



South Dakota

Bird  Notes

Photo credit: American Avocet, Brown Co. 5/21/2017, Kelly Preheim

South Dakota Bird Notes

Note from the Editor Nancy Drilling

Starting with this issue I am the new editor of South Dakota Bird Notes. I've taken this position with a great deal of excitement but also with some nervousness. I'm a little nervous because of the big shoes I am filling. Doug Chapman, the editor for the past 10 years, did a great job and I hope to be able to continue his legacy. Many thanks to Doug for his leadership and hard work.

A little about myself. I was born and raised in Iowa. Currently I am a biologist with the non-profit organization Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (formerly Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory). I have conducted bird survey and research work in South Dakota since 2005, and have lived in Rapid City since 2011. In the course of my research and many birding adventures, I have had the pleasure of experiencing many of South Dakota's inhabitants, both avian and human. I have discovered that there are many individuals, organizations, academics, and agencies that are working with and for birds in South Dakota. I hope to highlight many of their efforts in Bird Notes. Of course we will continue with a mix of science and birding news, as well as keeping you informed of SDOU meetings and happenings.

The Bird Notes editorship, as with all SDOU officer positions, is a volunteer position. We rely on all of you for content and ideas. So don't be shy, send me your ideas and articles! I can be reached at SDBNeditor@gmail.com.

ANNOUNCEMENT – MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

Time to renew your SDOU membership or join SDOU. Dues have remained the same for 2018:

Sustaining membership	\$40
Regular membership	\$20
Family membership	\$25
Junior/Student membership	\$10

There are also *Life memberships*; see the inside cover of your mailing label for details.

You can renew online using PayPal on the Membership page at www.sdou.org. Or you can send a check (payable to South Dakota Ornithologists' Union) to the SDOU Treasurer, Rosemary Draeger, 2520 E. Whisper Trail, Sioux Falls, SD, 57108.

Minutes of the SDOU Board of Directors Meeting

14 May 2016, Oacoma, SD

Editor's Note: SDOU meeting minutes are not published in Bird Notes until they have been approved at a subsequent meeting. Thus the published minutes are up to one year old.

President Roger Dietrich called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM.

Elected Directors Present: Scott Stolz, Kelly Preheim, Ron Mabie, Linda Johnson, Bill Bossman, Mark Otnes, Gene Hess, Doug Chapman, Mick Zerr, Richard Latuchie, Roger Dietrich, Duane Weber

Elected Directors Absent: Chris Anderson (excused absence), Gary Olson (excused absence), and KC Jensen

Past President Directors Present: Jocelyn Baker, Nelda Holden, Todd Jensen, Ricky Olson, and Rosemary Draeger

Past President Directors Absent: Nancy Drilling, Jeffrey Palmer, David Swanson (excused absence), Gilbert Blankenspoor, Bruce Harris, Rex Riis, Robb Schenck, Dennis Skadsen, Dan Tallman, and J. David Williams

Minutes of the Fall 2015 meeting

Roger Dietrich read the minutes which were approved with a notation that the dates of the Ft. Randall Bird Festival have been changed to the third weekend rather than the first. Jensen/Johnson - Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Rosemary Draeger announced that the investments are earning small amounts but holding their own. The Amazon fee earned so far is \$54.00 but there is a considerable lag period between orders and payment as Amazon has a waiting period for returns. No orders have yet been recorded for the Eagle Optics affiliate link. We were not able to establish an affiliate link with B & H Photo as our web site does not have the traffic count they require.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Scholarship Committee Reports - Awards 2016

Jocie Baker:

- Mary E. Baylor Memorial Scholarship of \$1,200 was awarded to Nicholas Antonson from Augustana University
- Kenneth H. Husmann Memorial Scholarship of \$1,000 was awarded to Kassie Hendricks of SDSU
- Alfred Hinds Memorial Award of \$100 was awarded to Kelly Preheim of Armour, SD

Nelda Holden:

- David J. Holden Scholarship of \$400 was given to Jamie Fischer from Hanska, MN

Gene Hess:

- Nathaniel R. Whitney Jr. Memorial Research Grant of \$750 was awarded to Rachel Wiedmeier from BHSU

Jocie Baker asked to step down from the scholarship committee effective this fall and Roger Dietrich appointed Ricky Olson to take her place.

