

SOUTH DAKOTA Ornithologists' Union

Glaucous-winged Gull

Kingsbury County 4/18/2012

Photo: Ricky D. Olson



S O U T H



D A K O T A

B I R D

N O T E S

Vol. 64

June 2012

No. 2

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 membership: \$400; Family Life membership (one subscription to *Bird Notes*): \$500; Sustaining membership: \$40; Regular membership: \$20; Family membership (one household; one subscription to *SD Bird Notes*): \$25; Junior/Student membership: \$10; Library Subscription: \$30. Single and back copies: Members, \$5; non-members, \$6. All dues, contributions, 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 and change of address notices 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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Vol. 64

JUNE 2012

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

As millions of birds flood back into South Dakota for breeding, it can be difficult to realize that some of our breeding bird populations are not doing well. Here are some that are declining.

PURPLE MARTIN: Nationwide, **PURPLE MARTIN** populations have declined by 78% over the past 40 years and this species is entirely dependent on human-provided housing for reproduction. Paul Mammenga outlines new efforts to monitor and study this species in South Dakota in this issue of *SD Bird Notes*. If you see a banded bird, please let Paul know!



SPRAGUE'S PIPIT: This little-known species is a denizen of mid-height native grasslands in the northern tier of counties in South Dakota. No one is certain of the reason, but this species' population has declined precipitously in the last few years and is a candidate to be listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Here in South Dakota, we will have a role in whether this species survives.

OTHER NATIVE GRASSLAND SPECIES: As more sod is plowed under for agriculture and residential development, many native grassland species are disappearing. Species such as **FERRUGINOUS HAWK** and **LONG-BILLED CURLEW** are already quite rare. Other species such as **CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR**, **GRASSHOPPER SPARROW**, and **BAIRD'S SPARROW** are still common in certain parts of the state but are disappearing in former strongholds, especially in the eastern part of the state. One solution to preserving the grasslands is to keep the ranchers in ranching.

SAGEBRUSH BIRDS: Even though South Dakota doesn't have much sagebrush, the continual elimination and degradation of the sage we do have has contributed to a decline in sagebrush-dependent species. **GREATER SAGE-GROUSE**, **BREWER'S SPARROW**, and **SAGE THRASHER** are increasingly difficult to find in Fall River County and are just hanging on in Harding and Butte counties.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER: Land management practices, residential development, and natural events such as fire and pine bark beetle outbreaks all impact Black Hills breeding birds. Many woodpecker species are dependent on the availability of dead or diseased trees for nesting and foraging. In particular, **BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS**, the focus of a long-term radio telemetry study in the Black Hills, specialize on large tracts of trees recently killed by disease or fire. This habitat type is highly ephemeral and quite rare, prompting concerns that the disappearance of these tracts of dead trees will lead to the demise of this species.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Various organizations, students, researchers, and birders are studying some of these species and monitoring their populations. Join one of these efforts or start your own. Stay informed through articles in *South Dakota Bird Notes*, the SDOU fall conference, news media, the internet, and so forth. Financially support research efforts by contributing to SDOU endowment funds that help fund research and monitoring projects. If you are a landowner, learn how you can enhance bird habitat on your property. And, enjoy these special birds while they are still here in South Dakota.

Nancy Drilling

PURPLE MARTIN HAPPENINGS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

by Paul Mammenga

With the first sighting and arrival of a Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) on 30 March 2012 in Sioux Falls, I would like to share some exciting happenings regarding Purple Martins in South Dakota. Last year I and my brother, Dennis (who has a large nesting colony near Sioux Falls), put together a proposal “Tracking Purple Martins from South Dakota with Geolocator Devices” to the SD Department of Game, Fish & Parks' Wildlife Diversity small grant program. This proposal was accepted and funding was made available to purchase the geolocators. This funding was critical in being able to collaborate with the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) and Dr. Bridget Stutchbury from York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with ongoing research on Purple Martin migration. Last June, Kevin Fraser from York University arrived in South Dakota to assist and train us in deploying geolocators on 33 Purple Martins, 15 at my brother's colony on 42nd St. near 41st and Tea/Ellis road and 18 at my colony south of Columbia, SD. The hard work of looking for marked Purple Martins now begins. The Purple Martins carrying geolocators will need to be recaptured and the data “backpacks” sent to York University for data analysis and development of migration map information. We are hoping for a 50% return rate. This study will be continuing with plans to deploy 15 additional geolocators on these returning Purple Martins to collaborate with “multiple” migration research on returning Purple Martins conducted by York University and PMCA. This should produce some very exciting information on South Dakota Purple Martin migration once the data has been analyzed.

Beginning this summer, in cooperation with SD Game, Fish & Parks, we are planning to initiate a natal dispersal study on South Dakota Purple Martin nestlings. Plans are to band 400 to 500 nestlings using color leg bands (yellow with black coding; e.g. SD M 101) at nesting colonies in eastern South Dakota. What prompted this study was an event I witnessed at my colony last year. In early May, two adult male Purple Martins were in a battle over a nesting cavity when they ending up on the very wet grass. One male Purple Martin was too wet to obtain flight again, so I went out to pick the martin up. After capture, using a paper napkin to dry the Purple Martin off, I turned him over to see a metal leg band. Exciting! Where was this bird banded? So now with one banded martin at my colony and with the prospects of deploying geolocators, I was inspired to spend more time looking for any additional leg bands. Unbelievably, in early June when the subadults arrived I noticed a red color leg band on another male. After a couple of days, I was able to verify this band number using a spotting scope. I knew it was banded somewhere in Minnesota., as he band number coding began with a sideways MN. The banding location information from the Bird Banding Lab revealed a natal dispersal of 580 miles for the adult male. This martin was banded as a nestling in 2008 near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The subadult male with the red leg band was banded as a nestling in 2010 near Wilmar, Minnesota with a natal dispersal of 160 miles. (See Fig. 1) With plans for more banding of Purple Martin nestlings in South Dakota, hopefully more observations of leg bands will reveal

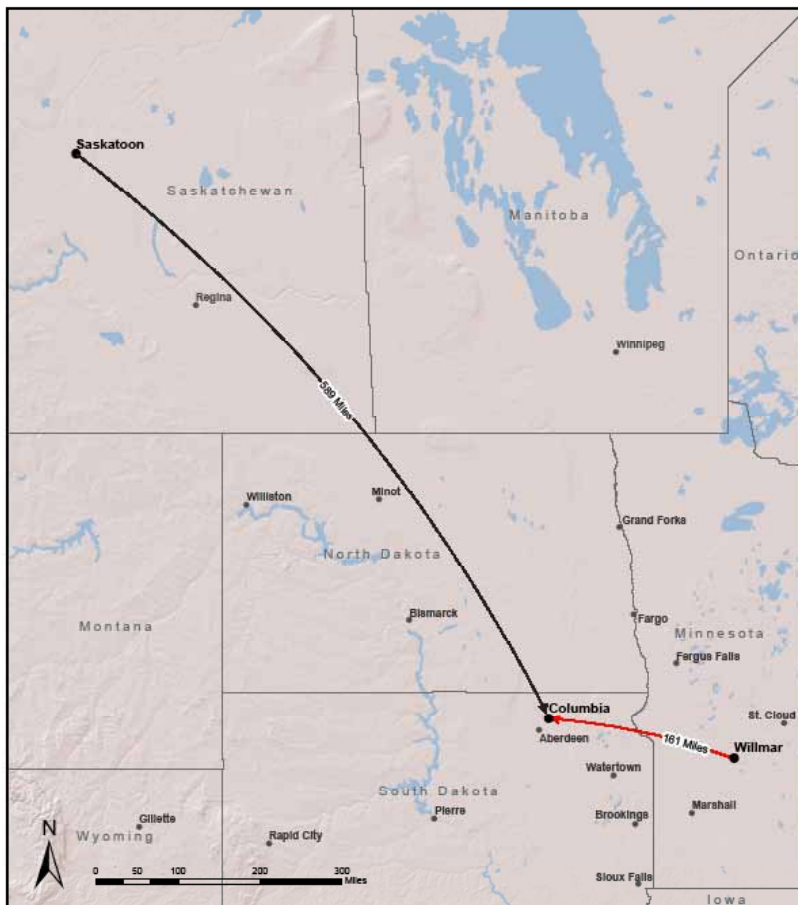
natal dispersal from active nesting colonies throughout the State of South Dakota and surrounding region.

