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# SOUTH DAKOTA Ornithologists' Union

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*Greater White-fronted Geese*

*Minnehaha County, 3/20/05*

*Photo: Terry Sohl*



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SOUTH



DAKOTA

BIRD

NOTES

**SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES**, the official publication of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, is sent to all members whose dues are paid for the current year. Life members: \$400; Family life members (one subscription to *Bird Notes*): \$500; sustaining members: \$40; regular membership: \$20; Family membership (one household with one subscription to *Bird Notes*): \$25; Junior membership (ages 10-16): \$10; Library Subscription: \$30; single and back copies: Members, \$5; non-members, \$8. All dues, contributions, change of address notices and orders for back copies should be sent to the SDOU Treasurer, Rosemary Draeger, 528 E. Lotta St., Sioux Falls, SD, 57105. Manuscripts for publication should be sent to Douglas Chapman, 3108 S. Holly Ave., Sioux Falls, SD, 57105 or, preferably, e-mailed to SFbirdclub@sio.midco.net. **SDOU website: www.sdou.org.**

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**SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION**  
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# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

While on vacation recently, I pondered what I should write about for this President's Page. At the beginning of my new term as president of SDOU, there are so many exciting goals for SDOU in the coming year to consider. Let's tackle:

- The environment and how global changes impact bird distribution in South Dakota.
- Economic conditions that have impacted environmental tourism in South Dakota, the US and internationally, impacting jobs and the financial well-being of both those traveling and those dependent upon environmental tourism.

Within the organization we could work on:

- Research grants and awards; there have been fewer individuals applying for grants. Why? Perhaps it's tied to the drop of our award values due to financial declines in the investment markets.
- Membership involvement within SDOU, to sustain both the existing membership and promote continued growth.
- Advocacy for habitat preservation of non-game species.
- Holding workshops and trips for bird identification and cataloguing more bird watching locations.
- Reducing our carbon footprint by bicycling, hiking or even just walking rather than driving a motor vehicle. (The increased physical activity can only have added health benefits as well.)

Both outside and within the organization, we all play a part and have an impact in different ways and to differing degrees: it is our choice if our individual actions have a positive or a negative impact. Here are some ways in which we can work together to insure a positive impact within SDOU:

- To increase involvement and participation of new and current members, but not just the current members who are continuously involved.
- To help develop new ideas and then to disseminate and implement them. As times change, we need to adjust, grow, and thus attract new members of all ages.
- To continue our search for avian scientific knowledge in South Dakota, including changing status and distribution of species. While atlasing is important, we need to employ a much larger strategy.
- To promote both avian scientific research and recreational birding opportunities. Everyone has something to contribute and thus to have an impact within SDOU.

So I reach out to each and every one of you. Each of us must actively participate in the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union. Individuals can have a great impact.

I look forward to the next year together. We can accomplish a great deal for the birds—and birders—of South Dakota.

*Todd Jensen*





## ONE SMALL GESTURE: GENERATION TO GENERATION

About nine years ago, at the age of seven, I received a gift from my neighbor that would make an impression on me for the rest of my life. This gift helped to make me the birdwatcher I am today.

I was given this gift around Christmas 2000, when my family went over to my neighbor's house. He was dying of a blood disorder similar to leukemia and he was giving away some of his special belongings to friends and family during that time. What I received was given to me based on the fact that I liked being

outdoors and that I had an interest in birds and nature in general, as was evidenced by my frequent visits to the local nature center. He knew that I had for some time enjoyed those things and so he had a special gift reserved for me: a leather-bound *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds: Eastern Region*. When he gave it to me, I treated it as though it was worth a million dollars and it seemed to me at the time to be the most precious material thing that I owned.

It didn't take long for my interest in birds that was sparked by this gracious gift to grow into a passion. It was helped along because I had received binoculars from my grandparents. Previously, I was continually looking at and trying to identify the birds I saw as best as I could. At the local nature center, my bird watching was supported by many people. That was where my love was fostered until I joined the Audubon Society at age eleven. From then on I attended almost all of the trips that they offered which helped my love for birds grow and grow. Well, the rest is history.

As evidenced by my story, adult birders reading this need to know that, yes, you really do make a difference in a young birder's life. Oftentimes, people in a young birder's own age group find it funny that they like birds and sometimes try to discourage their interest; this happened to me. The support I have received from older birders has helped me to become who I am today. I wish that my neighbor was still around to see what that one small gesture did for me.

So please don't be afraid to inspire other young people, just as he did for me.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

by Jocelyn L. Baker, Rapid City

The recipient of the Kenneth H. Husmann Memorial Scholarship for 2009-2010 in the amount of \$500.00 was Amanda Ervin, a doctoral student of Dr. David Swanson at the University of South Dakota. For her dissertation work, Amanda investigated the breeding ecology of American Three-toed Woodpeckers in the white spruce forests of the Black Hills. This research will add to the life history of



*American Three-toed Woodpecker. Lawrence Co.*

*Photo: Doug Backlund*

this disjunct woodpecker population which is isolated from other populations in the Rocky Mountains and boreal forests of Canada. Specifically, her project will produce new information on population size, reproduction, habitat use, movements, and genetic structure. Ultimately, this study will provide critical data to inform productive management decisions regarding conservation of this species. SDOU members may remember Amanda's presentations of her field work and preliminary conclusions at the fall meetings in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

The Alfred Hinds Memorial Award was not awarded in 2009 but will be in 2010. Established in 1983, this award is presented to an indi-

vidual, student (high school or college/university undergraduate or graduate) or an organization/agency which has made a significant contribution to the advancement of ornithology in South Dakota. It may also be used to fund a special SDOU project which needs financial support. The amount to be awarded in 2010 will be \$100.

Nominations may be sent to: SDOU Scholarships and Awards Committee, c/o: Jocelyn L. Baker, Rapid City, SD 57702 or by e-mail to: [osprey@hills.net](mailto:osprey@hills.net).

Committee Members: Jocelyn Lee Baker (Chair), Nelda Holden and Galen Steffen.

# AMERICAN MINK PREYS ON SNOW GOOSE

by David Swanson, Department of Biology,  
University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD 57069

On 2 November 2008, I was birding the Gavin's Point Dam area, Yankton County, and was traveling north along the road on top of the dam, scanning Lewis and Clark Lake. Near the first turn-out south of Lewis and Clark Marina, I observed a single adult white-phase Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) standing alert on the rip-rap lining the dam face near the edge of the water. I stopped at the turn-out to observe the goose more closely and as I was watching, the goose jumped into the water. As the goose entered the water, I observed a dark mammal that very rapidly followed the goose into the water. Initially, the mammal moved so quickly that I was not able to identify it. I could see neither the goose nor the mammal in the water, as the rip-rap blocked my view, but shortly after the goose and mammal entered the water, I could hear the goose thrashing heavily upon the water. This heavy thrashing lasted for perhaps 30 seconds. At this time, I began walking down the face of the dam toward the spot where the goose had entered the water to investigate the cause of the commotion. As I approached within about twenty meters of the site, I observed and was able to photograph an American Mink (*Neovison vison*) on the rocks dragging the Snow Goose from the water. The mink was able to drag the goose out of the water onto the rocks, at which point it noticed my presence, but stayed in the general area, apparently not willing to abandon its prey. After snapping several photographs, I left the mink to its prey.

