



South Dakota

Bird  Notes

South Dakota Ornithologists' Union

*Photo credit: Nancy Drilling*

American Robin nest, Lyman Co

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# SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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## Note from the Editor

Nancy Drilling

This issue we have two articles that demonstrate the importance of documenting bird life around us, in their own ways. George Prisbe has been keeping detailed records of the birds around Hanna for many years. This sort of record-keeping is invaluable for noting changes in our environment via changes in bird populations. It also is a lot of fun to do! SDOU librarian Mick Zerr looks way back to the early 20th Century for commentary about South Dakota's birds and efforts to document our birds. His research not only sheds light on the way things were but also shows that some issues are still the same in the 21st Century.

As we look forward, how can we document current conditions for comparison in the future? Entering our bird observations into online databases, such as the SDOU online reporting system or eBird, is certainly important. But it is also important to report our stories, analyses, and interpretations so that the data has context and depth. South Dakota Bird Notes is a perfect venue for doing this and as a permanent record, will be extremely valuable for future generations. We rely on voluntary submissions for this journal so please consider writing something. Contact the editor if you have an idea. And many thanks so George, Mick and many other contributors for documenting our bird life.

## Announcements

### **Upcoming meetings:**

The Fall 2018 meeting of SDOU will be held November 2 - 4 at Dakota State University in Madison. The Fall meeting features a day of presentations on current ornithology in South Dakota, field trips on Saturday and Sunday morning, SDOU General Membership meeting, and an evening banquet (\$20 per person) and program. Field trips are planned to Lake Herman State Park and to the Lake Thompson area. Registration is \$12 per person. You do not need to be a SDOU member to attend. See the SDOU web site (<http://sdou.org/SDOU/Meetings.aspx>) for more information and registration.

The Spring 2019 SDOU meeting will be held in the Sioux Falls area. Details will be posted on the web site and in future issues of South Dakota Bird Notes as they become available.

### **New Publication:**

The Second South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas book is now available! Published by the SDGFP, the cost is \$35. You should call the following number to make a purchase: 605-223-7662. You can leave a message on that line if the individual is not available.

# Spring 2018 SDOU Meeting in Martin

## Nancy Drilling

The 2018 spring meeting of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, based out of Martin, SD, was held June 1st – 3<sup>rd</sup>. The emphasis of spring meetings is birding, and weekend field trips visited a variety of outstanding birding areas including Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge, Yellow Bear Canyon, and southeast Oglala Lakota County (including Wakpamini wetlands, Denby dam, and the Manderson Road area). The major habitat types in the region include the Sandhills and the Pine Ridge escarpment. These habitats host a variety of specialty bird species, such as colonial waterbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, grassland species, and pine forest species. As a result, 144 species were tallied during the meeting, an impressive total considering the meeting was held after spring migration. Special finds included Eastern Meadowlark, Burrowing Owl, Cassin's Kingbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Black-necked Stilt, and Green Heron. The full list of birds can be found on the SDOU web site at <https://sdou.org/SDOU/Past.aspx>

Friday evening's special presentation was given by Shilo Comeau, the Wildlife Biologist at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge. She spoke about habitat management efforts on the Refuge. Several grassland bird species of concern are listed in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. In order to enhance populations of these species, the Refuge is improving grassland habitat by removing planted shelterbelts and seeding native grasses. The Refuge also conducts breeding bird surveys to monitor the success of their efforts.

After Saturday evening's dinner, Paul Mammenga of Columbia, SD updated the audience on Purple Martin research results. Several years ago, researchers attached tiny geolocator tags to Purple Martins across the country, including several at Paul's house, to map their migration routes and over-wintering sites. The research birds need to be recaptured and the tags removed to retrieve the data, which is not a problem with the site-faithful breeding martins. See Paul's article in the June 2012 issue of SD Bird Notes (Vol. 64, No. 2, pp 32-33) for an introduction to the project. As a result of this research, we now know that the martins spend the winter in the Amazon, specifically on islands along major rivers. The data also has identified important stop-over sites along the migration route, especially in the Yucatan peninsula of Central America.

During the SDOU Board meeting, the dates of the Fall 2018 meeting in Madison were confirmed to be November 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>. The Sioux Falls Bird Club graciously offered to host the Spring 2019 meeting in the Sioux Falls area.

This year's successful meeting would not have been possible without the hard work of many people. In particular we thank the organizers, Nancy Drilling, Rosemary Draeger, and Scott Stoltz, and the field trip leaders, Peter Hill, Dave Swanson, and Nancy Drilling. Finally, we thank the Crossroads Inn in Martin and the staff at Lacreek refuge for their hospitality and logistical support.



*Birders look for grassland specialities during the Spring 2018 SDOU meeting.*  
**PHOTO CREDIT: Chris Anderson**

# Hanna Birds in Review – 2017

D. George Prisbe

The following summary of my observations at Hanna requires some introduction. The area in which I record my sightings is a 3 ½ miles radius of our home at the old mining community of Hanna in the Black Hills – my “Hanna Circle”. The dominant habitat of this area is conifer forest consisting of an equal mix of white spruce and ponderosa pine. Deciduous forest, with the exception of several aspen stands, is not contiguous and a mix of aspen, birch, narrowleaf cottonwood, balsam poplar, and various willow - with aspen being the most prevalent. There are six ponds within this area, none of which cover more than an acre, with the two smallest being the creation of recent beaver activity. Several open high country meadows also contribute to habitat diversity. The elevation of this area ranges from approximately 5,200 to 6,300 feet. Observations were made from birds coming to our feeders: during the course of daily activity in the yard; normal coming and going on local roads; and most notably from daily hikes into the forest, with my dogs. This past year we took 420 of these hikes, a record for any calendar year. I suspect that with the recent addition of a border collie to our family, this record will not stand long.

