

South Dakota Bird Notes

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Ruffed Grouse

Photo: Jocelyn L. Baker

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

I am writing on Friday, 27 April; and watching a blizzard outside. I returned 2 days ago from southwestern Ohio, where spring was well underway, although it rained and few migrants were in evidence. The blizzard began the day I returned, and for the past 2 days we have watched an assemblage of winter birds--mostly Evening Grosbeaks, but with several Pine Siskins and goldfinches and a few Red Crossbills and Cassins's Finches--all at the sunflower seeds. A few White-winged and Slate-colored Juncos are eating grain, and today I noted a Tree Sparrow and a Chipping Sparrow. Snowstorms bring in strange visitors. Les Baylor reported 2 Horned Larks at his feeding station during the storm. Horned Larks usually stay well out on the prairie, and do not come into our area.



Red Crossbills are appearing now in family groups, and apparently nesting during the relatively mild weather of January and February. At that time we are not thinking of nesting, and usually overlook the early breeders. Crossbills, now common, do not appear in the same numbers each year, and so presumably the seed crop (Ponderosa Pine or others) has been good this year.

Another species deserving further study is the Pinyon Jay, which also appears to be an early breeder. Most of the year we find them around our home, although they may be absent in December and January. Then, usually in late April or early May, they appear again, in company with gray immatures begging to be fed. In northern Arizona, Russell Balda found them nesting in colonies, in which only a few of the available adults actually breed and become parents. Other adults, possibly older offspring of the parent birds, help with the care of the nestlings. Do the Pinyon Jays in our Black Hills populations use cooperative nesting? In all of my South Dakota birding, I have found only 1 nest, and that discovery was many years ago.

In my 2 previous President's Pages, I have talked about

the May meeting in Aberdeen, which will be history by the time this page is published. The meeting promises to be a good one. Our local committee--Jocie Baker, Les Baylor, and myself--are now working on plans for the fall meeting, to be held in Rapid City on 5, 6, and 7 October 1984. Hopefully, we will have a beautiful autumn to provide all with fall migrants and glorious scenery. The resident Black Hills birds, such as Lewis' Woodpeckers and dippers, should be here to greet you. We anticipate an interesting and informative program and we will be sending you details soon.

The Drumming Ritual of the Ruffed Grouse

by Jocelyn L. Baker
Rapid City 57701

Some birds dance, a few boom, while others preen and bob. These strange antics can be observed chiefly in the spring when male birds go through courtship rituals. The Ruffed Grouse's courtship rituals (in South Dakota seen only in the Black Hills) consist of displays of neck and tail feathers and drumming. Although the behavior is mainly observed in the spring and early fall, the male's drumming can occur year-round. The drumming is the male grouse's way of attracting a mate and advertising territorial claims to rivals.

What causes the drumming sound? Do the wings beat together behind the grouse's neck? Or do they beat against the log upon which the birds often perch? Perhaps the wings are struck against the grouse's breast. Not until J. J. Allen photographed drumming grouse in 1924 did we discover that the hollow sound is produced by the swiftly beaten stiffened wing feathers that strike only air.

Drumming behavior usually occurs when the bird is perched on a log (known, appropriately, as a drumming log), but stone walls, mossy mounds on the ground, and boulders are also used. The same drumming sites can be used for many years. Large logs are preferred since they provide good elevation and allow the grouse to see farther. Southern exposures are often chosen since they provide the best food and cover. Fresh droppings help to identify a drumming log and, because birds usually stand at exactly the same place on a log, pinpoint the exact spot where drumming occurs. Because of their tenacious preferences for these fixed locations--grouse may even roost overnight on them--drumming logs tend to be barkless, at least in those places where the

birds stand.

The drumming log is usually located in a woodland, often near a clearing, road, or other opening. Many males have more than one log, although usually one is used more than others. In the territory around his log, a male may become unusually aggressive and fearless, especially when driving away other males.

Braced by its rigid tail and with claws embedded in soft wood, a male Ruffed Grouse stands perpendicular to the log. The stiff, cupped wings are brought forward and upward in quick beats. The initial strokes are slow, deliberate, and almost inaudible but then accelerate to about 60/sec. As the beating peaks, the strokes are so rapid that they can not be accurately counted. Finally the drumming ends as it began, with slow, strong, deliberate beats. With a drumming response, males will answer the drumming of neighbors. Because the sound travels most strongly away from the bird's front, rivals can increase the effects of drumming by facing directly towards each other.

The sound is at a low frequency (40 cycles/sec) and can be heard by an attentive ear at a distance of 0.25 mi. Because of the low pitch, however, judging distance and location is often difficult. Thus the Great Horned Owl, the grouse's principal predator, rarely makes kills while the grouse is on the drumming log. Perhaps the drumming is too low for the owl's hearing, which is ineffective below 60 cycles/sec (Rue, 1973. *World of the Ruffed Grouse*, Lippincott).