Mink diets consist mostly of fish, amphibians (especially frogs), crustaceans, muskrats and small mammals, but may also include lagomorphs (rabbits and hares), squirrels, and birds and their eggs (Larivière 1999). In the northern prairie region, mink can be an important predator on waterfowl during the nesting season where they prey on adults (hens incubating on the nest), ducklings and eggs (Cowan and Reilly 1973, Eberhardt 1973, Sargeant et al. 1973, Eberhardt and Sargeant 1977, Arnold and Fritzell 1987, 1989). Waterfowl have also been documented in mink diets in Alberta, Scotland and Poland (Gilbert and Nancekivell 1982, Birks and Dunstone 1985, Bartoszewicz and Zalewski 2003). Seasonal variation in the amount of waterfowl in mink diets follows a general trend of relatively high volumes during the spring and summer nesting season, but lower volumes in fall and winter (Arnold and Fritzell 1987, Bartoszewicz and Zalewski 2003, Hoffman et al. 2009). Thus, the incident I observed in early November, during fall migration, was outside of the nesting season period where waterfowl typically form an important component of mink diets.

Mink also do not normally prey on organisms as large as Snow Geese, and I was unable to find any reference to Snow Geese being preyed upon by mink in the literature. Waterfowl diet items for mink include mainly ducks, nestlings and eggs, and adult hens of species as large as Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and Canvasbacks (*Aythya valisineria*) are regularly preyed on by mink (Eberhardt and Sargeant 1977, Arnold and Fritzell 1987, 1989). For American Mink introduced to Poland, Bartoszewicz and Zalewski (2003) documented Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*) as the major avian prey item, but they also documented Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*) as mink prey, although the lifestage preyed upon was not identified. Birks and Dunstone (1985) listed Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) as a prey item for mink, but mentioned that these were at least sometimes taken as carrion, rather than killed as prey. Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) is also listed as a prey item of mink by Hoffman et al. (2009). Average body masses of adults of these bird species range from 770-902 g for European Coots, 1023-1147 g for Herring Gulls, 1095-1246 g for Mallards, 1154-1252 g for Canvasbacks,

953-1317 g for Ring-necked Pheasant and 3108-3509 g for Greylag Geese (Dunning 2008). Among mammalian prey, lagomorphs are among the largest prey items taken,



Figure 1. American Mink dragging Snow Goose from Lewis and Clark Lake across the rip-rap lining the dam face shortly after the mink killed the goose.

with adult rabbits, upon which male American Mink in Poland specialize in summer, weighing about 2 kg (Bartoszewicz and Zalewski 2003). Average masses for adult Snow Geese are 2517 g for females and 2744 g for males (Dunning 2008), which are larger than other prey items taken, except for Greylag Geese, and the lifestage of Greylag Geese preyed upon by mink was not mentioned by Birks and Dunstone (1985), so may have consisted of goslings or less than fully grown juveniles.

Thus, this observation of an American Mink preying on an adult Snow Goose is unusual both for the autumn timing of the kill, outside of the nesting season when waterfowl are a major component of mink diets, and for the large size of the prey item taken.

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# SEASONAL REPORTS

## The 2009 Summer Season

Compiled By: Jeffrey S. Palmer

01 June 2009 to 31 July 2009

College of Arts & Sciences  
Dakota State University  
Madison, SD 57042

The primary goal of the Summer Season compilation is to report confirmed breeding records observed during the season. There were 111 species reported as confirmed breeding this year; however, this does not include numerous records reported to the current South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas Project. These will eventually be reported elsewhere and the data will hopefully make its way into the online database as well. The secondary objectives of the Summer Season summary include sightings of rare (or at least infrequently reported) species, late spring and early fall migration dates, and species that are reported from unusual locations. There were 256 species - the ten-year (1999-2008) average is 253 - including 7 rarities, reported during the season. A full listing of all reported sightings can be obtained from the online database. This report contains those sightings and species which seemed to be consistent with the objectives of the Summer Season as described above.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** All Reports: **02 Jun Hand BFW**; 25 Jul Clay DS  
**Canada Goose** Confirmed Breeding in Bennett, Butte, Corson, Faulk, Kingsbury, Lake, Lyman, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, and Sully counties  
**Trumpeter Swan** Confirmed Breeding: 27 Jun Tripp (PY) RAP; 28 Jun Meade (PY) JLB  
**Wood Duck** Confirmed Breeding in Hughes, Jackson, Lake, Miner, and Minnehaha counties  
**Gadwall** Confirmed Breeding: 28 Jun Sully (PY) RDO; **27 Jul Meade (PY) JLB**  
**American Wigeon** Confirmed Breeding: **28 Jun Sully (PY) RDO**; **27 Jul Meade (PY) JLB**  
**American Black Duck** Only Report: **02 Jul Kingsbury DC**  
**Mallard** Confirmed Breeding in Lake, Meade, Minnehaha, and Sully counties  
**Blue-winged Teal** Confirmed Breeding: 04 Jul Meade (PY) JLB; **29 Jul Faulk (PY) MMM**; **30 Jul Meade ND**  
**Cinnamon Teal** All Reports: 12 Jun Butte RSL; 15 Jun Butte ND; 02 Jul Hanson DC; 04 Jul Meade JLB  
**Northern Shoveler** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jul Corson (PY) ND; **29 Jul Faulk (PY) MMM**  
**Northern Pintail** Confirmed Breeding: 01 Jun Meade (PY) JLB; 02 Jul Kingsbury (PY) DC  
**Canvasback** Confirmed Breeding: **29 Jul Faulk (PY) MMM**  
**Redhead** Confirmed Breeding: 20 Jun Minnehaha (PY) JSP; **19 Jul Minnehaha (PY) MRZ**; **30 Jul Fall River (PY) ND**  
**Ring-necked Duck** All Reports: 16 Jun McCook JSP; 02 Jul Lake DC  
**Bufflehead** All Reports: **27 Jun Kingsbury JSP**; **13 Jul Meade JLB**  
**Hooded Merganser** All Reports: 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP; 27 Jun Kingsbury JSP  
**Common Merganser** Confirmed Breeding: **27 Jul Pennington (PY) JLB** ... also reported 07 Jun Stanley DB; 20 Jun Charles Mix RM; 26 Jul Hughes DB; 31 Jul Stanley RDO  
**Ring-necked Pheasant** Confirmed Breeding: 16 Jun Beadle (PY) BFW; 22 Jun Sully (PY) KM; 06 Jul Gregory (PY) SS; 18 Jul Lake (PY) JSP; 19 Jul Minnehaha (PY) MRZ; **30 Jul Corson (PY) ND**  
**Greater Sage-Grouse** Only Report: 06 Jul Harding CEM  
**Sharp-tailed Grouse** Confirmed Breeding: 27 Jun Harding (PY) JLB ... also reported 09 Jun Faulk MMM; 23 Jun Custer RSL; 27 Jun Harding RSL; 30 Jun Perkins ND; 06 Jul Gregory SS  
**Greater Prairie-Chicken** Only Report: 09 Jun Faulk MMM  
**Wild Turkey** Confirmed Breeding: 15 Jun Pennington (NE) MMM; 06 Jul Gregory (PY) SS  
**Common Loon** reported 07 Jun Pennington RSL; 14 Jun Harding DC; 04 Jul Meade JLB; 27 Jul Meade JLB  
**Pied-billed Grebe** Confirmed Breeding in Clark, Lake, McCook, Meade, and Minnehaha counties



