

# South Dakota Bird Notes

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Whole No. 120

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Photograph Courtesy of Willis Hall

## Black-capped Chickadee

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## President's Page

Two summers ago I purchased five rolls of microfilm copies of manuscripts in the National Archives which I thought would aid me in some research I was doing and found that one of them contained two lists of bird species some Army doctors had seen at Fort Randall and Lake Andes during the period 1869-1873. One of these doctors was the renowned ornithologist Elliott Coues, who was Post Surgeon at Fort Randall from October, 1872, till May, 1873. The first list of 68 species was compiled by Dr.



A.I. Comfort, a civilian physician on contract with the Army, 1869-1871, and the second list of 101 species by Major James F. Weeds. Another civilian, Dr. George E. Lord, observed birds with both Coues and

Weeds and is frequently cited as an authority on Weeds' list. Lieutenants Lockwood, Campbell, and von Blucher are also mentioned as observers of a few species.

In those days the Post Surgeon was expected to be the fort's historian, and so these bird records should not be regarded as mere dilettantish gestures by Army men attempting to preserve the old-fashioned image of an officer who was not only a gentleman but also a scholar. A standard government book was provided for the Surgeon's daily records of his treatment of sick soldiers in which he was also required to describe the post, give its history and make daily entries of events taking place there, and write what he could about the geology, botany, and zoology of the post's vicinity. Major Weeds appears to have had an unusually thorough scientific education - his botanical entries number 300 - and his bird list and Dr. Comfort's are

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far more complete and more professionally done than any of the others I have seen. Then too we are fortunate in this instance of having Elliott Coues on the scene. He checked Comfort's list and corrected several errors, and it is evident that he had a prominent part in the making of the Weeds list, although he probably didn't see it after it was complete. Finally, the general competence of these doctors as scientists, as well as their critical sense, gains some impressiveness from the fact that Coues, Weeds, and Dr. J.F. Head, Medical Director of the Department of Dakota, all reacted violently against the "impertinent trash" placed in the Fort Randall history by Comfort's predecessor, Dr. G.P. Hachberg, who sent out fantastic articles for newspaper publication and who robbed nearby Indian scaffolds (and graves) for their cranial specimens he wanted for his collection.

Our SDOU May meeting at Pickstown yielded a list of 146 bird species sighted. What birds did the Army doctors see there over a hundred years ago that may not be seen there today? The following findings I offer as tentative identifications, not as positive ones, that may have some significance when combined with other evidence. In consultation with Dr. Byron Harrell, a professor of ornithology, I have studied the Comfort and Weeds lists using two books by Coues, *Birds of the North-West* (1877) and *Key to North American Birds* (1887), which clarify both the archaic popular and scientific names used for birds during the period of the doctors' observation.

They saw the Passenger Pigeon (now extinct, of course) and Coues saw "numerous flocks of fifty to several hundred" Eskimos Curlews (now almost extinct). They saw the (wild) Turkey, the Trumpeter Swan,

(Continued on page 12)

# BREEDING COLONIES OF DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS AND GREAT BLUE HERONS ON LAKE FRANCIS CASE DURING THE SUMMER OF 1978

G. Blankespoor, S. Archer, D. Ode.

Among the more striking of South Dakota's breeding birds are the Great Blue Heron and the Double-crested Cormorant. Contributing to the inherent interest of these species is their relatively large size and the fact that they are colonial nesters. The natural history of these species has been adequately reviewed by Palmer (1962). Briefly, the Great Blue Heron breeds across most of North America almost always in the immediate vicinity of water. Preferred nesting sites are in the tops of tall trees, although nests in low vegetation and even on the ground surface have been reported. Great Blue Herons utilize both live trees and dead trees (snags) as nesting sites. The Double-crested Cormorant has its largest breeding populations along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts but is also well represented inland, utilizing a variety of freshwater habitats. Cormorants also nest commonly in live and dead trees but are frequently found breeding on barren, rocky islands in larger lakes. Mixed colonies of Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants are not at all uncommon.

About ten years ago Adolphson and Adolphson (1968) provided a rather complete survey of three colony-nesting species in South Dakota. Among the species they considered were the Double-crested Cormorant and the Great Blue Heron. They reported that the cormorant was a common resident throughout the state. In support of this contention they cited the existence of 36 known colonies on the lakes and rivers of the state and estimated that there were 5000 breeding pairs. The Adolphsons described the Great Blue Heron as a common summer resident of the state and indicated that there were known colonies of this species. Most of

these colonies were located along the drainages of the Missouri and James Rivers, but the Adolphsons did not include precise descriptions of colony locations in their report.

In this note our basic purpose is to report on nesting colonies of Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants which occurred on Lake Francis Case during the summer of 1978. We have also tried to assess the importance of these colonies within the wider context of state-wide breeding populations of these species.

## METHODS

Information about cormorant and heron colonies was collected during the summer of 1978 as part of an ecological and archaeological reconnaissance of the east bank of Lake Francis Case. The project was made possible by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Augustana College Research Institute. The survey was conducted by canoe, and the area covered extended north from the Fort Randall Dam at Pickstown to the tail waters of the Big Bend Dam near Fort Thompson. Since we made our way north along the east side of the lake, it was not possible to determine whether colonies existed in the bays which extend westward from the west side of the lake.

All colonies were inventoried in the afternoon on clear, hot, calm days. One pass was made through each colony, during which the number of birds in each nest was recorded. Birds in flight in the colony vicinity and birds perched on trees without nests were not counted. No distinction was made between adult and juvenile individuals.

*SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES*

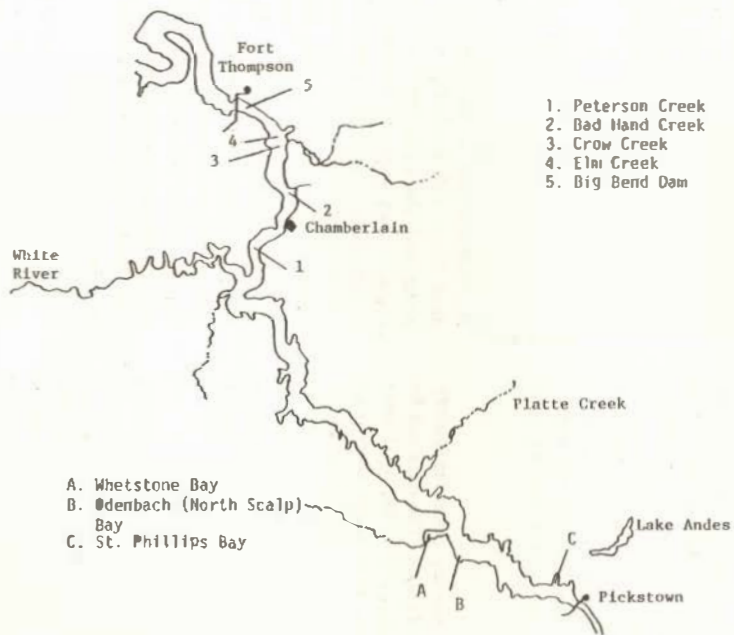


FIGURE 1. Locations of Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant colonies occurring on Lake Francis Case during the years 1965-1970 (A-C) and during the summer of 1978 (1-5). The 1965-1970 colonies were reported by Town (1970).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Five nesting colonies were recorded during the survey; their precise locations are given in Figure 1. In every case nests were located in dead trees (snags) standing in the water. Cormorants breeding elsewhere in South Dakota also nest in dead trees (Greichus and Greichus, 1973). It is interesting to note that all of the colonies were located in the upper portions of Lake Francis Case. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that as one goes north along the lake (into increasingly shallow water) the number of standing dead trees increases. The largest, single colony was situated in the tailwaters immediately below Big Bend Dam. Dead trees and snags were abundant, and the shallow, clear, nutrient-rich waters likely provided an abundance of food resources.

Results of the nesting colony inventory are presented in Table 1. The data can be summarized as follows: (1) of 181 total nests in the five colonies, 63 or 34.8% were inactive; (2) of the 118 active nests, 33 or 23.0% were those of Great Blue Herons; (3) the colony at Elm Creek had no nesting herons; (4) for both species there was an average of 2.08 birds on the nest at the time of the inventory.

In an effort to assess the relative contribution the Lake Francis Case colonies make to the total picture of breeding Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants in the state of South Dakota, we accumulated reports of breeding colonies from several sources. Most of these reports were gleaned from *South Dakota Bird Notes*. Additional reports came from a James River study by Schneider (1978) and from the present study. The geographical locations of reported breeding colonies are presented in Figure 2. It should be noted that each location was entered into the figure only once, though more than one breeding report was filed for some locations.

Figure 2 permits one to generalize that most of the breeding Double-crested Cormorant colonies in the state have occurred in the northeast lake region and along the Missouri and James Rivers. The same is true for Great Blue Herons, except that this species also has had breeding colonies in the Black Hills. The figure also indicates that at least at the present time, the Lake Francis Case colonies of both species make an important contribution to state-wide breeding populations. Although the majority of heron and cormorant colonies are located on Lake Francis Case, it is likely that systematic surveys of Lake Sharpe and Lake Oahe would reveal the existence of additional colonies.

Since the Lake Francis Case colonies occur in emergent dead trees, the prognosis for the future of these colonies is not good. It is certain that as time continues these dead trees will gradually disappear and along with them the heron and cormorant colonies they support. Vermeer (1969) attributed the loss of three Great Blue Heron breeding colonies in Canada to nesting tree decay. This may have already happened in lower Lake Francis Case. Town (1970) reported nesting colonies at St. Phillips, Odenbach, and Whetstone Bays. In the present study no colonies were observed in these parts of the reservoir, although the latter two bays were on the west bank and conceivably could have supported colonies not detected in this survey.

The future breeding status of these two species on a state-wide basis is not easily predicted. Intuitively, one would suppose that both the species are greatly threatened by such things as persistent pesticides, increased home building along lake shores and increased accessibility of isolated, remote areas. The assumption that large, wading birds are susceptible to influences of this sort is the basis for a recent effort to use east coast wading birds as biological indicators (Custer and Osborn 1977). Larson's (1925) report that the Great Blue

TABLE 1. Inventory of Double-crested Cormorant and Great Blue Heron nesting colonies on lake Francis Case during the summer of 1978.

Location of colony	River mile	Total no. of nests	No of nests occupied	
			Cormorant	Heron
Peterson Creek	960	5	2	3
Bad Hand Creek	971	7	6	1
Crow Creek	980	59	26	5
Elm Creek	981	12	5	0
Big Bend Dam	986	98	46	24

No. of nests unoccupied	Total no of birds seen on nests		Total no. of birds per nest	
	Cormorant	Heron	Cormorant	Heron
0	5	6	2.5	2.0
0	12	3	2.0	3.0
28	58	7	2.2	1.4
7	10	0	2.0	0.0
28	77	47	1.7	1.9