I have observed Ruffed Grouse (gray-phase birds) in two areas of the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve in the Black Hills National Forest. Although *The Birds of South Dakota* states that Ruffed Grouse habitat is deciduous forest, chiefly young to medium-aged stands of aspen, I observed all but 1 of the drumming males in Ponderosa Pine forest. The first place I saw them is a short distance from the Willow Creek Horse Camp, off Trail 8 that follows Willow Creek and eventually goes to Harney Peak. In May and June 1983, I found 3 males drumming on 5 different logs. I recorded 1 other drumming male in this area on 17 October 1982. The second drumming area I found is near the base of Harney Trail 9, which begins at Sylvan Lake and also ends at Harney Peak. Both of these areas are heavily forested (Ponderosa Pine is the dominant tree) with fairly thick ground cover. One of the logs in the Willow Creek region is located in a mixed forest of pine, spruce, aspen, and birch. Several sites were on hillsides and two were on level ground quite close to the hiking trails.

Galen Steffen and I carefully observed a drumming male near the Harney Trail 9 on 26 May 1981. The ritual we observed was very similar to the drumming described above and in the literature. Total time for the drumming was from 12 to 14 seconds at repeated intervals of 2.5 to 3.0 minutes. At the same site, on 10 May 1982, I observed another bird. This individual used three different but adjacent Ponderosa Pine logs that were roughly the same size. In each sighting, the grouse were actively drumming when I arrived at 6 am. Drumming stopped by 9 am, either because the birds were frightened or had simply walked off. Several times after being scared off his primary log, one bird at Willow Creek remounted this log each time a nearby grouse drummed. All of the drumming birds raised their head feathers in an ear-like crest. While performing, they inflated their breast feathers. When their show ended, they raised and fanned their tails.

I look forward to further studies of Ruffed Grouse in the Black Hill to help delineate the actual limits of their habitat preferences and provide data on the sizes of their home ranges. I hope birders of the state will share with me their records of this species.

GENERAL NOTES

SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD OBSERVATIONS.--After looking through *The Birds of South Dakota*, I would like to report some of the more interesting observations made by me and my brother and sister-in-law, Marvin and Allayne Martsching, of Redfield, South Dakota. I have been birding for 23 years and have lived at Redfield for parts of several years and usually spend some time there each August. In the following accounts, these initials are used: Paul Martsching (PM), Marvin Martsching (MM), Allayne Martsching (AM).

Least Bittern--2 August 1976, 1 at Redfield, Spink Co. (PM).

Cattle Egret--27 May 1973, 1 west of Watertown (PM, MM, AM).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron--13 June 1976, 1 at Sand Lake, Brown Co. (PM, MM, AM).

Cinnamon Teal--24 April 1977, 1 male 6 mi W Redfield (MM, AM).

Red-shouldered Hawk--7 October 1972 near Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM, MM, AM); 23 March 1973, 19 May 1974, 6 September 1975, 1 August 1978, 1 on each date at Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM, MM); 22 August 1976, 1 east of Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM, MM); 1 May 1977, south of Redfield, Spink Co. (MM, AM); 28 July

1979, 1 southeast of Redfield, Spink Co. (MM, AM).
Peregrine Falcon--16 May 1981, 1 at Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (MM, AM).
Prairie Falcon--15 August 1976, 1 at Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM).
Piping Plover--4 August 1981 and 6 August 1983, 2 at Twin Lake, Spink Co. (PM, MM, AM).
Ruddy Turnstone--21 May 1983, 2 at Twin Lake, Spink Co. (MM, AM).
Caspian Tern--13 August 1983, 1 at Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM, MM).
Barred Owl--15 June 1976, 1 at Cottonwood Lake, Spink Co. (PM, AM, MM).
Cape May Warbler--13 May 1975, 1 just south of Redfield, Spink Co. (AM).
Connecticut Warbler--28 May 1973, 1 male with complete white eye ring, just south of Redfield, Spink Co. (PM).
Blue Grosbeak--1 or 2 males seen 3 mi SE Redfield, Spink Co. in July 1978, August 1981 and 1982, and on 13 August 1983 (variously by PM, MM, AM).
Lazuli Bunting--23-25 May 1974, 1 male just south of Redfield (PM).
Le Conte's Sparrow--18 May 1974, 1 just south of Redfield (PM); 19 June 1976, 1 about 5 mi S Redfield (PM, MM, AM).
Sharp-tailed Sparrow--6 June 1976, 3 seen and heard about 5 mi S Redfield (PM, MM, AM).
Common Redpoll--3 October 1976, 3 very early birds just south of Redfield (PM)
--Paul Martsching, 1120 Marston, Ames, IA 50010