**Eared Grebe** Confirmed Breeding in Corson, Faulk, and Meade counties

**Western Grebe** Confirmed Breeding: 18 Jun Aurora (PY) ND; 24 Jun Aurora (PY) ND; 27 Jun Kingsbury (PY) JSP; 02 Jul McCook (PY) DC; 18 Jul Lake (PY) JSP

**Clark's Grebe** All Reports: 08 Jun Marshall GO; 20 Jun Aurora DB; 13 Jul Meade JLB

**Double-crested Cormorant** Confirmed Breeding in Aurora, Bennett, Clark, Corson, Day, and Meade counties

**American Bittern** All Reports: 16 Jun McCook JSP; 20 Jun Aurora DB

**Great Blue Heron** Confirmed Breeding in Aurora, Bennett, Butte, Clark, Corson, Custer, Harding, Meade, and Pennington counties

**Great Egret** Confirmed Breeding: 17 Jun Clark (ON) ND

**Green Heron** Confirmed Breeding: **01 Jul Brown (ON) GO**

**White-faced Ibis** All Reports: 08 Jun Marshall GO; 14 Jun Brown GO; 14 Jun Marshall GO; 27 Jun McPherson GO; 06 Jul Brown GO

**Osprey** All Reports: 04 Jul Custer JLB, RSL; 18 Jul Lawrence DB

**Bald Eagle** Confirmed Breeding: **10 Jul Mellette (NY) SS**

**Northern Harrier** Confirmed Breeding: 16 Jun Custer (CF) MMM

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** Only Report: 14 Jun Pennington DC

**Cooper's Hawk** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jun Stanley (ON) RDO; 14 Jun Hughes (ON) DB

**Northern Goshawk** Only Report: 28 Jun Custer DB

**Ferruginous Hawk** reported 02 Jul Miner DC

**Golden Eagle** Confirmed Breeding: 30 Jun Harding (NY) ND; **04 Jul Harding (NY) CEM, KM**

**Merlin** Confirmed Breeding: 04 Jul Harding (NY) CEM, KM

**Prairie Falcon** Confirmed Breeding: **04 Jul Harding (NY) KM** ... also reported 15 Jun Butte DC; 21 Jun Harding CEM; 27 Jun Harding CEM

**Virginia Rail** All Reports: 05 Jun Miner JSP; 16 Jun McCook JSP; 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP

**American Coot** Confirmed Breeding in Butte, Fall River, Lake, Meade, and Minnehaha counties

**Sandhill Crane** Only Report: **14 Jun Stanley RDO**

**Black-bellied Plover** Only Report: 05 Jun Meade RSL

**Semipalmated Plover** All Reports: **20 Jun Charles Mix RM**; 02 Jul Kingsbury DC; 18 Jul Sully RDO; 26 Jul Meade RSL; 26 Jul Sully RDO; 27 Jul Jones RDO

**Piping Plover** Confirmed Breeding: 13 Jun Sully (NE) KM ... also reported 28 Jun Sully RDO; 05 Jul Sully RDO; 12 Jul Sully RDO; 18 Jul Sully RDO

**Killdeer** Confirmed Breeding: 01 Jun Pennington (PY) JLB; 05 Jun Miner (PY) JSP; 06 Jun Mellette (PY) ND; 08 Jun Butte (DD) JLB; 08 Jun Meade (DD) JLB; 25 Jun Lake (PY) JSP; 19 Jul Minnehaha (PY) MRZ

**Black-necked Stilt** All Reports: 28 Jun Sully RDO; 05 Jul Sully RDO

**American Avocet** Confirmed Breeding: 17 Jun Clark (ON) ND

**Solitary Sandpiper** All Reports: 11 Jul Brookings JSP; 22 Jul Meade JLB; 29 Jul Stanley RDO

**Greater Yellowlegs** Early: 28 Jun Sully RDO; 18 Jul Lake JSP; 19 Jul Minnehaha MRZ; 27 Jul Jones RDO

**Lesser Yellowlegs** Early: 28 Jun Meade JLB; 28 Jun Sully RDO; 11 Jul Brookings JSP

**Upland Sandpiper** Confirmed Breeding: **29 Jul Faulk (PY) MMM**

**Hudsonian Godwit** reported 26 Jul Sully RDO

**Sanderling** Late: **07 Jun Stanley DB**; **06 Jun Meade RSL, JLB**; 03 Jun Hughes RDO ... Early: **12 Jul Sully RDO**; 28 Jul Kingsbury DC

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** Late: **09 Jun Minnehaha DC**; 05 Jun Miner JSP; 03 Jun Hughes RDO ... Early: 12 Jul Sully RDO; 18 Jul Lake JSP; 19 Jul Minnehaha MRZ

**Least Sandpiper** All Reports: **09 Jun Minnehaha DC**; 12 Jul Sully RDO; 18 Jul Lake JSP; 18 Jul Sully RDO; 28 Jul Kingsbury DC

**White-rumped Sandpiper** Late: 09 Jun Minnehaha DC; 08 Jun Hutchinson RM; 06 Jun Bon Homme RND ... Early: **05 Jul Sully RDO**; **05 Jul Union DC**

**Baird's Sandpiper** All Reports: **03 Jun Hughes RDO**; 12 Jul Sully RDO; 26 Jul Lincoln DC; 26 Jul Sully RDO; 27 Jul Jones RDO

**Pectoral Sandpiper** Late: 05 Jun Miner JSP; 04 Jun Beadle BFW ... Early: 11 Jul Brookings JSP; 18 Jul Lake JSP; 26 Jul Lincoln DC; 26 Jul Sully RDO; 27 Jul Jones RDO

**Dunlin** Only Report: **09 Jun Minnehaha DC**

**Stilt Sandpiper** Late: 09 Jun Minnehaha DC ... Early: 05 Jul Sully RDO; 25 Jul Clay DS; 27 Jul Jones RDO

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** Only Report: **27 Jul Jones RDO**

**Long-billed Dowitcher** All Reports: **05 Jul Sully RDO**; 12 Jul Sully RDO; 26 Jul Sully RDO

**Wilson's Snipe** All Reports: 08 Jun Harding ND; 09 Jun Minnehaha DC; 12 Jun Meade RSL; 30 Jun Perkins ND; 04 Jul Meade JLB

**Red-necked Phalarope** Only Report: 26 Jul Sully RDO

**Bonaparte's Gull** Only Report: **10 Jun Hughes DC**

**Ring-billed Gull** Confirmed Breeding: 17 Jun Clark (NY) ND

**Herring Gull** All Reports: 10 Jun Stanley RDO; 26 Jul Hughes DB; 31 Jul Stanley RDO

**Caspian Tern** reported 08 Jun Butte JLB; 08 Jun Marshall GO; 22 Jun Meade JLB; 27 Jul Meade JLB

**Black Tern** Confirmed Breeding: 18 Jun Aurora (CF) ND; **29 Jul Faulk (FL) MMM**

**Common Tern** Confirmed Breeding: 17 Jun Clark (CF) ND

**Rock Pigeon** Confirmed Breeding: 23 Jun Aurora (ON) ND; 30 Jun Perkins (ON) ND

**Mourning Dove** Confirmed Breeding: 22 Jun Sully (NE) KM; 30 Jun Perkins (ON) ND; 02 Jul Perkins (ON) ND; 11 Jul Minnehaha (NY) MRZ

