

SOUTH DAKOTA
ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



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BIRD



DAKOTA
NOTES

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SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Since 1967, 44 states have initiated nongame programs that manage species that traditionally are neither hunted, trapped, nor fished. These programs not only manage individual nongame species (such as the Kirtland's Warbler in Michigan) but also entire ecosystems, so that diverse wildlife populations can also prosper.

Scientific management of nongame resources requires funding from a variety of nontraditional sources. Thus over 30 states receive at least part of their revenue from income tax checkoffs. Florida funds its program by taxing first-time automobile registrations. Selling wildlife prints, stamps, and personalized license plates are approaches used by a few other states.

Unlike those states, South Dakota has neither the monetary funding sources nor a management program that will directly benefit its nongame populations. Our state does, however, have several programs designed for gamebirds that will indirectly enhance nongame species. Ducks Unlimited (DU), a private organization dedicated to conserving wetlands, and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) sponsor 2 of these programs, which will provide waterfowl habitat preservation and restoration.

DU's MARSH (Matching Aid to Restore States' Habitat) program provides money to the SDGFP in an amount equal to 7.5% of the dollars raised in South Dakota by DU. The SDGFP must match on a one-to-one basis any MARSH dollars used. This matching is done with money generated from the sale of a new \$2 Waterfowl Restoration Stamp, approved by the 1986 legislature. Currently, South Dakota has over \$97,000 to restore habitats under the MARSH program.

The other DU funding program, called US HABITAT, provides funds for improvement or development of waterfowl habitats. These funds need not be matched by state dollars and are available to certain public agencies located in the 5 major waterfowl production states, including South Dakota. The number of proposals that can be submitted for US HABITAT dollars is unlimited, as is the total amount of funding. Eleven projects have been approved for construction and 22 more are on the drawing board. Thus, to date, a total of 36



wetland improvement projects will result from these cooperative efforts between DU and the SDGFP.

State wildlife biologist George Vandel feels that all forms of wildlife (especially birds) will benefit from these projects. While the activities are primarily designed to increase waterfowl production, the ultimate goal is to manage wildlife habitat so that a diversity of species benefit. According to Vandel, "DU's involvement in state wetland projects is an excellent way to improve the state's overall marsh management." Marshes that have decreased from peak wetland productivity are rejuvenated by natural drain-downs and flooding. Predator-proof electric fences and islands are installed to protect all ground breeding birds by providing secure nesting cover. The benefits resulting from these management techniques include more stable numbers of bird and an increase in permanent water sources.

Another SDGFP project that indirectly benefits songbirds is the pheasant restoration program. Financed by a \$5.00 mandatory stamp, this program leases land to provide pheasant habitat. Trees, such as cedar, ash, and hackberry, and fruit-producing shrubs, are planted on these leased lands. The resulting increased food supply and improved nesting habitat are not only beneficial to Ring-necked Pheasants, but also to songbirds.

The SDGFP and DU are to be congratulated for jointly identifying a critical habitat problem, planning a cooperative management strategy, and providing the monetary resources to put the plan into action. South Dakota still needs a plan, however, for funding and research that will directly benefit nongame species. South Dakota's total budget for nongame species is one of the lowest in the nation (\$50,000). Florida and California, in contrast, spend \$1,500,000 and 15,100,000 respectively. Minnesota and Wyoming, closer to home, spend \$684,000 and \$668,310. South Dakota is one of 6 states to have 1 or less department employees designated as nongame specialists.

SDOU members will recall that at our 1985 fall meeting, a resolution was passed urging the SDGFP to: manage and protect nongame and game species, expand nongame research, continue to build a nongame data base, and establish a mechanism to identify the willingness of license purchasers to have some of their hunting and fishing fees used for nongame research and management. Recognizing that the previously mentioned projects only minimally satisfy the edicts of our 1985 resolution, we, as SDOU members, must continue to urge the SDGFP to provide research, management, protection, and funding for those nongame species that traditionally have

been neglected. Members should write to the SDGFP Secretary, urging the department to place a priority on developing a comprehensive program in our state for all nongame species.

COMMON MERGANSERS BREEDING IN PENNINGTON COUNTY SOUTH DAKOTA

By L. M. Baylor, Thomas M. Hays, Ruth Palmerton,
and Leighton Palmerton
1941 Red Dale Drive, Rapid City 57702

Over the years, observers at Rapid City have come to expect at least a few Common Mergansers at Canyon Lake during the winter season. In early spring, however, the mergansers typically disappear from the lake. Birders have had little or no reason to expect to find Common Mergansers breeding in the Black Hills. *The Birds of South Dakota* (1978) notes only 1 apparently authentic record in July 1874 and 2 possible records in 1957 and 1963. Recent experiences now indicate that a few Common Mergansers bred in western Pennington Co. during the 1984-86 breeding seasons.

Prior to 1983, Ruth and Leighton Palmerton never saw Common Mergansers along Rapid Creek by their home in the Big Bend area, about 7.5 miles west of Rapid City. In the summer of 1982, 2 mergansers appeared, although without young. During late June and early July 1984, the Palmertons observed a female merganser with 6 ducklings, and in late June 1985, a female with 4 ducklings again appeared in the creek by the Palmertons' home.

In early June 1985, T. M. Hays found a female Common Merganser with 7 very small ducklings in the Dark Canyon area of Rapid Creek, about 2 miles west of Rapid City. Hays was searching the area because a friend had reported having chanced upon a merganser's nest in a rocky habitat near the creek. Also in 1985, L. M. Baylor encountered 2 Common Merganser females with young birds. On 19 and 20 June, a hen and 5 small ducklings were in Rapid Creek near the fish hatchery at the west edge of Rapid City. Another female merganser and 4 ducklings (about half the size of the hen) were on Canyon Lake on 20 June 1985.

During the 1986 season, the Palmertons noted 2 female mergansers with young birds. In late June, the first female appeared, in the creek by the Palmertons' home, with 12 downy ducklings. This family dwindled during the ensuing weeks, but 10 young still remained with the hen on 17 July

1986, and 6 young were noted at the last observation on 6 August 1986.