SWANS AND GULLS AT ORMAN DAM.--On 24 November 1983, while cruising in my fishing boat behind Orman Dam near Belle Fourche, I saw a pair of Trumpeter Swans, 4 Ring-billed Gulls, and 1 first-year Glaucous Gull. The swans were first seen in calm water on the north side of the reservoir. They let me approach to within 100 meters and I observed them for about 10 minutes. They flew northwesterly and disappeared over a ridge. This sighting is my first at Orman Dam, an area I've explored since 1973. The gulls were resting on a mud flat near the inlet of the Belle Fourche diversion channel. Shutting off the boat motor, I approached to within 75 meters and observed the birds for about 10 minutes. The black ring on the bills made it obvious that these birds were Ring-billed Gulls. I went to the island in the southeastern part of the reservoir and landed. Walking on the southeast perimeter, I approached a single

gull resting on a sandbar. I noted its large size and light cream-color with a mottled back. The wings contained no dark markings. The bill and feet were flesh-colored. In comparing the gull with my field guide, I noticed that the tail extended beyond the wing tips, a feature characteristic of the Glaucous Gull. The *Birds of South Dakota* indicates that, although Glaucous Gulls are known on the Missouri, no sightings have been reported west of that river. My observation is on a date similar to those of past records along the Missouri.--Dan Bjerke, Spearfish 57783.

LESSER GOLDFINCHES IN FALL RIVER COUNTY.--The black-backed variety of the Lesser Goldfinch is developing quite a history of appearances in Fall River Co. The first recorded were between 8 July and 10 September 1969 by Kathryn Twomey of Hot Springs. She reported that a pair came almost daily to drink at her bird bath. This observation is included in *The Birds of South Dakota* as part of the basis for a hypothetical listing of the species. Next came a series of observations: 6 August (1 male), 12 August (1 male), 1 September (1 male), 2 September (3 males, 3 females or immatures) all in 1982 and all feeding on sunflowers in Kathryn Murdock's yard south of Minnekahta Jct. These observations were documented with a photograph of a male bird (pers. comm.).

My own observations of Lesser Goldfinches were on 2 and 5 September 1983 in Hot Brook Canyon just west of Hot Springs. On both days from about 20 feet, I saw a male and a probable female feeding on the same sunflower. On 2 September a flock of American Goldfinches was nearby but no comparison was really necessary to distinguish the male as something different. The Lesser Goldfinch is described as being smaller than the American Goldfinch in *The Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds*; however, my first impression was not of size but of the Lesser's more slender shape. Its solid black head and back contrasted sharply with its bright yellow underparts. The white wing patches were prominent, especially when it flew. The females or immatures could be mistaken for American Goldfinches but the dark green heads and backs along with the dark rumps distinguish them.

The Lesser Goldfinch is considered a resident from northern Colorado southward. It has essentially the same behavior as the American Goldfinch but prefers drier foothill habitat (*Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds*). The Lesser Goldfinch is apparently not listed as occurring in Nebraska (Richard Rosche, pers. comm.). But a

Wyoming checklist by Dr. Oliver K. Scott of Casper mentions this species as a rare migrant in the southeast part of that state.--Richard A. Peterson, Hot Springs 57747.

HOUSE FINCHES AT BURKE.--While banding on the afternoon on 29 October 1983, I trapped a strange bird in my backyard. After a lengthy study with the bird in hand, I could only guess that it was a female House Finch. All the field marks were carefully compared with the illustrations in bird books and with the excellent description of the House Finch in Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*. After taking photographs, I banded and released the bird. The finch gave a House Sparrow-like chirp as it flew away, one of the key identifying features listed by banders in Bent's *Life Histories*.

The next morning, 30 October, I was surprised to see another female House Finch at one of my sunflower feeders. The bird remained for several minutes, allowing me to note all the field marks and the fact that it was unbanded. Therefore, in late October, at least 2 House Finches were present in my yard. Subsequently, I observed neither individual.--Galen L. Steffen, Burke 57523.

CORRECTION.--An unfortunate editorial error occurs in Kenneth Husmann's entertaining and informative article "Creating Natural Habitat" (SDBN 36:7-8). As it appears in the text, a sentence reads, "A few times we had bluebirds, kestrels, Rough-winged Swallows, or Warbling Vireos nest in our bird boxes." Actually Mr. Husmann has never recorded Rough-winged Swallows or Warbling Vireos nesting in bird boxes, although the species in question did nest in his yard. I extend my apologies to Mr. Husmann for this mixup.--Dan Tallman, Editor, SDBN.