Late last fall, I was asked by Perry D. Vogel of Grand Forks, North Dakota, to assist him in co-founding an organization for Purple Martins in our area. We are pleased to announce that The Purple Martin Association of the Dakotas has been established. The PMCA has accepted our organization as an affiliate and we were registered as a non-profit organization on 7 March 2012. The association is on Facebook and a website has been established at <www.purplemartinassociationdakotas@weedy.com>. Please check us out and pass on this information to others that have an interest in Purple Martins. All are welcome to stop by my brother's colony site on the western edge of Sioux Falls, or at my colony site near Columbia anytime to watch the Purple Martin activities and/or assist us by looking for any of the marked Purple Martins with geolocators.

Fig. 1



Natal Dispersal of Purple Martins



BIRDING ON THE EDGE: WESTERN LYON COUNTY, IOWA

by Douglas C. Harr

In the spirit of looking just over our borders for birds, and the new Canton, SD, CBC count circle including much of this land, this article on birding western Lyon County, Iowa, seems to fit right in. Gitchie Manitou is only eleven miles southeast of Sioux Falls and other areas mentioned are no more than 30 miles from Sioux Falls. Grateful thanks to the author for authorizing this revised reprint from Iowa Bird Life, Spring 2004. All Photos by the author.

Iowa's border with South Dakota is a good region in which to spend a little discovery time. The Big Sioux River valley in Lyon County offers some picturesque scenery, with scattered prairies, bur oak savannas, and oak-cedar woodlands. These "Little Loess Hills" really are an extension of one of Iowa's most notable landforms, although a bit more gentle and approachable than the steeper slopes ranging from Sioux City south to Missouri.

Sometimes called "the Gateway to the Black Hills" by local residents, the region's witty moniker has a little more truth to it than might be first apparent. Lying within what geologists refer to as the Northwest Iowa Plains (Prior 1991), the overall landscape often gives visitors a feeling of entering the Dakotas.

Any visit to Lyon County should start with a visit to Gitchie Manitou State Preserve (1), one of Iowa's oldest and most unique preserves (Figure 1). Formerly within the Iowa State Park system and now managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Bureau, the 121-acre outpost boasts a surprising mix of interesting fauna and flora. The preserve is accessed by a parking lot on its west boundary with Co. Hwy K10 (Apple Avenue). A one-half mile walk down a former entrance road leads to a three-fourths mile looped hiking trail. The trail takes visitors through riparian woodlands and across a wonderful mixed-grass prairie featuring prickly pear cactus and other western flora. Interesting birds to look for include Swainson's Hawk (nested here for some time in the 1980s), American Woodcock, both cuckoo species, an occasional intergrade (Red- x yellow-shafted) Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Western Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and Lark Bunting. Clay-colored Sparrows have been observed during the breeding season (Jackson et al. 1996) and must be considered potential nesters. Yellow-breasted Chats have been reported from the nearby Sioux Falls, SD, area and remain a possibility for discovery here. Sharp-tailed Grouse have been reported from nearby private lands a mile southeast of Gitchie Manitou; they were encountered and reported by an experienced, knowledgeable hunter. While visiting Gitchie Manitou, don't miss viewing the 1.8 billion year-old Sioux Quartzite formations. Among some of the oldest exposed rock in North America, this stone once was quarried here and nearby, and was used for many historic buildings in Sioux Falls, Sioux City,



Figure 1. Western Lyon County birding areas (1) Gitchie Manitou State Preserve; (2) Blood Run Historic Site; (3) Hidden Bridge/Peterson Prairie Wildlife Area; (4) Lake Pahoja County Park; Big Sioux River Wildlife Area; (5) Olson Tract, (6) Nelson/Lee Tract, (7) Kroger Tract; (8) Blankespoor Wildlife Area.

as well as paving the streets of such metropolis as Chicago and St. Louis. The preserve is unique because it has multiple dedications as a geological, archeological, historical, and botanical state preserve (Herzberg and Pearson 2001).

Two miles south of Gitchie Manitou is the Blood Run Historic Site (2), another worthwhile stop both for birds and ancient history. Owned by the State Historical Society of Iowa and managed by the Lyon County Conservation Board, the site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, Blood Run history is so interesting it might even distract visiting birders. Home to the Oneota, Ioway, and Omaha people from about a.d. 900 to 1720, as many as 3,000 people may have inhabited this small area of river valley at the cultural peak. Although many burial mounds were long ago destroyed by farming, more than 80 remain, making Blood Run one of Iowa's most important but least known archeological treasures. Access to Blood Run is a gravel road west from Apple Avenue (K10) (look for a directional sign).

From the parking area and visitor kiosk, trails lead through the mounds area, across remnant mixed-grass prairie, and down through overgrown savanna to the river's floodplain, crossing Blood Run Creek (waterproof footwear needed – think Wellies). Birds to look for here include many of the same varieties listed previously for Gitchie Manitou. In scattered riparian woods along the edge of the Big Sioux River, Green Herons and Orchard Orioles are common nesters, along with extra-limital Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. A Mountain Bluebird, reported to the author by local birders, was never verified but remains a good possibility for this western Iowa outpost, and the species has been recorded a few miles to the south. A Loggerhead Shrike nest in a plum thicket along the area's entrance road was active for many years, and Blood Run's brushy habitat component likely still offers good locations for shrikes. The dry prairies on west-facing slopes or hilltops provide good habitat for Western Meadowlark and Lark Sparrow. It appears that Blood Run might provide a probable location for rare Lark Bunting, a species more common just an hour west into South Dakota, as well as Burrowing Owls, which have nested periodically at the nearby town of Larchwood. Documented observations of either species by visiting birders are welcomed by Iowa DNR, Lyon County Conservation Board, and the Iowa Ornithologists Union. This historic site normally is open only during daylight hours and visitors should check the regulations sign for any changes.

Continuing downstream, the next large tract of public land encountered is Hidden Bridge-Peterson Prairie Wildlife Area (3), owned by the Lyon County Conservation Board. Access is from Apple Avenue (K10), 1.5 miles south of its intersection with Co. Hwy A18. Apple Avenue dead-ends on the wildlife area, and a parking area is provided. An abandoned road may be followed down to the river terrace, but there is no formal trail system, so birders are left to range these big prairie hills at will. A Black-billed Magpie once was observed from a high prairie ridge, and what appeared to be possible abandoned magpie nests later were reported in a couple of cottonwood trees (Harr 1986). Given periodic reports of magpies in the Sioux City vicinity, this species could be found here at any time. Other species of interest here include nesting Loggerhead Shrikes, one of which the author, Harold White, and Lee and Nancy Schoenewe once observed carrying a male Eastern Bluebird. A Mountain Bluebird was recorded here in 1996 (Kent 1996), and this remains good habitat for the possibility of future observations. The wonderful prairies and scattered brush at Hidden Bridge appeal to Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Field Sparrows, and Blue Grosbeaks, among others. Fall raptor migration viewing also can be excellent along the area's wind-swept ridges, and Northern Harriers nested on Peterson Prairie in 2003 (Dinsmore 2003).

To continue downstream, visitors must backtrack to Co. Hwy A18, then drive three miles east to K12 (Beech Avenue) and continue south on this paved road. If an extended visit is planned to the area (probable, given Lyon County's distance from almost anywhere), a good place to camp is Lake Pahoja County Park (4), just east of K12 on A26. Entrance and camping fees are charged. The 282-acre park, with an artificial lake, has excellent camping facilities and some camping cabins. Cabins are almost continuously filled in summer, how-

ever, so reservations often are needed months in advance. The park itself can offer suitable birding all year round, and it's a good place to see a wide variety of migrating waterfowl each fall and spring. Both Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls have been observed on park grasslands south of the lake, although no nests have been located. An interesting side note — the name “Pahoja” (pronounced pa-HO-ya) is an Oneota word translated as “dirty snow”.