The second family appeared by the Palmertons' home on 20 July 1986. Five very tiny ducklings, probably less than a week old, accompanied a female merganser. This family remained without diminished numbers through 7 September 1986. A sheltered rocky area opposite the Palmertons' home became a preferred loafing place for the mergansers, and an adjacent pool became a favored feeding area for the birds.

From 16 June 1986 through 26 July 1986, Baylor and Hays monitored a family of Common Mergansers that appeared variously in Rapid Creek by the fish hatchery and on Canyon Lake near its inlet. Initially, 6 ducklings, about a fifth of the size of the adult, accompanied the female. By 3 July, only 2 ducklings remained with the adult, and when last observed, on 26 July, these 2 young birds were nearly fully grown.

GENERAL NOTES

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER BUILDS NEST IN LINCOLN COUNTY. On 4 May 1986, while hiking along Sargeant Creek in the NE corner of Newton Hills State Park (NHSP), I observed a female Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. From a small shrub, the bird gave soft, 1 and 2 note calls. She was answered from 40 feet upstream by a male gnatcatcher with call notes and occasional songs. They both appeared to be gleaning small insects off of branches. The female flew to the end of an overhanging Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) along the top bank of the creek. As soon as she flew, the male went to the same branch, which was covered with many strands of white spider web or insect silk. I backed away from the tree and sat down to watch the birds construct their nest.

From 12:00-12:30, the pair worked, placing spider web in a fork of an upward sloping limb above a small clearing. The web was wrapped around the top and sides of the 2-3 inch diameter limb. The nest was wedged between the bases of 2 small, vertical branches that formed a fork in the limb. Each of the pair spent from 2-4 minutes gathering nest material within a radius of 50 feet. Although I never saw anything in their bills, every time the birds returned to the nest, they rubbed their bills back and forth over the branch. The nest grew in size during this 30 minute period. The pair called continuously, being loudest as they approached and left the nest. I returned to the nest later

that day, from 17:05 to 17:20, and found the pair still at work. They were now taking up to 5 minutes to collect materials and they were ranging further, up to 100 feet from the nest. The nest platform had been built up about 0.5 inch on the bottom and spider's web was wrapped for 1.0 inch on each of the vertical branches. Other materials had been added to the base. After spreading the materials with their bills, the birds sat several times with raised wings to pack the nest.

On 7 May, I accompanied Gil Blankespoor to the nest. We found the pair still constructing the nest, which now had side walls 1.5 inches high. On 15 May, the birds were no longer working on the nest. The completed structure had dense side walls, 2.5 inches tall, sloping in at the rim to form a beautiful compact cup. The outside color of the nest closely matched the bark of the tree, making the nest look like a large knot in the fork. The pair called from a tall Basswood (*Tilia americana*) on a wooded hillside 75 yards north of the nest. Later the female sat on the nest for 2 minutes while the male foraged in a nearby tree. Neither bird was ever seen at the nest again.

I visited the nest on 26 and 31 May and 5 June without finding a gnatcatcher in the area. On 7 June, I showed the nest to Bruce Harris and we both agreed that the nest was abandoned. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers often desert nests (Root, 1969, *Condor* 71:16-31). Similar behavior of a pair constructing a nest and then abandoning it occurred 45 miles NE of NHSP at Blue Mounds State Park, Minnesota, in May 1981 (Eckert, 1981, *American Birds* 35:825-828). Mark Skadsen, 1904 W 26th Street, Sioux Falls 57105.

TRUMPETER SWANS IN EASTERN MEADE COUNTY. On 24 July 1985, G. Hinds observed 2 adult Trumpeter Swans with 4 cygnets at a pond by U.S. 212, 2.5 miles west of Mud Butte, SD. Since 1980, friends had been telling Hinds that swans nested at this pond or another one by the highway 5.2 miles west of Mud Butte. On 27 June 1986, M. E. and L. M. Baylor noted 2 adult Trumpeter Swans and 3 cygnets at the pond 2.5 miles west of Mud Butte. These observations apparently extend the modern South Dakota breeding range of Trumpeter Swans to the north and west since their reintroduction at Lacreek NWR in 1960-63. L. M. Baylor, M. E. Baylor, 1941 Red Dale Drive, Rapid City 57702 Gertice Hinds, Box 112, , Prairie City 57649.

BANDING RECOVERIES. An amazing aspect of bird migration is that, not only do small birds, after long journeys, return

to their birth places, and not only do birds return seasonally to the same wintering grounds, birds often migrate along the same paths between summer and winter grounds. Such was the case of a Dark-eyed Junco that I banded (1720-21824) 17 October 1985 at 1709 N Jay Street, Aberdeen, Brown Co., South Dakota and retrapped at the same location on 28 October 1986.

Perhaps almost as surprising has been Galen Steffen's and my trading banded Pine Siskins. The exact dates for these encounters are given in Galen's banding report, which appears just below.

On 5 March 1986, Mrs. A. Margerita Baumgartner, a bander, caught and released, 5 miles south of Jay, Oklahoma, an American Goldfinch that I banded (1640-90293) on 19 April 1983. Jay, in northeastern Oklahoma, is about 1000 miles SSE of Aberdeen. The bird was a second-year male when banded, thus making it 5 years old when recovered.

A friend, Bill Donaldson, shot a Gadwall 8 miles NW of Aberdeen in November 1985. The duck was banded (0896-82880) too young to fly on 29 August 1985 near Smiley, Saskatchewan. *Dan Tallman, Northern State College, Aberdeen 57401.*

STEFFEN 1986 BANDING REPORT. The following is a list of the 36 bird species (1104 individuals) that I banded in the Burke area of Gregory Co. during 1986. I received notice of 4 recoveries: a nestling Purple Martin banded in Burke on 11 July 1980 was found dead at Bassett, NE, on 5 July 1986, thus 7 years old; an adult male Mourning Dove banded near Burke on 3 August 1985 was shot near Bastrop, TX, in October 1985; an adult Pine Siskin banded in my yard in Burke on 22 February 1986 was trapped and released in Aberdeen, SD by Dan Tallman on 12 March 1986; an adult Pine Siskin banded in my yard in Burke on 22 March 1986 was found dead in Jamestown, ND, on 3 May 1986. I also trapped 2 Pine Siskins wearing bands that were not mine. The first, trapped on 1 April 1986, had been banded in Aberdeen, SD, on 12 November 1985 by Dan Tallman; the second, trapped on 5 April 1986, was banded at Creighton, NE, on 31 March 1986.