1983 BANDING REPORT.--The following is a report of the 37 bird species (933 individuals) that I banded in the Burke area of Gregory Co. during 1983. Again, during the early fall of 1983, as during the same period of 1981, many American Robins were present in Burke. I banded 338 robins in 1983, mostly in September and early October. In late September and early October, I banded 145 Cedar Waxwings that I caught in water-drip traps. Immatures comprised 95% of the waxwings I banded, perhaps indicating a good reproductive year for this species. Mild fall weather resulted in late dates for several species, details of which will appear in the next issue of *Bird Notes*.

continued on page 32 →



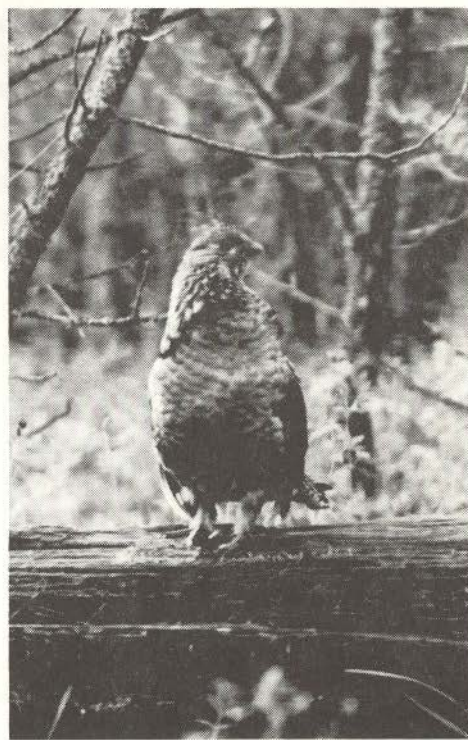
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2



4



5



3

A RUFFED GROUSE'S DRUMMING IN
THE BLACK HILLS,
BY JOCELYN L. BAKER

1. Male ascends log,
2. assumes drumming position,
3. stiffened tail braces body, eyes bulge, wingbeats crescendo to a blur,
4. then return to resting position.
5. Upright, fanned tail is lowered, breasts deflates,
6. grouse descends log to forage for nearby food.



6

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Yellow-shafted Flicker | 1 | Baltimore Oriole | 25 |
| Purple Martin | 13 | Orchard Oriole | 4 |
| Blue Jay | 11 | Black-headed Grosbeak | 2 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 5 | Black-headed x Rose- | |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | 1 | breasted Grosbeak | 1 |
| House Wren | 3 | Indigo Bunting | 1 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 1 | Rufous-sided Towhee | 1 |
| Swainson's Thrush | 1 | House Finch | 1 |
| American Robin | 338 | American Goldfinch | 26 |
| Gray Catbird | 1 | Slate-colored Junco | 119 |
| Brown Thrasher | 18 | Tree Sparrow | 23 |
| Cedar Waxwing | 145 | Chipping Sparrow | 32 |
| Philadelphia Vireo | 1 | Clay-colored Sparrow | 7 |
| Black and White Warbler | 1 | Field Sparrow | 7 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 6 | Harris' Sparrow | 62 |
| Myrtle Warbler | 32 | White-crowned Sparrow | 11 |
| Mourning Warbler | 1 | White-throated Sparrow | 1 |
| Wilson's Warbler | 1 | Lincoln's Sparrow | 2 |
| Brown Creeper | 1 | | |
| Common Grackle | 27 | | |

--Galen L. Steffen, Burke 57523.

The 1983/84 Christmas Counts
compiled by Dan Tallman
Northern State College, Aberdeen 57401

ABERDEEN--17 December 1983, 14 observers, compiler: Everett Montgomery, weather: -17 to -7 degrees, snow cover 4-6 inches.

BROOKINGS--No date given, 23 observers, compiler: Nelda Holden.

DEUEL CO.--30 December 1983, 8 observers, compiler: Bruce Harris.

MADISON--19 December 1983, 11 observers, compiler: R. Buckman.

PIERRE--18 December 1983, 30 observers, compiler: R. V. Summerside, weather: subzero temperatures.

RAPID CITY--18 December 1983, about 20 observers, compiler: Esther Serr, weather: temperatures as low as -27 degrees.

SAND LAKE--19 December 1983, 4 observers, compiler: Cathy Verdon.

SIOUX FALLS--31 December 1983, 9 observers, compiler: Gil Blankespoor, weather: mostly sunny, temperature in the 20's, 9-10 inches of snow.

SPEARFISH--2 January 1984, compiler: Dan Bjerke, weather:

31-53 degrees, 10-24 inches of snow cover.
 WATERTOWN--21 December 1983, 7 observers, compiler: Bruce Harris.
 WAUBAY--compiler: John W. Koerner.
 WILMOT--28 December 1983, 5 observers, compiler: Bruce Harris.
 YANKTON--30 December 1983, 8 observers, compiler: Willis Hall, weather: clear, 2-23 degrees, snow cover 0-96 inches.