Having closed out my journal, after a complete audit, I am pleased to report that 2017 was a good year for bird observation at Hanna. Total species observed during the year was 115 (see checklist), the third highest figure in the twenty years we have lived at Hanna. The record high of 122 was achieved last year. Prior to that the record was 120, set in 2012.

Most significantly, my all-time Hanna List reached the 200 mark (203, actually) with the addition of seven new species. Personally, I find this Hanna total remarkable. This comment is not meant to be boastful, but surprising in that it far surpasses what I ever thought to be possible for this location. Even more surprising is that after all these years, seven new species were recorded this year. Every birder knows that as a list grows, additions become more difficult. New species were Long-eared Owl (4/6), Lesser Scaup (5/3), Franklin’s Gull (5/3), Eurasian Collared-Dove (5/8), American Avocet (5/15), American Coot (5/16) Virginia Rail (9/13), Yellow-headed Blackbird (9/13), and Whooping Crane (11/22). Interestingly, two dates (May 5 and September 13) each saw the addition of two species.

The most species observed in any one week was 51 in the 37<sup>th</sup> week (September 10-16) which tied for the fifth most productive week, well off the weekly record of 67 recorded in 2012. The all-time single day record of 43 species (July 7, 2012) was not threatened in 2017, with a high count of 36 species on July 12.

There are several species that I consider to be “Hanna species” – birds that birders specifically hope to find when visiting the area. They are American Dipper, Ruffed Grouse, and American Three-toed Woodpecker. These three species comprise a personal triumvirate; a “Hanna Hat Trick” being when all three are observed on the same day, which happened twice in 2017.

Dipper sightings along Hanna Creek dropped to 76, compared to last year’s 112 and the record 144 in 2015. Nesting activity was not nearly as robust as recent years, with only one successful nest within my Hanna Circle. However, this is still better than 2012-14, when I had real concern about the status of the dipper population.

I had 69 encounters with American Three-toed Woodpeckers, which matched 2012 for the second highest total. The record year for this species was 77 sightings in 2006.

It was also a good year for Ruffed Grouse with 26 observations. This total is second only to the 44 of 2012. The secretive nature of these birds makes it very difficult to ascertain the true population.

Another species of interest in recent years is the Black-backed Woodpecker. Observations of this species are directly proportional to the spread of the pine beetle infestation. Prior to 2010 I had only one sighting ever within my Hanna Circle. As the pine forest turned to red these birds began to appear and were found on a regular basis. As the plague wanes and exits the Black Hills, black-backs have been more difficult to find. Interestingly, my eight sightings of black-backs this past year all occurred in a three week period from August 12 to September 3. I suspect that Black-backed Woodpeckers will be few and far between within my Hanna Circle in the coming years.

Species expected, because they have been recorded more often than not, but not seen this past year include Wood Duck, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Calliope Hummingbird, and Bohemian Waxwing. Fifty/fifty misses were Mourning Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Redstart, Lark Bunting, White-throated Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak.

Perhaps the most glaring disappointment for the year was the near absence of hummingbird activity. This continues a trend of recent years, which has seen reduced numbers of individuals. Not only was the usually dependable broad-tail difficult to find, but I only had one sighting of a rufous, and none for the calliope!

It was also a miserable year for sparrows and warblers. Only eight species of sparrows made the checklist. This is well below average and only one better than my worst tally ever in 2009. The warbler total of six was the lowest ever.

Anecdotally, I would have to say that our breeding birds seemed to fare pretty well. Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, juncos, Gray Jays, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Red Cross-bills were as abundant as ever. However, several species did seem less common than normal: Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Dusky Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, Warbling Vireo, and McGillivray's Warbler.

Compared to last year, when I routinely found Winter (Pacific) Wrens in three different locations, 2017 was an off year. Ward Draw was the only semi-reliable location to host this species and as far as I could discern, it was home to only one breeding pair, which I do not believe to have successfully fledged young.

On the good news front, the most striking difference from recent years was the seemingly ubiquitous Western Wood-Pee-wee. They were everywhere that pine was to be found.

The general take-away of this report is simple and I believe consistent with what other birders are experiencing. Though checklist numbers can be respectable, individual bird numbers continue to decline. This conclusion frightens me. The Black Hills in general and Hanna in

particular, has not seen drastic habitat loss, herbicide and pesticide poisoning, and other threats to bird welfare that are affecting bird populations elsewhere. We would appear to be a refuge, an oasis that is still able to support breeding birds. Still, birds are not showing up as they have in the past.

Here is the list of species observed in 2017 within my Hanna Circle – with apologies to all who faithfully subscribe to the constant changes in the checklist order.