Mourning Dove	69	House Wren	1
Northern Flicker	2	Swainson's Thrush	1
Downy Woodpecker	2	American Robin	118
Eastern Kingbird	1	Gray Catbird	2
Purple Martin	110	Brown Thrasher	25
Blue Jay	18	Cedar Waxwing	9
Black-capped Chickadee	2	Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	Myrtle Warbler	3

Common Yellowthroat	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Chipping Sparrow	13	Orchard Oriole	5
Clay-colored Sparrow	2	Baltimore Oriole	28
Field Sparrow	1	Purple Finch	5
White-throated Sparrow	2	Lazuli Bunting	2
White-crowned Sparrow	5	Common Redpoll	5
Harris' Sparrow	9	Pine Siskin	542
Slate-colored Junco	46	American Goldfinch	15
Western Meadowlark	1	Black-headed Grosbeak	2
Common Grackle	51	Evening Grosbeak	2

Galen Steffen, Box 73, Burke 57523.

FIRST FALL PIPING PLOVER WEST RIVER RECORD. While birding at the Belle Fourche Reservoir in Butte County on 16 August 1986, I discovered a lone plover feeding along the SE shore. The bird, which was the size of a Semipalmated Plover, had a very light, frosty gray back, a gray cheek below a white superciliary stripe, and a prominent dark eye. White was below its cheek and on its forehead and its collar was white at the nape. The band around its neck was not only broken but so reduced in size that it consisted of patches at the side of the breast. When the plover flew, it revealed a long, white wing bar and a black band at the base of the tail and a white rump above the tail band. Thus I identified the bird as an adult, winter plumage Piping Plover. I believe this record is a first fall observation west of the Missouri River and only the second West River sighting (the first was at Angostura Reservoir on 22-29 May 1981 by Dorothy and Richard Rosche of Chadron, Nebraska. *Jocelyn Lee Baker, 3220 Kirkwood Drive, Rapid City 57702.*

ROSS' GEESE WEST RIVER. A blizzard moving in from the west on 13 April 1986 grounded a flock of 17 geese, about 16 miles NE of Rapid City. Observed from 8:00 to 8:30 am, the flock fed on grass at the edge of a tiny stock pond just north of Veith's Dam in Meade Co. Of the birds, 9 were Snow Geese, with grinning patches on their orangish, wedge-shaped bills. The other 8 birds were Ross' Geese, differing from the Snow Geese in several aspects. The Ross' Geese were about 1/3 smaller, being shorter in height with shorter necks and less bulky bodies. Also, they lacked the grinning patch on their smaller bills, which were pinkish and triangular in shape. A discoloration that appeared to be greenish was present at the bases of the bills. Whenever the tight cluster of Ross' Geese approached the Snow Geese too closely, the Snow Geese became very aggressive until the

Ross' Geese regrouped and moved away from the Snows' territory. As I left the area, the temperature dropped below freezing, falling rain turned to snow, and the wind picked up. Except for several observations at Lacreek NWR in Martin, this record is the first sighting of the Ross' Goose west of the Missouri River. *Jocelyn Lee Baker, 3220 Kirkwood Drive, Rapid City 57702.*

WHOOPING CRANES IN BRULE COUNTY. On the morning of 3 November 1986, I found 3 Whooping Cranes in a marsh about 200 yards east of the road on which I was driving, 9 miles South, 4 miles West of Kimball, Brule Co., South Dakota. After observing them for several minutes, I returned to my friend David Wagner's place to call the Game, Fish and Parks office in Chamberlain, and then went back to the cranes with David and his camera.

We watched the cranes for the next 1.5 hours. The sky was overcast with occasional periods of sunshine. The wind was 10-15 mph out of the NW. The birds were in 6-10 inches of water, well away from the dense marsh vegetation. The marsh was surrounded with well-grazed pasture, giving an unobstructed view of the birds.

One of the cranes appeared to be larger and more active than the others; it had a conspicuous red area on its head. Only 1 of the other birds had discernible red. All 3 had orangish leg bands above the knee.

For the first hour, the cranes were rather inactive; they rested, preened, and fed. In the last half hour, they walked about, spreading their wings while facing the wind. The largest crane jumped into the air several times, once almost landing on one of the others. Then it began bowing low before the others. Soon thereafter, they ran a few steps into the wind and took flight, uttering several low honks. They spiralled higher and higher for nearly 5 minutes before heading on a straight line to the south and out of sight. *Michael Melius, Rt 2, Box 40C, Hermosa 57744.*

RAPTOR NOTES FROM NE CUSTER COUNTY. In the 1982 spring, I moved near Folsom, South Dakota, in NE Custer Co. I live on the second terrace above Spring Creek, 1.5 miles north of the creek. The area features mid to short-grass prairie, alfalfa, and a few grain farms. Weather ranged from more than 30 inches of rain in 1982 to drought from July 1984 to July 1985. Temperatures ranged from a few days of 100° F to several weeks of subzero weather in the 1983-84 winter. Here follows accounts of some of the raptors I observed during this time:

Turkey Vulture. Vultures were most common in the 1985 summer. On 15 May 1985, 3 Long-billed Curlews harassed a vulture circling 0.25 miles south of me. The curlews rose above the vulture, then folded their wings and dove to just above the vulture, pulling up to dive again. No actual contact was made and the vulture soon left the area.

Sharp-shinned Hawk. In September 1985, an immature Sharp-shinned Hawk flew into my yard, dove unsuccessfully at a sparrow, then landed on a fence about 30 yards from me. The hawk flew up and slowly settled into a grassy area where it began eating a small bird. The hawk's leisurely approach was surprising as it was certainly slow enough to allow the prey's escape. After the hawk departed, I tried to identify the prey from the leftover feathers--possibly a Clay-colored Sparrow, common in the area at the time. On 31 August 1986, I witnessed 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks flying south. They engaged in an aerial "dance," chasing and eluding one another, rising and falling. Finally 1 landed on a haystack, while the other 2 swooped down at it.

