our



trees are not satisfactory for them. The Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and the Black-headed Grosbeaks have nested here almost every year lately.

With the planting of alfalfa such birds as the Bobolink now nest in the area, as do the Dickcissel and Field Sparrow. In the early years these birds were not present here or in the vicinity but probably passed through.

Western Meadowlarks are among the birds that stay all winter in some years. One winter a large number of meadowlarks stayed, and during a long cold spell, when I went to use some haystacks, I found many dead birds in the stacks.

The Yellow-headed Blackbird is present but seldom nests here.

We had dozens of redpolls stay with us during the winter of 1970-71. The Tree Sparrows were here all winter, 1972-73, and fed in our feeders with the chicka-

dees and the juncos which are here every winter.

In June, 1970, when the SDOU held its annual meeting at Bison, Perkins County, some of the bird watchers noticed the Red Crossbill in trees by our house. I never saw them before or since. This shows the way birds can slip through here unnoticed. No one knows how many times these and other birds have been overlooked.

In summary, many of the plants, animals, and birds present in the 1970's were not here in the 1880's, while, in reverse, the numbers of some species have decreased or have become extinct. Stock dams, shelterbelts, and fire-prevention, along with the demands created by farming and ranching are reasons for most of the changes.

I wish to thank Paul F. Springer for his encouragement and editing.—Prairie City

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(Scientific names for the plants mentioned on pages 54 and 56 are: *Agropyron smithii* (western wheatgrass); *Carex eleocharis* (threadleaf sedge); *Buchloe dactyloides* (buffalo grass); *Bouteloua gracilis* (blue grama); *Bouteloua curtipendula* (sideoats); *Bouteloua hirsuta* (hairy grama); *Stipa comata* (needle-and-thread); *Stipa viridula* (green needlegrass); *Symphoricarpos occidentalis* (buckbrush); *Crataegus* spp. (hawthorn); *Shepherdia argentea* (buffaloberry); *Rosa* spp. (wild rose).

The meadow voles, page 56, are: *Microtus pennsylvanicus* and *Microtus ochrogaster*.

And the conjecture by the author that the Golden Eagle and Mountain Bluebird nest in the Slim Buttes (pages 55 and 56) is justified. It has been confirmed that both species nest in the area.—Ed.)

## *General Notes of Special Interest*

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON AT OAKWOOD LAKES PARK**—It was on a wet morning May 16, 1974, at 9:45 a.m. when I saw the Yellow-crowned Night Heron. It was about 400 feet northeast of the ranger's house or over the steep bank just north of the small circle trailer park.

I came over the bank quietly because quite often I have discovered Black-crowned Night Herons or Green Herons at this spot. Just after I came over the bank, the bird flew up to the top of a tree about 40 or 50 feet from where I stood. I felt, as soon as I saw him fly, that after nine years of watching hundreds of Black-crowned Night Herons at Oakwood I was watching a Yellow-crowned.

I watched him for about seven or eight minutes through my binocular and then tried to leave as quietly as possible to get Mr. and Mrs. Rogge so they could see him. When we returned the bird was gone. The Rogges were quite disappointed.

I have seen many Yellow-crowned Night Herons in the Gulf of Mexico area but this was my first sighting of one in South Dakota.

I do not know whether there has ever been a sighting before at Oakwood Lake Park or in Brookings County.—Robert F. Trusler, Sioux Falls

(A Yellow-crowned Night Heron was observed by Mr. and Mrs. M.C. Goldberg two miles southeast of Arlington, Brookings County, on 27 June 1964 and published in BIRD NOTES, 16:96.—Ed.)

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**SNOWY EGRETS IN EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA**—On April 7, 1974, four of us from Sioux Falls were watching Northern Shovelers and Blue-winged Teal on a farm pond contiguous to a gravel road several kilometers northwest of

Madison, in Lake County. Mallards, Pintails, and American Wigeon had left the pond as we stopped the car. As we began driving away a white bird flew over the car. All four of us saw the bird and recognized it as an egret. We stopped quickly and with 7x binoculars watched the bird fly to the north. It was smaller than a Great Blue Heron, with a moderately long neck folded in an S-shape, and it trailed black legs with yellow feet. Our first binocular view of it was at perhaps 50 meters distance and at a greater distance we observed the black bill confirming it to be a Snowy Egret. I had observed Snowy Egrets and Great Egrets in Idaho many times.