Eared Grebe	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	Plumbeous Vireo
Great Blue Heron	Rufous Hummingbird	Orange-crowned Warbler
Snow Goose	Belted Kingfisher	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Canada Goose	Red-naped Sapsucker	- Audubon
Cackling Goose	Downy Woodpecker	- Myrtle
Green-winged Teal	Hairy Woodpecker	Ovenbird
Mallard	A. Three-toed Woodpecker	MacGillivray's Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Black-backed Woodpecker	Common Yellowthroat
Northern Shoveler	Northern Flicker	Wilson's Warbler
Gadwall	Western Wood-Pewee	Western Tanager
American Wigeon	Willow Flycatcher	Black-headed Grosbeak
Redhead	Least Flycatcher	Spotted Towhee
Ring-necked Duck	Dusky Flycatcher	American Tree Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Cordilleran Flycatcher	Chipping Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Western Kingbird	Clay-colored Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Kingbird	Vesper Sparrow
Osprey	Tree Swallow	Lark Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Violet-green Swallow	Song Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Barn Swallow	Lincoln's Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	Canada Jay	White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Goshawk	Blue Jay	Dark-eyed Junco
Broad-winged Hawk	American Crow	- Slate-colored
Golden Eagle	Black-capped Chickadee	- White-wing
Merlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	- Oregon
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch	- Pink-sided
Wild Turkey	Brown Creeper	Bobolink
Virginia Rail	Canyon Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Sora	House Wren	Western Meadowlark
American Coot	Pacific Wren	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Sandhill Crane	American Dipper	Common Grackle
Whooping Crane	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Avocet	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Cassin's Finch
Solitary Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird	Red Crossbill
Spotted Sandpiper	Mountain Bluebird	White-winged Crossbill
Wilson's Snipe	Townsend's Solitaire	Common Redpoll
Franklin's Gull	Swainson's Thrush	Pine Siskin
Eurasian Collared-Dove	American Robin	American Goldfinch
Great Horned Owl	Gray Catbird	
Long-eared Owl	American Pipit	
Common Nighthawk	Cedar Waxwing	
White-throated Swift	Northern Shrike	



# 100 Years Ago: Birds in South Dakota

Mick Zerr  
SDOU Librarian

In 1918, the Spanish Flu was killing tens of thousands of Americans, including over 2,000 South Dakotans, or 36% of all deaths for that year<sup>1</sup>, and the “War to end Wars” was still dragging on. The Christmas Bird Count was on hold for a few years in most of the state, likely due to the flu, but some brave souls in Yankton did a 1918 count<sup>2</sup>. Twelve species were found, including: Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Redpoll. Interesting to note the redpoll count was 45 and the waxwing count was 115. This makes one wonder if they mistook Cedar Waxwings for the Bohemians, yet when waxwings are reported over the next 20 years, they also are Bohemians. Also, future South Dakota CBC’s have had very few, if any redpolls after 1919. So, as with this year (2018), they are seen in irruptions that are uncommon. W.H. Over and Craig S. Thoms’ *“Birds of South Dakota”* from 1920 lists Cedar Waxwings as common migrants and Bohemians as irregular migrants<sup>3</sup>.

Probably the most time relevant writing on birds 100 years ago dealt with birds and World War I. In circular #03, June 1918, of the South Dakota Geological and Natural History Survey, W.H. Over wrote an article titled: “Protect the Birds and Help Win the War”<sup>4</sup>. In this work, he examines the importance of birds to agriculture and their importance to the war effort. He also includes the dangers of bird extinction because of lack enforcement of bird protection laws, and killing for sport or over-killing for food.

The article states that it is “proved” that birds eating harmful insects and rodents affect crop success resulting in millions of dollars more in production value. Addressed is the destruction of breeding areas due to intensive farming and pasturing of large numbers of cattle, thereby upsetting the “balance of nature.” It goes on to indicate sparrow and shorebird diets are mostly insects and weed seeds, also helping agriculture.

In the article, Over refers to members of the “Grouse family,” consisting of Quail, Prairie Chicken, and Sharp-tailed Grouse in discussion of insect eating birds. No mention is made of other “Chicken-like birds,” as most were introduced later, only found in the Black Hills, or as in the Wild Turkey, almost wiped out by 1918<sup>5</sup>. The article suggests these large “Grouse family” birds must be encouraged to breed in larger numbers, as they are eagerly sought after by “hordes” of hunters, which might lead to extermination. Over suggests killing them for pleasure must be curtailed or stopped, and killing for food should be curtailed.

The author’s discussion of hawks and owls indicates very few of species of hawks prey on chickens and only one of the “three” species of owls does. Note that presently, the SDOU website lists nine species of owl that are regularly found in the state<sup>6</sup>. The article suggests that a hawk or owl, even one that occasionally takes a chicken, is more of an asset, as it takes many rodents and crop eating birds as prey. It indicates that a hawk or owl is worth around \$15 per year (1918) in its taking grain-destroying rodents. That number converts to about \$244 per bird in 2017 dollars<sup>7</sup>.

An interesting aspect of the article refers to bird laws being disregarded. It indicates the action of game wardens, in most instances, is mainly directed by public sentiment rather than by enforcement of the law. Today, the state's conservation officers would be in trouble if they disregarded the law in such a manner. The author voiced concern about possible extermination of many species unless public attitude toward birds can be changed. He suggests schools teach conservation for at least one hour per week, including the economic value of birds with knowledge of each species. A suggestion was made to do this through the "National Association of Audubon Societies."