Red-tailed Hawk. On 20 May 1984, I noted a Red-tailed Hawk along Spring Creek Road. Rising from a fence, the hawk carried a small snake in its talons while an Eastern Kingbird rode on the hawk's back.

Swainson's Hawk. On 25 April 1986, I observed 46 Swainson's Hawks migrating north over the Railroad Buttes area in Pennington Co.

Rough-legged Hawk. All raptors were more numerous the first 2 years in Custer Co. compared with the last 2. The mild winter of 1982-83 contrasted especially with the post-drought, snow-covered winter of 1985-86. Rough-legged and Ferruginous hawks, Golden Eagles, and Northern Harriers were frequent visitors the first winter but practically absent the last winter. I sighted 11 Rough-legged Hawks on 15 December 1983 in about 10 miles of driving, some of it along Rapid Creek in Pennington Co. I have 1 record from the last winter: 30 December 1985 in Custer Co.

Ferruginous Hawk. A favorite hunting perch for raptors on my land is a powerline that passes over a prairie dog colony. Apparently when 1 bird goes to the ground, others are attracted and a crowd gathers. On 25 November 1983, I watched 7 Ferruginous and 1 Rough-legged Hawk work over a dead cottontail (the rabbits often used the prairie dog burrows).

Golden Eagle. At the prairie dog site, sometimes the hawks will all rise and scatter, leaving their prey behind. This response is my cue to look for an eagle. Sometimes the hawks will remain nearby while the eagle feeds. I have seen

Ferruginous Hawks unsuccessfully harass a Golden Eagle. Once I watched 2 immature Golden Eagles fight over a prairie dog and try to fly away with the carcass. But an adult eagle came along and the younger birds scattered. The adult flew off with the rodent.

Bald Eagle. On 13 January 1983, I was amazed when a Bald Eagle flew over my place, circled over the prairie dogs, then landed in a dead cottonwood, 0.5 miles away. An adult Bald Eagle, perhaps the same individual, has returned to this area every winter since, most recently on 6 December 1986. There is a dump in the area, and my former neighbors used to put their dead sheep there. The neighbors, and their sheep, left after the 1983-84 winter, but the eagle remains. The Bald Eagle seems to be highest on the pecking order around here, and will chase off any Golden Eagle from its prey. Last winter the Bald Eagle was not observed until 13 March 1986, when it flew low over my yard, perhaps eyeing my cat.

Northern Harrier. On 18 April 1983, I observed 7 harriers, 2 males and 5 females, flying north. In the 1984 spring I watched a Northern Harrier chase a cottontail rabbit. The harrier rose enough to be able to dive, while the cottontail rushed from one clump of weeds to another. Eventually the rabbit took refuge beneath my pickup, against which I was leaning. The harrier followed and pulled up at the last moment, thus passing just a couple of feet overhead.

Prairie Falcon. Each year, from August through October, I see, on the average, 1 Prairie Falcon per week. On 2 May 1984, I flushed a Great Horned Owl, which flew over open prairie. A Prairie Falcon left a powerline to pursue the owl. The owl descended to the ground and out of sight. While the falcon rose and swooped above the owl, a Swainson's Hawk appeared and chased off the Prairie Falcon. *Michael Melius, Rt 2, Box 40C, Hermosa 57744.*

LATE SAVANNAH SPARROW NESTING IN DAY COUNTY. On 5 August 1986 I observed a Savannah Sparrow nesting at Hedtke's Pass, Day Co., SD. The adult sparrow carried food to a nest on 3 occasions and twice removed fecal sacs. Young called from the nest each time the adult approached. I did not attempt to see the young.

The nest was located in an area of tall-grass prairie, located between North Waubay Lake and a large slough, containing species of *Andropogon*, *Liatris*, and *Solidago*. This sparrow prefers to nest in wet meadows and low prairies close to water (Whitney et al. 1978, *The Birds of South Dakota*).

The Savannah Sparrow is considered an uncommon summer resident throughout the state. This observation is 2 days later than the latest nesting date of 3 August 1967 reported by Harris in Sanborn Co. (Whitney et al., 1978, *The Birds of South Dakota*). Dennis Skadsen, Box 113, Grenville 57239.

WHITNEY 1985/86 BANDING REPORT. I banded the following species during 1985 and 1986:

	1985	1986
Downy Woodpecker	1	
Western Kingbird	2	
Barn Swallow	1	
Pinyon Jay		1
Black-capped Chickadee	3	3
Red-breasted Nuthatch		1
American Robin		2
Red-eyed Vireo	1	
Black-headed Grosbeak	1	1
Chipping Sparrow	5	
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	
White-crowned Sparrow	5	1
Harris' Sparrow	1	
White-winged Junco	94	22
Slate-colored Junco	10	14
Oregon Junco	6	4
Common Grackle	1	
Cassin's Finch	3	1
Red Crossbill	21	73
Common Redpoll		1
Pine Siskin	81	122
Evening Grosbeak	6	3

N. R. Whitney, 633 Berry Pine Road, Rapid City 57702.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Birds of Nebraska: a Critically Evaluated List by Tanya E. Bray, Barbara K Padelford, and W. Ross Silcock. Published by the authors, 1986 (1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005). Softbound 111 pp. \$4.75.

This text, summarizing the occurrence and distribution of the birds of Nebraska, is an important contribution to regional ornithology. It gives an account of each of the

445 species reported as occurring in Nebraska, listing frequency of occurrence and "firmness of data" (i.e., whether collected, photographed, seen and described by competent observers, etc.), and, where necessary, other pertinent comments. This list is critically evaluated, as 38 of the above-mentioned species are not accepted as valid records (i.e., the Hermit Warbler, for which a diagnostic description is unavailable or the Crested Tinamou, which was unsuccessfully released).