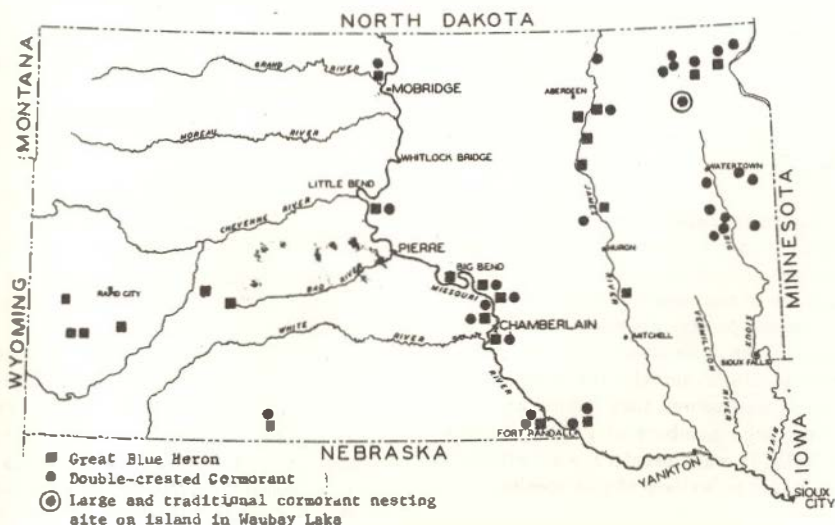


FIGURE 2. Locations of breeding colonies of Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants which have been reported in South Dakota at various times since about 1950.

Heron was a summer resident along the river (Big Sioux) and creeks of Minnehaha County seems to imply that such influences have had their effect in South Dakota. Similarly, Green and Janssen (1975) indicate that although cormorants once bred in all regions of Minnesota, today active colonies occur at only the large lakes of the west central region. Ellison and Cleary (1978) recently demonstrated that human disturbance did have a negative effect on breeding of Double-crested Cormorants in the St. Lawrence Estuary.

On the other hand, there is little evidence to support the contention that numbers of breeding individuals have declined in the state in recent years. It may be that both species have become adapted to breed in close proximity to human beings and their appurtenances. Populations of both species appear to be thriving in other states as well. Palmer (1962) reports that although Double-crested Cormorants decreased steadily with advancing civilization until the year 1935, since that time they have managed to re-establish themselves in many areas from which they had been absent for many years. Likewise, eight of nine east coast colonies of Great Blue Herons had more breeding pairs in 1975 than they did in 1973. (Custer and Osborn, 1977).

Although populations may be holding their own in many places, it seems reasonable to suppose that man will become an increasing threat to the welfare of these species, probably in large part through the destruction of suitable nesting habitat. Unfortunately, the prevalent but inaccurate notion that cormorants consume large numbers of game fish (Ross, 1974/1976) may interfere with efforts to promote the welfare of this species.

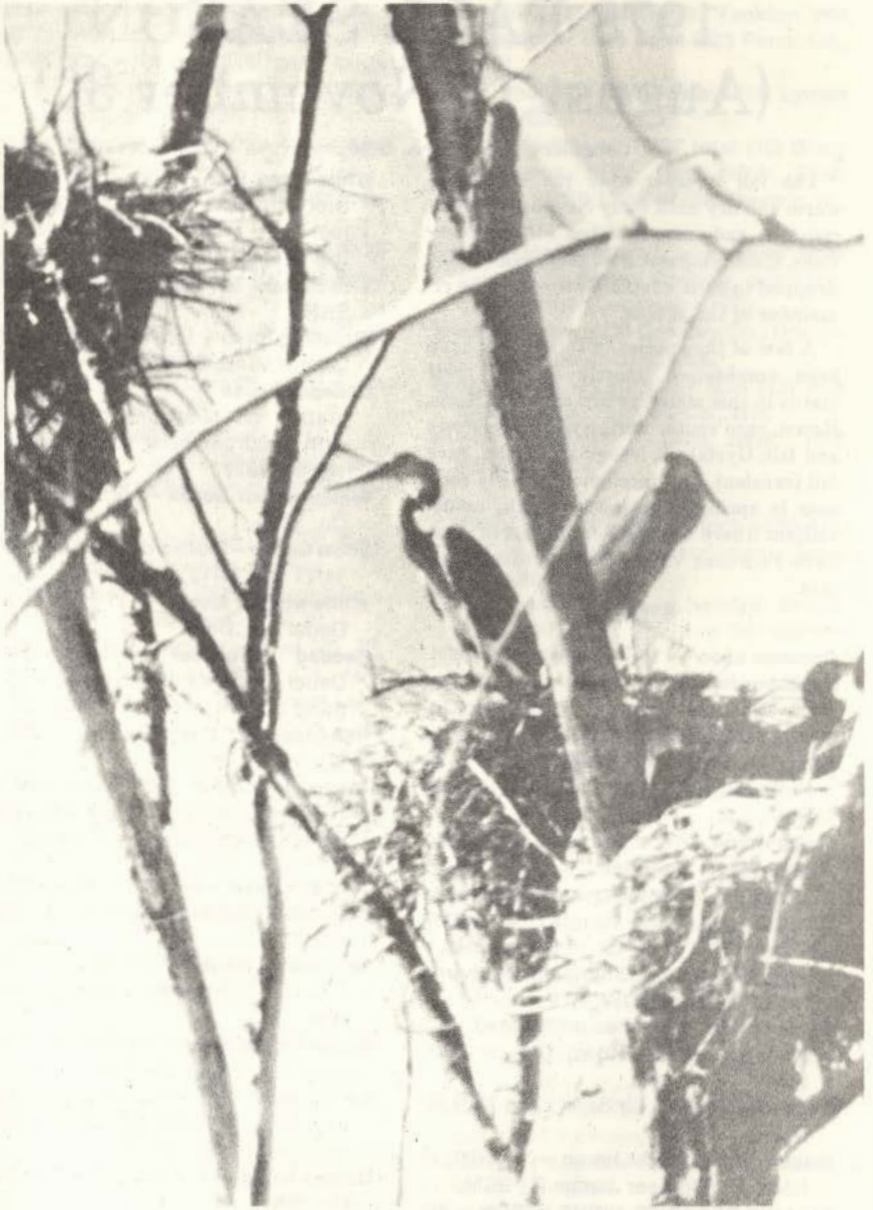
In the interest of a possible future need to manage these species, it is important that as many breeding colonies as possible be located and monitored.