The article suggests bird clubs should distribute literature on bird conservation, using every effort in carrying out an educational campaign to change public sentiment. Also, it suggests having their respective area newspapers publish short bird information articles, and utilizing county farm agents to help spread this information among farmers. Lastly, the author mentions the aesthetic value of birds should not be disregarded, especially among young people.

The final statement in the circular reads "Just now we are 'winning the war', and this Circular is sent out to the people of South Dakota as a war measure with the appeal, 'Protect the Birds and Help Win the War'."

*Author's note:* Interesting comparisons, questions and parallels to 1918 can be drawn to today's attitudes and behaviors toward wild bird value and conservation. These include: 1. Habitat preservation/destruction, 2. Public attitudes, 3. Enforcement of existing laws and eliminating outdated laws and regulations, 4. Creating new environmental friendly laws, 5. Education in public schools, (note SDOU member Kelly Preheim's nationally recognized success in teaching grade school kids about birds<sup>8</sup>), and 6. Utilization of environmental groups, birding organizations, media and other resources to inform South Dakota citizens of the values of proper stewardship of our lands and waters. Of course, we are not at war *per se*, so some comparisons do not fit today's situations as they would have in WW1, WW2, the Korean War, and perhaps the Viet Nam War.

## Citations

<sup>1</sup> South Dakota Historical Society. "1918 flu pandemic in South Dakota remembered". May 10, 2009. [https://history.sd.gov/Archives/docs/Spanish Flu Article.pdf](https://history.sd.gov/Archives/docs/Spanish%20Flu%20Article.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> National Audubon Society. "Christmas Bird Count: Historical results by count". <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Over, W. H., and C. Thoms. "Birds of South Dakota, 1920". *South Dakota Geological and Natural History Bulletin*, B-09 (1921): 1-142.

<sup>4</sup> Over, W. H. "Protect the Birds and Help Win the War". *South Dakota Geological Survey Circular*, C-03 (1918): 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Ogden, L. E. "How wily wild turkeys struck it lucky in America". *New Scientist*, 28 November 2015. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22830490-500-how-wily-wild-turkeys-struck-it-lucky-in-america/>

<sup>6</sup> South Dakota Ornithologists' Union. "South Dakota Official Checklist". Accessed March 2018, <http://sdou.org/Birds/Checklist.aspx> .

<sup>7</sup> CPI comparison calculator. Accessed March 2018, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/>.

<sup>8</sup> Preheim, K. *We Love Birds!* Self-published, LuluBooks, 2017.

# Winter 2017-2018 Seasonal Report

01 December 2017 to 28 February 2018

Compiled by Chris Anderson

There were 138 species, including 2 rarities (Barrow's Goldeneye and Horned Grebe), reported during the 2017-2018 winter season. The ten-year (2007-2016) average is 142. In the following report, I have not included all reported species but have tried to highlight the more significant sightings. These include species that have been reported in 6 or fewer of the last 10 winter seasons, unusual early/late dates, species that are out of range, or new county records. For more common species, I list the 3 latest reports between 01 Dec and 15 Jan, and also the 3 earliest reports between 16 Jan and 28 Feb. At the end is a list of species (24) that were not reported this year but might be expected during the Winter Season. A species is placed on the not-reported list if had been reported during winter in at least 2 of the previous 5 years. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of consecutive years that the species has appeared on the list during the previous 5 winters. Two species, Red-headed Woodpecker and Swamp Sparrow, were not reported during the Winter Season in the last 5 years and were removed from this list. To look up any records in the SDOU database, visit <https://research.dsu.edu/sdousbor/explore-sightings.aspx>

**Greater White-fronted Goose** 09 Dec Stanley RDO; 16 Dec Brown GO, CV; 23 Dec Sully KM; 04 Jan Charles Mix RM; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 17 Feb Yankton KP

**Snow Goose** reported 19 Dec Perkins ND; 27 Dec Brookings JSP; 27 Dec Brule ND; 05 Jan Hughes RDO; 13 Jan Minnehaha CA; 20 Jan Lyman MO; 31 Jan Hughes KM

**Ross's Goose** All Reports: 16 Dec Lake JSP; 16 Dec Brown GO

**Cackling Goose** reported 16 Dec Brown GO; 16 Dec Lake JSP; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 18 Jan Stanley RDO; 18 Jan Pennington CLG

**Wood Duck** reported 22 Dec Lawrence KM; 01 Jan Hughes KM; 04 Jan Hughes RDO; 04 Jan Brown GO; 07 Jan Lawrence ND; 16 Feb Pennington RSL; 17 Feb Yankton KP

**Gadwall** reported 18 Dec Yankton RND; 04 Jan Pennington CLG; 08 Jan Pennington CLG; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 25 Jan Pennington CLG; 14 Feb Yankton RND

**American Wigeon** reported 02 Dec Kingsbury JSP; 26 Dec Charles Mix RM; 06 Jan Fall River ND; 08 Jan Pennington CLG; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 25 Jan Pennington CLG; 29 Jan Stanley KM

**Northern Shoveler** All Reports: 02 Dec Lake JSP; 09 Dec Yankton RND; 11 Dec Pennington CLG; 17 Dec Yankton KP; 14 Feb Yankton RND; 22 Feb Yankton RND

**Northern Pintail** All Reports: 02 Dec Kingsbury JSP; 16 Dec Stanley RDO; 09 Feb Stanley RDO; 22 Feb Yankton RND; 25 Feb Minnehaha MRZ