Continuing two miles south on K12 from the intersection of K12 and A26, turn west onto 200th Street. After traveling 1.25 miles, the road turns into an unmaintained dirt road that descends a steep hill to a parking lot on an 80-acre parcel of DNR's Big Sioux River Wildlife Area. Do not attempt driving this road if it has rained within the previous three days or any time if ruts appear particularly deep! Leave vehicles at the top of the hill and to the side of the road. Anyone stuck downhill will find the nearest landowner very unfriendly about offering assistance! Known as the Olson Tract (5), this state land is mostly dense woodland on steep hills. It is situated in the midst of the largest contiguous forest on Iowa's side of the middle Big Sioux River. Birdlife consists of mostly woodland varieties typically found across the rest of Iowa. The site is rich in nesting Wild Turkey, Eastern Wood-Pewee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, a number of vireos, Ovenbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Eastern Towhee. Spotted Towhees occasionally may be found in migration. While Spotted Towhees are not known to nest here, discovery of the species, or Spotted x Eastern hybrids, remains distinctly possible (Silcock 2001). Although not hosting many unusual species, this site offers someone trying to enlarge their Lyon County list a considerable opportunity to add several deep woods species.



Blood Run Historic Site in Iowa. This very important historical and natural site also includes a new park on the South Dakota side of the Big Sioux River.

It's again necessary to backtrack to Hwy K12. Continue south one mile, then west three-fourths mile on 210th Street, south one mile on Beech Ave. (K12, then west again one-half mile on 220th. Lands on both sides of the road are part of the Big Sioux River Wildlife Area, Nelson-Lee Tract (6). This is an area of mixed oak-cedar woodlands, oak savanna, remnant prairies and agricultural fields, a deeply cutting stream, and a 3-acre impoundment, thus providing a variety of habitats for birds. No trail system exists, so birders again are on their own to explore the 337 acres of public land. Turkeys abound, and this area formerly was home to a number of Northern Bobwhite, at the northwestern limits of their Iowa range before the national population decline of recent years. Other unusual species (assumed nesting) for northwestern Iowa are American Woodcock and Whip-poor-will. The author has found that, from some of open hilltop ridges, the Nelson tract is a wonderful place to view raptors in fall migration each September and October. Some of the raptors observed personally here include Bald and Golden Eagles, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, and Prairie Falcon, along with more common species. Eastern Bluebirds are very abundant around this public area, nesting in hollow trees along creek bottoms and in the many houses placed on posts along roadsides in the vicinity. Blue Grosbeaks and Western Kingbirds may be commonly observed perched on roadside utility lines. The portion of land north of 220th Street (Lee Tract) was recently purchased through DNR's new State Wildlife Grants program and has not been fully explored for its birding opportunities. That makes it a ripe area for an ener-

getic birder to explore and perhaps secure some new Lyon County records.

For the next stop, reverse direction and return to Beech Avenue, continuing south as it zigzags its way to U.S. Hwy 18. Immediately south of U.S. 18 at this point is situated the Kroger Tract (7), at 454 acres the largest component of the Big Sioux Wildlife Area and the largest parcel of public timber on Iowa's side of the Big Sioux. Parking is available near the boat ramp access, just west along Hwy 18. One also can travel one-half mile east, turn south on Able Blvd., and follow a winding road uphill to a couple of parking areas located at the edge of hilltop fields and oak woodland. The first signed parking lot encountered is a good place to access much of the area. An old access road, now closed to vehicles, serves as a good walking trail. It descends through oak woodlands, ending up in abandoned weedy field on the river's floodplain terrace. Many birds found on this area are the same species as those listed previously for the Olson Tract.



*Gitche Manitou State Natural Area
11 miles southeast of Sioux Falls*

Final stop on our western Lyon County tour is the Lyon County Conservation Board-owned Blankespoor Wildlife Area (8). From the previously-described Kroger Tract, travel 1.25 miles south on Ashley Ave. to the intersection with Co. Hwy A50. Blankespoor Wildlife Area and the public parking lot are located immediately south of this "T" intersection. Habitat is a now-familiar mix of oak savanna, oak-cedar woodlands, small prairie remnants, and farm fields, with a couple of small impoundments. Acquired in the mid-1990s, this area has yet to be fully explored by birders and offers another great opportunity for some unexpected finds.

Public lands along the Big Sioux River, and farther downstream in Sioux County, form a "string of pearls" along this scenic valley. It has long been a dream of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, local county conservation boards, and South Dakota's Department of Game Fish and Parks, to create a major green belt between Sioux City and Sioux Falls. With respective populations of approximately 85,000 and 155,000 residents, and another 40,000 or so between the larger metropolitan centers, the river has become a major target for both outdoor recreation and rural housing developments. Should the latter predominate, this interesting ecological transition area between eastern and western United States could suffer. Some dedicated birding and new records of unusual species in both states might help in the struggle to keep the Big Sioux River corridor in a relatively natural condition.

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FLEDGLING TRACTS

JASON THIELE

Birding Hotspots Close to Home

Of all the things I like to do for recreation, I think there are only two activities that just can't possibly put me in a bad mood. Those two activities are birding and fishing. I think they both appeal to me for a lot of the same reasons. Both are outdoor activities that get me away from the noise and stress of daily life. Both are enjoyable to me whether I'm alone or with others. And both present plenty of challenges and surprises. When birding, there are certain species that are much more difficult to find than others. Still, if you search the right habitat at the right time and have a little luck on your side, they can be seen. Plus, there are those unexpected birds that show up every now and again – that unusual song coming from the woods that you can't quite place or that one shorebird in the flock that looks a little bit different from the others. Birds keep you guessing. Likewise, when fishing, you need to use the right bait at the right depth in the water around the right type of cover for the species you are trying to catch. But you really don't know what might tug at the end of your line. To me, the best thing about both birding and fishing is that they are not mutually exclusive activities. If I have a fishing pole in my hands, there's a good chance my binoculars are around my neck as well. Admittedly, my abilities at both activities suffer when I try to do both at once. I don't know how many times I've missed setting the hook on a fish because my attention was focused on a bird or how many birds have ducked out of sight before I could get a good look because I was reeling in a fish. That being said, I've gotten some of my best looks at many birds while fishing.

Although I could never completely choose one of these activities over the other, birding is superior to fishing in two respects. First of all, birders are almost undoubtedly a more honest lot than anglers. There's a reason they call lies "fish stories" and not "bird stories." It's always been fascinating to me how much the birding hobby relies on the honor system. Sure, SDOU and other such organizations require documentation for rare bird sightings to be accepted into their records, but overall, birders mostly tend to trust each other, and most do a pretty good job of being honest about what they've seen. I think birders generally tend to keep fewer secrets than anglers as well. I suppose there's good reason for that. If I find a spot where the fish are always biting and end up telling all of my friends about it, well, pretty soon there might not be many fish left. However, if I share my bird sightings, other birders won't take the birds away from the spot. I suppose an increase in birding pressure might cause the birds to leave the area, but I haven't come across too many places in South Dakota where the number of birders has been an issue. It's also interesting to me that birders have online forums to share their rare bird sightings so others can try to find them too. Anglers are much different—they have online forums to complain about how it's the state game and fish agency's fault

they can't catch any fish.

Birders and anglers are very much alike in one respect – both like to travel far and wide in search of more and better opportunities to enjoy their hobby. However, almost every birder and every angler has at least one spot close to home that he or she tends to frequent. You know, that one birding spot you find yourself returning to time and time again because it's easy to access and because you've had success there in the past. I like to think of these spots as the equivalent of what a fisherman might call his personal "honey hole."