This book is well-referenced and clearly printed. At \$4.75, the book is easily afforded. Why should South Dakota birders be interested in this book? Obviously the bird distributions of our southern neighbor state is of primary interest to those of us intrigued by the bird ranges of our state. Take gulls, for example. Nebraska has several gull species that we should be on the lookout for in South Dakota: Common Black-headed, Thayer's (recently confirmed in SD), Iceland, and Great Black-backed (hypothetical). *Dan Tallman, Northern State College, Aberdeen 57401.*

Gulls: a Guide to Identification by P. J. Grant. Buteo Books: Vermillion 1986. Hardbound 352 pp. \$35.00.

One problem with documenting gull occurrences is that gull identification is notoriously difficult. Just how do you tell apart pale Herring, Thayer's, and Iceland Gulls? Snap identifications will be none the easier with this text in hand, but safe ID's are probably now in reach. Because of this achievement, this book is essential for all serious birders.

Covered here are the gulls of North America and Europe. Brief sections on gull plumages and identification markings are followed by 159 pages of spectacular, black-and-white gull photographs. Among the most striking of the photographs are two of flying and floating Bonaparte's and Common Black-headed Gulls. (I never realized that the Bonaparte's Gull was so much smaller than the Black-headed.) Amazing pictures of Thayer's Gulls probably make that species identifiable by most of us. The photo of a pair of Herring Gulls, showing how much larger the male is than the female, indicates that size alone will confirm Thayer's Gull identifications. The text is further illustrated by black-and-white drawings of almost all species.

One of the text's faults may be a strange organization of the species. For example, Ring-billed and California Gulls are separated by 17 other species. The problem with this organization is that comparing these species directly

takes a great deal of page flipping. The reason for this organization is probably two-fold. First, the book is primarily written for the European birder (who is unlikely to be confronted by both Ring-billed and California Gulls) (Buteo Books has published this American edition of the text). Second, this extensively rewritten edition now includes a section of western U.S. gulls not in the first edition (and it is here that the California Gull appears). I don't think this European bias will affect the use of the text and North American races of species like Herring Gulls are adequately represented in the photos.

Don't misunderstand these criticisms: they are minor! Any birder who intends to ever see a rare gull in South Dakota should own this book and will exclaim, "bring on the gulls!" *Dan Tallman, Northern State College, Aberdeen 57401.*

Wings of the North: a Gallery of Favorite Birds by Candace Savage. University of Minnesota Press, 1985. \$35.00.

If one cannot judge a book by its cover, what about its title (or, in this case, subtitle)? A superficial observation to be sure, but not without reason. *Wings of the North: a Gallery of Favorite Birds* does, through this title, offer insights into its content and intention.

As the title implies, birds of Canada and the northern United States are featured. Some 60 species of the 18 bird orders native to this area are discussed. The book's color photographs, numbering an even 100, do, indeed, present a "gallery" of extremely fine quality, making the book worth its rather hefty price. The wording, "favorite birds," aside from raising the eyebrow of the discerning birder/book buyer, reflects the nature of this book.

The text will likely offer few revelations to the seasoned birder or ornithologist. Instead, the author's attention seems directed to the newcomer to the avian world. The forward, written by Roger Tory Peterson, describes the text as "a series of essays aimed at....the essence of birds." This statement is a fair and accurate assessment. Although each species account affords information on bird behavior, biology, and ecology, most are painfully brief, leaving the reader wanting more information. This brevity is made even more apparent since the accounts follow a compelling and thought-provoking introduction that reads like a good introductory ornithology class lecture.

Pigeonholed to a specific readership, this book does have further merits. The text is very readable, light in

scientific terminology, and though at times bordering on anthropomorphism, written with a sense of humor. I was struck by the author's earnest dedication, combined with a rather engaging spirit of wonderment and reverence for her subject. Much to her credit, Ms. Savage seems unwilling to pass up an opportunity to criticize people for their ignorant intrusions into the balance of nature and she warns that "man is not the center of the biosphere." *Douglas Geroge Prisbe, 1309 S Lincoln, Aberdeen 57401.*

THE 1986/87 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

compiled by Dan Tallman
Northern State College, Aberdeen 57401

- Aberdeen. 20 December 1986. Compiler: Everett Montgomery. 9 observers. Sunny, no snow, 17-37° F.
- Brookings. 20 December 1986. Compiler: Nelda Holden. 14 observers. Weather "very nice."
- Deuel Co. Compiler: Bruce Harris. 4 observers, no other data given.
- Hot Springs. 20 December 1986. Compiler: Richard Peterson. 8 observers. Little snow cover, 20-45° F.
- Madison. 23 December 1986. Compiler: David Gilbert. 8 observers. Weather not given.
- Pierre. 21 December 1986. Compiler: R. V. Summerside. 17 observers. Clear and light wind, 15-48° F.
- Rapid City. Date not given. Compiler: Esther Serr. "Balmy" weather.
- Sand Lake. 22 December 1986. Compiler: Bill Schultze. 6 observers. No snow, 18-46° F.
- Sioux Falls. 20 December 1986. Compiler: Dennis Skadsen. 16 observers. Clear, light breeze, 13-37° F.
- Spearfish. 4 January 1987. Compiler: Tom Hays. 10 observers. No snow, light wind, 40-52° F.
- Watertown. Date not given. Compiler: John Gilman. 7 observers. Heavy morning fog, sunny afternoon, temperature in 40's.
- Waubay. 22 December 1986. Compiler: Mike Getman. Weather "beautiful."
- Wilmot. Compiler: Bruce Harris. 8 observers, no other data given.
- Yankton. 3 January 1987. Compiler: Willis Hall. 9 observers. No snow, light wind, clear, 17-41° F.