**Barn Owl** Confirmed Breeding: 13 Jun Sully (ON) KM; 10 Jul Shannon (NY) ND

**Great Horned Owl** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jun Hughes (FL) KM; 02 Jul Lake (FL) JSP

**Barred Owl** reported 27 Jun Union TJ

**Short-eared Owl** All Reports: 03 Jun Custer MMM; 10 Jun Haakon MMM; 16 Jun Custer MMM; 04 Jul Perkins ND; 10 Jul Pennington ND

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** Confirmed Breeding: 12 Jun Harding (NY) CEM; 22 Jun Harding (NE) CEM; 03 Jul Harding (NY) CEM ... also reported 13 Jun Pennington DC; 23 Jun Harding CEM; 03 Jul Harding KM; 05 Jul Harding KM

**Common Nighthawk** Confirmed Breeding: 27 Jun Sully (NE) KM

**Common Poorwill** All Reports: 08 Jun Harding ND; 18 Jul Lawrence DB

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird** All Reports: 11 Jun Lawrence DGP; 15 Jun Custer DC; 15 Jun Lawrence DGP; 04 Jul Custer JLB; 31 Jul Pennington JF

**Rufous Hummingbird** Only Report: 31 Jul Pennington JF

**Lewis's Woodpecker** All Reports: 15 Jun Custer DC; 24 Jun Pennington JLB; 28 Jun Custer DB

**Red-headed Woodpecker** Confirmed Breeding: 24 Jun Pennington (ON) JLB; 03 Jul Harding (ON) CEM, KM; 06 Jul Hughes (ON) KM; 10 Jul Mellette (NY) SS; 26 Jul Charles Mix (CF) RM

**Red-bellied Woodpecker** Confirmed Breeding: **04 Jul Union (ON) JSP**

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** Confirmed Breeding: **12 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MS** ... also reported 19 Jun Minnehaha ND; 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP; 11 Jul Brookings JSP

**Red-naped Sapsucker** Confirmed Breeding: **05 Jun Lawrence (ON) DGP**

**Downy Woodpecker** Confirmed Breeding: 10 Jul Mellette (NY) SS; 11 Jul Minnehaha (FL) MRZ

**Hairy Woodpecker** Confirmed Breeding: 07 Jun Hughes (NY) DB; 08 Jun Stanley (ON) KM

**American Three-toed Woodpecker** All Reports: 15 Jun Pennington DC; 18 Jun Lawrence DGP

**Black-backed Woodpecker** All Reports: 14 Jun Custer DC; 28 Jun Custer DB; 03 Jul Custer JLB

**Northern Flicker** Confirmed Breeding: 12 Jun Harding (ON) CEM; 04 Jun Union (FY) JSP

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** All Reports: 07 Jun Hughes DB; **11 Jun Charles Mix DS**

**Western Wood-Pewee** Confirmed Breeding: 20 Jun Harding (ON) CEM; 03 Jul Harding (ON) KM

**Alder Flycatcher** All Reports: 03 Jun Yankton DS; 07 Jun Clay DS

**Least Flycatcher** Confirmed Breeding: 12 Jun Harding (ON) CEM; 03 Jul Harding (NY) KM; **04 Jul Harding (ON) KM**

**Cordilleran Flycatcher** Confirmed Breeding: **24 Jul Lawrence (NY) MMM**

**Eastern Phoebe** Confirmed Breeding: 10 Jun Clay (FL) DS

**Say's Phoebe** Confirmed Breeding: 30 Jun Perkins (CF) ND; 04 Jul Harding (CF) KM; **10 Jul McPherson (FY) DDS**

**Western Kingbird** Confirmed Breeding: 21 Jun Lyman (ON) RDO; 02 Jul Perkins (ON) ND

**Eastern Kingbird** Confirmed Breeding: 14 Jun Sully (CN) KM; 01 Jul Aurora (CN) *vide* BFW; 18 Jul Lake (NY) JSP

**Loggerhead Shrike** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jun Mellette (NY) DB; 21 Jun Harding (NE) CEM

**Yellow-throated Vireo** All Reports: 20 Jun Union ND; 22 Jun Turner ND; 06 Jul Day GO

**Warbling Vireo** Confirmed Breeding: 01 Jun Meade (ON) DGP

**Blue Jay** Confirmed Breeding: 19 Jun Minnehaha (CF) ND; 22 Jun Turner (FY) ND; 11 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MRZ

**Pinyon Jay** All Reports: 01 Jun Meade APB; 04 Jul Custer RSL; 13 Jul Meade AKB; 15 Jul Meade APB

**Black-billed Magpie** Confirmed Breeding: **04 Jul Harding (FL) CEM, KM**

**American Crow** Confirmed Breeding: **12 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MS**

**Horned Lark** Confirmed Breeding: 30 Jun Perkins (CF) ND

**Purple Martin** Confirmed Breeding: 15 Jun Hughes (ON) DB; 11 Jul Minnehaha (ON) MRZ

**Tree Swallow** Confirmed Breeding: 16 Jun Minnehaha (ON) ND; 11 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MRZ; **27 Jul Meade (NY) JLB**

**Violet-green Swallow** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Custer (FY) JLB

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** Confirmed Breeding: 02 Jul Lake (FY) JSP

**Bank Swallow** Confirmed Breeding: 23 Jun Aurora (ON) ND

**Cliff Swallow** Confirmed Breeding in Buffalo, Butte, Campbell, Clark, Custer, Gregory, Harding, Hutchinson, Lyman, McCook, Mellette, and Perkins counties

**Barn Swallow** Confirmed Breeding: 21 Jun Lyman (ON) RDO; 21 Jun Stanley (ON) RDO; 22 Jun Sully (ON) KM; 30 Jun Lake (ON) ND; 04 Jul Charles Mix (CN) RM; 29 Jul Pennington (NY) JLB

**Black-capped Chickadee** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jun Hughes (ON) KM; 11 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MRZ

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** Confirmed Breeding: 22 Jun Harding (ON) JLB ... also reported 06 Jul Day GO

**White-breasted Nuthatch** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jun Hughes (ON) KM; 20 Jun Union (FY) ND

**Pygmy Nuthatch** Only Report: 30 Jun Fall River DB

**Brown Creeper** All Reports: 13 Jun Harding CEM; **20 Jun Charles Mix RM**; 28 Jun Custer DB

**House Wren** Confirmed Breeding: 04 Jul Harding (NY) KM; 11 Jul Minnehaha (ON) MRZ; 28 Jul Charles Mix (ON) RM

**American Dipper** reported 13 Jul Dark Canyon, Pennington County AKB

**Golden-crowned Kinglet** Only Report: 17 Jun Lawrence DGP

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** Confirmed Breeding: **03 Jul Harding (NB) KM**; **03 Jul Harding (ON) CEM** ... also reported 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP; 14 Jul Harding CEM