SDOU Membership Report

Linda Johnson reported that there are ten new members, but after losing a few members the overall number of members is down. She solicited ideas for attracting new members.

Rosemary Draeger urged members to create an account on the SDOU website, if they have not done so already so that they have access to pertinent information for members only.

Rare Bird Committee Report

Ricky Olson – No Rare Bird Committee meeting was held this spring, as it was done electronically with only seven rare bird reports. Ricky commented, “Find more rare birds and write a report!”

OLD BUSINESS

Fall Meeting to be in Vermillion, SD on October 14, 15, & 16, 2016. Baker/Jensen - Approved unanimously
Nominating Committee: Richard Latuchie was asked to join the committee consisting of Scott Stolz and Kelly Preheim. Kelly Preheim was appointed as the committee chair.

Birder’s Guide: Roger Dietrich reminded everyone that Dave Swanson would like individuals to test out the site accounts in his “Birder’s Guide to South Dakota.” A list of sites should be sent to interested individuals, possibly on the SD Birds listserv.

SD Birding Festival will be held May 20-22, 2016 – Ron Mabie thanked SDOU for the continuing support of the festival. Donations provided this year included two SDOU memberships, two SDOU t-shirts, three Birds of South Dakota books, and one coffee mug.

NEW BUSINESS

2017 Spring Meeting

The 2017 Spring Meeting will be in Aberdeen, SD with probable dates of May 19-21. Host to be determined. T. Jensen/Baker - Approved unanimously.

Ft. Pierre National Grasslands Bio Blitz

Ricky Olson announced a U. S. Forest Service Grant for \$5,000 to pay members’ costs for mileage and lodging when they help with the BioBlitz at the Ft. Pierre National Grassland on June 17, 2016. The members have to keep track of the hours of effort and report that before they receive any reimbursement for expenses. SDOU will have to provide the hours of effort as the 50% match required at \$50 per hour for the grant. Guidelines for reimbursement will be developed and approved by the BOD before final acceptance of the grant. A motion to accept the grant was made contingent upon the approval of the guidelines by the BOD. Johnson/Jensen - Approved with one abstention.

SDOU archives

Mick Zerr explained that the SDOU archives at the Augustana Center for Western Studies are available to members, but they will need to set up an appointment to view materials. Also a copy of each of the SDOU minutes needs to be given to the SDOU archives.

2016 Spring Meeting

The BOD officially thanked Todd Jensen for hosting the spring meeting.
The meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m. T. Jensen/Baker.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kelly Preheim*

The 2016-2017 Winter Season

01 December 2016 to 28 February 2017

Compiled By: Jeffrey S. Palmer

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

There were 144 species, including 2 rarities, reported during the season this year. The ten-year (2006-2015) average is 141. 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 (22) 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. Not reported during the Winter Season during the last 5 years, **Black-legged Kittiwake** and **Vesper Sparrow** were removed from the list.

Greater White-fronted Goose reported 03 Dec Charles Mix KP; 03 Dec Lyman JSP; 20 Dec Yankton RND; 15 Feb Brookings KCJ; 16 Feb Pennington JLB; 16 Feb Spink BP; 17 Feb Charles Mix RM; 17 Feb Lyman KCJ

Snow Goose reported 09 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 09 Jan Hughes RDO; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA, MKZ; 06 Feb Hughes KM; 13 Feb Yankton RND

Ross's Goose reported 04 Dec Sanborn and McCook CA; 05 Dec Brookings KCJ; 16 Feb Spink BP; 17 Feb Yankton KP; 19 Feb Lincoln CA, MKZ

Cackling Goose reported 09 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 01 Jan Hughes RDO; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 14 Jan Pennington ND, JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 17 Jan Charles Mix KP; 20 Jan Brown GO

Tundra Swan reported 08 Dec – 27 Feb Pennington JLB et al.