I've lived in several places in the past few years, and I've had a number of personal birding haunts. On my parent's farm in northeast Nebraska, my favorite spot to bird is the pasture to the north of our house. It's big enough to attract some grassland birds, and the wooded draws add to the diversity, producing some interesting birds in every season. Every time I go back home, I take an hour or two to walk around this area and see how the bird community has changed since my previous visit. When I lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, my favorite birding area was actually a relatively little-used bike trail on the outskirts of the city that I frequently rode on evenings and weekends. When I lived in western Kentucky in 2008-2009, just about everywhere around me was a good birding spot, but I especially enjoyed the patch of woods right around my house. During many days in the spring and summer, I would wake up to a Wood Thrush singing, walk to work to the song of a Northern Parula, and fall asleep to a Chuck-will's-widow.

Brookings has been my home while working on my [recently completed—yay!] Master's degree. I've really enjoyed my time in Brookings because I've had such good birding opportunities very close to me – which could be said for just about anywhere in this state. During grad school, I have utilized my limited blocks of free time during the week by taking short birding trips. Often I have just taken a half hour or so at the end of the day to walk around one or two of my favorite spots in town. My checklists have generally not been very long, but I've picked up some pretty exciting birds. Sexauer Park, a tiny little city campground on the north edge of Brookings, has been a favorite spot of mine since the first time I birded there in February 2010. A small creek flows through a wooded area that attracts quite a few thrushes and warblers (including Blackburnian Warblers, the prettiest of them all, in my opinion) on some days in the spring and fall. There are big cottonwood trees that woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Wood Ducks seem to like. And there is plenty of shrubbery to attract various sparrows. Another one of my regular birding locations in Brookings is the Southbrook Nature Park, which was the once the city landfill. There are several small ponds in the park that occasionally bring in some water birds. I found a family of Green Herons there last summer. The wooded areas have produced a variety of colorful birds like Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Indigo Buntings, a Canada Warbler, and others. I've picked up Bobolinks

and Savannah Sparrows in the large grassy area in the middle of the park. This park actually gets fairly busy some days with people enjoying the outdoors, but oddly, I've only ever seen one other person there with binoculars. People are missing out.

For fun, I decided to pull up my eBird records and see just how productive my short outings to my favorite spots in Brookings have been. I was pleasantly surprised that I have seen 102 species of birds within the city limits of Brookings since I started keeping track in January 2011. My urban birding in Brookings even produced a life bird for me – White-winged Crossbills at the city cemetery during the 2011 Christmas Bird Count. For many of you reading this article, 102 species may not sound like that much, but there are plenty of people who wouldn't believe me if I told them that there were over 100 species of birds to be seen in the state, let alone in one town. Good birding is not far away from most people, and for beginning birders, it might take a while before they know enough of the birds moving through their hometowns to become a little bored with those species and start seeking out the many other species in the state.

I'm writing this article in North Dakota, where I am stationed for my current job with the USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. Several very good birding locations are located within an hour's drive of my residence, but I've already found a couple of favorite birding spots within about a 5-mile radius that serve well for my after-work outings during the week. Actually, I can walk to an oxbow



pond about 150 yards from the house I'm living in and find some nice birds on any given evening. One of the city parks in nearby Jamestown has also been fairly productive for migrants. By the time you are reading this, I will have changed location again. I'm spending part of this summer doing grassland bird surveys around Highmore, SD.

North Dakota Prairie Scene Photo: Doug Chapman 1/4/09

Because I think that there is no better way to unwind from a day of looking for birds than spending an evening looking for more birds, I will be again be seeking out some new birding hotspots. I am eager to begin this quest.

BIRDING THE SIOUX FALLS AREA: 1925 AND 2012, A COMPARISON

By Mick Zerr

Birders in the Sioux Falls area often bird around the perimeters of the city for about fifteen miles and to the west northwest to the vicinity of Wall Lake, Grass Lake, Beaver Lake, Weisensee/Englehardt Lakes, Lake Vermillion and Lost Lake for about 20 miles. We find that today all of the above are filled with water, and even large fish.....for now.

The March, 1925 Wilson Bulletin contains an article by Adrian Larson titled; “*The Birds of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Vicinity*”. In it, the areas covered in his list of birds and environmental descriptions are basically the same as the present Sioux Falls Bird Club route indicated above. That similarity gives us the opportunity to compare the two time periods for almost the same areas. Larson gave locations in which each species was seen in the Sioux Falls area. Almost all of these are species that were killed before identification was made, as was the norm for studying birds at that time.

Looking at the 1925 water areas, the article lists Wall, Grass, Beaver, and Lost Lakes, indicating that only one, Wall Lake, is an actual lake. The rest are described as “merely large sloughs”. It states that Wall Lake is 700 acres, which is much larger than its present 442 acres. Lake Vermillion is not mentioned in the article since it was not a lake until years later. The article mentions that the prairie is scattered with tree groves planted “fifty years ago by the homesteaders”, along with natural deciduous tree areas in hills, ravines and around lakes. Wild rice (*Zizania aquatica* L.) is mentioned often, as is wild celery, (*Vallisneria* L.), both as common marsh plants.

Species records from the article are rich with names that have been changed and species that are very rarely or never found in the area today. Often mentioned is the “Pinnated Grouse”, (Greater Prairie Chicken). This presently rare area bird also shows up on Christmas Bird Counts from the first area CBC done in 1911 - 1912, where 300 were reported in the Sioux Falls count.

Following is a partial list of birds listed in the 1925 article for the Sioux Falls area, including the obsolete name followed by the present name and a letter (R) indicating the species is very rare or not found in the area any more, and some comments.

- Holboell’s Grebe (Red-necked Grebe)
- Double Crested Cormorant. Listed a rare migrant that probably does not nest here. (From Larson’s article and W.H Over’s 1920 Birds of South Dakota, original edition, but in the 1946 revision he gives great detail on Cormorant nesting.)
- American Merganser (Common Merganser)
- Baldpate - (American Widgeon)
- Spoonbill - (Shoveler)
- Butter-ball - (Bufflehead)
- African Goose - (White-winged Scoter) R
- White Brandt - (Lesser Snow Goose)
- Brant - (White-fronted Goose)
- Hutchin’s Goose - (Cackling Goose) Note: with seven subspecies of Canada Goose, including two subspecies of Cackling G., it is hard to determine which species the Wilson article is indicating. Missing in the 1925 list is the CANG *maxima*, which has become the common breeder in the area today.
- Whistling Swan - (Tundra Swan), Here is what Larson says about this species: “Rare transient; several have been shot in past years. Fred Pruner mounted one in March,

1908. I saw another in a drug store window quite a few years ago but I do not remember the date; this particular one had been wounded and was alive when on exhibition”.

- Wood Duck - Larson lists this common species today as “Rare”.
- Bittern - (American Bittern)
- Little Brown Crane - (Lesser Sandhill Crane) - *R*
- King Rail - *R*
- Carolina Rail - (Sora)
- Florida Gallinule - (Since July 2011, Common Gallinule; previously, Common Moorhen)
- Mud-hen - (American Coot)
- Northern Phalarope - (Red-necked Phalarope)
- Avocet - (American Avocet) Listed as rare in the article, but more common now.
- Yellow-legs - (Lesser Yellowlegs)
- Western Willet - (Willet)
- Bob-white - (Northern Bobwhite) Quoting Larson, “Common resident. Nearly every grove on the prairie has its family of quail in the summer”.
- Pinnated Grouse - (Greater Prairie Chicken) Listed as a common resident.
- Ring-necked Pheasant - Quoting Larson, “A few were liberated about 1910, and are seen occasionally along the river south of the city”.
- Western Mourning Dove - He lists this subspecies (*marginella*) as the area bird.
- Turkey Buzzard - (Turkey Vulture) Larson lists it as an uncommon resident.
- Marsh Hawk - (Northern Harrier)
- Golden Eagle - Quoting Larson in the Wilson’s article, “Rare visitant. This and the Bald Eagle are the birds that are always shot whenever there is opportunity to do so, and later they are mounted to decorate some clubroom or den. Surely a poor monument for the King of Birds”.
- Bald Eagle - Listed as “rare”. Larson states that one was “taken” here in 1911.
- Pigeon Hawk - (Merlin)
- Sparrow Hawk - (American Kestrel)
- Long Eared- and Short Eared- owls, *R*, are listed as common breeders in the area.
- Arctic Horned Owl - (Subarctic Great Horned Owl)
- Burrowing Owl - *R* - (listed as a common summer breeding resident)
- Rain Crow (Yellow-billed Cuckoo) - *R* - Listed as a common summer breeding resident, along with the Black-billed Cuckoo. *R*
- Northern Flicker - (Northern/Yellow-shafted Flicker)
- Kingbird - (Eastern Kingbird)
- Phoebe - (Eastern Phoebe)
- Arkansas Kingbird - (Western Kingbird)
- Traill’s Flycatcher - (Willow and Alder flycatchers)
- Prairie, Saskatchewan and Hoyt’s Horned larks - There are at least 21 subspecies of Horned Lark. Larson indicates that all three subspecies listed were positively identified (from dead birds, of course).
- Magpie - *R*
- Northern Red-winged Blackbird and Red-winged Blackbird - Larson indicates positive in-lab identification of both subspecies.
- Meadowlark - (Eastern Meadowlark) *R* - Larson lists both this and the Western Meadowlark as common summer breeding residents.
- Bronzed Grackle - Is actually the subspecies of the Common Grackle we see locally today.
- Brewer’s Blackbird - Listed as a common resident, but uncommon today.
- English Sparrow - (House Sparrow)
- Slate-colored Junco - (Dark-eyed Junco)