On May 5, 1974, while canoeing the Big Sioux River two kilometers northeast of Canton, Lincoln County, four of us saw an egret on a mud bank at 150 meters. We observed it standing for a few minutes, and then it flew downriver. We next observed it standing at 100 meters distance before it flew again, this time to the opposite bank. By then we had noted the white color, folded neck in flight, and black legs.

As the bird stood on the muddy southeast bank we approached within perhaps 20 meters before it flew. We identified it at first as a Cattle Egret because of the apparent black feet on the bird. Upon later reflection and discussion with Gil Blankespoor and Kim Eckert I attributed the black feet to mud covering the natural yellow. The bird completely lacked rusty coloration, and Darlene Scott's remembrance of the black bill (which I had forgotten to take into consideration) confirmed it as a Snowy Egret.—Brent M. Haglund, Biology Department, Augustana College, Sioux Falls

NOTABLE SPRING MIGRANTS IN SOUTHERN MEADE COUNTY—A favorite prairie birding area for Rapid Citians is in southern Meade County about 12 miles north of Rapid City, particularly an area called Seavy Lake, near Elk Creek. On 5 May 1973, I observed at Seavy Lake four species that I had not previously encountered there. Three of these species involved a Black-crowned Night Heron, an American Bittern, and a Common Snipe. The fourth species, however, was more fascinating. In the mud flats on the north side of the road that divides Seavy Lake, were two Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*). With special interest I watched these distinctively marked plovers at about 20 yards with a 20x spotting scope, for I had never before encountered this species in western South Dakota. While the area is within the migrational range for the species, I doubt that the Semipalmated Plover has been reported often in this particular area, if ever.

The day was exceptional for migrating species. Also at Seavy Lake or in the immediate vicinity, on 5 May 1973, were the following species: Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Swainson's Hawk, American Kestrel, Long-billed Curlew, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Baird's Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Mourning Dove, Say's Phoebe, Black-billed Magpie, Common Crow, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Vesper Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Before I arrived at Seavy Lake, I stopped to view some Vesper Sparrows along the south side of the road. Then I looked to the north, and on a fence post perched a Rock Wren, looking like a

miniature Upland Sandpiper. Seeing this species in such uncharacteristic habitat was quite startling. But, of course, the little Rock Wren must cross considerable prairie to arrive at its breeding habitat in such areas as the Slim Buttes and the Cave Hills.—L.M. Baylor, SDSM&T, Rapid City

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## Winter Meeting at Pierre

Friday, Saturday and Sunday,  
Dec. 6-8, 1974

### COVER PICTURE

L.B. McQueen, artist and ornithologist, lives in Eugene, Ore. We gratefully acknowledge Mr. McQueen's generosity in sharing his line drawing with us.—Ed.

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### President's Page

(Continued from Page 47)

times prior to the count will help you to find more birds.

Birders should not shy away from participation in a count because they feel they cannot identify all the birds. There are not that many species to be found during the winter, and experienced help probably will be available. With each passing year you will find Christmas Bird Count day becoming more interesting.

Best of luck with all counts.—Bruce K. Harris

# Winter Meeting At Pierre

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 6-8, 1974

## HEADQUARTERS

Red Owl Community Room, 120 West Sioux, where all activities will take place.

## PROGRAM

### FRIDAY, DEC. 6

7-9 p.m.—Registration and social hour (\$1 fee for local expense).

### SATURDAY, DEC. 7

8-9 a.m.—Registration.

9-10:30 a.m.—Business meeting and coffee break.

10:30-12 noon—Paper session.

1:30-5 p.m.—Paper session; directors' meeting.

3 p.m.—Coffee.

7 p.m.—Banquet (\$3.50).

### SUNDAY, DEC. 8

Committee meetings.

Preview of the Pierre Christmas Bird Count—a birding trip.

PLEASE NOTE—Those who plan to attend the banquet should notify Conrad Fjetland, Dell Acres, Pierre 57501, no later than Dec. 1.

The program will feature **Birding in Northeast United States and Maritime Provinces, Summer 1974** by B.J. Rose.

## Call for Papers

Those who plan to present papers at the Winter Meeting should send **title, length of time desired, and projection equipment needed** to Conrad Fjetland, Dell Acres, Pierre 57501, by Nov. 15.

## Hotels and Motels

St. Charles Hotel—Single, \$7.50 to \$12; double, \$10 to \$12.

Frontier Motel—Single, \$9; double, \$13.

Terrace Motel—Single, \$11; double, \$14.

Fawn Motel—Single, \$11; double, \$16.

Holiday Inn—Single, \$13.50; double, \$18.50.

King's Inn—Single, \$14; double, \$20.