**Acknowledgement.** We thank Les Baylor for critically reading the manuscript. Biology Department, Augustana College, Sioux Falls.

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**PHOTOGRAPH.** Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorants breeding at Big Bend Dam in 1978. Photo by Steve Archer.

# 1978 FALL SEASON (August 1 - November 30)

Compilers: B.K. Harris, G.L. Steffen, J. Harter

The fall weather over the state was warm and dry until early November, when rain, ice, and snow initiated wintry conditions. Cold temperatures, that occasionally dropped to zero, continued through the remainder of the season.

A few of the species in this report have been emphasized, mostly due to their status in this state: Yellow-crowned Night Heron, rare visitor during spring, summer and fall; Gyrfalcon, irregular; Dunlin, rare fall transient, but uncommon to fairly common in spring; Black-necked Stilt, casual visitant (there was a concentration of 26 at Belle Fourche); Varied Thrush, casual visitant.

## SPECIES

- Common Loon** - 11/17 (8) Gavin's Pt., WH.  
**Double-crested Cormorant** - Late dates on Missouri River; 11/16 Buffalo Co. and 11/24 Gregory Co., WH.  
**Great Blue Heron** - Late dates: 11/23 Hyde Co., JH; 11/30 Canyon L., Rapid City, JLM.  
**Green Heron** - Recorded from Turner and Minnehaha Counties  
**Cattle Egret** - Nesting birds at Sand Lake N.W.R. resulted in counts of 44 on 8/6, 18 on 10/12 (date for 11/28 seems unrealistic); est. of 90 birds on the refuge for peak count, SJW, RLW.  
**Great Egret** - (38) birds on flooded field near James R., Brown Co. on 10/1, ECM.  
**Snowy Egret** - 8/6 (6) Sand Lake N.W.R., SJW.  
**Black-crowned Night Heron** - 10/1 (60) in flooded field near James R., ECM.  
**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON** - 8/3 (1) e. Miranda, Brown Co., SJW; 9/9 (1) Sand Lake N.W.R., LL; 9/13 (2) near Columbia Dam, ECM. Duplications?  
**Least Bittern** - 8/2 Sand Lake N.W.R., SJW  
**White-faced Ibis** - More than usual. 9/3 Brookings Co., Paul Sands (*vide* NJH); 10/2 Hecla Grade, Brown Co., BM, and 10/8 on James R., Brown Co., ECM; 10/11 Sand Lake N.W.R., SJW; 10/5 Deuel Co., BKH.  
**Whistling Swan** - 11/6 peak of 4500, Sand Lake N.W.R., SJW  
**Canada Goose** - Nov. 11-12 peak migration on Missouri R. at Yankton, with 2400 per hour for 7 hours; est. 16,800, JEW.  
**White-fronted Goose** - 10/12 (200) Gregory Co., GLS.  
**Snow Goose** - Flocks of (200 and 1000) on 11/11 and 11/12, Gregory Co., GLS.  
**White-winged Scoter** - 11/8 (1) L. Alice, Deuel Co., BKH.  
**Hooded Merganser** - Reported from Deuel and Yankton Counties, and Sand Lake N.W.R.  
**Red-breasted Merganser** - 11/23 (13) Gavin's Pt., WH.  
**Goshawk** - Adult and young near nest tree through 8/27 in Black Hills, RAPN; 11/18 (1 imm.) Gregory Co. GLS.  
**Cooper's Hawk** - Reported from Gregory, Ziebach, Yankton, and Deuel Counties.  
**Swainson's Hawk** - Late dates of 10/31 and 11/1, Gavin's Pt., latest on record, WH.  
**Rough-legged Hawk** - Earliest So. Dak. record: 9/17 Butte Co., DB.  
**Ferruginous Hawk** - Records from Meade, Lawrence, Walworth, Jones, Deuel, and Yankton Counties.  
**Golden Eagle** - (4) during period in Deuel Co., BKH.  
**Bald Eagle** - More records than usual. 9/1 at Sand Lake N.W.R. is earliest on record, with (10) more reported from that area during period, SJW, TK, RE; (14) in s.e. So. Dak. along Missouri R., WH.