- Dakota Song Sparrow - *Melospiza melodia juddi* - This, one of over 30 subspecies of Song Sparrow, was lab identified according to Larson. Breeding location was discovered as the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota.
- Towhee - (Eastern Towhee)
- Arctic Towhee - (Spotted Towhee)
- Lark Bunting - Listed as an uncommon summer resident that breeds in the Sioux Falls area.
- Purple Martin - Larson indicates that it is common where there are birdhouses, and Spring arrival average date is April 22, almost a week later than today's average for the area.
- Tree Swallow - Larson lists this presently common bird as uncommon in his time period.
- White-rumped Shrike - (Loggerhead Shrike)
- Grinnell's Water-thrush - (Northern Waterthrush)
- Maryland Yellowthroat - (Common Yellowthroat)
- Long-tailed Chat - (Yellow-breasted Chat)
- Willow Thrush - (Veery)
- Short-billed Marsh Wren - (Sedge Wren) Listed as rare in the article, common (but somewhat nomadic) today.
- Prairie Marsh Wren - (Marsh Wren)
- Long-tailed Chickadee - (Black-capped Chickadee)

Larson's list consists of 237 species for the Sioux Falls area. Most of South Dakota's species for the time period are listed in Over and Thoms *Birds of South Dakota*, first edition, 1920.

Larson also gives early and late arrival dates for migrants, which would be an interesting comparison to make separately. Even though the species list is confusing due to name changes etc., the article gives us a comparative look at the commonly birded areas around Sioux Falls, and the species found then and now. The comparison of new and old species names is always interesting and the similarities and differences in the species listed gives us an idea of trends over the 80+ years since the article was printed.

Sources:

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SEASONAL REPORTS

The 2011-2012 Winter Season

01 December 2011 to 29 February 2012

Compiled By: Jeffrey S. Palmer • College of Arts & Sciences • Dakota State University • Madison, SD 57042

Surpassing the previous high of 147 (set just last year), there were **149 species**, including 6 rarities, reported during the season this year. The ten-year (2001-2010) average is 136. Below, I have tried to highlight the more significant sightings (species that have been reported in 6 or fewer of the last 10 winter seasons, early/late dates, and species that are out of range). Finally, at the end is a list of species (17) that were not reported this year and might be expected during the Winter Season. A species is placed on the list if it was not reported this year but had been reported during winter in at least 2 of the previous 5 years. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of consecutive years (up to 4) that the species has appeared on the list during the season.

Greater White-fronted Goose All Reports: 24 Dec Lyman RDO; 14 Jan Brule JLB, LB; 14 Jan Hughes JSP; 11 Feb Hughes RDO; 22 Feb Yankton GJS; 25 Feb Charles Mix KP

Snow Goose reported 07 Jan Brookings JSP; 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 14 Jan Brule JLB, LB; 21 Jan Brule ND; 23 Jan Stanley RDO; 26 Jan Hughes SS; 02 Feb Brown GO

Ross's Goose reported 17 Dec Lake JSP; 24 Dec Lyman RDO; 04 Jan Stanley RDO; 14 Jan Brule JLB, LB; 23 Jan Stanley RDO

Cackling Goose reported 09 Jan Pennington RSL, JLB, LB, GKH; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 13 Jan Stanley SS; 14 Jan Brule JLB, LB; 14 Jan Hughes JSP; 18 Jan Stanley DB; 21 Jan Charles Mix KP; 23 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 14 Feb Grant BJU

Trumpeter Swan Only Report: **07 Jan Bennett JLB, LB**

Wood Duck reported 17 Dec Lake JSP; 01 Jan Lawrence SW; 02 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 14 Jan Hughes JSP; 23 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 26 Jan Lawrence JLB, LB; 24 Feb Stanley DB

Gadwall reported 21 Dec Charles Mix RM; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 15 Jan Pennington RSL, JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 20 Jan Charles Mix RM

American Wigeon reported 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 26 Feb Fall River JLB, ND; 26 Feb Hughes RDO

American Black Duck reported **14 Jan Hughes JSP; 29 Feb Stanley SS**

Northern Shoveler reported 01 Jan Pennington RDO; 01 Jan Stanley RSL; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 22 Jan Hughes KM; 23 Feb Stanley RDO

Northern Pintail reported 05 Dec Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 13 Jan Charles Mix RM; 14 Jan Brule JLB, LB; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 18 Jan Pennington JLB; 20 Jan Hughes DB; 21 Jan Brule ND

Green-winged Teal reported 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 05 Jan Hughes RDO; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 16 Jan Meade EEM; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 29 Jan Hughes KM

Canvasback reported 03 Dec Yankton JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH

Redhead reported 10 Jan Grant BJU; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 15 Jan Stanley JSP; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 01 Feb Stanley DB; 05 Feb Hughes DB; 25 Feb Lake JSP

Ring-necked Duck reported 21 Dec Brown GO; 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 15 Jan Stanley JSP; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH

Greater Scaup reported 04 Jan Stanley RDO; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 22 Jan Charles Mix RDO

Lesser Scaup reported 21 Dec Brown GO; 04 Jan Stanley RDO; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 09 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 22 Jan Charles Mix RDO; 23 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 24 Feb Stanley DB

Long-tailed Duck reported 18 Dec Yankton KP; 02 Jan Charles Mix CA; 16 Feb Charles Mix JLB, LB

Bufflehead reported 08 Jan Lawrence RSL; 13 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 21 Jan Charles Mix KP

Common Goldeneye reported 10 Jan Day BJU; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 14 Jan Butte ND; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Pennington RSL, JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 21 Jan Charles Mix KP; 06 Feb Brown BJU

Barrow's Goldeneye reported **18-24 Jan Charles Mix RM and others**

Hooded Merganser reported 14 Dec Day WS; 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 14 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 17 Jan Charles Mix RM; 14 Feb Grant BJU

Red-breasted Merganser reported 17 Dec Stanley RDO; 07 Jan Lyman RDO; 19 Jan Charles Mix RM, JLB, LB

Ruddy Duck All Reports: 03 Dec Yankton JSP; 14 Dec Day WS

Common Loon All Reports: 10 Dec Sully KM; **04 Jan Charles Mix ND**

Pied-billed Grebe All Reports: **03 Dec Yankton JSP; 18 Dec Brown GO; 25 Dec Sully RDO; 29 Dec Fall River JSP; 02 Jan Fall River JSP**

Horned Grebe All Reports: **02 Dec Sully KM; 04 Dec Stanley RDO; 10 Dec Sully KM**

Red-necked Grebe All Reports: **02 Dec Sully KM; 28 Dec Gregory RM**

Western Grebe All Reports: 02 Dec Sully KM; 03 Dec Hughes KM; 18 Dec Brown GO; 21 Dec Brown KCJ, GO; **25 Dec Sully RDO**

