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Pomarine Jaeger at Lake City

Karl Bardon

While counting Common Mergansers on Lake Pepin at Lake City, Wabasha County on 8 November 1996, I was surprised to see a large, dark bird on the water flap its wings, displaying the diagnostic white wing flash of a jaeger. The bird then took flight, heading farther out onto the lake, where it alighted on the water again, but it was so far away all I could make out was a dark blob. I kept my eye on this dark blob for the next 20 minutes, waiting for it to fly.

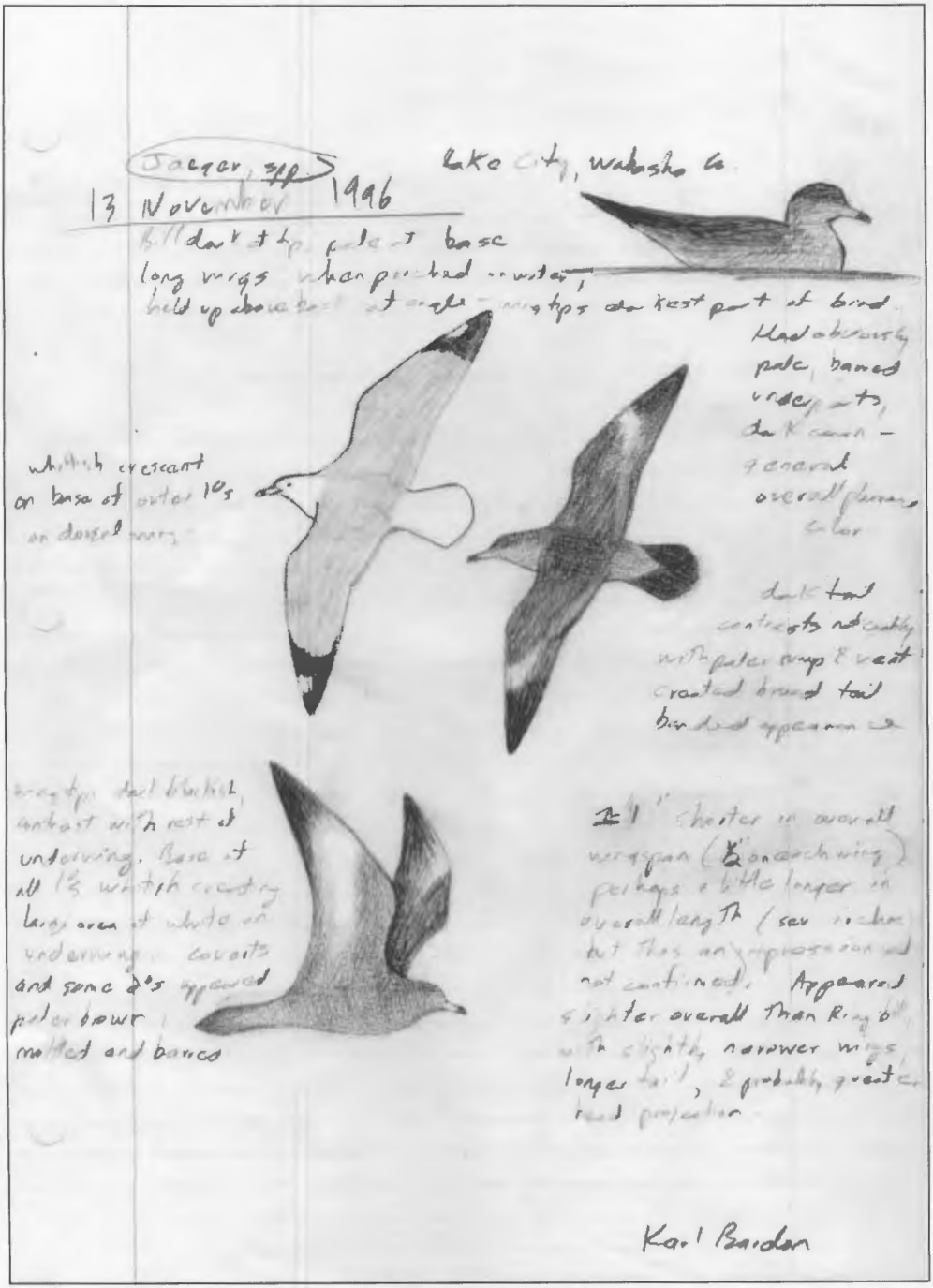
When it did take flight again, it flushed a flock of several thousand Ring-billed Gulls. The jaeger went directly into the flock of gulls, singled out an adult Ring-billed Gull, and chased it for several seconds, giving me direct comparison between these two species. As both birds banked, showing the full breadth of their wingspans, I carefully noted that the jaeger's wingspan was virtually identical to the Ring-billed Gull. I was surprised by this, because my impression of the jaeger in flight by itself had been of a much larger bird.

Despite the distant sighting in poor light (heavy overcast with strong west winds), I felt that the large size of the bird, the heavy flight style, and especially the direct comparison to a Ring-billed Gull were diagnostic of a Pomarine Jaeger. I have seen limited numbers of all three jaegers and South Polar Skuas on the West Coast, but I am certainly not an expert.