Wood Duck reported 21 Dec Brown GO; 07 Jan Charles Mix DS, JSP; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 14 Jan Pennington JLB; 19 Jan Lawrence JLB; 20 Jan Brown GO; 21 Jan Hughes BP

Gadwall reported 27 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 18 Feb Lake JSP

American Wigeon reported 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 07 Jan Charles Mix DS, JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 11 Feb Hughes RDO; 18 Feb Butte ND; 20 Feb Douglas KP

American Black Duck All Reports: 02 Jan Charles Mix RM; 07 Jan Charles Mix DS; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 25 Feb Lake JSP

Northern Shoveler reported 04 Dec Yankton RND; 12 Dec Hughes KM; 12 Dec Pennington CLG; 17 Feb Stanley KM; 17 Feb Yankton KP

Northern Pintail reported 04 Dec Davison CA; 31 Dec Stanley RDO; 02 Jan Charles Mix RM; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 17 Feb Lake JSP; 17 Feb Stanley RDO; 18 Feb Butte ND

Green-winged Teal reported 06 Dec Gregory RM; 12 Dec Pennington CLG; 21 Dec Yankton DS; 20 Jan Stanley KM; 19 Feb Charles Mix KP; 20 Feb Douglas KP

Canvasback reported 01 Dec Bon Homme RM; 03 Dec Lyman JSP; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 17 Feb Lake JSP; 20 Feb Charles Mix and Douglas KP; 27 Feb Haakon ND

Redhead reported 02 Dec Day BP; 08 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Hughes KM; 12 Feb Hutchinson KP

Ring-necked Duck reported 02 Dec Edmunds and Day BP; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 21 Jan Hughes BP; 22 Jan Charles Mix KP; 17 Feb Lake JSP

Greater Scaup reported 01 Dec Yankton DS; 01 Jan Hughes KM; 08 Jan Stanley KM; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 21 Jan Hughes BP, KM, SS

Lesser Scaup reported 04 Dec Pennington ND; 07 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 01 Jan Stanley KM; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 17 Feb Lake JSP; 17 Feb Lyman KCJ

Surf Scoter Only Report: 01 Dec Yankton DS

White-winged Scoter All Reports: 13 Dec Charles Mix RM; 24 Dec Charles Mix ND

Black Scoter Only Report: 01 Dec Yankton (7) DS

Long-tailed Duck reported 04 Dec Yankton RND; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM; 06 Feb Gregory RM; 11 Feb Yankton DS

Bufflehead reported 04 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 28 Jan Gregory ND; 18 Feb Lake JSP

Common Goldeneye reported 07 Jan Minnehaha MKZ; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA, MKZ

Hooded Merganser reported 04 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 18 Jan Charles Mix RM; 19 Jan Hughes KM; 17 Feb Lincoln MKZ

Common Merganser reported 07 Jan Minnehaha MKZ; 14 Jan Gregory KP; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA, MKZ

Red-breasted Merganser reported 11 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Hughes ND; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 21 Jan Hughes BP, SS; 28 Jan Gregory ND

Ruddy Duck All Reports: 21 Dec Yankton DS; 18 Feb McCook MKZ; 19 Feb Charles Mix KP

Gray Partridge All Reports: 06 Dec Meade EEM; 15 Dec Meade ND; 21 Dec Meade RDO; 07 Jan Haakon RSL; 28 Jan Pennington RSL

Northern Bobwhite Only Report: 24 Dec Bon Homme SS

Common Loon Only Report: 02 Dec Hughes RDO

Pied-billed Grebe reported 03 Dec Charles Mix KP; 04 Dec Yankton RND; 01 Jan Hughes RDO; 11 Feb Charles Mix RM

Horned Grebe All Reports: 02 Dec Gregory RM; 03 Dec Charles Mix KP; 04 Dec Gregory RM

Eared Grebe Only Report: 04 Dec Gregory RM

Western Grebe All Reports: 01 Dec Stanley KM, RDO; 03 Dec Sully RDO; 05 Dec Stanley KM; 10 Dec Stanley KM; 30 Dec Hughes KM

American White Pelican All Reports: 23 Dec Charles Mix RM; 24 Dec Charles Mix ND, RM; 27 Dec Charles Mix RM

Double-crested Cormorant reported 03 Dec Faulk MMM; 03 Dec Hughes KM; 03 Dec Lyman JSP; 02 Jan Charles Mix RM

Great Blue Heron reported 03 Dec Brown BP; 03 Dec Faulk MMM; 04 Dec Hanson CA; 01 Jan Pennington RSL; 23 Jan Pennington CLG; 25 Feb Lake JSP