**Green-winged Teal** reported 03 Jan Stanley RDO; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP, RM; 07 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 29 Jan Stanley KM; 22 Feb Yankton RND

**Canvasback** All Reports: 01 Dec Hughes KM; 04 Dec Hughes KM; 13 Dec Yankton RND; 15 Dec Yankton RND; 18 Dec Yankton RND

**Redhead** reported 02 Dec Lake JSP; 08 Jan Pennington CLG; 10 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 25 Jan Pennington CLG

**Ring-necked Duck** reported 14 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 25 Jan Pennington RSL

**Greater Scaup** reported 04 Jan Hughes RDO; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP, RM; 07 Jan Hughes KM; 07 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 18 Jan Pennington JLB; 20 Jan Pennington RSL

**Lesser Scaup** reported 02 Dec Lake JSP; 17 Dec Pennington CLG; 28 Dec Charles Mix KP; 01 Jan Charles Mix RM; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP, RM; 22 Feb Yankton RND; 26 Feb Yankton RND; 27 Feb Brule ND

**Long-tailed Duck** Only Report: 17 Dec Yankton CA, KP

**Bufflehead** reported 02 Dec Lake JSP; 08 Jan Gregory RM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Charles Mix RDO

**Common Goldeneye** reported 14 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Gregory RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Gregory RM; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 20 Jan Minnehaha CA, MRZ

**Hooded Merganser** reported 13 Jan Hughes ND; 14 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 20 Jan Grant JSP

**Common Merganser** reported 11 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Gregory RM; 15 Jan Gregory RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Gregory RM; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan Stanley KM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Charles Mix RDO; 20 Jan Grant JSP

**Red-breasted Merganser** reported 11 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 20 Jan Charles Mix KP, RDO, MO

**Ruddy Duck** Only Report: 02 Dec Yankton DS

**Gray Partridge** Only Report: 13 Jan Haakon ND

**Pied-billed Grebe** All Reports: 05 Dec Hughes RDO; 09 Dec Charles Mix KP

**Western Grebe** All Reports: 02 Dec Fall River ND; 03 Dec Hughes KM; 05 Dec Hughes RDO; 07 Dec Hughes KM

**American White Pelican** All Reports: 01 Dec Brown GO; 02 Dec Brookings JSP; 13 Dec Brookings CV; 22 Dec Brookings CV

**Double-crested Cormorant** reported 07 Dec Charles Mix RM; 09 Dec Charles Mix KP; 10 Dec Yankton CA; 14 Dec Charles Mix RM; 17 Dec Yankton KP; 20 Dec Charles Mix RM

**Great Blue Heron** reported 01 Jan Stanley KM; 03 Jan Pennington ND; 04 Jan Pennington CLG; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 25 Jan Pennington CLG; 29 Jan Pennington CLG

**Northern Harrier** reported 22 Dec Douglas KP; 06 Jan Sully KM; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 13 Jan Pennington RSL; 17 Jan Sully KM; 21 Jan Hughes KM; 26 Jan Hughes KM

**Cooper's Hawk** reported 23 Dec Fall River ND; 31 Dec Lincoln MRZ; 03 Jan Hughes KM; 05 Jan Hughes RDO; 28 Jan Lyman CA; 02 Feb Hughes KM; 06 Feb Brown GO

**Northern Goshawk** reported 02 Dec Jones CA, KP; 04 Jan Brown GO; 10 Jan Hughes KM; 12 Jan Stanley KM; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 21 Jan Brown MO; 24 Jan Hughes KM

**Ferruginous Hawk** reported 06 Jan Sully KM; 06 Jan Custer ND; 06 Jan Stanley RDO; 07 Jan Lawrence ND; 15 Jan Todd ND; 19 Jan Lyman KM; 20 Jan Lyman KM, MO; 28 Jan Stanley CA

**Golden Eagle** reported 02 Dec Douglas RM; 13 Jan Haakon ND; 14 Jan Lyman RDO; 15 Jan Todd, Bennett ND; 19 Jan Jones KM; 20 Jan Lyman KM, RDO, MO; 20 Jan Jones RDO; 22 Jan Sully KM

**American Coot** reported 16 Dec Brown GO; 08 Jan Pennington CLG; 10 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Pennington RSL; 18 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 25 Jan Pennington CLG

**Wilson's Snipe** Only Report: 23 Dec Fall River ND

**Bonaparte's Gull** reported 04 Dec – 28 Dec Charles Mix KP, RM

**Franklin's Gull** Only Report: 26 Jan Charles Mix RM

**Ring-billed Gull** reported 02 Dec Lake JSP; 02 Dec Fall River ND; 04 Jan Hughes RDO; 07 Jan Hughes KM; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 14 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 26 Jan Charles Mix RM; 02 Feb Charles Mix CV

**California Gull** reported 02 Dec Fall River ND; 03 Jan Hughes KM; 04 Jan Hughes RDO; 14 Jan Hughes KM, RDO; 08 Feb Hughes RDO

**Herring Gull** reported 02 Dec Lake JSP; 10 Jan Hughes KM; 11 Jan Stanley KM; 14 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 18 Jan Stanley KM; 20 Jan Charles Mix KP

**Iceland Gull** reported 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 09 Jan Charles Mix RM; 14 Jan Hughes KM; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 18 Jan Hughes RDO; 04 Feb Stanley RDO