Many observers were able to see the jaeger at Lake City, and most agreed that this was indeed a Pomarine Jaeger. There was some controversy that this bird might actually be a Parasitic Jaeger, but the following description, written after I had much better views of the bird on the afternoon of 13 November (under sunny skies), fully supports this identification. Although the bird appeared very dark at a distance or in bad light, and was initially reported as a dark phase individual, it was clearly a juvenile, with heavily barred underparts and under wing coverts. The distal portion of the outermost primaries were blackish ventrally and dorsally, contrasting nicely with the large white wing flash at the base of the primaries on both the ventral and dorsal surfaces of the wing. The wing flash on the dorsal wing surface was prominent and crescent shaped, but the exact number of primaries involved could not be determined, while the wing flash on the ventral surface was very extensive, encompassing the basal half of the outer primaries, appearing to extend nearly to the tip of the inner primaries, and possibly even including some secondaries.

The dark tail contrasted with the paler brown rump, creating a broad tail-banded appearance at a distance. There was a slight projection of the center-most tail feathers, creating a small knob at the end of the tail. I did not see these tail projections well enough to describe accurately, but Tony Hertzel felt they were blunt and square, unlike the more pointed appearance of the central tail projections on juvenile Parasitic Jaegers (Kaufman 1990). The bill had a distinct dark tip which contrasted noticeably with the pale base; this feature was visible at a substantial distance. Although juvenile Parasitic Jaegers can show a similar bicolored bill pattern, it is more noticeable on Pomarine because the feathering at the base of the bill is dark, and because the bill is larger (Kaufman 1990, Olsen 1989).

The jaeger's flight was fast and steady, similar to a large falcon, with no rising and falling at each wingbeat as is re-



Pomarine Jaeger, 13 November 1996, Lake City, Wabasha County. Sketch and notes by Karl Bardon.

ported for Parasitic Jaeger. When seen coming head on in very fast flight (barreling into a large flock of Ring-billed Gulls), its wingbeats were shallow, and almost entirely below the horizontal; at other times, when "leisurely" flying about the lake, the wingbeats appeared quite deep, extending well above and below the plane of the body. Despite repeated views of this bird in flight, I seldom saw it glide, and it certainly did not do so as a matter of course. It gave the impression of a large bird in flight, with a prominent head and bill. When perched at a distance on the water, it appeared all dark, with a large head, and the long wings extended well up above the back.

This jaeger was seen chasing numerous Ring-billed Gulls by myself and many other observers, and most observers agreed the jaeger appeared quite similar in size to the Ring-billed Gulls. Careful study revealed that the wingspan was actually just slightly (about an inch) shorter than most of the Ring-billed Gulls. This direct size comparison to a broad sample of Ring-billed Gulls confirms the identification as Pomarine Jaeger (Finch *et al.* 1978, Kaufman 1990, and Patteson 1996), in contrast to Parasitic Jaegers, which appear smaller. The measurements of wingspan given in Harrison (1983) fully support this conclusion, with complete overlap between the Pomarine Jaeger and the Ring-billed Gull, while the Parasitic Jaeger falls an average of over seven inches shorter in wingspan than these two species: Pomarine Jaeger wingspans vary from 48–50 inches, Ring-billed Gulls vary from 47.5–50 inches, and Parasitic Jaegers vary from 38–45 inches.

Despite these measurements, many of the previous Pomarine Jaeger records in Minnesota described the birds as being the same or nearly the same size as a Herring Gull, sometimes even when the birds were in close comparison. I saw the Lake City bird next to several Herring Gulls, and it was substantially smaller (by about 20%). The Pomarine Jaeger was not reported chasing Herring Gulls (which tolerated the jaeger's presence near them), and it clearly singled out Ring-billed Gulls for pursuit, which flushed *en masse* at its approach. Pomarine Jaegers reportedly differ from Parasitics in their pursuit of larger birds, including Herring Gulls, and not only will they bring such larger birds crashing down into the water, but they have also been reported killing birds as large as Black-headed Gulls and Black-legged Kittiwakes (Olsen 1989, Davenport 1987). Although these observations seem to differ from the behavior of the Lake City bird, it should be noted that Herring Gulls were numerically insignificant to Ring-billed Gulls on Lake Pepin at the time, and no doubt the jaeger chose the easiest and most abundant species to pursue.

This is the eleventh record of a Pomarine Jaeger in Minnesota. Although Janssen (1987) lists eleven records, the individuals observed in Duluth on 12 August 1976 (***The Loon*** 48:134) and 15 October 1980 (***The Loon*** 53:113–114) are now unacceptable (***The Loon*** 57:119). Interestingly, although the first nine records occurred during a period of 12 years from 1970–1982, there has been only one other record (***The Loon*** 66:209–210) in the last fifteen years. All but one of the previous records have been in fall, with dates of occurrence ranging from 5 August to 14 October.

The Lake City record is unusual because it is the first Pomarine Jaeger to occur away from Lake Superior, because it occurred over a month later than any previous record, and because the bird stayed in the area for such a long period of time allowing dozens if not hundreds of birders a chance to see this elusive species. The Pomarine Jaeger was last reported as far south on Lake Pepin as Reads Landing on 24 November, no doubt forced there by formation of ice on the main portion of the lake. This bird was reported as far north as Sand Point, documenting its occurrence in both Goodhue and Wabasha Counties; the same bird was also often seen in Wisconsin waters.