Bald Eagle reported 01 Jan Gregory (222) RM

Northern Harrier reported 25 Dec Hutchinson KP; 14 Jan Jones RDO; 14 Jan Lyman KM; 15 Jan Lawrence RSL; 15 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Tripp KM; 28 Jan Meade RSL; 04 Feb Pennington ND; 10 Feb Lincoln MKZ; 19 Feb Charles Mix KP

Northern Goshawk reported 19 Dec Edmunds BP; 04 Jan Hughes RDO; 14 Jan Brown BP; 08 Feb Hughes KM; 26 Feb Edmunds BP

Ferruginous Hawk reported 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 14 Jan Jones RDO, KM; 15 Jan Stanley RDO; 16 Jan Jones KM; 16 Jan Pennington JLB; 17 Jan Sully KM

Golden Eagle reported 04 Dec Hanson CA; 15 Jan Hand ND; 09 Feb Hand KM; 13 Feb Faulk BP; 26 Feb Edmunds BP

American Coot reported 09 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 02 Jan Charles Mix KP; 09 Jan Pennington JLB; 14 Jan Hughes DS, JSP; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 20 Feb Lake JSP

Sandhill Crane All Reports: 04 Dec Stanley KM, RDO; 19 Feb Spink fide ND

Killdeer All Reports: 19 Feb Lincoln CA; 21 Feb Douglas KP

Wilson's Snipe reported 10 Jan Stanley RDO

Bonaparte's Gull reported 02 Dec Gregory RM; 26 Dec Charles Mix RM; 28 Feb Brule ND

Franklin's Gull reported 11 Dec Charles Mix RM; 23 Feb Hughes KM

Mew Gull Only Report: 11 Dec Hughes CA et al.

Ring-billed Gull reported 04 Dec Minnehaha MKZ; 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 07 Jan Stanley RSL; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 22 Jan Charles Mix KP; 13 Feb Yankton RND; 17 Feb Stanley RDO; 20 Feb Lake JSP; 25 Feb Meade ND

California Gull reported 11 Dec Stanley RDO; 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Hughes RDO; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Feb Charles Mix RM

Herring Gull reported 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 11 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Hughes RDO; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM; 18 Jan Gregory RM; 18 Jan Hughes KM, RDO; 18 Feb Lake JSP; 25 Feb Meade ND

Thayer's Gull reported 13 Dec Charles Mix RM; 26 Dec Stanley KM; 15 Jan Hughes RDO; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM; 18 Jan Gregory RM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO

Iceland Gull reported 06 Dec Charles Mix RM; 10 Jan Hughes RDO, KM; 20 Jan Hughes KM; 17 Feb Stanley RDO

Lesser Black-backed Gull reported 20 Dec Charles Mix RM; 10 Jan Stanley KM; 15 Jan Hughes RDO; 17 Feb Stanley RDO

Glaucous Gull reported 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 11 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Hughes RDO; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 17 Feb Stanley RDO

Mourning Dove reported 31 Dec Stanley RDO; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA, MKZ; 22 Jan Pennington RSL; 29 Jan Charles Mix KP

Eastern Screech-Owl reported 31 Dec Stanley RDO; 06 Jan Lincoln CA; 07 Jan Hughes RDO; 02 Feb Hughes KM; 03 Feb Minnehaha CA; 18 Feb Stanley RDO

Snowy Owl Only Report: 28 Jan McPherson BP

Barred Owl All Reports: 21 Dec Minnehaha CA; 06 Jan Lincoln CA; 18 Feb Lincoln CA

Long-eared Owl All Reports: 30 Dec Stanley KM; 17 Jan Sully KM; 26 Jan Stanley KM; 04 Feb Sully KM

Short-eared Owl reported 01 Dec Clay DS; 04 Dec Hanson CA; 02 Jan Brookings KCJ; 11 Jan Brown BP; 16 Jan Brookings KCJ; 23 Jan Lyman SS

Northern Saw-whet Owl All Reports: 04 Dec Charles Mix RM; 20 Dec Pennington ND; 31 Dec Hughes KM; 04 Feb Sully KM; 18 Feb Stanley RDO; 27 Feb Sully KM

Belted Kingfisher reported 20 Dec Hughes KM; 22 Dec Lawrence JLB; 31 Dec Custer ND; 09 Jan Pennington JLB; 16 Jan Pennington CLG; 21 Jan Minnehaha CA, MKZ; 11 Feb Lawrence ND; 17 Feb Yankton KP