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** reported 09 Dec Stanley RDO; 11 Dec Stanley KM; 16 Dec Stanley RDO; 03 Jan Stanley RDO; 04 Jan Hughes RDO

**Glaucous Gull** reported 10 Jan Charles Mix RM; 12 Jan Gregory RM; 15 Jan Gregory RM; 20 Jan Gregory RM; 20 Jan Charles Mix KP, RDO, MO; 23 Jan Gregory RM

**Mourning Dove** reported 24 Dec Union CA; 31 Dec Clay GJS; 01 Jan Clay GJS; 18 Jan Stanley KM; 29 Jan Pennington RSL; 15 Feb Pennington RSL

**Eastern Screech-Owl** reported 28 Dec Jackson ND; 30 Dec Minnehaha CA; 07 Jan Douglas KP; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 26 Jan Clay CA; 28 Jan Lyman CA; 29 Jan Stanley KM

**Barred Owl** Only Report 30 Dec Minnehaha CA

**Long-eared Owl** All Reports: 02 Dec Lyman CA, KP; 16 Dec Minnehaha CA; 28 Dec Jackson ND; 30 Dec Stanley KM; 30 Dec Minnehaha CA; 19 Jan Lake CA; 24 Jan Hughes KM; 26 Jan Clay CA; 31 Jan Stanley KM

**Short-eared Owl** reported 28 Dec Jackson ND; 30 Dec Stanley RDO; 03 Jan Hughes KM; 06 Jan Stanley RDO; 20 Jan Hughes KM, MO; 20 Jan Grant JSP; 23 Jan Hughes KM; 26 Jan Hughes KM

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** All Reports: **02 Dec McCook CA**; 09 Dec Gregory RM; 16 Dec Minnehaha CA; 16 Dec Hughes KM; **17 Dec Yankton CA**; **24 Dec Union CA**; 30 Dec Lincoln CA; 06 Jan Sully KM; 17 Jan Sully KM; **19 Jan Lake CA**; **19 Jan Moody CA**; 22 Jan Sully KM; **26 Jan Clay CA**; 30 Jan Sully KM; 02 Feb Minnehaha CA

**Belted Kingfisher** reported 07 Jan Lawrence ND; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 08 Jan Pennington CLG; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 25 Jan Pennington CLG

**Lewis's Woodpecker** All Reports: 24 Jan Meade RDO; 06 Feb Lawrence KM; 10 Feb Lawrence RSL

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** All Reports: 02 Dec Yankton DS; 13 Dec Yankton RND; 17 Dec Yankton CA, KP

**Pileated Woodpecker** Only Report: 20 Jan Roberts JSP

**Merlin** reported 07 Jan Moody JSP; 10 Jan Edmunds GO; 14 Jan Jones RDO; 15 Jan Bennett ND; 19 Jan Stanley KM; 19 Jan Jones KM; 24 Jan Lawrence ND; 25 Jan Potter KM

**Gyr Falcon** All Reports: 13 Jan Jones KM; 14 Jan Lyman RDO; 19 Jan Lyman KM; 19 Jan Stanley KM; 23 Jan Lyman KM

**Peregrine Falcon** Only Report: **19 Dec Perkins ND**

**Prairie Falcon** reported 02 Jan Charles Mix KP; 05 Jan Stanley KM; 06 Jan Stanley RDO; 18 Jan Stanley RDO; 19 Jan Jones KM; 19 Jan Lyman KM; 27 Jan Hutchinson CA

**Gray Jay** Only Report: 17 Feb Lawrence RSL

**Pinyon Jay** Only Report: 23 Jan Custer RDO

**Black-billed Magpie** reported 03 Jan Stanley RDO; 06 Jan Fall River ND; 06 Jan Sully KM; 07 Jan Stanley KM; 07 Jan Pennington RSL; 20 Jan Pennington RSL; 23 Jan Custer RDO; 24 Jan Lawrence RDO

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** reported 12 Jan Hughes KM; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 20 Jan Gregory RDO, MO; 20 Jan Lincoln CA; 20 Jan Minnehaha CA, MRZ; 20 Jan Roberts JSP; 20 Jan Union DS

**Pygmy Nuthatch** All Reports: 18 Dec Pennington ND; 07 Jan Pennington RSL; 02 Feb Pennington ND; 19 Feb Pennington JLB; 26 Feb Pennington ND

**Brown Creeper** reported **19 Dec Perkins ND**

**Canyon Wren** All Reports: 22 Dec Pennington KM, RDO

**Marsh Wren** All Reports: 01 Dec Hughes KM; 06 Jan Fall River ND

**American Dipper** All Reports: 19 Jan Lawrence ND; 24 Jan Lawrence ND, RDO; 03 Feb Lawrence ND

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet** All Reports: **04 Dec – 31 Dec Clay GJS**

**Eastern Bluebird** reported 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 09 Jan Brown GO; 10 Jan Charles Mix RM; 24 Jan Gregory RM; 27 Jan Gregory CA, KP; 01 Feb Gregory RM

**Mountain Bluebird** All Reports: 28 Dec Jackson ND; 07 Jan Stanley KM

**Townsend's Solitaire** reported 16 Dec Brown GO; 24 Dec Union CA; 10 Jan Edmunds GO; 21 Jan Brown MO; 15 Feb Brookings CV; 15 Feb Brown GO