In addition to the Lake City record,

Figure 1. Pomarine Jaeger observations reported to central U.S. birding hotlines, September – December 1996. • = one report, • + *n* = more than one report.

there were numerous Pomarine Jaegers reported in the Midwest from September through December 1996. These are plotted in Figure 1. It should be noted that many of these observations have yet to be considered by local records committees. Noteworthy inland records away from the Great Lakes include two birds at Garrison Dam, North Dakota; up to three birds at Red Rock Reservoir, Iowa; three locations in Illinois including Carlyle Lake, Lake Springfield, and Clinton Lake; two locations in Missouri including one at Smithville Lake and up to two at Riverlands; and one reported at Freeman Lake, Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The Pomarine Jaegers at half of these eight locations were first reported from 5–8 November, coinciding nicely with the 8 November date for the Minnesota bird. Also, most of these inland reports were from large lakes and reservoirs, similar to Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River.

I would like to thank Tony Hertzel for providing a summary of Pomarine Jaegers reported to Midwest area hotlines.

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Second Record of the Mew Gull in Minnesota

Peder Svingen

More than 14 years after the first record of the Mew Gull in Minnesota, an adult on Knife Island in Lake County on 19 September 1982, another adult provided the state's second record on 10 November 1996 in Cass County. This article documents the sighting on Lake Winnibigoshish and reviews the occurrence of the Mew Gull in eastern North America.

On 10 November 1996 near Bena, I discovered an adult Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) on the Cass County portion of Lake Winnibigoshish. A recent cold front had dropped daytime highs by more than 40 degrees F. and produced winds from the northwest at 15–20 miles per hour. Along with a gathering of 136 Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) and 12–15 Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*), the Mew Gull was foraging along the edge of ice that had accumulated along the south shore of "Lake Winnie." Although I noticed that its mantle appeared darker under overcast skies compared to the other gulls, my attention was immediately distracted by a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) that flew through my spotting scope's field of view! After taking notes and sketching the kittiwake, I looked through the gulls that were loafing on the ice pack approximately 75 yards offshore and relocated the darker-mantled gull at 11:08 A.M. among several Ring-billed Gulls. At this point, I realized that its darker mantle was not just an artifact of lighting, since direct side-by-side comparison with the Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls was possible. I also realized that it was smaller than any of the Ring-billed Gulls, which ruled out the California Gull (*L. californicus*). The possibility of Mew Gull entered my mind for the first time and so did panic — I had no references with me and couldn't remember any field marks for distinguishing the "Short-billed" Mew Gull (*L. canus brachyrhynchus*) from the "European" Common Gull (*L. canus canus*). Nominate *canus* has occurred many times along the Atlantic Coast of North America, primarily in winter, and a "split" of *brachyrhynchus* from Common Gull has been widely anticipated.

For the next 22 minutes, I studied the darker-mantled gull and wrote field notes, looking toward the north through a Kowa TSN–4 with either 20X or 40X eyepieces from a distance of 75 yards. During part of this time it sat on the ice, either facing into the wind, or tucking its bill into its back feathers. It periodically turned its head in both directions so that excellent views of the bill were obtained. An eagle flushed the gulls several times, permitting further size and mantle shade comparisons in flight with Ring-billed Gulls. Its leg color was seen whenever it landed again on the ice. It also briefly held its wings open after landing, showing extensive white mirrors on the outermost two primaries (P9 and P10). After several more brief forays along the edge of the ice, it suddenly flew northeast at 11:30 A.M. toward Tamarack Point on Lake Winnie. By early afternoon, the overcast skies completely cleared and despite extensive searching by myself and others the rest of the day, it was never relocated. Near dusk, several dozen gulls were spotted circling over Tamarack Point, steadily gaining altitude before departing toward the southeast; although too far away to identify, they were the size of Ring-billed Gulls. On the following day, there were virtually no gulls of any kind on Lake Winnibigoshish (Anthony Hertzel, pers. comm.).

Description: Smaller than Ring-billed Gull but obviously larger than Bonaparte's Gull; smaller size compared to the Ring-billeds best seen in flight but also apparent while sitting on the ice. Bill slightly down-curved and proportionately shorter than on Ring-billed Gull; combination of dainty bill, large dark eye, and rounded head shape produces a "gentle" or dove-like facial expression. Bill straw-colored and completely unmarked except for a dusky smudge near the gonys that forms an indistinct, thin arc on the lower mandible; this mark only visible using the 40X eyepiece. Legs greenish-yellow. Entire head but especially the nape heavily streaked with dark gray, appearing much darker than the lightly streaked heads of the Ring-billeds and easily as dark as the most heavily streaked Herring Gull ever gets in winter. Mantle consistently one shade of gray darker than the Ring-billeds at all times irrespective of viewing angle; this difference especially noticeable in flight but also seen while sleeping on ice. Primaries at rest black, with white apical spots. In flight and when wings unfolded while standing on the ice, wing tip shows extensive white mirrors on the outermost two primaries. Entire underparts and underwings appear whitish except for the wing tip; unable to determine exact markings on ventral surface of primaries. Wing tips appear slightly more rounded and wing span is just less than Ring-billed Gulls. Easily distinguished in flight from the Ring-billed Gulls by the combination of darker mantle and heavily streaked head and neck.