**Eastern Bluebird** Confirmed Breeding in Charles Mix, Gregory, and Hughes counties

**Mountain Bluebird** Confirmed Breeding: 20 Jun Custer (NB) RDO; 27 Jun Meade (ON) EEM

**Townsend's Solitaire** All Reports: 01 Jun Lawrence DGP; 25 Jun Pennington JLB; 28 Jun Custer DB; 30 Jun Fall River DB; 18 Jul Lawrence DB

**Veery** Only Report: 28 Jun Custer DB

**Gray-cheeked Thrush** Only Report: **02 Jun Edmunds JDW**

**Wood Thrush** All Reports: 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP; 20 Jun Union ND; 04 Jul Union JSP

**American Robin** Confirmed Breeding in Charles Mix, Hughes, Meade, Minnehaha, Perkins, Stanley, and Union counties

**Gray Catbird** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Stanley (CF) RDO; 05 Jul Union (FY) DC; **27 Jul Hughes (FS) DB**

**Northern Mockingbird** reported from Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Gregory, Lake, Lyman, and Stanley counties

**Sage Thrasher** Only Report: 14 Jun Butte DC  
**Brown Thrasher** Confirmed Breeding: 30 Jun Perkins (CF) ND  
**European Starling** Confirmed Breeding: 24 Jun Beadle (CF) ND; 30 Jun Perkins (CF) ND  
**Sprague's Pipit** All Reports: 05 Jul Harding KM; 05 Jul Stanley RDO; 29 Jul Faulk MMM  
**Cedar Waxwing** Confirmed Breeding: 20 Jun Harding (CF) CEM; 02 Jun Perkins (CN) ND  
**Virginia's Warbler** All Reports: 13 Jun Custer DC; 28 Jun Custer DB  
**Yellow Warbler** Confirmed Breeding: 21 Jun Harding (NE) CEM; 05 Jul Harding (FY) KM; 05 Jul Union (FY) DC, MRZ  
**Black-throated Blue Warbler** Only Report: **17 Jun Stanley KM**  
**Yellow-rumped Warbler** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Harding (FY) KM  
**Blackpoll Warbler** Only Report: **06 Jun Hughes GO**  
**Black-and-white Warbler** Only Report: 18 Jun Meade DGP  
**American Redstart** Confirmed Breeding: **06 Jul Hughes (FL) KM**  
**Northern Waterthrush** Only Report: **02 Jun Brown GO**  
**Mourning Warbler** Only Report: 02 Jun Brown GO  
**MacGillivray's Warbler** Confirmed Breeding: 04 Jul Custer (CF) JLB  
**Summer Tanager** Only Report: **06 Jul Fall River RAP**  
**Scarlet Tanager** All Reports: 19 Jun Minnehaha ND; 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP; 28 Jun Minnehaha TJ  
**Western Tanager** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Harding (CF) CEM, KM  
**Spotted Towhee** Confirmed Breeding: 12 Jun Harding (NE) CEM; 27 Jun Meade (FY) EEM; 04 Jul Harding (FL) KM  
**Eastern Towhee** All Reports: 14 Jun Union MS; 20 Jun Charles Mix RM; 20 Jun Minnehaha DC, JSP; 12 Jul Minnehaha MS  
**Chipping Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 14 Jun Hughes (NY) DB; 25 Jun Pennington (CF) JLB; 27 Jun Kingsbury (CF) JSP; 03 Jul Harding (NY) KM  
**Clay-colored Sparrow** All Reports: 07 Jun Sully KM; 12 Jun Hughes KM; 27 Jun Kingsbury JSP; 06 Jul Day GO; 11 Jul Brookings JSP; 18 Jul Lake JSP  
**Brewer's Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 28 Jun Harding (ON) CEM ... also reported 07 Jun Harding CEM; 08 Jun Harding ND; 28 Jun Harding CEM; 30 Jun Fall River DB  
**Field Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 21 Jun Sully (FY) KM; 04 Jul Harding (FY) KM  
**Lark Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: **08 Jun Stanley (CF) KM**; 21 Jun Stanley (NE) RDO; 03 Jul Harding (CF) KM; 06 Jul Gregory (FY) SS; 10 Jul Mellette (CF) SS  
**Lark Bunting** Confirmed Breeding: 30 Jun Fall River (FY) DB; 30 Jun Perkins (CF) ND  
**Grasshopper Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 10 Jul Mellette (CF) SS  
**Baird's Sparrow** All Reports: 01 Jun Custer MMM; 13 Jun Harding DC; 05 Jul Harding CEM, KM  
**Nelson's Sparrow** Only Report: 29 Jul Faulk MMM  
**Song Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jun Hughes (CF) KM  
**Swamp Sparrow** All Reports: 05 Jun Miner JSP; 16 Jun McCook JSP; 27 Jun Kingsbury JSP; 06 Jul Day GO; 11 Jul Brookings JSP; 18 Jul Lake JSP  
**White-throated Sparrow** reported **07 Jun Lawrence DGP**  
**Northern Cardinal** Confirmed Breeding: 15 Jun Hughes (FY) DB ... also reported 27 Jun Tripp RDO; 09 Jul Jackson ND  
**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** Confirmed Breeding: 22 Jun Turner (CF) ND; 05 Jul Union (FY) DC  
**Black-headed Grosbeak** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Harding (FL) KM; 04 Jul Harding (FL) KM; 04 Jul Harding (ON) CEM  
**Dickcissel** Confirmed Breeding: 05 Jul Union (CF) DC  
**Bobolink** Confirmed Breeding: **20 Jun Sully (CF) KM**  
**Red-winged Blackbird** Confirmed Breeding: 15 Jun Butte (CF) ND; 02 Jul Lake (CF) JSP; 11 Jul Minnehaha (ON) MRZ; 22 Jul Meade (CF) JLB  
**Western Meadowlark** Confirmed Breeding in Butte, Faulk, Harding, Lake, Meade, Mellette, and Perkins counties  
**Yellow-headed Blackbird** Confirmed Breeding: 18 Jun Lake (NY) JSP; **29 Jul Faulk (FL) MMM**

**Brewer's Blackbird** Confirmed Breeding: **22 Jul Meade (FY) JLB**

**Common Grackle** Confirmed Breeding: 21 Jun Lyman (CF) RDO; 28 Jun Aurora (CF) ND; 02 Jul Perkins (CF) ND

**Great-tailed Grackle** Only Report: 20 Jun Minnehaha JSP

**Brown-headed Cowbird** Confirmed Breeding: 03 Jul Harding (NY) CEM

**Orchard Oriole** Confirmed Breeding: 28 Jun Aurora (ON) ND; 04 Jul Harding (CF) KM; 08 Jul Faulk (CF) MMM; 12 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MS; **30 Jul Haakon (FY) ND**

**Bullock's Oriole** Confirmed Breeding: 29 Jun Meade (FY) EEM ... also reported 01 Jun Meade EEM

**Baltimore Oriole** Confirmed Breeding: 25 Jun Lake (ON) JSP; 05 Jul Union (FY) DC

**Cassin's Finch** All Reports: 14 Jun Pennington DC; 28 Jun Custer DB

**House Finch** Confirmed Breeding: 11 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MRZ

**White-winged Crossbill** Only Report: 05 Jun Lawrence DGP

**Pine Siskin** reported 09 Jun Hughes KM; 12 Jun Charles Mix RM; 14 Jun Lake JSP; 02 Jul Perkins ND

**American Goldfinch** Confirmed Breeding: 04 Jul Harding (ON) CEM, KM; 06 Jul Gregory (CN) SS

**House Sparrow** Confirmed Breeding: 12 Jun Hughes (CF) KM; 23 Jun Turner (ON) ND; 30 Jun Lake (ON) ND; 11 Jul Minnehaha (FY) MRZ