| | SPEARFISH | RAPID CITY | PIERRE | ABERDEEN | SAND LAKE | WAUBAY | MADISON | WATERTOWN | WILMOT | DELEL | YANKTON | BROOKINGS | SIOUX FALLS |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|--------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|---------|-----------|-------------|
| Great Blue Heron | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Snow Goose | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Canada Goose | | 2 | 6930 | | | | | | | | | 9 | |
| Wood Duck | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Green-winged Teal | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| American Wigeon | | 73 | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Mallard | 49 | 742 | 5195 | | 31 | | 2 | | | | 2002 | | 315 |
| Northern Pintail | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gadwall | | 56 | | | | | | | | | 11 | | |
| Canvasback | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ring-necked Duck | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lesser Scaup | | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Common Goldeneye | | | 25 | | | | | | | | 38 | | |
| Hooded Merganser | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Common Merganser | | 15 | 97 | | | | | | | | 4 | | |
| Red-breasted Merganser | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bald Eagle | 2 | 2 | 18 | | | | | | | | 19 | | |
| Northern Harrier | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Accipiter sp. | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cooper's Hawk | | 2 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Northern Goshawk | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | 2 | 3 | |
| Swainson's Hawk | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 5 | 4 | 5 | | | | 2 | | | | 10 | | |
| Ferruginous Hawk | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rough-legged Hawk | | 5 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Buteo sp. | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Golden Eagle | | 6 | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| American Kestrel | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 4 | | 3 |
| Merlin | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peregrine Falcon | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prairie Falcon | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gray Partridge | 1 | 16 | 28 | 1 | 25 | 60 | 127 | 176 | 86 | | 8 | 27 | 74 |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 30 | 85 | 573 | 9 | 113 | 39 | 529 | 83 | 53 | | 309 | 120 | 18 |
| Greater Prairie Chicken | | 19 | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse | 17 | 124 | 202 | | | | | | | | | | |

| | SIoux FALLS | BROOKINGS | YANKTON | DEUEL | WILLMOT | WATERLOO | WADSWORTH | WALKER | SAND LAKE | ABERDEEN | PIERRE | RAPID CITY | SPEARISH |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|----------|--------|------------|----------|
| Wild Turkey | | | 21 | | | | | | | | 33 | 119 | 20 |
| American Coot | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | |
| Killdeer | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Common Snipe | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 4 | 9 |
| Ring-billed Gull | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | |
| Herring Gull | | | | | | | | | | | 35 | | |
| Rock Dove | 80 | 67 | 94 | 35 | 30 | | 103 | | 7 | 210 | 264 | 190 | 152 |
| Mourning Dove | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| Great Horned Owl | 4 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 | | 3 | 8 | 11 | | 2 |
| Snowy Owl | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Long-eared Owl | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Short-eared Owl | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Belted Kingfisher | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Downy Woodpecker | 24 | 31 | 11 | 10 | 19 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 22 | 10 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 11 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 9 | | 6 | 15 | 16 | 2 |
| Northern Flicker | | 6 | | 1 | | | | | | | | 7 | |
| Yellow-shafted | | | 7 | | | | | | 1 | 3 | 3 | | |
| Red-shafted | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 3 |
| Hybrid | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Horned Lark | 24 | 281 | 40 | 20 | 67 | 28 | 349 | 54 | 15 | 890 | 463 | 40 | 18 |
| Gray Jay | | | | | | | | | | | | 6 | |
| Blue Jay | 18 | 35 | 11 | 6 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 15 | | 21 | 3 | 72 | 42 |
| Pinyon Jay | | | | | | | | | | | | 35 | |
| Black-billed Magpie | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 5 | 34 | 17 |
| American Crow | 153 | 30 | 72 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 37 | | | 1 | | 78 | 44 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 222 | 149 | 53 | 40 | 88 | 28 | 39 | 69 | | 33 | 65 | 177 | 201 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | | 9 | 1 | 1 | | 4 | 2 | | | 7 | 3 | 25 | 25 |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 18 | 25 | 6 | 9 | 14 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 11 | 18 | 3 |
| Brown Creeper | | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | 3 | 6 | |
| Canyon Wren | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | |
| American Dipper | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | |
| Townsend's Solitaire | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 37 | 10 |