**Hermit Thrush** All Reports: 01 Dec Stanley RDO; 08 Dec Stanley KM; 16 Dec Stanley KM; 29 Dec Hughes KM

**Gray Catbird** Only Report: 01 Dec Hughes KM

**Northern Mockingbird** All Reports: **02 Dec – 24 Dec Hughes KM**

**Bohemian Waxwing** reported 15 Jan Stanley KM; 20 Jan Roberts JSP; 24 Jan Lawrence RDO; 31 Jan Stanley KM; 03 Feb Lawrence ND; 06 Feb Meade KM; 15 Feb Brown GO

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** reported 03 Jan Hughes KM; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 07 Jan Gregory RM; 10 Jan Hughes KM; 20 Jan Gregory RDO, MO

**Vesper Sparrow** Only Report: **06 Dec Charles Mix RM**

**Fox Sparrow** All Reports: 24 Dec Union CA; 20 Jan Union DS

**Song Sparrow** All Reports 18 Dec Stanley KM; 19 Dec Hughes KM; 19 Dec Yankton RND; 23 Dec Fall River ND; 26 Dec Hanson KP; 06 Jan Fall River ND; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 19 Feb Hughes KM

**White-throated Sparrow** All Reports: 04 Dec Clay GJS; 16 Dec Clay GJS

**Harris's Sparrow** reported 15 Dec Oglala Lakota ND; 26 Dec Hanson ND; 31 Dec Clay GJS; 01 Jan Clay GJS; 18 Jan Hughes KM; 03 Feb Clay GJS; 19 Feb Clay GJS

**White-crowned Sparrow** reported 20 Dec Lake JSP; 31 Dec Clay GJS; 01 Jan Clay GJS; 28 Jan Lyman CA; 04 Feb Clay GJS; 17 Feb Tripp RDO

**Spotted Towhee** All Reports: 10 Dec Yankton CA; 24 Dec Hughes KM; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 23 Feb Hughes KM

**Northern Cardinal** reported 14 Feb Pennington RSL

**Red-winged Blackbird** reported 02 Jan Stanley KM; 04 Jan Hughes KM; 07 Jan Stanley KM; 07 Jan Butte ND; 20 Jan Jones RDO, MO; 21 Jan Brown MO; 27 Jan Charles Mix CA, KP

**Western Meadowlark** reported 04 Jan Douglas KP; 06 Jan Charles Mix KP; 07 Jan Charles Mix KP; 14 Jan Jones RDO; 20 Jan Jones RDO, MO; 20 Jan Lyman KM; 10 Feb Butte ND; 11 Feb Charles Mix KP

**Rusty Blackbird** All Reports: 01 Dec Charles Mix RM; 02 Dec Lyman CA, KP; 04 Dec Clay GJS; 09 Dec Charles Mix RM; 16 Dec Hughes RDO; 23 Dec Brookings CV; 01 Jan Minnehaha MRZ; 07 Jan Butte ND; 13 Jan Stanley ND; 24 Jan Hughes KM

**Brewer's Blackbird** All Reports: 23 Dec Brookings CV; 04 Feb Clay GJS

**Common Grackle** reported 16 Dec Meade ND; 31 Dec Clay GJS; 01 Jan Clay GJS; 06 Jan Douglas KP; 21 Jan Brown MO; 04 Feb Clay GJS; 16 Feb Sully KM, RDO

**Brown-headed Cowbird** All Reports: 04 Dec Clay GJS; 27 Jan Charles Mix KP; 05 Feb Clay GJS; 19 Feb Clay GJS

**Evening Grosbeak** All Reports: 22 Dec Lawrence KM, RDO; 07 Jan Lawrence ND; 24 Jan Lawrence RDO

**Pine Grosbeak** All Reports: 13 Feb Brown GO; 26 Feb Brown GO

**Cassin's Finch** Only Report: 16 Dec Meade ND

**Red Crossbill** reported 17 Dec Pennington ND; 18 Dec Lake JSP; 22 Dec Lawrence KM, RDO; 23 Dec Brookings CA, CV, MRZ; 20 Jan Lincoln CA; 20 Jan Roberts JSP; 03 Feb Brookings CV, 03 Feb Minnehaha RSL; 04 Feb Stanley RDO

**White-winged Crossbill** reported 03 Dec Hughes KM; 30 Dec Minnehaha CA; 07 Jan Brookings JSP; 09 Jan Minnehaha CA; 20 Jan Minnehaha CA, MRZ; 03 Feb Brookings CV, 05 Feb Brookings RSL

**Common Redpoll:** reported 07 Jan Meade ND; 08 Jan Hughes KM; 09 Jan Minnehaha CA; 14 Jan Moody ND; 14 Jan Brookings ND; 17 Jan Sully KM; 20 Jan Minnehaha CA, MRZ; 21 Jan Marshall MO

**Pine Siskin** reported 12 Jan Hughes KM; 14 Jan Miner ND; 14 Jan Minnehaha CA; 14 Jan Stanley RDO; 15 Jan Charles Mix RM; 15 Jan Bennett ND; 16 Jan Hughes KM; 16 Jan Charles Mix RM; 17 Jan Sully KM; 20 Jan Minnehaha CA, MRZ