	ABERDEEN	BROOKINGS	DEUEL CO.	HOT SPRINGS	MAISON	PIERRE	RAPID CITY	SAND LAKE	SIOUX FALLS	SPEARFISH	WABEY	WATERLOO	WILMOT	YANKTON	TOTAL
Snow Goose							1								1
Canada Goose	10	500		83		6500	12	405	2	49		1			7562
Wood Duck						2	2		1						5
Green-winged Teal						1	1								2
Mallard	62	150		1642	8002	2060	891	3003	97	8	3	12		31	15961
Northern Pintail							1							5	6
Northern Shoveler					1		1								2
Gadwall							81							44	125
American Wigeon							83								83
Canvasback						3									3
Redhead						2	2								4
Ring-necked Duck						2									2
Greater Scaup						2									2
Lesser Scaup						3									3
Common Goldeneye				40		20	37							27	124
Barrow's Goldeneye							1								1
Bufflehead				1			9								10
Hooded Merganser						2									2
Common Merganser						16	8							14	38
Bald Eagle				2		3		3		5				19	32
Northern Harrier				1		10	2				1				14
Sharp-shinned Hawk							1								1
Northern Goshawk													3		3
Butea sp.															1
Red-tailed Hawk						5			9					10	24
Ferruginous Hawk						1									1
Rough-legged Hawk	5	2			1	41	1		1	2				4	57
Golden Eagle				5		4				6					15
American Kestrel	3	6	1		3	2			5	1		1	3	6	31
Merlin	1			2		2					1	2	1		9
Prairie Falcon				1		2									3
Gray Partridge					10			8	4						22
Ring-necked Pheasant	43	5	1	6	18	80	35	24	22	1	7	7	11	45	305
Greater Prairie Chicken						12									12
Sharp-tailed Grouse						118	1			9					128
Wild Turkey				31		109	82			12					234
Northern Bobwhite							7								7
American Coot				3		1	1	1							6
Killdeer										1					1
Common Snipe							2			2					4
Franklin's Gull						1									1
Ring-billed Gull						15									15
Herring Gull						50									50
Rock Dove	158	59	36	17	74	143	740	10	137	56	23	25	79	75	1632
Mourning Dove			2						1						3
Eastern Screech-Owl	1					1								2	4
Great Horned Owl	8	9	9	2	10	10	1	6	15	2	5	3	3		83
Short-eared Owl			3			1						1			5
Belted Kingfisher			1			1	13		6	1			1	3	26
Red-bellied Woodpecker			2			2		1	3				2		10
Downy Woodpecker	20	45	12	1	4	18	10	4	60	11	14	8	29	14	250
Hairy Woodpecker	7	13	8	6	2	14	9	1	6	5	11	6	11	10	111
Northern Flicker	5	4			5	6	7		13	1				15	56

	ABERDEEN	BROOKINGS	DEUEL CO.	HOT SPRINGS	WADSWORTH	PIERRE	RAPID CITY	SAND LAKE	SIOUX FALLS	SPEARFISH	WABAY	WATERTOWN	WILMOT	YANKTON
Horned Lark	12					11	12			2	34		8	79
Gray Jay							2							2
Blue Jay	20	32	9	3	17		60	7	11	14	6	8	14	14
Pinyon Jay				31			17							48
Black-billed Magpie						6	45			16				7
American Crow		33	54	16	106		64	23	113	23	5	8	8	168
Black-capped Chickadee	70	141	35	65	46	81	212	16	325	83	59	45	69	71
Red-breasted Nuthatch		3		4		5	80		8	16	2	8		126
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	41	17	10	7	9	13	3	60	2	16	8	22	5
Brown Creeper	1	6	2		1	2			7		1	1	7	1
Canyon Wren				1			2							3
American Dipper										1				1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	18	11		2		2	3		2		6	7	5	56
Townsend's Solitaire	2	1		57			34			11	3	1	1	110
American Robin	46	2	1	10		26	6			4	4	1	4	1
Varied Thrush											1			1
Brown Thrasher						1								1
Bohemian Waxwing	116		3	12		50	232	13		111	100			637
Cedar Waxwing	597	29		100		25	24				390	37		1202
Northern Shrike	2	1	1	10		5	2	1	2	5	4		1	34
Loggerhead Shrike						1								1
Shrike sp.														1
European Starling	247	448	155	320	316	364	571	75	1062	194	72	26	110	466
Yellow-rumped Warbler							2							2
Northern Cardinal					3				13					7
Rufous-sided Towhee					1									1
Tree Sparrow		82	10	119	131	30	41	30	98	21	10		41	111
Song Sparrow						30								30
Harris' Sparrow						4		2	1					7
Dark-eyed Junco			6	162	28						4	27	35	262
Slate-colored Junco	13	74				28	93		65	9				31
Oregon Junco							4		2	3			1	10
White-winged Junco							196			13				209
Lapland Longspur			3								1			4
Red-winged Blackbird		1				40		13						180
Yellow-headed Blackbird								9						9
Rusty Blackbird			2					3		1	8			14
Brewer's Blackbird						15		26						41
Common Grackle		1	1		1	2	5	16					1	32
Brown-headed Cowbird														1
Blackbird sp.														3
Pine Grosbeak	3										1			4
Purple Finch		6	3						1		29	17	6	62
House Finch			1											2
Red Crossbill	8			34			87			30	23	19		201
Common Redpoll	7	23	40		82		47	6		643	469	19	38	1374
Pine Siskin	98	173	10	330	87	2	353		27	214	8	28	2	7
American Goldfinch	14	26		57	3	8	80	25		226	17		1	13
Evening Grosbeak							684			198				882
House Sparrow	941	732	180	71	914	443	962	298	819	179	201	141	361	512
total individuals	2545	2662	605	3279	9873	10455	5976	4032	2998	2191	1539	467	878	1929
total forms	31	32	28	36	26	62	59	28	33	41	34	27	30	103

THE 1986-87 WINTER SEASON

by Bruce Harris

Box 605, Clear Lake 57226

Statewide, this winter was the second warmest on record. In the east, the winter was the second driest recorded. Only the winter of 1930-31 was warmer and drier. Snowfall was above average for the state due to November and late February snows in the west. Ice breakup was about 2 weeks early, and some lakes had open water all winter.

The weather's effect on birds was what might be expected for some species. Geese and ducks wintered far north of the Missouri River. Very early migration dates were recorded for most waterfowl. Large numbers of kinglets, kingfishers and solitaires wintered E River. However, other passerines wintered in very small numbers, perhaps because of very cold and stormy weather in November.