American White Pelican All Reports: **07 Dec Charles Mix RM; 10 Dec Charles Mix RM**

Double-crested Cormorant All Reports: **31 Dec Stanley RDO; 02 Jan Lyman DB; 06 Jan Hyde SS**

Great Blue Heron All Reports: 05 Dec Charles Mix RM; 21 Dec Brown GO; **04 Jan Charles Mix GJS**

Northern Harrier reported 14 Jan Brown GO; 14 Jan Hand JSP; 15 Jan Stanley JSP; 15 Jan Pennington RSL; 15 Jan Harding CEM; 15 Jan Custer RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix KP; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 17 Jan Pennington RSL; 21 Jan Charles Mix KP; 21 Jan Custer RSL; 21 Jan Harding CEM; 21 Jan Jones ND; 26 Jan Hand SS

Cooper's Hawk reported 07 Jan Harding CEM; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 13 Jan Sully MO; 15 Jan Stanley KM; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 22 Jan Brule RDO; 26 Jan Fall River ND; 28 Jan Minnehaha CA

Northern Goshawk reported 07 Jan Harding CEM; 08 Jan Hughes RDO, DB; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 15 Jan Stanley KM; 22 Jan Hughes KM; 26 Jan Hand SS; 30 Jan Brown GO

Ferruginous Hawk reported 14 Jan Harding CEM; 14 Jan Hughes JSP, JLB, LB; 14 Jan Hyde JLB, LB; 15 Jan Stanley JSP; 17 Jan Sully DB; 21 Jan Jones ND; 01 Feb Stanley DB

Merlin reported 28 Dec Lawrence SW; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 13 Jan Potter SS; 13 Jan Stanley MO; 15 Jan Sully KM; 18 Jan Hughes DB; 20 Jan Stanley KM; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA; 26 Jan Pennington RSL

Gyrfalcon reported 19 Dec Stanley DB; 27 Dec Jones GO; 21 Jan Stanley KM; 05 Feb Sully KM; 14 Feb Grant BJU

Virginia Rail All Reports: **20 Feb Lawrence EK; 22 Feb Lawrence JLB, LB; 27 Feb Bon Homme RM**

American Coot reported 21 Dec Brown GO, KCJ; 13 Jan Sully DB; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 26 Jan Hughes SS

Killdeer reported 13 Jan Meade EEM; 13 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH; 04 Feb Meade JLB

Wilson's Snipe All Reports: 29 Dec Fall River JSP; 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 17 Jan Meade EEM; 04 Feb Meade JLB; 22 Feb Lawrence JLB, LB

Black-legged Kittiwake reported **19 Dec Stanley RDO; 21 Dec Hughes RDO; 04 Jan Charles Mix ND**

Bonaparte's Gull reported 12 Dec Stanley RDO; **02 Jan Charles Mix CA**

Franklin's Gull reported **07 Jan Gregory RDO; 13 Jan Charles Mix RM, JLB, LB**

Ring-billed Gull reported 07 Jan Gregory RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix KP; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 19 Jan Hughes RDO; 29 Jan Stanley SS

California Gull reported **12 Jan Hughes MO, DB; 14 Jan Charles Mix RM; 19 Jan Hughes RDO; 18 Feb Charles Mix RM; 20 Feb Stanley RDO**

Thayer's Gull reported 19 Dec Stanley RDO; 19 Jan Hughes RDO; 21 Feb Stanley RDO

Iceland Gull reported **18 Jan Hughes SS; 09 Feb Stanley DB**

Lesser Black-backed Gull Only Report: 04 Dec Stanley RDO

Glaucous Gull reported 06 Jan Hyde SS; 07 Jan Gregory RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix KP; 19 Jan Hughes RDO; 22 Jan Charles Mix RDO

Mourning Dove reported 18 Dec Yankton GJS; 07 Jan Brown GO; 08 Jan Charles Mix RM; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA; 22 Jan Lake JSP; 22 Jan Lincoln BFH; 29 Jan Charles Mix KP

Eastern Screech-Owl reported 04 Feb Harding CEM, ND

Snowy Owl reported **29 Dec Charles Mix (37) RM; 30 Dec Meade SW; 15 Jan Brown MO; 15 Jan Charles Mix (10) KP; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Sully (14) KM; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 16 Jan Hyde JSP; 16 Jan Sully KM; 22 Jan Douglas KP; 11 Feb Harding CEM**

Barred Owl Only Report: **07 Feb Grant BJU**

Long-eared Owl reported 11 Dec Brown GO; 13 Dec Perkins ND; 03 Jan Walworth SS, RDO; 12 Jan Stanley MO; 16 Jan Stanley RDO; 29 Jan Hughes KM; 04 Feb Sully KM; 06 Feb Marshall BJU; 25 Feb Butte EK

Short-eared Owl reported 19 Dec Deuel BJU; 07 Jan Lyman RDO; 14 Jan Stanley JLB, LB; 20 Jan Stanley KM; 30 Jan Jones RDO; 03 Feb Harding ND; 07 Feb Edmunds BJU

Northern Saw-whet Owl reported 17 Dec Hughes KM; 07 Jan Harding CEM; 08 Jan Stanley KM; 21 Jan Harding CEM; 28 Jan Stanley KM; 03 Feb Sully KM; 07 Feb Grant BJU

Belted Kingfisher reported 01 Jan Minnehaha MS; 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 13 Jan Sully MO; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 21 Jan Hughes DB; 22 Jan Charles Mix RDO; 23 Jan Pennington JLB, LB, GKH

Lewis's Woodpecker reported 08 Jan Lawrence RSL; 28 Jan Meade RSL; 30 Jan Lawrence RDO; 18 Feb Pennington JLB

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Only Report: **23 Jan Charles Mix RM**

Black-backed Woodpecker All Reports: 15 Jan Custer RDO; 02 Feb Custer JLB, LB; 05 Feb Custer RSL

Pileated Woodpecker All Reports: 10 Jan Grant BJU; 14 Feb Grant BJU; 16 Feb Marshall GO; 19 Feb Roberts RDO, SS

Gray Jay All Reports: 30 Dec Custer JSP; 02 Jan Lawrence RDO; 21 Jan Custer JLB, LB

Pinyon Jay All Reports: 31 Dec Meade AKB; 01 Jan Meade RDO; 26 Jan Meade JLB, LB

Clark's Nutcracker Only Report: **02 Feb Custer JLB, LB**

Black-billed Magpie reported 09 Dec Hughes DB; 09 Dec Stanley DB; 17 Dec Hughes KM; 05 Jan Hughes SS; 07 Jan Lyman RDO; 17 Jan Stanley RDO

Pygmy Nuthatch All Reports: 03 Dec Fall River DB; 18 Dec Pennington JLB; 22 Dec Pennington JLB; 15 Jan Custer RDO

Winter Wren reported 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 15 Jan Hughes JSP

Marsh Wren All Reports: **02 Jan Fall River JSP; 20 Feb Lawrence EK**

American Dipper All Reports: 02 Dec Lawrence DB; 21 Dec Pennington JLB; 01 Jan Lawrence SW; 26 Jan Lawrence JLB, LB; 30 Jan Lawrence RDO

Eastern Bluebird reported 04 Jan Charles Mix RM; 13 Jan Hughes MO; 22 Jan Charles Mix ND; 18 Feb Gregory JSP

Townsend's Solitaire reported 07 Jan Brookings JSP; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 15 Jan Brown MO; 26 Jan Beadle SS; 31 Jan Brown GO; 06 Feb Day BJU

Varied Thrush All Reports: **22 Jan Beadle RDO; 26 Jan Beadle SS**

Brown Thrasher Only Report: **01 Dec Charles Mix RM**

Bohemian Waxwing reported 10 Jan Grant BJU; 14 Jan Walworth MO; 15 Jan Stanley KM; 02 Feb Brown GO; 06 Feb Marshall BJU

Yellow-rumped Warbler reported 07 Jan Stanley KM; 15 Jan Hughes JSP; 15 Jan Union DS; 23 Jan Charles Mix RM