**Reports Requiring Acceptance By The Rare Bird Records Committee**

**Black-bellied Whistling Duck** 21-22 Jul Lincoln DC, DS, JSP, TJ

**Peregrine Falcon** 15 Jun Butte DC

**Prairie Falcon** 11 Jun Brown CG

**Hudsonian Godwit** 18 Jul Sully RDO

**Barred Owl** 20 Jun Union (FL) ND

**Tennessee Warbler** 04 Jul Custer JLB

**Prothonotary Warbler** 13 Jun – 05 Jul Union (FY) GJS, TJ, MS, DC, MRZ

**Louisiana Waterthrush** 03 Jul Union DC

**Hooded Warbler** 20 Jun Minnehaha DC

**White-throated Sparrow** 18 Jun Lawrence DGP

**Eastern Meadowlark** 14 Jul Yankton ND

**Corrections/Additions from Past Reports**

**Horned Grebe** Delete: 05 Jul 2008 Hughes

**Contributing Observers**

DB	Doug Backlund	EEM	Ernest E. Miller
JLB	Jocelyn L. Baker	KM	Kenny Miller
APB	Addison & Patricia Ball	GO	Gary Olson
AKB	Anna K. Ball	RDO	Ricky D. Olson
DC	Doug Chapman	JSP	Jeffrey S. Palmer
RND	Roger N. Dietrich	RAP	Richard A. Peterson
ND	Nancy Drilling	DGP	D. George Prisbe
BFW	Bridgette Flanders-Wanner	MS	Mark Schmidtbauer
JF	Jennifer Fowler	GJS	Gary & Jan Small
CG	Chris Goldade	SS	Scott Stolz
TJ	Todd Jensen	DDS	Daniel D. Streifel
RSL	Richard S. Latuchie	DS	David Swanson
RM	Ron Mabie	JDW	J. David Williams
MMM	Michael M. Melius	MRZ	Mick Zerr
CEM	Charlie Miller		

# RED-TAILED HAWK IDENTIFICATION

by Dan Tallman, 2120 Taylor Ct., Northfield, MN 55057

**R**ed-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) are found across all of North America, from northern Canada and central Alaska south into Central America. This species tends to be the most commonly observed raptor throughout much of its range.

## Typical Red-tailed Hawks

Almost every birder can identify an adult Red-tailed Hawk. Beginners can easily recognize this raptor's reddish tail, with a black terminal band. Intermediate birders learn the bird's silhouette—its outer primaries (except for the outermost) are more or less the same length, giving the bird a stocky, somewhat rounded, wing shape (Wheeler, 2003). Furthermore, the bird's tail is relatively short. Usually Red-tailed Hawks show a line of streaks between the breast and the belly. Advanced birders know to look for a dark line on the leading edge of the undersides of each wing (the patagials), as well as dark lines on the trailing wing edges. Finally, in all plumages Red-tailed Hawks lack feathered tarsi.

Juvenile birds are a bit more difficult. Their tails are pale brown with about a half dozen or so uniform dark bars. Beginners should learn the Red-tailed Hawk silhouette to identify immatures. Note, however, that juvenile hawks have longer primaries and shorter secondaries, factors that can contribute to silhouette confusion. Beginners should beware of juvenile Swainson's Hawks. Swainson's tend to have more pointed wing tips, and they soar with their wing tips held higher than their bodies, somewhat like a Turkey Vulture.

So, if Red-tailed Hawks are so easily recognized, why did our editor Douglas Chapman urge me to write this article? With Red-tailed Hawks things rapidly get complicated. This species is extremely variable, with the existence of several races (= subspecies), color morphs, and abnormal plumages (see Photo 4). Birders tend to attempt accurate identification of these birds but this is often impossible in the field. I will try to explain the situation simply and with a focus on South Dakota.

## Eastern and Western Red-tailed Hawks

Red-tailed Hawks vary across North America, and ornithologists recognize several races. I use the terms race and subspecies as meaning the same thing—a morphologically distinct population of a species with a discernible geographic range during the breeding season. Little overlap exists among races. Where ranges do overlap in the breeding season, genetic blending occurs. The Red-tailed Hawk has two major and wide-ranging races, the Eastern Red-tailed (the *borealis* group) and the Western Red-tailed (the *calurus* group). Irrespective of subspecies, the breast band tends to be more pronounced in the west and in the north. Western birds also tend to be darker (Clark and Wheeler 1987) (See Photo 1). Eastern birds often appear to be hooded, with a white throat (Photos 2 and 3). Despite these trends, birds of both races are extremely variable, so it is probably not wise to identify Red-tailed Hawk subspecies in the field. Furthermore, the two races meet and interbreed in South Dakota, bisecting the state from northeast to southwest. Birds breeding in Aberdeen and Rapid City should be *calurus*, birds breeding in Sioux Falls probably are *borealis*, and birds from the Pierre area are intermediate.

## Polymorphism and Krider's Hawk

Matters quickly become more complicated. Western Red-tailed Hawks, in addition to normally plumaged birds, come in three color morphs: dark (Photo 5), intermediate (Photo 8), and light. Color morphs differ from races in that they are not geographically distinct and often occur together in the same nest. These morphs merge into one another, varying from some birds being nearly black to others quite white. Eastern birds have a pale morph, and, rarely, a dark one (Preston and Beane 2009).

Red-tailed Hawks in the Dakotas and Montana have a fourth, even paler morph. These birds have nearly white heads, often show red only toward the outer half of their tails (the tails being otherwise whitish), and have whitish windows on the upper wing surfaces. These traits cause this palest color morph to appear superficially similar to Ferruginous Hawks. These very pale morph birds are often called “Kriders” Red-tailed Hawks (Photo 6). To give this very pale morph bird a distinct name, however, makes for considerable confusion. It is not a race of Red-tailed Hawk, because subspecies, by definition, have a distinct breeding range and do not overlap more than marginally with other subspecies. Other polymorphic species, such as the red and gray morphs of Eastern Screech-Owls, do not bear multiple names for their color morphs. Speaking of races, you will notice I have not said to which race Kriders’ Hawks belong. Most references indicate they are Eastern birds. The map in Preston and Beane (2009), in the definitive *Birds of North America*, concurs, but the range map shows the Kriders’ Red-tailed Hawk overlapping the range of the Western Red-tailed Hawk. Perhaps Kriders’ is actually, then, a morph of intermediate Eastern/Western birds! Whatever a Kriders’ Hawk actually is, extreme caution should be used differentiating pale and very pale morphs of Red-tailed Hawks.