## Reports Requiring Acceptance By The Rare Bird Records Committee

**Barrow's Goldeneye** 07 Jan Gregory RM; 07 Jan – 27 Feb Charles Mix CA, KP, RM, RDO, MO, CV  
**Horned Grebe** Only Report: 02 Dec Fall River ND

## Species Expected But Not Reported

Common Loon (5), Trumpeter Swan (2), Tundra Swan (2), American Black Duck (5), Blue-winged Teal, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter (2), Black Scoter, Ruffed Grouse (4), Red-necked Grebe, Virginia Rail, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer (5), Mew Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, American Three-toed Woodpecker (3), Black-backed Woodpecker (4), Clark's Nutcracker (2), Winter Wren (2), Carolina Wren (3), Varied Thrush, Brown Thrasher (2), Yellow-headed Blackbird (2), Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (2)

## Contributing Observers

CA	Chris Anderson	RDO	Ricky D. Olson
JLB	Jocelyn L. Baker	MO	Mark Otnes
RND	Roger N. Dietrich	JSP	Jeffrey S. Palmer
ND	Nancy Drilling	KP	Kelly M. Preheim
CLG	Canyon Lake Group	GJS	Gary & Jan Small
RSL	Richard S. Latuchie	DS	David Swanson
RM	Ron Mabie	CV	Cheryl Vellenga
KM	Kenny Miller	MRZ	Mick Zerr
GO	Gary Olson		



# Why Didn't Someone Just Tell Me That?!

Jason Thiele

*This is the fourth 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!*

## **#4. People Are Going to Wonder What the Heck You're Doing**

Birding is a hobby that can take you a lot of different places – from a park in the middle of a city to a marsh in the middle of...uh...nowhere. But regardless of where you are, you're rarely far from someone who is going to be wondering what you're up to.

Sometimes this isn't such a bad thing. I've lost track of how many times I've been pulled over along the side of the road to check out some good bird habitat and a kind soul has stopped to make sure I'm OK. I must say that it is comforting to know that there are people out there who care about the plight of a stranger.

However, other people might not think you're in trouble, but that you're up to trouble. I've never really had many run-ins with the law – I think my “rap sheet” includes a single speeding ticket from a few years back – but I have found that my odds of speaking with the authorities increase dramatically when I'm birding. A couple of stories come immediately to mind.

In my first summer of field work for my master's research on Burrowing Owls, I had a police officer pull up behind me with the light bar on his SUV flashing as my technician and I were scanning a prairie dog town with spotting scopes. He walked up to my side window and asked what was going on. I explained what we were doing, and he started to chuckle. He said that his office had received a call that someone was shooting prairie dogs out of a vehicle parked along the highway. As I tried to visualize what I must have looked like to a passerby, it became easier to see how the mistake could have been made. At a glimpse, a spotting scope sticking out of a truck window doesn't look that different from a firearm. And the fact that we were parked next to a prairie dog town very near the protected lands of Badlands National Park must have looked suspicious.

Another particularly memorable visit with a cop came during a Christmas Bird Count in southwest Wisconsin. I was driving a gravel road and spotted a bird perched in the top of a tree in a farmyard. The sun was directly behind it, but a quick glance at the long-winged, long-tailed silhouette told me it was either a Mourning Dove or an American Kestrel. I pulled up a little farther to get a better angle where the bird was not backlit, quickly glassed it with my binocular, put a tally mark in the “American Kestrel” column of my data sheet, and continued down the road. Not long afterward, I was parked on the shoulder next to a field that I was scanning for Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs. A police cruiser pulled up behind me. The officer got out of the car, and asked, “Are you birdwatching?” I explained what the Christmas Bird Count is

and gave him an informational flyer that I had in my car. He said that someone on that road had called to say that someone was “looking at her house with binoculars.” I assured him that I had no interest in anyone’s house and even less in what might be going on inside of it. Although I didn’t tell him so, I was definitely impressed at the response time of Grant County, Wisconsin’s finest. Had I really been a baddie of some sort, I don’t think I would have gotten away.

Due to these and other experiences, now when I’m doing an “official” survey of some sort, such as a Christmas Bird Count or Breeding Bird Survey route, I try to put some sort of signage on my car to alert passing drivers about my activities. It might be as simple as a sign saying “Bird survey in progress” that I place on my back window. Naturally, some people don’t notice or read it, but I know that a sign on my car has prevented a few unnecessary interruptions when I’ve remembered to use it.

My main reason for relating these stories is to remind all birders to be aware of how our actions are perceived by the general public. People are generally quite vigilant and on the lookout for people and vehicles that seem out of place (perhaps for good reason these days), and they often assume the worst. A vehicle that is driving more slowly than normal and/or stopping frequently along the road could be perceived as someone looking to harm their family or steal their belongings. Likewise, many people (myself included) strongly value their privacy and often don’t like people venturing close to their property. Even when on public property, such as a hiking trail or a road right-of-way, birders should be conscious of the private landowners in the area and be respectful of their space. And hopefully I don’t have to remind birders that trespassing is never acceptable.

I must admit that I sometimes get a bit annoyed when my birding gets interrupted. That being said, I’m sure that most of the law enforcement officers I’ve encountered while birding have also been disappointed that they didn’t get to make an arrest. However, I hope that I can continue to use these interactions with non-birders to educate them about birds and the enjoyment that looking for them can bring. Happy birding, everyone!



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*Photo credit: Nancy Drilling*  
Killdeer nest, Jackson Co.