Lewis's Woodpecker reported 29 Dec Meade JLB; 15 Jan Lawrence RSL; 19 Jan Meade JLB; 08 Feb Lawrence RDO

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker All Reports: 09 Jan Charles Mix RM; 10 Jan Charles Mix RM; 17 Jan Charles Mix RM

Merlin reported 08 Jan Meade ND; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Spink ND; 17 Jan Charles Mix KP; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan McPherson GO; 06 Feb Pennington ND

Gyr Falcon reported 15 Jan Haakon ND; 15 Jan Stanley RDO; 21 Jan Stanley BP

Prairie Falcon reported 14 Jan Jones KM; 14 Jan Lyman RDO; 14 Jan Meade JLB; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Stanley RDO; 16 Jan Gregory and Jones KM; 17 Jan Charles Mix KP; 14 Feb Faulk BP

Gray Jay All Reports: 22 Dec Lawrence and Meade ND; 02 Feb Meade RDO; 11 Feb Meade RSL; 19 Feb Lawrence ND

Pinyon Jay Only Report: 31 Dec Custer ND

Clark's Nutcracker Only Report: 15 Feb Meade RDO

Black-billed Magpie reported 03 Dec Lyman JSP

Red-breasted Nuthatch reported 13 Jan Brookings KCJ; 14 Jan Brown BP; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 16 Jan Brown BP; 16 Jan Codrington ND; 17 Jan Charles Mix RM

Pygmy Nuthatch reported 20 Dec Pennington ND, JLB; 05 Feb Pennington JLB, ND; 19 Feb Custer KCJ

Canyon Wren All Reports: 03 Dec Pennington ND; 20 Dec Pennington ND; 05 Feb Custer ND; 14 Feb Custer RDO

Winter Wren All Reports: 18 Dec Hughes KM; 31 Dec Hughes KM; 02 Jan Hughes KM

American Dipper All Reports: 02 Jan Lawrence SW; 11 Feb Lawrence ND

Ruby-crowned Kinglet Only Report: 01 Dec Pennington CLG

Eastern Bluebird reported 24 Dec Yankton ND; 27 Dec Davison KP; 09 Jan Hughes KM; 29 Jan Charles Mix KP; 15 Feb Lake KB; 16 Feb Gregory RM

Mountain Bluebird reported 20 Dec Pennington ND; 10 Jan Stanley KM; 29 Jan Stanley KM; 18 Feb Butte ND; 19 Feb Custer RSL

Townsend's Solitaire reported 01 Dec Brown GO; 14 Jan Brown and Edmunds BP; 23 Jan Brown GO; 04 Feb Kingsbury JSP; 13 Feb Brown GO

Hermit Thrush Only Report: 21 Dec Yankton DS

Varied Thrush All Reports: 02 Dec Lawrence ND; 04 Dec Lawrence RSL; 21 Jan Hughes KM

Gray Catbird All Reports: 10 Dec Pennington JLB; 25 Dec Pennington ND; 04 Jan Pennington ND

Brown Thrasher Only Report: 08 Feb Lawrence RDO

Bohemian Waxwing reported 02 Jan Hughes KM; 02 Jan Stanley RDO; 03 Jan Lawrence EK

Yellow-rumped Warbler reported 07 Jan Charles Mix DS, JSP; 08 Jan Stanley KM; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 11 Feb Stanley KM

Fox Sparrow All Reports: 18 Dec Hughes KM; 31 Dec Hughes KM; 03 Feb Clay GJS; 09 Feb Clay GJS

Song Sparrow reported 23 Dec Oglala Lakota ND; 29 Dec Douglas KP; 01 Jan Charles Mix KP; 01 Jan Yankton KCJ; 11 Feb Stanley KM; 19 Feb Lincoln CA; 20 Feb Fall River KCJ

White-throated Sparrow All Reports: 21 Dec Brown BP; 02 Jan Brown BP

Harris's Sparrow reported 27 Dec Davison KP; 01 Jan Clay GJS; 05 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 21 Jan Clay GJS; 24 Jan Minnehaha CA

White-crowned Sparrow All Reports: 21 Dec Oglala Lakota ND; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 10 Feb Hughes KM; 20 Feb Hughes SS