- Osprey** – More than usual. (2) Brown Co., (5) Yankton Co., (1) Gregory Co.
- GYRFALCON** – 11/20 (2) different birds (from markings) Lyman Co., WCT; 11/27 (2) Sully Co., RLH.
- Prairie Falcon** – 11/26 (1) Deuel Co., later than usual, BKH.
- Merlin** – Reported from Meade, Gregory, and Yankton Counties.
- Greater Prairie Chicken** – 10/21 and 10/25 Brown Co., SJW, RE; 11/18 (3) Sand Lake N.W.R., TK.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse** – 12/6 (4) near Mina L., Edmunds Co., LL.
- Sandhill Crane** – 11/6 (30) Sand Lake N.W.R., late date, TK.
- Piping Plover** – 9/4 Aberdeen, LL.
- Am. Woodcock** – One of the few fall dates on record: 9/15 Brookings Co., Spencer Vaa.
- DUNLIN** – 8/17 McPherson Co., TK. Very few fall records for this species.
- Marbled Godwit** – 8/16 (60) in flooded field near James R., Brown Co., ECM.
- Am. Avocet** – Concentrations of (25, 30, 75, and 70 birds) in Brown Co., MA.
- BLACK-NECKED STILT** – 8/2 (2) near Lake Andes, Chas. Mix Co., Jim Good, Gary Zahm, Lynn Nymerer, USF & WS (*vide* RLH); 9/17 concentration of (26) Orman Dam, Belle Fourche, G.G. Ross and DB.
- Franklin Gull** – 9/29 concentration of (10,000) Yankton, JEW, and (40,000) Gavin's pt., WH.
- Least Tern** – 8/2 (2) Swan L., Turner Co., WH.
- Mourning Dove** – 11/27 Aberdeen, LL.
- Burrowing Owl** – 8/6 (4) Richmond L., Brown Co., SJW.
- Whip-poor-will** – 9/14 (1) s. Clay Co., KJH.
- Common Nighthawk** – 8/11 unusual concentration of (200) Rapid City, RDM; 9/24 late date, Rapid City, EMS.
- Red-Bellied Woodpecker** – 10/28, 10/30 (1 m.) Burke L., GLS; 10/18 to 11/3 (1) Sodak Park, Roberts Co., BKH; 11/8 (1) near Gary, Deuel Co., Mrs. A. Krause; 11/16 (1) Deuel Co., D. Linehan; 11/15 (1) Enemy Swim L., Day Co., H. Chilson.
- Red-headed Woodpecker** – Late date: 11/29 (1) Burke, Gregory Co., GLS.
- E. Kingbird** – Late date: 9/17 Yankton, WH.
- W. Kingbird** – Late date: 9/23 Penn. Co., NRW.
- Say's Phoebe** – Late date: 9/16 Lyman Co., WCT.
- Gray Jay** – 9/24 to 11/27 total (18) Black Hills area, RDM, NJE, NRW, EEM.
- Blue Jay** – 9/30 flock of (64) Gavin's Pt., JEW, WH.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch** – Reports from Brookings, Brown, Gregory, and Yankton Counties, and Black Hills.
- Mockingbird** – 10/30 Gregory Co., first record for the county, GLS.
- Gray Catbird** – Late date: 9/24 (13) in a quarter-mile, Yankton Co., WH.
- Brown Thrasher** – Late date: 10/8 Yankton, WH.
- VARIED THRUSH** – 10/5 in flock of 30 Am. Robins (detailed description), Belle Fourche, IW.
- Wood Thrush** – 10/1 (1) banded, Brookings, GMF, NJH. Very few fall records for this species.
- Townsend's Solitaire** – 11/16 (1) Aberdeen, LL.
- Bohemian Waxwing** – Flocks of 56, 40, and 91 Perkins Co. during Nov., AH.
- Northern Shrike** – Reports from Gregory (8), Brule, Hyde, Butte, and Yankton Counties.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler** – Late dates: 11/15 (1) Burke L., GLS; (1) still present at end of period, Huron, J.W. Johnson.
- Western Tanager** – Late dates: 9/16 and 9/24 Rapid City, GRB, NRW.
- Gray-crowned Rosy Finch** – First sightings in Black Hills 10/30 and 10/31, RAPn and R. Kovarik.
- Rufous-sided Towhee** – Late dates: 11/9 and 11/24 Yankton, WH.
- Le Conte's Sparrow** – 10/9 (1) L. Alice, Deuel Co., BKH.
- Sharp-tailed Sparrow** – 9/15 (1) L. Alice, Deuel Co., my first record of this species, BKH.
- Smith's Longspur** – 10/24 (15-20), 11/4 (15) Deuel Co., BKH.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### WEST RIVER

- (BHAS) - Black Hills Audubon Society.  
Members: Gertrude Bachman (GRB); Dorothy Boreison (DAB); Adelaide Brodsky (AMB); Violet Brodsky (VLB); Norma Eckmann (NJE); Bonnie Green (BLG); Carol Johnson (CJJ); Doris Knecht (DHK); Mike Michael (RDM); Chuck Milliken (CCM); Jocie Mortimer (JLM); Leighton and Ruth Palmer-ton (LRP); Reva Pearce (RAP); Esther Serr (EMS); N.R. Whitney (NRW); Leota Williams (LAW); Clara Yarger (CY); Lenord Yarger (LY).
- (DB) - Dan Bjerke, Spearfish, Lawrence Co.
- (AH) - Gertrice and Alfred Hinds, w. Perkins Co.
- (EEM) - Earnest Miller, Sturgis, Meade Co.
- (BMN) - Barney Nordstrom, Fairburn, Custer Co.
- (RAPn) - Richard A. Peterson, w. Custer Co.
- (GLS) - Galen Steffen, Burke, Gregory Co.
- (WDT) - Wait Thietje, Reliance, Lyman Co.
- (IW) - Irma Weyler, Belle Fourche, Butte Co.

### EAST RIVER

- (MA) - Margerey Arbogast - Aberdeen, Brown Co.
- (GMF) - Gladyce Froiland, Brookings
- (WH) - Rosamond and Willis Hall, Yankton
- (BKH) - Bruce K. Harris, Clear Lake, Deuel Co.
- (RLH) - Richard Hill, Pierre, Hughes Co.
- (NJH) - Nelda Holden, s. Brookings Co.
- (KJH) - Karolyn Hoover, Vermillion, Clay Co.
- (LL) - Larry Lynch, Aberdeen
- (ECM) - Jeanette and Everett Montgomery, Aberdeen
- (CAT) - Charles Taylor, Brookings
- (JEW) - Juli Wilcox, Yankton
- (SJW, RLW, BM, TK, RE, TW) - Sam Waldstein, Refuge Mgr., Robert Wright, Berle Myers, Tim Kessler, Robert

Edens, Tonna West, all from Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Brown Co.

### President's Page (Continued from page 3)

and the Long-billed Curlew, which later disappeared from the Fort Randall vicinity. Apparently the American Raven was much more common then than now. Comfort listed the King Rail, and both Comfort and Weeds recorded the Brant. In June, 1873, Weeds says he saw the Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, the Black Vulture, the Hermit Thrush, the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and either the Ruby-crowned or Golden-crowned Kinglet. For July, 1873, Weeds recorded the Sharpshinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk, and both he and Dr. Lord indicate that they saw the Crissal Thrasher, adding the note "larger than in Colorado, Crissum deep red." One of the most surprising entries is Weeds' "Crow Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*)," which may be his faulty transcription of "Crow Blackbird (*Quiscalus versicolor*), i.e., Common Grackle, from Comfort's list. Weeds also gives the Arctic Loon ("only seen in winter"), the Red-throated Loon ("in the larger lakes in winter"), and three species of grebes: the Red-necked, the Horned, and the "Crested." Coues does list a Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) in both of his books, but in his *Key* (p. 794) he admits that it has been "eliminated from our fauna," though in his opinion "hastily eliminated."