Spotted Towhee Only Report: **30 Dec Hughes KM**

Vesper Sparrow Only Report: **08 Dec Faulk MMM**

Fox Sparrow Only Report: **03 Dec Yankton JSP**

Song Sparrow reported 14 Dec Day WS; 17 Dec Hughes KM; 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 07 Jan Pennington RSL; 04 Feb Meade JLB; 25 Feb Pennington RSL

White-throated Sparrow Only Report: 03 Dec Yankton JSP

Harris's Sparrow reported 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 07 Jan Lake JSP; 12 Jan Clay (6) GJS; 21 Jan Lake JSP; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA; 26 Jan Hughes RDO

White-crowned Sparrow reported 30 Dec Hughes KM; 02 Jan Fall River JSP; 12 Jan Clay GJS; 26 Jan Hughes RDO; 29 Jan Clay GJS

Northern Cardinal reported 28 Dec Jackson JLB; 09 Feb Pennington JLB; 19 Feb Pennington RSL

Red-winged Blackbird reported 13 Jan Lyman JLB, LB; 13 Jan Stanley MO; 14 Jan Marshall GO; 15 Jan Jones JSP; 21 Jan Jones ND; 28 Jan Brookings JSP; 29 Jan Charles Mix KP

Western Meadowlark reported 26 Dec Brown GO; 07 Jan Bennett JLB, LB; 13 Jan Lyman JLB; 13 Jan Stanley SS; 14 Jan Sully KM; 20 Jan Charles Mix RM; 20 Jan Stanley KM; 22 Jan Lincoln BFH; 28 Jan Pennington JLB

Yellow-headed Blackbird All Reports: **11 Dec Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Brown MO**

Rusty Blackbird reported 14 Jan Clay DS; 14 Jan Hand JSP; 14 Jan Marshall GO; 28 Jan Brookings JSP; 29 Jan Jones SS; 06 Feb Marshall BJU; 11 Feb Clay DS

Brewer's Blackbird All Reports: **14 Dec Day WS; 21 Dec Brown GO; 28 Dec Brown GO; 15 Jan Brown MO; 28 Jan Brookings JSP**
Common Grackle reported 08 Jan Butte RSL; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 13 Jan Douglas KP; 14 Jan Clay DS; 28 Jan Deuel BJU; 03 Feb Clay GJS; 23 Feb Lake JSP
Brown-headed Cowbird All Reports: **19 Dec Deuel BJU; 28 Jan Brookings JSP; 02 Feb Jones RDO; 06 Feb Jones SS; 11 Feb Clay DS; 27 Feb Lyman ND**
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch reported **14 Jan Meade ND; 15 Jan Custer RDO; 17 Jan Custer KH; 04 Feb Meade JLB**
Pine Grosbeak reported **05 Jan Brown GO; 13 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Walworth MO; 26 Jan Beadle SS; 06 Feb Marshall BJU; 07 Feb Brown BJU; 07 Feb Edmunds BJU; 08 Feb Walworth DB**
Red Crossbill reported 17 Dec Brookings KCJ; 02 Jan Shannon ND; 15 Jan Minnehaha MS; 19 Jan Minnehaha KP; 06 Feb Day BJU
White-winged Crossbill reported **14 Jan Walworth MO; 15 Jan Custer RDO; 15 Jan Minnehaha MS; 19 Jan Minnehaha KP; 28 Jan Brookings JSP; 06 Feb Day BJU; 06 Feb Marshall BJU**
Common Redpoll reported 02 Jan Shannon ND; 10 Jan Grant BJU; 12 Jan Clay GJS; 12 Jan Stanley RDO, MO; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA; 26 Jan Lawrence JLB, LB; 03 Feb Clay GJS
Evening Grosbeak All Reports: 01 Jan Lawrence RDO; 08 Jan Lawrence RSL; 26 Jan Lawrence JLB, LB

Reports Requiring Acceptance By The Rare Bird Records Committee

Blue-winged Teal 21 Dec Charles Mix RM
Harlequin Duck 15 Dec – 29 Feb Canyon Lake, Pennington County JLB and others
Horned Grebe 25 Dec Sully RDO; 05 Jan Hughes SS
Double-crested Cormorant 18 Jan Stanley DB
Spotted Sandpiper 30 Dec Pennington ND
Franklin's Gull 09 Feb Stanley DB; 20 Feb Charles Mix RM
Great Black-backed Gull 03-08 Dec Hughes and Stanley RDO, KM
Chipping Sparrow 26 Jan Meade JLB, LB; 21 Feb Pennington APB; 29 Feb Minnehaha MRZ
Savannah Sparrow 03 Jan Charles Mix RF, RM

Species Expected But Not Reported

White-winged Scoter (3), Ruffed Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse (2), Eared Grebe, Sandhill Crane (2), Dunlin (3), Mew Gull, Barn Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker (2), American Three-toed Woodpecker (3), Carolina Wren (3), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Bluebird, Hermit Thrush (2), Gray Catbird (2), Swamp Sparrow, Great-tailed Grackle

Contributing Observers

CA	Chris Anderson	EEM	Ernest E. Miller
DB	Doug Backlund	KM	Kenny Miller
JLB	Jocelyn L. Baker	GO	Gary Olson
APB	Addison & Patricia Ball	RDO	Ricky D. Olson
AKB	Anna K. Ball	MO	Mark Otnes
LB	Lynn Barber	JSP	Jeffrey S. Palmer
DC	Doug Chapman	KP	Kelly Preheim
ND	Nancy Drilling	MS	Mark Schmidtbauer
RF	Richard Filby	GJS	Gary & Jan Small
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EK	Elizabeth Krueger	JT	Jason Thiele
RSL	Richard S. Latuchie	BJU	Bill J. Unzen
RM	Ron Mabie	SW	Scott Weins
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CEM	Charlie Miller		

BIRDING HOTSPOTS IN SD

Spring of 2012 Birds of Note

RICKY D. OLSON

The spring of 2012 brought a few rare birds to South Dakota. In the Pierre area a **Laughing Gull** and **White-winged Dove** were observed. On a mudflat in Sully County a female **Ruff** (Reeve) appeared. A **Glaucous-winged Gull** in breeding plumage was discovered in Kingsbury County and seen later in Miner County. (See below.)

Bill Unzen reported a **Black Vulture** near Pringle, SD and the **Chucks-will's-widow** near Yankton, SD, was heard by several people again this year (this species *must* be in other locations not yet discovered by birders). Lynn Barber and Jocie Baker sighted a **Neotropic Cormorant** in Brule County. There actually may have been two, an adult and a first year bird. On 3 May 2012, a surprised person in Sioux Falls, SD, took a photo of a **Yellow Rail** on his driveway. On 13 May 2012 a Little Blue Heron was observed at Stone Lake in Sully County, and on 17 May 2012 two **Tri-colored Herons** were seen near Hecla SD.

19 May 2012 a **Kentucky Warbler** was found in Newton Hills State Park and on the same date a **White-eyed Vireo** was found in Sherman Park Sioux Falls.

I predict (hope?) that a rare bird will be discovered during the Spring SDOU meeting near Edgemont, SD, 1-3 June 2012.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL AT LAKE THOMPSON

Ricky D. Olson, Ft. Pierre

On 18 April 2012, Scott Stolz and I were checking out a second/third hand report of a Brown Pelican that Scott had received. It was supposed to be in a swamp on the west side of Lake Thompson. We looked for the pelican without success. There were, however, many gulls on the gravel road through the swamp. I noted a gull which looked "different". At first I thought it was an adult Iceland Gull. While not expected to be observed here, it was certainly at least plausible. As I began digiscoping photos, I took further note. In a short time, upon consideration, I decided that an Iceland Gull identification didn't fit. First, the short wing tip projection was all wrong for Iceland Gull, and second, it was a big, bulky gull with a stout bill. Then it dawned on me: perhaps it was a Glaucous-winged Gull! With this tentative identification, Scott and I delved into our various bird guides to confirm. We agreed it was a Glaucous-winged and immediately called Jeff Palmer and asked him to post the sighting to the listserve. While this is potentially South Dakota's third state record of the species, it is the first sighting of an adult in the state. See the cover of this issue for a photo of the bird, taken one-half mile east of 435th Avenue on 212th Street.