| | STOUX FALLS | BROOKINGS | YAKTON | DEUEL | WILLIOT | WATERLOO | MADISON | VALLEY | SAND LAKE | ABERDEEN | PIERRE | RAPID CITY | SPEARFISH |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------|-------|---------|----------|---------|--------|-----------|----------|--------|------------|-----------|
| American Robin | 5 | 3 | 39 | | | | | | | 3 | 8 | 25 | 68 |
| Brown Thrasher | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Bohemian Waxwing | | 1 | | | 16 | | | | | | 1 | 120 | 43 |
| Cedar Waxwing | | 16 | 25 | | 11 | | 22 | | | | 50 | | 4 |
| Northern Shrike | 2 | | | | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| European Starling | 238 | 159 | 521 | 10 | 82 | 84 | 198 | 27 | 5 | 137 | 310 | 244 | 189 |
| Northern Cardinal | 10 | 3 | 10 | | | | 2 | | | | 1 | | |
| Rufous-sided Towhee | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| American Tree Sparrow | | 6 | 57 | 10 | 4 | | 19 | 49 | 79 | 3 | 87 | 15 | 44 |
| Clay-colored Sparrow | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Song Sparrow | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | 8 | | 1 |
| White-throated Sparrow | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| White-crowned Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Harris' Sparrow | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | 8 | | 1 | |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 53 | | 34 | | | | 30 | | | | | | |
| Slate-colored | | 77 | | 4 | 21 | 6 | | 3 | 2 | 27 | 27 | 283 | 39 |
| Oregon | 1 | 5 | | 1 | | 5 | | 1 | | 2 | | 31 | 3 |
| White-winged | | | | | | | | | | | | 102 | 92 |
| Lapland Longspur | | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 | 13 | 10 | |
| Snow Bunting | | 209 | 3 | 47 | 74 | | 7 | 7 | | 50 | | | |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | 7 | | | 2 | 1 | 30 | | 87 | 17 | 40 | | 2 |
| Western Meadowlark | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Yellow-headed Blackbird | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Rusty Blackbird | | | | | | | 10 | | | | | | |
| Brewer's Blackbird | | 2 | | | | | | | 91 | | | | |
| Blackbird sp. | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Common Grackle | | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 11 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 6 | 1 | |
| Rosy Finch | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Purple Finch | 2 | 78 | 5 | | | 6 | 14 | 12 | | 38 | 10 | | |
| House Finch | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | |
| Red Crossbill | | | | | | | | | | | | 211 | 230 |
| Common Redpoll | | | | | | | 10 | | | | 2 | 2 | |
| Pine Siskin | 86 | 22 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 145 | | | | 194 | 100 | 190 | 43 |
| American Goldfinch | 54 | 18 | 58 | | | 1 | 20 | 2 | | 7 | 112 | 57 | 15 |
| Evening Grosbeak | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | 91 | 52 |
| House Sparrow | 708 | 998 | 387 | 127 | 258 | 410 | 1102 | 318 | 423 | 662 | 1355 | 468 | 184 |

THE 1983/84 WINTER SEASON

by Bruce Harris
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Clear lake 57226

December was very cold with winds up to 45 mph, giving wind chill factors in excess of -50 degrees F. In the northeast, daytime temperatures did not get above -18 degrees from 15-25 December! Mrs. Willis Hall writes that in her area starlings froze in cattle feedlots. This terrible weather may account for few Red-winged Blackbirds and grackles seen this season and makes one wonder how the reported White-throated Sparrow survived. January brought comparatively mild weather. During the first week, temperatures were not above freezing at night. But the cold returned by mid-month. February was one of the mildest Februaries on record, breaking a 30-year record in the northeast. Snow cover existed for most of the season. Snowfalls were generally heaviest in the southeast, where especially heavy snows fell in early March. Memorable was a "sneak" blizzard in February (only 22 hours) that caught many people unprepared, killing 23 in Minnesota.

The following contributors are cited in this report: Leon J. Anderson (LJA), Dan L. Bjerke (DLB), Robert D. Buckman (RDB), Jocelyn L. Baker (JLB), James L. Cole (JLC), Kenneth Graupman (KG), Willis Hall (WH), Winston Hall (WiH), Bruce K. Harris (BKH), Gertrice Hinds (GH), Nelda J. Holden (NJH), David J. Holden (DJH), Jim Johnson (JJ), John W. Koerner (JWK), Rebecca Lane (RL), Dennis L. Lengkeek (DLL), Michael M. Melius (MMM), Richard Michaels (RM), Ernest E. Miller (EEM), Everett C. Montgomery (ECM), Debbie Paulson (DP), Richard A. Peterson (RAP), Dennis R. Skadsen (DRS), Aeylyn Spevak (AS), Galen L. Steffen (GLS), Dan A. Tallman (DAT), Erika J. Tallman (EJT), Steven Van Sickle (SVS), Kathy Verdon (KV), Gerald R. Waddel (GRW), Sam J. Waldstein (SJW), Irma Weyler (IW), Kathy M. Verdon (KMV), N. R. Whitney (NRW).

PIED-BILLED GREBE--3 December, Fall River Co. (RAP).

TRUMPETER SWAN--29 February, Pennington Co., 2 near Scenic (RAP).

SNOW GOOSE-- 14 February, McCook Co. and 15 February, E Minnehaha Co., the earliest dates ever (LJA). 1 wintered in Rapid City (NRW).

CANADA GOOSE--7 February, Sand Lake, 2 wintering birds (SJW). Roberts Co., Big Stone Power Plant, 2000 (DRS). Migrants: 3 February, Gregory Co.; 13 February, McCook Co.; 15 February, Codington, Brookings, and Jackson Co.