Northern Cardinal reported 19 Dec Pennington JLB; 20 Dec Pennington JLB

Red-winged Blackbird reported 09 Jan Brookings KCJ; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Hyde ND; 15 Jan Lawrence RSL; 16 Jan Edmunds BP; 16 Jan Kingsbury ND; 18 Jan Douglas KP; 22 Jan Charles Mix KP; 19 Feb Lawrence ND

Western Meadowlark reported 27 Dec Davison KP; 14 Jan Jones RDO; 15 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Hyde ND; 15 Jan Stanley RDO; 17 Jan Sully KM; 28 Jan Lake JSP; 28 Jan Lyman ND; 12 Feb Fall River ND

Yellow-headed Blackbird Only Report: 04 Dec Douglas KP

Rusty Blackbird Only Report: 23 Feb Clay DS

Brewer's Blackbird Only Report: 31 Dec Hughes RDO

Common Grackle reported 11 Jan Day BP; 12 Jan Hughes RDO; 15 Jan Spink ND; 16 Jan Kingsbury ND; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 22 Feb Lincoln MKZ

Red Crossbill All Reports: 20 Dec Pennington JLB; 21 Dec Oglala Lakota ND; 19 Feb Lawrence ND; 20 Feb Harding KM; 21 Feb Harding KM

Pine Siskin reported 23 Dec Lake JSP; 06 Jan Brown GO; 07 Jan Hughes ND, JLB; 28 Jan Lake JSP; 29 Jan Brown GO

REPORTS REQUIRING ACCEPTANCE BY THE RARE BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Mute Swan 10 Dec – 18 Jan Hughes RDO, JSP, JLB; 26 Feb Sully RDO

Barrow's Goldeneye 13 Dec Charles Mix RM; 19 Dec Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix KM, RDO; 17 Jan Charles Mix RM

Horned Grebe 28 Feb Charles Mix RM

Red-shouldered Hawk 28 Jan – 04 Feb Lake JSP, DC, MKZ

Peregrine Falcon 26 Dec Brookings KCJ

Eastern Towhee 14 Dec Lake KCJ

SPECIES EXPECTED BUT NOT REPORTED

Trumpeter Swan (2), Blue-winged Teal, Ruffed Grouse, Red-necked Grebe (3), Virginia Rail (3), Great Black-backed Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker (4), American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Marsh Wren (3), Carolina Wren, Spotted Towhee (2), Chipping Sparrow (2), Swamp Sparrow (4), Brown-headed Cowbird (3), Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch (2), White-winged Crossbill (4), Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak.

Contributing Observers

CA	Chris Anderson
JLB	Jocelyn L. Baker
KB	Kristel Bakker
DC	Doug Chapman
RND	Roger N. Dietrich
ND	Nancy Drilling
CLG	Canyon Lake Group
KCJ	Kent C. Jensen
EK	Elizabeth Krueger
RSL	Richard S. Latuchie
RM	Ron Mabie
MMM	Michael M. Melius
EEM	Ernest E. Miller
KM	Kenny Miller
GO	Gary Olson
RDO	Ricky D. Olson
MO	Mark Otnes
JSP	Jeffrey S. Palmer
BP	Barry Parkin
KP	Kelly M. Preheim
GJS	Gary & Jan Small
SS	Scott Stolz
DS	David Swanson
SW	Scott Weins
MRZ	Mick Zerr

SDOU Spring Meeting in the Aberdeen Area

May 19 - 21, 2017

Kelly Preheim

On May 19th SDOU members traveled to the Aberdeen area for their spring meeting. Early that morning, SDOU member Mark Otnes reported to the SD Birds listserv that he saw a rare Curlew Sandpiper at Amherst Slough. David Swanson also saw the bird when he arrived that afternoon. Several members went to that spot later in the day to search for the bird and while unsuccessful, they were impressed with the many thousands of Dunlin, White-rumped Sandpipers and other shorebirds in the area. It was an amazing sight to watch a huge flock of them zip by us as we could hear the flurry of their wings. Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles were chasing the shorebirds. Beautiful Ruddy Turnstones were within five feet as they foraged along the shoreline.

That evening we gathered at the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge headquarters. It was great to meet with other birders again and share birding experiences. Refuge wildlife biologist Al Olson talked about the Sand Lake NWR and shared some history of the area.