### **Harlan’s Hawk**

What I have written above is both complicated enough and probably over-simplified. To further confuse matters, consider the Harlan’s Hawk (Photo 9). Currently this raptor is considered to be a subspecies of the Red-tailed Hawk found in central Alaska, eastern Northwest Territory and northwestern British Columbia. It winters in the western United States and in the Great Plains. Since its discovery in 1830, this population has at least twice been treated as a separate species, and twice as a race of the Red-tailed Hawk. Even today the subject of Harlan’s Hawks can elicit heated arguments among advanced birders.

In coloration, Harlan’s Hawks are quite similar to Western Red-tailed Hawks, and, indeed, may often be indistinguishable in the field (Liguori 2004), but on average, they are “colder/blacker” in hue. Harlan’s Hawks exhibit both light and dark morphs, including intermediate-plumaged individuals. Sibley (2000) depicts typical light and dark Harlan’s Hawks, clearly showing their dusky white tails that lack red. Also, their wing tips are clearly shorter than the tips of their tails. Their tarsi may also be shorter than those of Western Red-tailed Hawks (Clark 2009a). Remember, however, that some juvenile Red-tailed Hawks also have dusky tails (see Photo 7).

Apparently, Harlan’s Hawk tails can show variable amounts of red, equal to some Western Red-tailed Hawks (see photos in Clark 2009b). Currently, because it interbreeds with adjacent populations of Red-tailed Hawks, Harlan’s Hawks are considered a race of the Red-tailed Hawk (Preston and Beane 2009). Birds with red in the tail have been considered to be the result of mixed race breeding. Recently, however, Clark (2009b) maintained that in all mixed Western/Harlan’s pairs, the presumed Western Red-tailed Hawk is actually a misidentified Harlan’s Hawk with more reddish than usual in the tail! Thus, Clark is lobbying to reinstate the Harlan’s Hawk as a distinct species from the Red-tailed Hawk.

### **Conclusions**

Birders of all abilities should be wary when identifying races and color morphs of Red-tailed Hawks. Be sure you know your field marks and taxonomic definitions. Are you identifying a race or a color morph? Be on the lookout for the re-emergence of the Harlan’s Hawk as a full species. And, finally, be prepared to leave some forms of the Red-tailed Hawk unidentified! To see how complex and contrary Red-tailed Hawk identification (and experts) can be, refer to photos 10 and 11 below and the discussion at <<<[http://www.dyesscreek.com/miscellaneous\\_pages/kriders.html](http://www.dyesscreek.com/miscellaneous_pages/kriders.html)>>>.

### **Acknowledgments**

I thank everyone who shared their photography and gave me permission to use their work. The following birders generously donated photos: Doug Backlund, Kenneth Cantley, Rebecca Field, Mary Graves, Diane Gulbrandson, Vija Kelly, Tim Markhardt, Eric J. Miller, Deb Palmer, Paula Perdon, Terry Sohl, Pete Sufka, Jim Williams, Lynn Williams, and Mick Zerr. I apologize to anyone I may have left off this list—any omissions are

not intentional. Many thanks also to Erika Tallman, who made many helpful suggestions to improve earlier drafts of this manuscript, and to reviewers Alan Knue (University of Washington, Seattle, WA) and Michael Retter (Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN).

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**Photos. Here is a gallery of Red-tailed Hawk photos. Note that many of these birds do not show red tails!**



Photo 1. A Western Red-tailed Hawk. Note the more prominent breast band than on the Eastern bird below. Madison, SD.

©Dan Tallman



Photo 2. An Eastern Red-tailed Hawk. Note dark leading edge to the wing and streaky band on lower breast. Grant Co., MN

©Paula Perdon





Photo 3. An Eastern Red-tailed Hawk. This bird lacks much, if any, of a breast band.

©Jim Williams.

**To see these photos in color please go to the SDOU website at <[www.sdou.org](http://www.sdou.org)>, click SD Birding Links and then the title: "Red-tailed Hawk Identification".**



Photo 4. A leucistic Red-tailed Hawk. This plumage is even paler than pale Red-tailed Hawk morphs. Cold Spring, MN.

©Pete Sufka



Photo 5. A dark morph Red-tailed Hawk. A completely melanistic individual will be completely black.

©Diane Gulbrandson



Photo 6. The head of a Krider's Red-tailed Hawk.

© Kenneth Cantley

To see these photos in color please go to the SDOU website at <[www.sdou.org](http://www.sdou.org)>, click SD Birding Links and then the title: "Red-tailed Hawk Identification".



Photo 7. An immature Red-tailed Hawk.

© Terry Sohl



Photo 8. An intermediate morph Red-tailed Hawk.

© Mick Zerr



Photo 9. Harlan's Hawk. Note the pale gray tail and white and gray-barred flight feathers. Compare this photo to that of the immature Red-tailed Hawk (Photo 7).

©Doug Backlund

**To see these photos in color please go to the SDOU website at <[www.sdou.org](http://www.sdou.org)>, click SD Birding Links and then the title: "Red-tailed Hawk Identification".**



Photo 10. Mystery Red-tailed Hawk. With a white head (too white?) and a pale red tail, shouldn't this bird be a Krider's Hawk? See <<<[http://www.dyess-creek.com/miscellaneous\\_pages/kriders.html](http://www.dyess-creek.com/miscellaneous_pages/kriders.html)>>> for an extended argument as to this bird's identity. At least one expert believes this bird is a Harlan's Hawk, but see note for the next photo. Photo taken in Louisiana.

©Eric J. Miller



Photo 11. Mystery Red-tailed Hawk 2. This is the same individual as in the photo above. Note that its wing tips extend at least to the tip of the tail (=not a Harlan's Hawk?). Photo taken in Louisiana.

©Eric J. Miller

# BOOK REVIEW

by Linda Johnson, Sioux Falls, SD

## **Gatherings of Angels: Migrating Birds and Their Ecology.**

Edited by Kenneth P. Able. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. 193 pp. Paperback. \$29.95

**G***atherings of Angels: Migrating Birds and Their Ecology*, edited by Kenneth P. Able, is a collection of research articles on bird migration in the Western Hemisphere. Two introductory chapters define migration. Subsequent chapters are overviews of research, with chapters written by experts on particular species. The text is beautifully illustrated, with twenty-four pages of color plates, many black and white photos, migration maps, and charts. The index, appendix of common and scientific names, and chapter bibliographies add to the ease of locating information.

The nine contributors pose a number of questions: How do birds withstand the rigors of long distance migration? Why do some choose long distance versus short distance migration? What are the migration habitat needs of particular species? What strategies do different species use to build energy for their long distance flights? What are the effects of habitat destruction on migration patterns? Researchers share accounts of their fieldwork on the Blackpoll Warbler, Dunlin, White-rumped Sandpiper, and Western Sandpiper. Other chapters describe Sandhill Cranes staging on the Platte River, Broad-winged hawks at Hawk Mountain, and Rufous Hummingbirds in the Rockies. In the Epilogue, conservation efforts are discussed.

Each chapter can be read on its own and contains fascinating facts. For example, White-rumped Sandpipers may travel up to 10,000 miles over the course of the migration year in their journey from northern Canada to Suriname and around to South America. The chapter on Broad-winged Hawks studied at Hawk Mountain explores the reasons for their shortened migration period (four days at Hawk Mountain versus two weeks for other raptors). They migrate with each other, synchronously, so that they can take advantage of soaring as a means of conserving energy on their 4,000 to 5,000 mile journey. And, the chapter on the Blackpoll Warbler is especially interesting. The Blackpoll begins migration to the south from across the entire stretch of Canada, but funnels into a well-defined staging area in the New England states, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Migration follows cold fronts, allowing the birds to boost their flight speed. On the second leg of their journey, instead of following the Carolina and Florida coastline, they travel 2,200 miles nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean to South America.