The season was rewarding for birders. A first confirmed record for the Thayer's Gull was made with photographs taken at Pierre (an earlier record by Willis Hall has never been submitted to the Records Committee). Also below Oahe were Ross' Geese, a Franklin's Gull, and 4 Glaucous Gulls. A Varied Thrush, Townsend's Solitaires and 200 Bohemian Waxwings were found at Pickerel Lake. Clark's Nutcrackers continued to be found in the Black Hills, where they will very likely nest. Red Crossbills apparently did nest in the Custer area in late February. Finally, the male Barrow's Goldeneye returned to Canyon Lake in Rapid City.

Correction for 1986 summer season report SDBN 17:37: the 2 June record for Goshawk (Marg Parker) should read Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Observers cited in this report are:

Jocie L. Baker (JLB)	Marjorie J. Parker (MJP)
Mike H. Getman (MHG)	Richard A. Peterson (RAP)
John M. Gilman (JMG)	D. George Prisbe (DGP)
Marjorie A. Glass (MAG)	Robert G. Rogers (RGR)
Carolyn E. Griffiths (CEG)	William A. Schultze (WAS)
Dave A. Griffiths (DAG)	Dennis R. Skadsen (DRS)
Willis Hall (WH)	Mark S. Skadsen (MSS)
Bruce K. Harris (BKH)	Galen L. Steffen (GLS)
Nelda J. Holden (NJH)	Dan A. Tallman (DAT)
August Hoeger (AH)	Erika J. Tallman (EJT)
Blanche Johnson (BJ)	Sam J. Waldstein (SJW)
James D. McLaird (JDM)	Nat R. Whitney (NRW)
Michael M. Melius (MMM)	Karen Winter (KW)
Everett C. Montgomery (ECM)	Steve J. Young (SJY)
Ernest E. Miller (EEM)	

The following abbreviations are used in this report:
BNP = Badlands National Monument; SLNWR = Sand Lake National
Wildlife Refuge; WNWR = Waubay National Wildlife Refuge.

- GREAT BLUE HERON--10 December and 7 January, SLNWR (SJY, WAS). 6 and 31
January, Yankton Co. (WH).
- CANADA GOOSE--SLNWR, 700 wintered (WAS). Brookings Co., 500 (BKH, NJH). S.
end Big Stone Lake, 1500 (MHG). 8 February, Day Co., 60 (MHG). 26
February, Deuel Co., 24 migrants (BKH).
- SNOW GOOSE--3 February, Oahe Dam (DAT)
- RDSS' GOOSE--30 January, Oahe Dam (BKH).
- WOOD DUCK--9 January, Pennington Co. (NRW).
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL--14 December, Pennington Co. (JLB).
- MAILLARD--Brookings Co., 300 wintered (BKH). Meade Co., 100 wintered (EEM).
Deuel Co., 2 wintered (BKH). 17 February, WNWR, migrants (MHG). SLNWR,
8500 wintered (SJW). See CBC.
- NORTHERN PINTAIL--9 January, Pennington Co. (NRW).
- GADWALL--6 December, Lake Mitchell, 1 (JDM). Pennington Co., fewer than
usual at Canyon Lake (NRW).
- AMERICAN WIGEON--30 January, Oahe Dam (BKH). 23 January - 26 February,
Yankton Co. (WH). Pennington Co., Canyon Lake, 50-60, many more than
usual (NRW).
- CANVASBACK--13 February, Yankton Co., 4 early migrants (WH). Meade Co., 1
all winter (EEM).
- REDHEAD--1 February, Oahe Dam, 3 (BKH). 9 and 25 January, Pennington Co., 2
(NRW). 2 February, Gregory Co., migrants (GLS). 28 February, Yankton
Co., 112 migrants (WH).
- RING-NECKED DUCK--Pierre, 1 wintered (many observers). 13 and 20 February,
Yankton Co., migrants (WH).
- GREATER SCAUP--30 January, Pierre, 1 male, possible female (DGP et al.).
- LESSER SCAUP--1 February, Pierre, 3 (many observers).
- COMMON GOLDENEYE--Pennington Co., 50 wintered (NRW). 8 December, Mitchell
Lake (JDM). 21 February, Gregory Co. (GLS). 24 February, Roberts Co., 5
migrants (BKH). 28 February, SLNWR (SJW).
- BARROW'S GOLDENEYE--14 December - 21 February, Pennington Co., Canyon Lake,
male wintered for 9th consecutive year (JLB)
- BUFFLEHEAD--7 December, Lake Mitchell, female (JDM). 1 and 9 January,
Pennington Co., 3 (NRW, JLB).
- HOODED MERGANSER--19 December, Yankton Co. (WH). 1 February, Pierre, 3
(many observers).
- COMMON MERGANSER--6 December, Lake Mitchell, 50 (JDM). 21 February, Gregory
Co., migrants (GLS). 26 February, Deuel Co., very early migrants for NE
(BKH).
- BALD EAGLE--30 birds total reported from Hughes, Stanley, Meade, Custer,
BNP, Sanborn, Haakon, Brown, and Brookings Co.
- NORTHERN HARRIER--wintered in small numbers in Custer, Stanley, Brookings,
BNP, WNWR, Jackson, and Tripp Co. 19 February, Sanborn Co. (RGR); 21

February, Gregory Co. (BKH); 26 February, Deuel Co., 2, all early migrants (BKH).

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK--27 December, Grant Co. (DGP).

FERRUGINOUS HAWK--Apparently down in numbers, see CBC.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK--Reports from Deuel (normal numbers in November, although did not winter), Brookings (3), McPherson, Brown (4), Custer (7), Stanley (7), Jackson (7), BNP, Custer and Tripp Co. (14).

GOLDEN EAGLE--23 reports from Brown, Sanborn, Jerauld, Tripp, Stanley, Pennington, Custer, Jackson, Gregory, Meade, Hughes, and BNP

AMERICAN KESTREL--Reported in low numbers from 7 E River counties.

MERLIN--See CBC. 4 December, Codington Co., 3 (JMG). 26 December, Faulk Co. (MMM). 7 and 25 January, Minnehaha Co. (MSS). Also reported from Fall River, Hughes, Day, and Roberts Co.