Although Weeds believed the maximum number of bird species in the Fort Randall-Lake Andes region to be 165 or 170, he wrote at the end of his list that Coues had thought there were over 200. Surely our compilation of 146 species during one weekend in May suggests that Coues was more nearly correct. -- **Bill Lemons, Meckling.**



Photograph Courtesy of Willis Hall

#### The Challenge

The adult Bald Eagle had been perched in the top of the tree, his accustomed place, when the immature eagle approached. The older bird retained his rights to the tree-top.

# GENESIS OF THE BIRDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Nathaniel R. Whitney, Jr.

When the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union was organized in 1949, one of the early objectives was the development of a definitive book on the birds of the state. Until that time, the only book written to cover the entire state was *Birds of South Dakota* by W.S. Over and Craig S. Thoms, published in 1920 by authors based in Vermillion. Their *Revised Edition*, published in 1946, contained a few additions, but continued to use 1920 nomenclature and taxonomic sequence. So, by 1949, it was very much out of date.

This therefore was one of the main purposes for *South Dakota Bird Notes*. The "President's Page" in the early 1950's, especially by Presidents Gerald Spawn, Scott Findley, and Kenneth Krumm, stressed this particular aspect of our organization. Also, the first two editors, E.R. Lamster and Herman Chapman, reprinted in *Bird Notes* several papers on South Dakota birds that had been published earlier in such national journals as the *Wilson Bulletin*.

In 1953, I moved to South Dakota, and shortly afterward joined S.D.O.U. In 1955, President J.O. Johnson asked me to inventory the egg collection at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City. I was able to complete this in time for publication in the June, 1955, issue of *Bird Notes*, and in the same issue (p. 25) President Johnson appointed me as chairman of a new Check List Committee, the other members being Herbert Krause, Herman Chapman, Scott Findley, Gerald Spawn, Alfred Peterson, William Youngworth, and William Felton. As I said above, I was new in the state, but the other seven were all experts on the birds in their specific areas of the state.

We worked fast, with much correspondence, but relied pretty much on our own collective knowledge, did relatively little library work and no further field

work. We published the list in *Bird Notes* in March, 1956.

In his "President's Page," September and December, 1957, Herbert Krause reported that he, Sven Froiland, and Will Rosine had set up a species file system at Augustana College to gather together all information on South Dakota birds. In my first "President's Page," June, 1958, I commented that they - Krause, Froiland, and Rosine - were the extant Check List Committee. At that time, we thought they would eventually write the definitive book on the state's birds.

Meanwhile, throughout this period, I had concentrated my own field work on the Black Hills. I had known nothing about South Dakota when I moved here, and I was immediately fascinated by the fact that several Rocky Mountain bird species reached the eastern edge of their ranges in the Black Hills, and especially by the fact that one species, the White-winged Junco, was virtually limited to the Black Hills for breeding. As we were finishing our work on the 1956 Check List, I learned that the A.C. Bent series of *Life Histories of North American Birds* still needed an author for the life history of the White-winged Junco, and so I volunteered. For the next four years I concentrated on juncos, eventually completing most of the research in 1960. I presented my findings to the Cooper Ornithological Society in Los Angeles in April, 1960, then to S.D.O.U. in Rapid City in May, and then turned in the manuscript to the editor.

While completing the junco life-history, I felt that an annotated list of all the birds of the Black Hills was needed. Later in 1960, therefore, I composed such a list, about 22 pages in length, and sent it to our editor, Jim Johnson, for review and possible publication. Jim wrote back that he thought a more detailed version would be more suitable, and he told me subsequently

that he had referred my paper to S.D.O.U.'s long-time mentor, O.S. Pettingill, Jr., for review. While writing an expanded version, I sent a request to Dr. Pettingill in 1962 for information, and he invited me to work with him in writing a definitive book on birds in the Black Hills. After we had completed the first drafts of species accounts, the Pettingills spent a week with us in June, 1964, during which time we spent the daylight hours gathering information on certain species which needed more investigation. The book was printed in time for the June, 1965, joint meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society and S.D.O.U. at Sylvan Lake.

In 1963, President L.J. Moriarty appointed a committee to proceed with the compilation of an annotated check list for the state. The original committee members were myself as chairman with Herman Chapman, Herbert Krause, and Alfred Peterson. Chapman immediately declined, although he sent a two-page letter of suggestions, and Moriarty then appointed Nelda Holden and J.W. Johnson to the committee. During the next two years, our work consisted mainly of correspondence and organization, but once the *Birds of the Black Hills* was published, we began serious work. Paul Springer joined the committee in 1966; Bruce K. Harris, B.J. Rose, and temporarily Don Adolphson joined in 1967. In 1965 (*Bird Notes*, p. 80), I published "List of Species Represented by Specimens" as a beginning to the statewide check list.