Identification: The combination of a small and slim-looking bill, rounded head shape, darker mantle, large white mirrors on the outermost two primaries, and smaller size when directly compared to a Ring-billed Gull eliminates other gull species. Compared to an adult Ring-billed Gull, the Mew Gull is "distinctly dark-mantled" with no overlap in mantle shade (Tove 1993). The California Gull is larger than a Ring-billed, with a longer and heavier bill that in adults usually shows both black and red spots near the gonys. The Laughing Gull is about the same size as a Mew Gull but adults have black legs and bill, a much longer and heavier bill, and lack white mirrors in their wing tips. The adult Black-headed Gull is also about the same size as a Mew Gull, but its mantle shade is paler than Bonaparte's, its bare parts are reddish, an auricular spot is present, and it shows a distinctive white wedge on the leading edge of its primaries (Grant 1986).

The description of the bird on Lake Winnibigoshish is entirely consistent with an adult Mew Gull in basic plumage and apparently consistent with *brachyrhynchus*, the North American form (species?) expected in Minnesota. The difficulty here is eliminating the Common Gull of northern and central Europe which is probably responsible for most winter records of "Mew Gull" along the Atlantic Coast (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, Tove 1993). The Kamchatka Gull (*L. canus kamtschatschensis*) of northeastern Siberia is rare to casual in western Alaska but otherwise unrecorded in North America. The wing tip pattern and mantle shade of a Common Gull are intermediate between the Ring-billed's and Mew Gull's; the Common Gull shows a broad black wing tip like Ring-billed but also shows large white mirrors on the outer two primaries like Mew Gull (Harris *et al.* 1989, Tove 1993). The Common Gull's mantle shade is only slightly darker than a Ring-billed Gull's. The Lake Winnie bird's mantle appeared distinctly darker than the Ring-billeds at all times and at all angles, both in flight and while on the ice. Unfortunately, I did not note the exact extent of black on the wing tip in my field notes. In winter, the Common Gull usually shows an irregularly shaped band near the bill tip; when present, this band often separates yellow on the tip from gray-green to greenish-yellow on the basal portion. In contrast, the bill of Mew Gull is completely dull yellow and unmarked, although some individuals may show a thin, dusky subterminal band in winter (Grant 1986, Tove 1993).

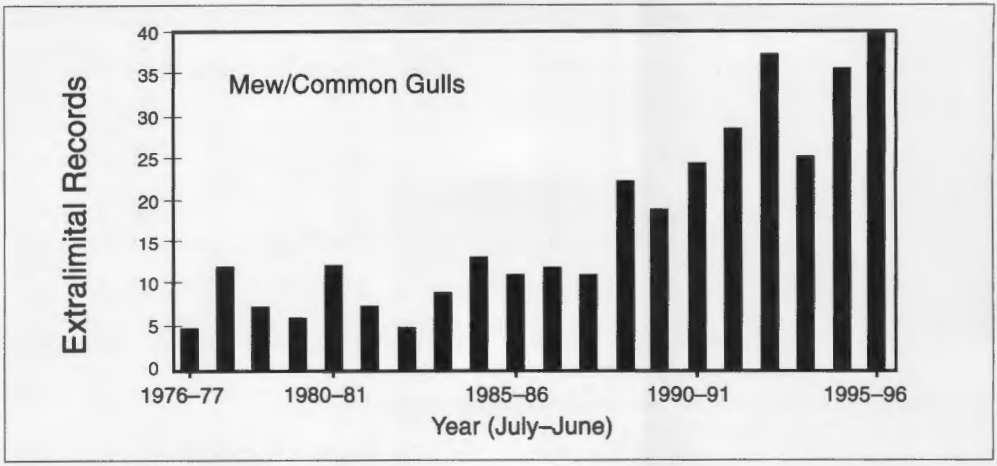

Figure 1. Mew/Common Gulls in North America 1976–1996.

Details of the Lake Winnie bird's bill strongly favor Mew Gull over Common Gull. Compared to Common Gull, the Mew Gull has more diffuse head markings in winter, producing a "uniform grey-brown head" (Grant 1986) that appears darker at a distance. The Mew Gull on Lake Winnie was most easily distinguished in flight by both its extensive head streaking and its darker mantle. Other differences between Mew and Common Gulls given by Grant and Tove were either not noted on the Lake Winnie bird at the time, or are considered less reliable for separating these two forms.

Distribution: The Mew Gull breeds in North America from Alaska, central Yukon, and portions of Mackenzie, south to coastal British Columbia, southern Yukon, northern Alberta, central Saskatchewan, and in northeastern Manitoba at Churchill (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, Godfrey 1986). There have been several summer reports from Churchill since *brachyrhynchus* was first found nesting there (Gollop 1980, Wright 1988). In migration and in winter, it is casual to accidental in the interior of North American and along the Atlantic Coast, with possibly most of the latter records referable to *canus* (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, DeSante and Pyle 1986). Large concentrations of Mew Gulls have been reported along the West Coast during migration, such as 15,000 staging on the Columbia River in mid-March 1979 (Hunn and Mattocks 1979), 10,000 on Tillamook Bay in November 1979 (Mattocks and Hunn 1980) and 7,000 moving along Sunset Beach, Oregon on 28 October – 10 November 1980 (Hunn and Mattocks 1981).