WOOD DUCK--12 February, Rapid City (NRW).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL--30 December, Rapid City, 4 (JLB) and 3 through winter (NRW).

MALLARD--Lake Co. CBC, 2 (RDB). Sand Lake, 20 wintered (SJW). Big Stone, 350 (DRS).

NORTHERN PINTAIL--4 December, Butte Co., 6 (DLB). Rapid City, 1 wintered (NRW, JLB). Early migrants: 16 February, Hutchinson Co., 3 pairs (LJA); 28 February, Meade Co., 15 (DLB).

AMERICAN WIGEON--Pierre CBC. 17 February, Turner Co., pair (LJA). Rapid City, 40 wintered (NRW).

CANVASBACK--Pierre CBC. 17 February, Yankton Co., migrants (WH).

REDHEAD--3 February, Pierre (JLB, DAT et al.). December-January, Rapid City (JLB). Migrants: 16 February, Yankton, 116 (WH); 28 February, Yankton, many (LJA).

RING-NECKED DUCK--Pierre CBC, 3. 16 February, Yankton, 12, very early (WH).

LESSER SCAUP--Pierre CBC, 2. 16 February, Yankton, 9 (WH).

COMMON GOLDENEYE--16 February, Big Stone, 3 (DRS). 19 February, Jackson Co., 7 (KG). 28 February, Turner Co. (LJA). 4 March, Brookings Co., 5 (DJH).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE --Rapid City, present through winter at Canyon Lake for 6th consecutive winter (JLB).

BUFFLEHEAD--27 February, Yankton, 2 (WH). Wintering birds: Charles Mix, Lacreek, and Rapid City.

HOODED MERGANSER--Wintered at Pierre and Rapid City. 11 February, Roberts Co., female at Hartford Beach State Park (DRS).

COMMON MERGANSER--15 February, Jackson Co., 12-60 birds (DRS). 16 February, Big Stone Power Plant, 45 (DRS).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER--Pierre (CBC).

BALD EAGLE--Many birds lingered or wintered at unexpected localities: 20 December, Big Stone Lake (DRS); 14 February, Meade Co. (JLB); 17 January, Sanborn Co. (MMM); 6 December, Custer Co. (MMM); February, Lawrence Co. (DLB); early December and 2 February, Sand Lake, 6-9 birds (KV, SJW); 9 January and 9 February, Fall River Co., 5 both dates (RAP); 28 February, Fall River Co. (NRW). Normal numbers along the Missouri River.

NORTHERN HARRIER--Wintering in Jackson, Gregory, Sully, Faulk, Brown, Stanley, Fall River, and Pennington Co. Migrants: 22 February, Turner Co. (LJA); 23 February, Jackson Co. (KG); 24 February, Sand Lake (KMU); 25 February, Shannon Co. (DP).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK--Unusually high numbers: recorded from Roberts, Lake, Brookings, Fall River (2), Yankton, and Jackson Co. Graupman wrote that 1 attacked his banding traps even though he stood 6 ft away.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK--Reports from Grant (2), Roberts, Shannon (3), Brookings, Hughes, Gregory, Fall River (3), and Brown Co. A Rapid City bird had a freshly killed cottontail (NRW).

RED-TAILED HAWK--Reported from Lake, Lawrence, Fall River, and Pennington Co. 25 February, Pennington Co., Harlan's subspecies (JLB).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK--Reports from Stanley (3), Custer (4), Fall River, Faulk, Meade, and Shannon Co.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK--Definitely uncommon East River, where only reports were

from Sand Lake (2), McCook, Grant, and Roberts Co. West River: 5 in Gregory Co. (GLS); 18 in various Black Hills areas, including 5 in Spearfish; 3 in Lacreek (JLB); 12 from Meade and Lawrence Co. (DLB); 10 from Custer and Pennington Co. (RAP); and 7 from Jackson Co (KG).

GOLDEN EAGLE--12 December (7) and 12 February (10), Fall River Co. (RAP). Gregory Co., 26 adults, 14 immature on midwinter survey (GLS, DLL). Reported also from Pennington (10), Meade (3), Haakon, Hughes, Custer, Jackson, Perkins (3), and Brown Co.

MERLIN--Reports from Pierre, Fall River (3)(RAP), Pennington (JLB), Lawrence (DLB), and Butte Co. (IW).

PEREGRINE FALCON --Reported on Pierre CBC but no details available. We should always report more than just dates for this endangered species, which is very similar to the Prairie Falcon.

GYRFALCON --4 February, Stanley Co., ca. 12 mi W Ft. Pierre (JLB, RL). Good details of gray phase bird.

PRAIRIE FALCON--Reports from Pierre, Lawrence, Jackson, Pennington, Fall River, and Hanson Co.

SAGE GROUSE--Fall River Co., 6 (RAP).