Even though only a few species are selected for inclusion, combined they provide the reader with a great sense of the complexities of migration. By delving into more detail about migration behavior, the reader may discover new enjoyment and perhaps a bit of wonder while watching flocks of birds against the sky, fall or spring.

# FROM OUR PAST...

...IN SOUTH DAKOTA BIRD NOTES

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L. M. BAYLOR

Vol. 3 No. 3

September 1951

For the President's Page, Vol. 3, No. 3, J. S. Findley reviewed areas of need for bird study in South Dakota as delineated by Dr. O. S. Pettingill in *South Dakota Bird Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1949) and Vol. 2, No. 2 (1950). Those general guidelines may be applicable today. Nevertheless, many accomplishments are now on record: in *SD Bird Notes*, the three editions of *Birds of South Dakota* and the first *South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas*. Further records will be available in the second breeding bird atlas, now in its third of five seasons. Conditions and circumstances in the early Twenty-first Century probably have changed. Perhaps soon, at a fall meeting's paper session, we should schedule a symposium to identify contemporary ornithological topics needing attention in South Dakota. The proceedings from the discussion could then appear in *SD Bird Notes*.

H. F. Chapman contributed the lead article in that September's issue, "Notes on Sennett's Nighthawk". The elaborate details through various citations from ornithological literature are impressive, but from a perspective more than fifty years later, one wonders about the significance of subspecies designations in avian taxonomy. For example, the 2002 edition of *Birds of South Dakota* reflects the current outlook by listing just the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). Do current readers find the concept of subspecies useful?

For the "Pioneer Prairie Ornithologists" section, Harry C. Behrens shared information about his grandfather, Henry Behrens (1845-1935). Born in Hamburg, Germany, Henry Behrens came to Chicago, IL, in 1868 and eventually to Pennington County, SD, in 1897. He occupied a ranch on Spring Creek, twenty miles southeast of Rapid City and also operated a classic furniture-mortuary business in Rapid City. He became a skillful taxidermist and developed a significant collection of mounted South Dakota birds. [For many years, the collection was on display at the Pioneer Museum at West Boulevard and Main Street in Rapid City. Subsequently, with the closing of the Pioneer Museum, the collection became part of Rapid City's Journey Museum.]

Editor H. F. Chapman provided a brief review of *Modern Bird Study* (1947), by Ludlow Griscom. Study topics included development of field ornithology; capacity, intelligence and adaptability of birds; migration; distribution; classification and the concept of species.

Among the "General Notes of Interest," Herbert Krause's "Migratory Warblers, Sioux Falls, S. D." should have special appeal to anyone who cherishes the stimulating experiences of warbler migration. While not revealed in this note, Krause's favorite bird-watching locale was Woodlawn Cemetery, then in southeast Sioux Falls. Readers who may not have discovered the habitat of a well-established cemetery with varieties of vegetation might do well to explore this resource.

Also as a General Note, Editor Chapman reprinted W. J. Breckenridge's account of a Pomerine Jaeger collected near Madison, SD, on 9 October 1932, from *The Wilson Bulletin* (1933). The specimen, then in the Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota, represents one of only three records for the species mentioned in *Birds of South Dakota*, 3rd ed. (2002).

# IN MEMORIAM

Debra Palmer of Vermillion, South Dakota, died at her home on 5 November 2009.

Deb was a member of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union and worked for the past few years with the South Dakota Osprey Re-introduction at Yankton, SD, through the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Bird lovers in South Dakota will miss Deb's devotion and energetic work on behalf of the birds she, and all of us, love so much.

The Eagle Momsters group out of West Virginia was a very important group to Deb. To view an inspiring tribute to her, please go to the Eagle Momsters website at:

<http://eagletmomsters.blogspot.com/2009/11/in-loving-memory-of-deb-palmer-open.html>.

SDOU has received several gifts from fellow Eagle Momsters members who wished to show their support for Deb's great love of birds. The members of SDOU are all deeply touched and very grateful for these gifts.

The South Dakota Ornithologists' Union also wishes to express sincere sympathy to the family of Deb Palmer.

~Douglas Chapman, Sioux Falls, SD.

VOL. 61, NO. 4



*The Bald Eagle truly deserves the sobriquet "regal". Deb was involved with Eagle Momsters and especially enjoyed eagles.*

*Hughes County, SD.*

*Photo: Dan Streifel*

# EDITORIAL

## ***South Dakota Bird Notes* Identification Quiz.**

For both a little enjoyment and to help hone a few identification skills at the same time, on the back cover you will find the first *South Dakota Bird Notes* Bird Identification Quiz photo. The rules are simple. Any species used in a *SD Bird Notes* Quiz will:

- 1) Be a bird found in South Dakota,
- 2) Include the date that the photo was taken, as well as the location,
- 3) Have at least one definitive, identifiable field mark present, though you may have to look closely.

The first person to correctly identify the species will receive a small gift. All correct identifications will be credited in the following issue of *SD Bird Notes*.

Please send your identifications to Douglas Chapman, SDOU *SD Bird Notes* Editor (address on page 74); or, preferably, by e-mail to: [sfbirdclub@sio.midco.net](mailto:sfbirdclub@sio.midco.net).

Thank you, good luck and let the detective work begin. The photo is also available to view at <<<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/8110372@N06/4107070066/>>>>.

### **This photo was taken on 12 July 2009 in western Minnehaha County.**

While the bird featured in the photograph may be difficult to identify, the photo will show at least one identifiable field mark on the bird. If a reader has a bird photograph suitable for the quiz (using the guidelines noted above), please submit it for a future quiz.

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I also want to properly introduce the *SD Bird Notes* Youth Editor, Tucker J. Lutter. Some of you have met him—he was at the meeting in Pierre, 20-22 November 2009. Here is a brief introduction. See his column and a picture on page 76.

At sixteen years old Tucker's contributions to the world of birds is already pretty extraordinary. The second bird book he acquired was the gigantic Smithsonian guide, which he laughs was nearly as big as he was and got several smiles from local birders when he would show up to bird with them. Such is his desire for birding knowledge that a constant discussion about birds with Tucker is normal. His knowledge is matched by his desire to learn more. Never hogging a conversation, he asks as many questions as he answers. And he listens intently to any answers given; it keeps a guy on his toes. It is a real privilege to bird with him. A few items already on his resume:

- From 2005 -2008 he wrote and published a color newsletter with the title "Birding with Tucker". He also publishes a birding blog at: <http://birdingwithtucker.blogspot.com>. It is very worthwhile to check it out.
- At about ten years old, he named his front yard the "Woodpecker Acre Wildlife Refuge." That sign is still there. (See picture on page 76.)
- At an earlier age he named his yard the "Eastern Ridge Wildlife Refuge".
- He is a junior member of SDOU.

*Doug Chapman*



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See also at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/8110372@N06/4107070066/>  
Photo: Douglas Chapman, Minnehaha County, 07/12/09