Extralimital reports of the Mew/Common Gull in North America have increased dramatically since about 1988 (Figure 1). I reviewed the past 20 years of *American Birds* and *Field Notes* for all records east and south of the breeding range, except those in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California. Whenever possible, these were cross-checked with other references but some valid records were undoubtedly overlooked and most were not clearly identified as to subspecies. Some may have been misidentifications, hopefully less prevalent after the publication of an identification article in *American Birds* (Lauro and Spencer 1980). I found a total of 340 records from July 1976 – June 1996, of which 56 were identified as the Common Gull. Individuals known to be returning from previous years were counted as one record, as were reports of multiple individuals. Arrival dates for the majority of

all records were split between fall (August–November, n=126 or 37%) and winter (December–February, n=133 or 39%). Of those identified as the Common Gull, almost half (n=26 or 46%) arrived during the winter months. As expected, virtually all records of the Common Gull are from the Maritime Provinces or from the Atlantic Coast as far south as North Carolina (Lewis *et al.* 1981, Lewis 1984, Dinsmore *et al.* 1995). In the Province of Quebec, over half of about 17 records of this complex have been assigned to *canus*. Similarly, New York has recorded both *brachyrhynchus* (Jones 1989) and *canus* (Boyle *et al.* 1993), the latter identified by David Sibley at the Moses-Saunders Dam in Massena. This dichotomy in both Quebec and New York underscores the possibility of either form appearing on the Great Lakes.

Minnesota has only one previous record (Pieper 1982) and is now overdue for its third record of the Mew Gull. They seem to be all around us and are clearly increasing as vagrants to eastern North America. Although South Dakota has no records, North Dakota already has five and Iowa at least three. In the Western Great Lakes Region, Michigan has about six records and Wisconsin has well over a dozen! Nearby Ontario has approximately twenty records, all (so far) attributed to *brachyrhynchus*. Observers throughout our region should anticipate more records of *brachyrhynchus* and prepare for the possible appearance of *canus*.

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Lark Sparrow, 10 June 1996, Anoka County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

The Summer Season
(1 June to 31 July 1996)

Terry Wiens

Highlights of this season were undoubtedly the singing ***Prairie Warblers*** *just north of the Twin Cities and the splendid* ***Pacific Loon*** *in Minneapolis. Despite cooperative weather, only 254 species were reported, well below average. Although migrant shorebirds were somewhat scarce and raptors were a bit more abundant than usual, overall there were relatively few suprises and even fewer rarities.*

No flooding, no droughts, no heat waves or frigid cold spells... weather for the summer of 1996 was about as "normal" as it can get. Although water levels were very high in the spring (apparently limiting nesting success for loons and grebes in some areas), rainfall statewide was near average in June. Temperatures for the month were also near normal with no notable extremes; the cold frosts that can often hit northern Minnesota in early June did not

occur (hopefully resulting in increased nesting success), and although the temperatures did hit the high 90s late in the month, this turned out to be the warmest it would get all summer. In July, precipitation was slightly above average in the north and slightly below average in the south. July temperatures were slightly below normal in all regions of the state, with no significant periods of either extreme heat or unusual cold.

Despite weather that would seem conducive to both birds and birders, an unusually low total of 254 species was observed for the season, well below the previous ten-year average of 266. Seasonal reports and/or breeding information was submitted by 128 observers. Contributors sent in 1,057 nest or brood cards, far short of last year's record but still a respectable number. Breeding data were collected for 134 species, the fewest in many years. Top contributors of breeding information included Jean Segerstrom & Mark Newstrom (256 nest/brood cards), Jacob Langeslag (106), the Natural Resources Research Institute (72), Jack Sprenger (68), and Forest Strnad (60). Thanks to all contributors for your outstanding efforts!

Perhaps the most unusual event of the summer was the surprising appearance of no fewer than three **Prairie Warblers** at the Cedar Creek Natural History area in Anoka County. This accidental species had previously been recorded only seven times in the state with three birds appearing at one location was quite remarkable. Two of the birds established territories for roughly two weeks, providing numerous birders with the opportunity to see and hear this species. It will be interesting to see if any of these birds return in 1997!

Another noteworthy discovery was the **Pacific Loon** found in early July on Lake Harriet in Hennepin County. Although this Casual species occurs more often than an Accidental such as the Prairie Warbler, the circumstances of this record were very unusual; the bird was in breeding plumage, it was well away from Lake Superior, and it appeared in midsummer (remaining for two weeks). It is noteworthy that 20 years ago a Pacific Loon spent most of the summer on Lake Harriet (***The Loon*** 48:184).