One of the Saturday field trips was to search for shorebirds - especially the Curlew Sandpiper. The other trip went to look for warblers and other woodland birds at Aberdeen's Riverside Cemetery and nearby Mina and Richmond lakes. The weather on both Saturday and Sunday was inclement as it was windy and rainy with temperatures in the upper 40s, but birders are a hardy lot and it didn't slow us down. Persistence paid off and we saw a nice variety of birds and some beautiful habitats in the area. Highlights for me were seeing the beautiful warblers, Black-necked Stilts, and the huge flocks of shorebirds.

The Board of Director's meeting was on Saturday afternoon in the Barnett Center on the Northern State University campus. At the banquet Saturday evening we enjoyed sharing stories over a delicious, warm meal. The banquet speaker was Dennis Skadsen, the Project Coordinator for the Day County Conservation District. Dennis gave an interesting presentation titled "The Fauna of Ft. Sisseton: Then and Now" which discussed how mammal and bird populations of the area have changed through since the 1800s.

On Sunday morning we had the same field trips in the area with the count-off to follow. Meeting attendees observed 158 species over the weekend in the Aberdeen area with 20 warbler species and 27 shorebird species making the list.

Thank you to Roger Dietrich and Mick Zerr for all of their time and effort in planning the meeting. Thanks also go out to Al Olson and Dennis Skadsen for their interesting presentations, and to our very skilled trip leaders: Dan Streifel, Barry Parkin and Al Olson for guiding us.

South Dakota Ornithologists' Union meetings are always enjoyable and very educational whether listening to speakers or out in the field. One leaves there feeling even more curious and interested in birds and our natural world.

Birders watch the shorebird spectacle northeast of Aberdeen during the 2017 SDOU meeting. Photo by Kelly Preheim.



FLEDGLING TRACTS

Why Didn't Someone Just Tell Me That?!

Jason Thiele

This is the second article in a series about birding tips and tricks that I have learned since I started birding in college. Many of these might seem like common sense to veteran birders, but I know I could have avoided a lot of frustration in my first few years as a birder had someone told me these things from the start. This series is meant to help those who are just starting out as birders and to remind those who have been at this for a long time that what seems obvious to you may not be obvious at all to a rookie. All you experts out there, please share your knowledge with the next generation of birders!

#2. Slow Down to Find More Birds

I clearly remember the first summer that I called myself a birder. I'd always liked birds—as a kid, whenever I saw a bird I didn't recognize, I would hit the books as soon as I could to identify it. I also did a few bird surveys in college and enjoyed the experience very much. But it was a friendly competition among coworkers in 2008 that got me hooked on a new hobby. I was working as a technician for the Tern & Plover Conservation Partnership in southern Nebraska—my first job as a college graduate. Early in the field season, someone proposed a little competition: Who could see more species of birds during the summer—the technicians or the supervisors? It became a mission for me to find as many as I could, and I figured the best way to see the most birds was to cover as much territory as possible. So when I wasn't at work, I would often take my bike on long rides so I could get out to new places and hopefully see more birds. I covered a lot of miles that summer, and I certainly saw some neat birds.

Around this same time, I read the book *The Big Year*, which introduced me to the world of competitive birding. Reading about the three gentlemen in the book who spent an entire year traveling all over North America seeing hundreds of species of birds made me even more convinced that the best way to see the most birds was to travel as much as possible and to not spend too much time in one place.

I honestly don't remember who won the contest, but I have a pretty good feeling that it wasn't my team. And even if it was, it probably wasn't because of my efforts. Still, I remained convinced for a while that it was important to keep on the move when I was birding. My theory seemed to gain more support when I went on my first few Christmas Bird Counts. Covering a 15-mile diameter circle with a small handful of people means you have to stay on the move, or so it seemed. These trips involved a lot of miles in the car and/or on foot, and since the groups I was accompanying seemed to find some pretty great birds, I was convinced it was all due to the search methods. I was definitely hooked on birding. But it was during the times I wasn't birding that I began to see that maybe I should rethink my approach to finding the most birds.