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN--10 December, Hutchinson Co., 1 (LJA).

AMERICAN COOT--3 December--17 February, near Rapid City, 4 (JLB).

KILLDEER--All season, Meade Co., near Sturgis (EEM). 27 December, Rapid City (NRW).

COMMON SNIPE--19 December, Lake Co. CBC (ROB). 14 February, Lawrence Co., 7 (DLB).

FRANKLIN'S GULL-- 14 December, Yankton Co., latest ever (WH).

BONAPARTE'S GULL-- 1 December, Yankton Co., latest ever (WH).

GLAUCOUS GULL --14 December, Yankton Co., 4 (WH). 3 other sightings through 13 January (WH).

MOURNING DOVE--Reports from Deuel, Roberts, Brookings, and Brown Co.

GREAT HORNED OWL--22 February, McCook Co., nesting (LJA). Arctic subspecies observed in Gregory Co. (GLS).

SNOWY OWL--A poor flight year: reports from Codington, Brown (3), Meade, and Ziebach Co.

BARRED OWL --1 January, Roberts Co., Hartford Beach State Park (DRS).

LONG-EARED OWL--19 February, Badlands (RL, JLB).

SHORT-EARED OWL--18 December, Custer Co., 3 (MMM). 2 January, Brown Co., 4 (DAT, EJT).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL--January-February, Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, (many Sand Lake employees and DAT, ECM). 14-22 December, Meade Co. (EEM).

BELTED KINGFISHER--Observed in Deuel Co. (JLC), Pierre CBC, and Pennington Co. (JLB).

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER--21 December, Day Co., (BKH, DAT, ECM).

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER--23 December, Roberts Co. (DRS). 21 December-8 February, Walworth Co. (WiH).

GRAY JAY--18 December, Rapid City, 4 (NRW).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH--Good flight year: observed in Brookings, Day, Deuel, Roberts, Gregory, and Brown Co; very common in the Black Hills (NRW).

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH--Perkins Co., first in several years (GH). Status of this species in the NW needs study.

PYGMY NUTHATCH--11 February, Rapid City (DP). 8 February, Mobridge, good observation (WiH).

CANYON WREN--18 December, Rapid City (NRW).

WINTER WREN--11 December, Lawrence Co., only 3 prior winter records for species (DP).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET--None reported East River and few observed in the West.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE--Pierre CBC.

AMERICAN ROBIN--Very few reports: East River observations in Brookings, Brown, and Roberts Co.

BROWN THRASHER--1 December, Day Co., Waubay NWR (GRW).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING--Very few East River: Brookings, Roberts, and Hughes Co. Normal West River: Butte Co., SO (IW); Rapid City, up to 600 (NRW, JLB).

NORTHERN SHRIKE--Reports from Day, Roberts, Deuel, Grant, Lake, Sanborn, Miner, Brown, Hughes, Gregory, Lawrence, Jackson, Pennington, Fall River, and Custer Co.

NORTHERN CARDINAL--8 December-6 January, Roberts Co. (DRS). Also Lake Co. CBC and Brookings CBC.

SONG SPARROW--Lake Co. CBC. 14 February, Lawrence Co., 2 (DLB). Butte Co., 2 (IW).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW--1-22 December, Codington Co. (BKH, AS). 1-7 December, Brookings Co. (NJH). 21 December through the winter, Waubay NWR (BKH, JWK).

HARRIS' SPARROW--Reports from Brookings (3), Roberts (3), Brown, Lawrence (6), and Butte Co. (7).

SNOW BUNTING--Fall River Co., SW Edgemont, 120 (RAP).

WESTERN MEADOW LARK--Lake Co. CBC. 1 December, Turner (LJA) and Jackson Co. (KG).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD--31 December, Pennington Co., 13 (JLB). Reported from Lake, Brown, Turner Co. (150) (LJA).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD--Brookings CBC.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD--11 and 18 December, Deuel Co. (BKH). 22 January, Sand Lake (DAT).

ROSY FINCH--18 February, Badlands National Monument, 30 (RAP). 25 February, Shannon Co., 125 (DP).

PURPLE FINCH--Fairly common throughout state except few reported in Black Hills.

CASSIN'S FINCH--18 February, Rapid City, 2 (JLB).

RED CROSSBILL--Only East River records: Brown Co., 6 (DAT, EJT); Codington Co., 20 (JJ). Abundant in the Black Hills region (NRW, DLB, EEM, JLB).

COMMON REDPOLI--Reported in small numbers (1-12) from Roberts, Deuel, Codington, Lake, Hughes, Brookings, Moody, Brown, and Day Co.

PINE SISKIN--Very common throughout state.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH--Relatively scarce after last winter's heavy flight.

EVENING GROSBEAK--Fairly common in the Black Hills (25-75) but only East River records were from Brookings, Deuel, and Brown Co.

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