There were a few other waterbirds of interest reported this year, including two separate records each for **Little Blue Heron** and **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (species that have been very scarce or absent in recent summers). **Harlequin Ducks** were found lingering 'til mid-June at two different sites along the north shore of Lake Superior; this species has been recorded in only two of the previous ten summers. Shorebirds were generally found in modest numbers, and several species were not reported at all; **Piping Plover**, **American Avocet**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, and **Red-necked Phalarope** were all missed despite being recorded in seven or more of the past ten summers.

A healthy number of raptor observations were reported this summer. Some, such as **Turkey Vulture**, **Bald Eagle**, **Osprey**, and **Peregrine Falcon** continue a well-documented expansion of range and/or numbers; others, such as **Cooper's Hawk**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Northern Harrier**, and **Red-shouldered Hawk** were well represented for reasons unknown. Of the diurnal raptors, only **Swainson's Hawk** seemed a bit more scarce than usual. Also noteworthy were the reports of **Ferruginous Hawk** and **Rough-legged Hawk** (two species becoming much more commonly reported in recent summers), plus the unusual sightings of two **Prairie Falcons**. Owls were a slightly different story; although most regular species were reported in the usual numbers, both **Long-eared Owl** and **Boreal Owl** were not recorded at all (Long-eared Owls had been reported every summer for ten previous years, and Boreal Owls in seven of the last ten).

Other interesting observations included a pair of **Northern Mockingbirds** that nested, of all places, in Minneapolis; a late migrant **Orange-crowned Warbler** and **Blackpoll Warbler**; the fa-

miliar **Yellow-throated Warbler** on territory (again) at Sibley State Park, and the even more familiar **Kentucky Warbler** at Seven Mile Creek County Park; scattered **Henslow's Sparrow** sightings; and the very unusual influx of **Red Crossbills** into southern Minnesota during July.

Over the past year or so, efforts have been made to recruit seasonal observers, especially for counties that normally get limited coverage. As a result, the number of contributors did go up somewhat in 1996. One would expect an overall increase in the number of counties reported for each species, and, to some extent, this did occur. For roughly 35 species, the number of counties reported was significantly above average; only nine species had a significant decline. Many of the former were "conspicuous" species (e.g. **Canada Goose**, **American Robin**, etc.) that one would expect to be reported more commonly as the number of observers increases. Most surprising, however, was the relatively large number of "regular" species that were not observed at all. No fewer than five shorebird and two owl species, as mentioned previously, were missed; in addition, **Bufflehead**, **Spruce Grouse** (!), and **Lark Bunting** were not reported this summer despite being recorded in seven or more of the ten previous summers.

The format for the species accounts is the same as the past several years. The key to the seasonal reports is located below. Breeding records are classified based on the criteria found in ***The Loon*** 58:22 or in *Minnesota Birds*, p.7 (Green and Janssen 1975). Counties for which positive breeding is documented for the first time since 1970 are in italics and identified as such according to updated versions of Janssen and Simonson's breeding maps (***The Loon*** 56:167–186, 219–239 and 57:15–34). Divisions of the state into regions (e.g. west central, southeast) are based on those delineated in *Birds in Minnesota*, p. 25 (Janssen 1987).

A final thanks to all of the summer season reporters who make it possible to document avian distribution and migration. Thanks also to Anthony Hertzel for compiling the Minnesota Rare Bird Hotline reports, and to Peder Svingen for his assistance in preparing this report.

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KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case **(PACIFIC LOON)** indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold **(10/9)** indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold **(Aitkin)** indicate an unusual occurrence for that county. City of **Duluth** also bold when applicable.
4. Counties listed in bold and underlined **(<u>Aitkin</u>)** indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics *(Aitkin)* indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [ ] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2602 East 4th St, Duluth, MN 55812.

PACIFIC LOON
Fifth summer record for the state. Single bird in breeding plumage observed 7/2–16 on Lake Harriet in Hennepin (CMy *et al.*; ***The Loon*** 68:135–136).

Common Loon
Nested in six counties, probable nesting in five; seen in 22 additional counties as far south as Renville, Steele.

Pied-billed Grebe
Nested in seven counties, probable nesting in Kandiyohi; observed in 31 additional counties statewide.

Horned Grebe
Seen in Roseau, Marshall, Polk; plus Lake Superior in St. Louis (6/28 LF, 7/7 AH).

Red-necked Grebe
Most reports in 15+ years. Nested in *Lac Qui Parle* JL, Marshall, Koochiching, Otter Tail, Wright; probable breeding in seven counties. Seen in 12 other counties in all regions except southwest and southeast.

Eared Grebe
Few reports, similar to last year. Nested in *Rice* FKS. Also observed in Roseau, Marshall, Lac Qui Parle; plus lingering migrant last seen 6/8 Hennepin.

Western Grebe
Nested in *Grant* SDM, Douglas, Big Stone; probable nesting in Todd. Seen in 12 additional counties as far east as a line through Roseau, Crow Wing, Hennepin, Steele.

American White Pelican
Observed in 43 counties in all regions except northeast.

Double-crested Cormorant
Nested in Big Stone, Meeker; observed in 33 additional counties statewide.

American Bittern
Seen in 20 counties as far south as Cottonwood, Winona.