At first, we held committee meetings at the time of our semi-annual S.D.O.U. meetings; in between we worked individually. The minutes of one early meeting, held Nov. 18, 1967, are published in *Bird Notes*, p. 79, 1967. At the Highmore meeting in May, 1968, however, we found that the press of other meeting activities was really too much. Les Baylor, our president at that time, suggested that we plan to have a few workshop meetings, at times and places entirely separate from other S.D.O.U. activities. Jim and Lucille

Johnson graciously invited us to use their home in Huron as headquarters. On March 22, 1969, Don Adolphson, Les Baylor, B.J. Rose, and I held a preliminary workshop meeting in Rapid City, and then on April 12, 1979, we held the first of many meetings at the Johnson home in Huron. Those present at that time, besides our host and hostess, were Rod Drewein, Bruce Harris, Nelda Holden, June Harter, Les Baylor, and myself. Rod moved to Idaho soon afterward, but the rest of us became a fairly close-knit group. Subsequent meetings were Nov. 16, 1969; April 17, 1971; April 29, 1972; Sept. 29, 1973; March 23, 1974; Sept. 28, 1974; and finally Feb. 15 and 16 and March 15, 1975. The gracious hospitality of the Johnsons brought us together in a spirit of unified purpose.

In 1966, we originally assigned species accounts as follows: Springer -- Loons through Hawks; Whitney -- Grouse through Woodpeckers; Johnson -- Flycatchers through Vireos; Holden -- Warblers through Fingillids. As I mentioned above, I had asked Alfred Peterson, one of the original committee members, to prepare the shorebird accounts. By 1966, however, his health had deteriorated to the point that he had to decline, and he died June 27, 1967. I therefore prepared the shorebird accounts myself, and for the first drafts I relied almost completely on his articles in *Bird Notes*. As we continued to revise the species accounts, we added the records of other observers, especially Springer, Harris, Rose, and Krause and Biankespoor in the East River areas in the early 1970's. But Alfred Peterson's published observations remain the body of the shorebird accounts.

Don Adolphson, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, moved to Rapid City in 1966 after several years in Huron. In the course of his professional field work throughout the state, he made extensive observations on the colonially nesting species -- Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, and White Pelican

-and also on the raptors. He published several papers in *Bird Notes* on these species, and wrote the first drafts on their species accounts for the book.

B.J. Rose moved to Rapid City from Bismarck in 1967, although he had previously lived in the Aberdeen area. He was a staff biologist with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks during the time the committee was working, and he covered much of the state in the course of his work. In 1971, he moved to Pierre, and subsequently added much information about all species in the central part of the state, as well as writing the accounts of all the gallinaceous birds and the Mourning Dove.

Bruce K. Harris, also a Game, Fish, and Parks Department biologist and a charter S.D.O.U. member, returned to the state in 1967 after living in New Mexico for several years. Originally from Roberts County, he was stationed first in Woonsocket and subsequently in Clear Lake, Deuel County, during the time of our committee work, and thus brought to the project a combination of scientific discernment and extensive field knowledge. Bruce assumed the responsibility for writing species accounts for loons through ducks when Paul Springer was unable to continue with them.

Nelda Holden moved to South Dakota in 1965, with a scientific background of a Master's degree in biology, with an ornithology major, from the University of Michigan. She became active in S.D.O.U. immediately, and has done extensive banding at her home along the Big Sioux River south of Brookings. She was thus well qualified to write the species accounts on the warblers, icterids, tanagers, and fringillids.

James W. Johnson, a civil engineer, has lived in Huron since the late 1940's, and accepted the editorship of *South Dakota Bird Notes* in 1959. He carried out and published extensive studies on Purple Martins and migrating American Robins, and, expanding from there, wrote the species ac-

counts for the groups from flycatchers through vireos.

June Harter worked closely with the committee throughout, especially helping with the typing of Johnson's and my accounts. She attended most of the committee meetings and workshops, and added a great deal to the success of the project.

Paul Springer came to South Dakota in 1963 as Director of the Cooperative Wildlife Unit at Brookings. He immediately became an active field worker and soon was contributing notes to *Bird Notes* regularly. He joined the committee in 1966, and originally planned to write the species accounts for water birds and hawks. After his transfer to Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1967, however, the pressure of other work prevented his continuing with that commitment, although he continued to attend some of the meetings. In 1972 he transferred to Arcata, California, but in 1974, he asked to remain an active member of the committee. He then reviewed all of the species accounts, and added his own observations when pertinent. Finally, he reviewed the older literature in detail, and prepared accounts for several species for which we had no recent information.

Byron Harrell had joined the project in 1971, when as both incoming S.D.O.U. president and host for the fall meeting, he had also suggested that the book could be published in conjunction with the W.H. Over Museum at the University of South Dakota. He agreed to act as editor and see the book through the publication process. From then on he was a full member of the committee, reviewing all of the species accounts, and especially revising the accounts of the raptors, Falconiformes and Strigiformes, in which he has special knowledge and interest. After June, 1975, he as editor had the main direction of the project, but he continued to meet with other committee members as he encountered questions that required more general review.



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SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

## General Notes of Special Interest

LATE FALL YELLOW-RUMPED (MYRTLE) WARBLER AT HURON - *Birds of South Dakota* gives Oct. 27, 1961, as the latest fall date of record for this warbler.

Nov. 19, 1978, this species was noted at our backyard bath, well seen, the yellow rump clearly displayed. On Nov. 28 it was at the bath twice during the day, the yellow rump clearly seen. The bird was seen Nov. 29 and 30, Dec. 2, 4, 5, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, and 24. On Dec. 25, it tried to get to the bath but gave up due to the new snow two inches deep around the edge of the bath. It was back Dec. 26, 28, 29, and 30. I left town early in the morning of Jan. 5, 1979, without seeing the bird again. Due to the extreme lateness of the season, the assumption that all observations were of the same individual is considered reasonable. J.W. Johnson, 1412 Utah Ave., SE, Huron 57350.

MOCKINGBIRD IN NORTHEAST GREGORY COUNTY - On October 30, 1978, I observed a Mockingbird in northeast Gregory County. The bird was seen near a weedy brushy area adjoining a flowing artesian well.