BOOK REVIEW

DAN TALLMAN

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD. Vol. 16. Tanagers to New World Blackbirds. J. del Hoyo, A. Elliot, and David Christie, Eds. (2011). Lynx Edicions, Barcelona \$278.29. (www.hbw.com.) 894 pp.

The final volume of the monumental *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is published! This book covers tanagers, cardinals, buntings and sparrows, and blackbirds. The most stunning birds of the world are among these families. As in previous volumes, the birds are illustrated with both spectacular photographs and superb illustrations. In all, this volume contains 81 color plates and 499 photographs! Different sexes and races are often included.

Readers of our reviews of previous volumes will be familiar with these books' layout. An introductory essay covers an aspect of ornithology, in this case climate change and its effect on birds. This essay is a must-read for anyone interested in bird conservation.

Next each family account includes a summary of what is currently known about the family, with superb photographs of representative species. These chapters include descriptions of bird taxonomy and behavior.

Following the family chapter is a section that includes every species from each family. These sections include range maps and gorgeous color paintings of the world's birds. Range, habitat, ecology, and behavior are all briefly described for each species. Of special interest, often fairly depressing, is an inclusion of conservation status.

All of the volumes in the *Handbook* are exceptionally well written. If you could read every volume, you would end up with an amazing wealth of ornithological information. Even casual reading will greatly enhance your knowledge and appreciation of birds. If you do not devote much effort in reading, the color photographs, including at least representatives of all the world's birds, make the handbook unique among ornithological publications.

As always, the cost of the series seems daunting. As I have written before, on a per-family basis, this cost is not prohibitive compared to buying separate books on each family. If you do not feel you can afford these books, you should make every effort to have your local library procure copies.

Is this volume the end of the line for the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*? No. Due to be published this fall is a special volume—recently discovered species and an index to all of the volumes in the series. At least 52 new species have been discovered during the last 20 years. These include birds that are outright newly discovered, and others elevated to species-hood through genetic analysis. Two additional volumes are under preparation—illustrated checklists of the birds of the world. One volume will cover nonpasserines, the other passerines. These volumes will include short species descriptions along with color paintings of all the world's birds. We should see the first of these volumes late this year. Finally, the publishers of the *Handbook* are launching a website to keep the entire series updated. This site will include audio and video aspects not possible on a printed page. Readers will also be able to keep notes on the webpages. This service will be available for an annual fee, which the publishers promise will be minimal. *Dan Tallman, 2120 Taylor Ct., Northfield MN 55057.*

SD BIRD NOTES ID QUIZ

DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

ANSWER TO BIRD QUIZ #3 (cover photo of *SD Bird Notes* Vol 63, No 4)

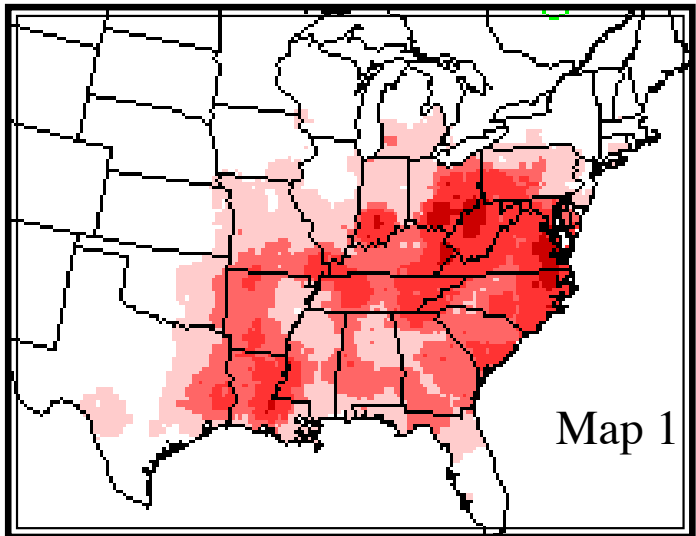
M*ea culpa*, folks. It seems I outsmarted myself with the species I picked for the *SD Bird Notes* bird ID Quiz Number 3. (Please find the photo at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/8110372@N06/6842022209/in/photostream>). It was a bit presumptuous, and I apologize. I had thought to call attention to a bird nobody has seen in South Dakota for about ninety years. The theory being, if no one knows how to spot this most desired bird, it will be much harder to identify and document if (when?) seen again. To use a sixties term, the goal was to "raise consciousness". Alas, since there were no correct answers submitted as of press time I failed, and not my readers.

In the March issue of *SD Bird Notes*, I gave three hints to aid identification:

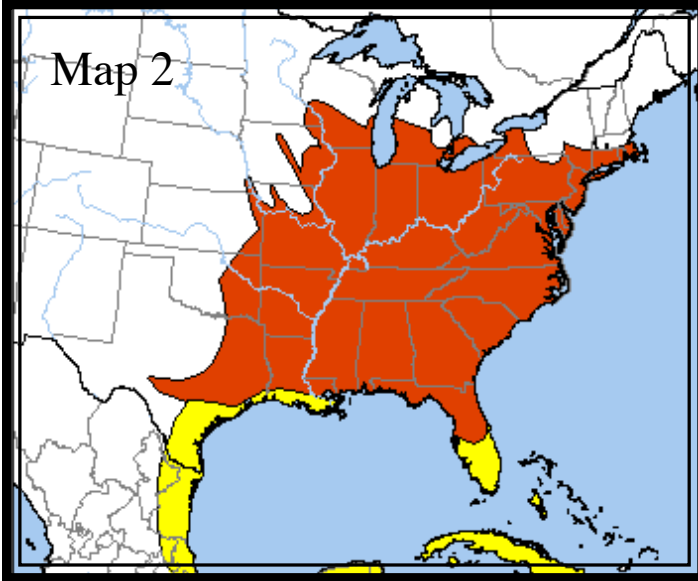
#1 "*I had to go EAST for a photograph.*" Thus, the bird must be found to the east of South Dakota much more reliably.

#2 "*Think "old" records as well as "modern" records.*" A quick look in *Birds of South Dakota, 3rd Ed.* shows that the last SD record was 1921.

#3 "*Check tail length and primary projection.*" With careful looks at the various field guides for *Empidonax* help, one finds the following: tail length (long) and primary projection (long) as well as breast color (white lower, pale grayish throat), greenish/olive upper-parts and a long broad-based bill with yellow lower mandible. Also, the overall "look" (JIS) of a larger empid, make this bird an **Acadian Fly-catcher**".



The only South Dakota records are from what is now the Adams Preserve area in the very far southeast corner of SD along the Missouri River. This makes a great deal of sense, as this is a bird of dense riparian areas in the Southeast United States.



The bird does breed in a few scattered areas of Southeast Minnesota and eastern Iowa. (See maps. The first map is a map of data collected from Breeding Bird Survey routes. The second is the breeding range, taken from

sdakotabirds.com, Terry Sohl's website.) As can be seen, the logical progression upstream on the Missouri River should (and did) surely bring a few "brave" **Acadians** to southeast South Dakota.

Thus, it is probably just a matter of time until the right birder in the right spot at the right time sees (and hopefully hears) this species again in South Dakota.

As with most *empidonax* flycatchers, voice is without question the most reliable identification feature. Listen closely for the *FRITZ-bew* of the Willow, the *che-BEK* of the Least, or the Alder singing *FEE-bee-o*. But Acadians sing a very loud, easily identifiable *PITZ-zzah*, sometimes described as "a bird sneezing". David Swanson, Secretary of the SDOU Rare Bird Records Committee stated, "There are indeed distinguishing field marks, but I don't think we could accept a new record of **Acadian Flycatcher** without a vocalization tape".

So **Acadian Flycatcher** was a washout as a quiz bird. Again, I am sorry for making this exercise so difficult.

But, at least, now many birders are perhaps aware that this is a bird of great interest to South Dakotans, and should be kept in mind when birding our state's Southeast corner.



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