Least Bittern
Reported in Becker, Chippewa, Watonwan, Hennepin, Dakota, Steele and Wabasha.

Great Blue Heron
Most reports since 1988. Nested in Cass, Meeker; probable nesting in Clearwater, Aitkin, Kandiyohi, Hennepin, Watonwan. Seen in 56 other counties statewide.

Great Egret
Observed in 32 counties as far north as Wilkin, Wadena, Kanabec.

Snowy Egret
All reports: 6/9 Roseau AE, 7/28 Big Stone LE, 7/13–? Ramsey *fide* CS.

Little Blue Heron
First summer reports since 1991. Observed 7/3 Otter Tail SM, 6/1–2 Le Sueur WS, mob.

Cattle Egret
Fewest reports since 1988. Observed 6/7 Wilkin SDM, 7/6 Big Stone (4) LE.

Green Heron
Nested in Anoka, Rice; probable nesting in Kandiyohi, McLeod. Seen in 36 additional counties as far north as Becker, Cass, Aitkin.

Black-crowned Night-Heron
Relatively few reports, similar to previous year. Seen in Roseau, Marshall, Grant, Douglas, Kandiyohi, Hennepin, Anoka, Washington, Ramsey, Dakota, Nicollet, Faribault; plus 7/28 **Cook** (Grand Marais) *fide* KE.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Single bird observed on 7/18 near Carlos Avery WMA in Anoka Co. AH; plus 7/19-20 Ramsey *fide* CS.

[TRUMPETER SWAN]
Reports continue to increase for this reintroduced species. Nested in *Wadena* PBi; probable nesting in Becker, Hennepin. Also observed in Roseau, Beltrami, Clear-

water, Hubbard, Crow Wing, Stearns, Cottonwood, Jackson. A recent review of the status of this species in the state can be found in ***The Loon*** 68:81–85.

Snow Goose
Several reports of single birds: 6/1 Wabasha CS, 6/8 Polk SKS, 6/15 Wright SC, 6/20 Hennepin RH.

Canada Goose
Most reports ever for this species. Nested in eight counties including Cass NRRI; probable nesting in 12 counties. Seen in 40 other counties throughout state.

Wood Duck
Nested in 17 counties, probable nesting in five; seen in 36 additional counties statewide.

Green-winged Teal
Many reports, similar to previous year. Observed in 23 counties in all regions except northeast.

American Black Duck
Seen in Marshall, Clearwater, St. Louis, Stearns, Sherburne, Dakota.

Mallard
MDNR estimates 315,000 breeding birds in state — 44% above 30-year average. Nested in eight counties, probable nesting in nine; observed in 48 other counties statewide.

Northern Pintail
Observed in Roseau, Marshall, Polk, Beltrami, Koochiching, Aitkin, Murray, Cottonwood.

Blue-winged Teal
MDNR estimates 289,000 breeding birds in state — up 38% from last year. Nested in five counties including *Crow Wing* JS/MRN; probable nesting in four. Seen in 39 additional counties statewide.

Northern Shoveler
Seen in ten counties within normal breeding range; plus Aitkin, Winona.

Gadwall
Observed in 13 counties in all regions except northeast and southeast.

American Wigeon
Nested in Aitkin. Also seen in Marshall, Roseau, Beltrami, Clearwater, Koochiching, Itasca, St. Louis; plus 6/4 Hennepin ABo, 6/6 Watonwan ED, **6/23** Hennepin (pair at Lake Calhoun) RJ, Winona (no date) CS.

Canvasback
Probable breeding in Roseau, Mahnomen; also observed in Marshall, Clay, Otter Tail, Grant, Big Stone, Hennepin.

Redhead
Seen in 19 counties in all regions except northeast and southeast.

Ring-necked Duck
Nested in *Wadena* PBi, probable nesting in Anoka; seen in 18 additional counties in all regions except west central and southwest.

Lesser Scaup
Observed in 14 counties in all regions except northeast and southeast.

Harlequin Duck
Adult male and female seen 6/9–17 on Lake Superior at Tofte in Cook (MR/AP *et al.*; ***The Loon*** 68:178). Additional pair of adult males observed 6/17–18 at mouth of French River in St. Louis Co. *fide* KE.

Common Goldeneye
Nested in Hubbard, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake; probable nesting in Cook. Also observed in Roseau, Beltrami, Koochiching, Cass.

Hooded Merganser
Nested in six counties including *Sherburne* PJo; probable nesting in Becker, Otter Tail. Seen in 18 additional counties in all regions except southwest.

Common Merganser
Nested in *Itasca* JLa, *Cass* NRRI; probable

nesting in Cook. Also seen in Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Aitkin.

Red-breasted Merganser
Only reports: St. Louis, Cook.

Ruddy Duck
Relatively few reports, similar to last year. Seen in 14 counties as far east as a line through Roseau, Todd, Hennepin, Winona.

Turkey Vulture
Number of reports continues to increase, following trend of previous three years. Nested in *Ramsey* SKi (***The Loon*** 68:176–177); seen in 43 additional counties statewide.

Osprey
Nested in *Todd* JSK, Otter Tail, Cass, Crow Wing, St. Louis, Aitkin, Winona; probable nesting in Mahnomen. Seen in eight other northern counties as far west as Becker; plus Chisago, Washington, Hennepin, Carver, Rice.