PRAIRIE FALCON--Reports from Jackson, Faulk, Brown, Custer, Sanborn and Stanley Co..

RUFFED GROUSE--14 December, Pennington Co., gray phase (JLB).

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN--3 January, Bennett Co., west of usual range (DG, CG). Also Aurora Co. (JDM) and Pierre CBC.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE--6 February, BNP, birds on lek.

AMERICAN COOT--2 December, Yankton Co., 34 (WH). Single birds wintered at Pierre, Rapid City, and SLNWR. See CBC.

KILLDEER--See CBC.

COMMON SNIBE--4 and 6 January, Yankton Co. (WH). See CBC.

FRANKLIN'S GULL--29 January, Oahe Dam, and Pierre CBC. (BKH et al.).

THAYER'S GULL--29-30 January and 7 March, at least 3 second-year birds studied (DAT, DGP, BKH, et al.); photographs by DAT with identification confirmed by Lynn Atherton of Florida.

GLAUCOUS GULL--29 January, Oahe Dam, at least 2 first-year and 2 second-year birds (BKH, DAT, et al.).

MOURNING DOVE--8 February, Sanborn Co., 2 (RGR). Only 2 of 14 CBC.

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL--Reported only from Minnehaha and Brown Co.

SNOWY OWL--A total of 6 reported from Deuel, Hughes, Jackson, Davison and Brown Co.

LONG-EARED OWL--15 December, Pennington Co., in badlands (MMM).

SHORT-EARED OWL--Reports from Codington, Faulk, Brookings and Hughes Co.

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL--1 and 21 February, Custer Co., 2 calling (RAP, MJP).

BELTED KINGFISHER--Many more on CBC than normal. Also reported Hartford Beach State Park (DGP), Grant Co. (BKH), and Lake Pelican (BKH, JMG).

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER--22 December, SLNWR (DAT, ECM). Pierre CBC. Also reported from Roberts, Deuel, and Minnehaha Co..

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER--18 January, Lawrence Co. (MMM).

HORNED LARK--BNP, very large numbers (MAG). Custer Co., 1000's (JLB).

GRAY JAY--Custer Co., 2-3 at feeder regularly (MJP).

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER--Custer Co., 5 during winter (MJP). Observed regularly in S. Black Hills after unprecedented invasion during November.

AMERICAN CROW--Deuel Co., 50-66 wintered (BKH). 11 January, Custer Co., 150 (JLB).

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE--Gregory Co., GLS did not have this species at feeder until February this year, following storm of April 1986.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH--See CBC, also Codington, Davison, and Brookings Co.; but not reported from Brown Co. despite heavy fall migration.

BROWN CREEPER--See CBC, reported more often than normal.

MARSH WREN--14 December, Fall River Co. (RAP, MJP).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET--See CBC, many more than normal.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET--1-15 February, Minnehaha Co., daily at feeder (AH).

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE--Unprecedented numbers E River: Day Co. (5) (DRS, MSS), Brown, Brookings, Day, Roberts, Codington, Beadle, Davison, Yankton, and Sanborn Co. 8 of 14 CBC.

AMERICAN ROBIN--Brown Co., 60 (DGP), with 1 in full song 6 February (DAT). Not in usual numbers in NE despite excellent food and cover.

VARIED THRUSH--17 November - 11 January, Day Co. (DRS et al.).

BROWN THRASHER--See CBC.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING--Large flight year, see CBC.

NORTHERN SHRIKE--Reports from Fall River, Brown, Davison, Sanborn, Pennington, Day, Deuel, Brookings, Grant, Roberts, Custer, and Faulk Co.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE--29 January, BNP, bird seen on same day as Northern Shrike (DAT, DGP).

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER--16 December - 15 January, Beadle Co., details later (BJ). 29 December, Pennington Co., Myrtle subspecies (NRW).

NORTHERN CARDINAL--16 December - winter, Day Co, male (DRS et al.). Reported also from Sanborn, Beadle, and Minnehaha Co.

RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE--See CBC.

SONG SPARROW--14 December, Fall River Co. (RAP, MJP). See also CBC.

HARRIS' SPARROW--See CBC. 1 January, Minnehaha Co., 2 (MSS). 11 January, Pennington Co., 2 (NRW).

SNOW BUNTING--Very few appeared to winter, with few noted on either migration.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD--Aurora Co., 200 (JDM). Brown Co., 120 (DGP).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK--26 February, Deuel Co., early migrant (BKH). 11 January, Aurora Co. (RGR).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD--Day Co., 16 all season (DRS). See CBC.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD--See CBC. 10 January, SLNWR (DAT, DGP). Also reported Brookings and Yankton Co.

COMMON GRACKLE--very few noted this winter.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD--10 January, Aurora Co. (JDM). See CBC.

ROSY FINCH--7 November - winter, BNP, 200 at feeder, 149 banded, including 30 returns from 1985-86 (MAG). Custer Co., up to 200 at feeder during season (RAP).

PINE GROSBEAK--20 December, Brown Co. (DAT). 24 December, Codington Co., 5 (KW). 6 December - 1 January, Day Co. (DRS).

PURPLE FINCH--A few at E River feeders.

CASSIN'S FINCH--5 February, Pennington Co. (NRW). A few at Black Hills feeders.

HOUSE FINCH--22 December - 2 February, Deuel Co., at feeder (BKH). See also

CBL.

RED CROSSBILL--Abundant in Black Hills--28 February, heavily streaked young (RAP, MJP). Also reported Day, Deuel, and Brown Co..

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL--13 December, Brown Co. (DAT, EJT).

COMMON REDPOL--Day Co., 631 banded (DRS). Very common in Black Hills. Also reported from Codrington, Day, Deuel, Sanborn, Beadle, Minnehaha, Grant, and Brown Co.

PINE SISKIN--Contradictory data: apparently widely scattered although not a major flight year.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH--Definitely an off year, present in small numbers at region feeders.

EVENING GROSBEEK--Usual large numbers in Black Hills; E River records only from Deuel, Day and Brown Co.



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