I always enjoy visits to my parent's farm in northeast Nebraska. Sometimes trips home mean helping out on the farm, which means I might find myself driving a tractor for hours at a time. Which means not moving very fast. And I discovered that when you're not moving very fast, you get to see interesting birds doing interesting things. For example, while disking fields in the spring, I might get to watch Red-tailed Hawks circling for rodents that get chased out of their burrows or flocks of migrating Franklin's Gulls looking for exposed earthworms and insects. While walking through the pasture digging up musk thistles in the early summer, I would find nests of Lark Sparrows, Mourning Doves, and many other species. Every season brought something new and interesting to see while plodding along doing farm chores.

During my college and graduate school years, one of my favorite visits home was my annual November deer season trip. The bird sights and sounds on a deer stand are beyond compare. A brave Eastern Screech-Owl calling from the tree beside me in the hour before sunrise as a Great Horned Owl hoots softly across

the clearing. Wild Turkeys calling in their roosts as the first traces of light appear in the sky. Dozens of Greater Prairie-Chickens flying just above the treetops as they head out to the harvested cornfields to feed. A late-migrating flock of Sandhill Cranes making their ancient sounds as they fly high overhead. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet that nearly lands on my shoulder. A White-breasted Nuthatch calling almost directly in my ear as it forages on the trunk of “my” tree. And a small group of Black-capped Chickadees that loudly announces to the world that a human is sitting in “their” tree. It’s hard to say how many deer snuck by as I watched the feathered critters around me, but I realized that you don’t need to be in constant motion to find a lot of birds.

After my epiphany about the effectiveness of slowing down (or even stopping) to see more birds, my birding strategy has changed dramatically. Several years ago, I would generally bird multiple locations in a single morning. Now I’m much more likely to bird a single area more intensely. I’ve estimated that my average speed while birding on foot is roughly 0.5 miles per hour in good habitat. And if it’s a particularly “birdy” morning, such as a fallout during spring migration, I might spend an hour or more within a few steps of where I parked my car. As I mentioned in a previous edition of this column [see the Spring 2017 issue of *Bird Notes*], once you find a good patch of habitat that attracts a foraging flock, you may find that the more you watch the flock, the more species you will realize are there!

When I walk, I also like to turn around and check behind me often. Some birds seem to have a strategy of holding still until a threat (or perceived threat – birds don’t know that I mean them no harm!) passes by before sneaking away either on wing or on foot. I recently had the opportunity to bird in Arizona for the first time, and I remember catching a glimpse of a small group of Gambel’s Quail crossing the trail behind me during my first hike. I also like to frequently scan the sky for flyover birds. While identifying birds on the wing is sometimes (though certainly not always) more difficult than when they’re perched or on the ground, I nearly always pick up at least one “bonus” bird on my trip checklist that I never would have seen had I not been looking up every so often. Even when I’m birding with a group of people that might move faster than my preferred speed, I often like to linger at the back of the group. While I sometimes miss birds that are spotted by those at the front of the pack, walking behind allows me to get away from the sounds of footsteps and focus on the subtle call notes from skulking birds or distant songs that I might not otherwise hear. And when I’m lucky, I sometimes get to call back the leaders for a bird that they missed, either because it was fleeing from them or because they were looking elsewhere.

In addition to the benefits of seeing more birds when my pace is more relaxed, slowing down also allows me to learn more about bird behavior, which is even more appealing to me than building up big lists of species. During my time in Wisconsin, I got involved with the state’s second breeding bird atlas project, spending hours in the field looking for birds exhibiting breeding behaviors. Several of the species that I was able to confirm as breeders required a lot of patience. Observing breeding behavior in some species dictates dressing in some drab-colored or camouflage clothing and just sitting still for a while!

All in all, the best strategy for finding birds depends on the birder and the situation. I’m certainly not saying that a birder who is trying to break a Big Day record should spend all day moving through a 100-acre patch of woods at a snail’s pace, but I am saying that those who want to make the most out of their trips, relax a little, and save some fuel can really benefit from taking things SLOOOOOOOW. Regardless of whether your birding pace is Peregrine Falcon-fast or Emperor Penguin-pokey, make sure you’re causing the birds as little stress as possible. If you’re startling and flushing a lot of birds because you’re power-walking through the prairie, it might be time to slow it down a bit. And if a bird really appears to be raising a fuss when you’re just standing around, it probably means you’re too close to its nest, and it would be a good idea to move along. Respect the birds no matter how you move!



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