I watched the Mockingbird for several minutes, first in flight and then at rest in a small tree at a distance of 50 feet. I was able to get a good view of the bird with the aid of an 8x binocular, and carefully noted all field marks before the bird took flight and moved out of sight.

Although sightings of Mockingbirds are not that unusual in South Dakota, I thought the above record to be of interest because it is a rather late date and it is my first observation of the species in five years of field work in Gregory County. --Galen L. Steffen, Burke.

EVIDENCE OF THE VIRGINIA RAIL'S NESTING AT RAPID CITY --Late in the afternoon of 22 July 1977, a friend brought me an extremely debilitated juvenile Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*). Earlier that day the chick, in juvenal plumage but not yet capable of flight, had wandered into a yard near 32nd Street at the western extremity of Sioux Park in Rapid City. The bird remained in the yard and unsuccessfully called throughout the day to attract parental attention. When I received the little rail, it freely drank some water, but then it lay quietly on the floor of a holding cage. Its chance for survival seemed extremely unlikely, and by 7:30 p.m. the bird was dead. Dr. N.R. Whitney has prepared the specimen for deposit in the Biology Department at Augustana College, Sioux Falls.

The western part of the Sioux Park contains a drainage lined with cattails (*Typha latifolia*). On the morning of 25 July 1977, I went to this area and in a dense portion of the cattail marsh heard four Virginia Rails but could not see them, even though they sometimes seemed very close to me. The next morning (26 July), Dr. Whitney and I visited the marsh and promptly heard the calls of four individuals. Subsequently, we managed to flush one bird for a satisfactory visual identification of the Virginia Rail.

SDOU's new Check List (*The Birds Of South Dakota, 1978*) offers minimal specific information on the Virginia Rail's status in western South Dakota: "We + of the Missouri, found wherever suitable habitat occurs." All nesting records are from sites in eastern South Dakota. Recent issues of *SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES* (29:57, Sept. 1977; 30:8, March 1978; 30:27, June 1978; and 30:54, Sept. 1978) suggest, however, that the species regularly ap-

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

pears and sometimes nests at the LaCreek National Wildlife Refuge near Marti'n. Especially significant are Lohofener and Ely's observations (30:27) of single young Virginia Rails on 17 and 26 July 1977 at the LaCreek Refuge. Additionally, summer observations of the species, principally by Jocie Mortimer, come from the Rapid City area, the Spearfish Lagoon, southern Meade County, and Butte, Custer, and Fall River Counties (SDBN, 28:71, Dec. 1976; 29:57, Sept. 1977; and 29:78, Dec. 1977).

The occurrence, reported in this note, of the juvenal Virginia Rail incapable of flight adds strong evidence of nesting by the species in far-western South Dakota.

-- L.M. Baylor, SDSM&T, Rapid City

## BANDING REPORT FROM BURKE

Galen L. Steffen

The following is a list of the 17 bird species, totaling 404 individuals, that I banded in the Burke area, Gregory County, in 1978.

My color banding project with Purple Martins was continued and 184 nestlings were banded with a dark blue plastic band on the right leg and the numbered metal band on the left leg.

Two adult males and one adult female Purple Martin banded with yellow bands in 1976 returned in 1978 and nested in colonies in Burke. Four Martins wearing the red bands used in 1977 also returned to nest in Burke in 1978. I confirmed a report of three Purple Martins wearing red bands observed nesting at a colony in Winner, which is located 35 miles northwest of Burke. Without being able to read the numbered leg bands on these martins I could only presume that they were birds I had banded in 1977.

During 1978 the Bird Banding Laboratory sent reports of four recoveries of birds I had banded at Burke.

March, 1979

**Species/numbers banded during 1978:** - Mourning Dove (8); Yellow-shafted Flicker (3); Downy Woodpecker (2); Purple Martin (200); Blue Jay (2); Black-capped Chickadee (8); Am. Robin (4); Orange-crowned Warbler (1); Red-winged Blackbird (1); Common Grackle (60); Baltimore Oriole (1); Common Redpoll (8); Pine Siskin (57); Am. Goldfinch (1); Slate-colored Junco (9); Tree Sparrow (36); Harris' Sparrow (3).

**Recoveries:** - Mourning Dove (imm.) -banded 07-17-77, recovered 11-20-77 Puebla City, Mexico, shot; Blue Jay (imm.) -banded 08-02-75, recovered 05-20-78 Gregory, So. Dak., found dead; Common Grackle (ad.) - banded 04-22-76, recovered 07-24-78 Burke, So. Dak., found dead; Purple Martin (nestling) - banded 07-03-78, recovered 08-19-78 Winner, So. Dak., found dead.

### POUGH BIRD GUIDE: SDOU MEMBER IS LOOKING FOR ONE

For some time now, Jocelyn Baker has searched, without success, for a used copy of Richard H. Pough's *AUDUBON WESTERN BIRD GUIDE*. We are hoping that one of our readers will know where she may acquire a copy. If you have any helpful information, please send it to: Jocelyn Baker, 3220 Kirkwood Dr., Rapid City, So. Dak. 57701.



Ovenbird

—Drawing—  
Courtesy E.W. Steffen

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Esther M. Serr, Regional Editor for *American Birds*, has a new address. Correspondence should now be sent to: Esther M. Serr, 110-11 East Watertown, Rapid City, So. Dak. 57701.

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# 1979 FALL MEETING SCHEDULE

## September 28, 29, and 30

**Headquarters:** Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

**Tentative Schedule:**

Friday, Sept. 28: Registration, social hour, informal program.

Saturday, Sept. 29: Paper sessions, business meeting, Broad of Directors meeting.  
Banquet in evening, with program.

Sunday, Sept. 30: Field trips.

**Call for Papers:**

Send title of presentation, estimated number of minutes required for presentation, and equipment needs to G.W. Blankespoor, Dept. of Biology, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, So. Dakota 57102, by Sept. 18 at the latest.