Bald Eagle
Record number of observations; almost double the previous ten-year average for number of counties reported. Nested in *Meeker* PJo, *Renville* (JL, DBM, FKS), Sherburne, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin; probable nesting in Otter Tail, Big Stone, Chippewa, Kandiyohi. Seen in 31 additional counties in all regions except southwest.

Northern Harrier
Nested in *Nobles* NAD, *Rice* JLa, JL; seen in 35 other counties statewide.

Sharp-shinned Hawk
Observed in 11 northern counties as far south as Wadena, Crow Wing, Carlton; plus a well-documented individual seen 7/13 Washington DN.

Cooper's Hawk
Record number of reports; double the previous ten-year average for number of counties reported. Nested in Otter Tail; probable nesting in Hennepin, Carver, Scott. Observed in 30 additional counties in all regions except northeast and southwest.

Northern Goshawk
Only records: Itasca and St. Louis.

Red-shouldered Hawk
Observed in Becker, Otter Tail, Crow Wing, Aitkin, Morrison, Stearns, Hennepin, Anoka, Washington, Wabasha, Winona.

Broad-winged Hawk
Nested in Becker, Itasca; probable nesting in Crow Wing, Aitkin. Seen in 20 additional counties as far west and south as Beltrami, Otter Tail, Kandiyohi, Brown, Winona.

Swainson's Hawk
Nested in Big Stone; also observed in Polk, Lac Qui Parle, Redwood, Washington, Dakota, Waseca, Mower, Winona.

Red-tailed Hawk
Nested in *Todd* JSK, *Le Sueur* JL, Otter Tail, Rice; probable nesting in five counties. Seen in 57 additional counties statewide.

Ferruginous Hawk
Adult observed on 6/15 at Felton Prairie in Clay KR; possibly same adult seen at same location on 7/1 AH.

Rough-legged Hawk
Immature bird observed 7/6,20 Roseau PS (***The Loon*** 68:179); plus single bird observed 6/25 Clearwater ABo.

American Kestrel
Probable breeding in seven counties; seen in 47 other counties statewide.

Merlin
Nested in St. Louis; also observed in Koochiching, Cook, Pine.

Prairie Falcon
Single bird observed **6/18** Norman BBe; plus single bird seen **6/10** Lac Qui Parle

RJ. These represent the third and fourth summer records for the state.

Peregrine Falcon
Report from Midwest Peregrine Restoration Project indicates continued breeding success. Nested in Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Sherburne, Wright, Hennepin, Washington, Ramsey, Dakota, Olmsted; probable nesting in Stearns, Goodhue. Also seen in Anoka, Rice.

Gray Partridge
Few reports, similar to previous three years. Nested in Murray, Winona; probable nesting in Freeborn. Seen in seven other southern counties plus Otter Tail, Wadena.

Ring-necked Pheasant
Nested in Rice, probable nesting in five counties; seen in 31 additional counties as far north as Clay, Wadena, Isanti.

Ruffed Grouse
MDNR reports drumming counts up 17% statewide. Probable breeding in Becker, Cass, Aitkin, St. Louis. Observed in 11 additional northern counties plus Anoka, Wabasha, Winona, Fillmore, Houston.

Greater Prairie-Chicken
Reported in Polk, Pennington, Clay and Wilkin.

Sharp-tailed Grouse
MDNR reports this species is still declining statewide, especially in northwest portion of range. Only reports: Koochiching, Aitkin, Pine.

Wild Turkey
Nested in *Rice* FKS, *Fillmore* NO; probable nesting in Sibley, Freeborn. Also reported in Big Stone, Brown, Anoka, Washington, Waseca, Goodhue, Wabasha, Dodge, Olmsted, Winona, Houston.

Yellow Rail
At least 20 individuals found on 7/20 at various locations in Roseau PS; also recorded at McGregor marsh site in Aitkin.

Virginia Rail
Nested in *Steele* CH, probable nesting in Otter Tail; seen in 15 additional counties statewide, including St. Louis in northeast.

Sora
Nested in *Olmsted* CH, Anoka; observed in 24 other counties statewide.

Common Moorhen
Pair seen throughout season near Fergus Falls in Otter Tail SDM; also observed in Wabasha.

American Coot
Nested in *Grant* SDM, Marshall; probable nesting in St. Louis. Seen in 27 additional counties throughout state.

Sandhill Crane
Many reports, similar to previous year. Nested in *Rice* (*fide* JL), *Wabasha* (*fide* CS). Seen in 19 other counties roughly along a line from Winona to Roseau.

Black-bellied Plover
Only report: 6/1 Marshall.

American Golden-Plover
Only record: 6/1 Marshall.

Semipalmated Plover
Only report: 7/28 Martin.

Killdeer
Most reports since 1989. Nested in five counties including *Todd* JSK; probable nesting in three. Observed in 59 additional counties statewide.

Greater Yellowlegs
July migrants observed in 15 counties; early migrants 7/1 Clay, 7/2 Nicollet.

Lesser Yellowlegs
Fall migrants seen in 18 southern and two northern counties; early migrant 7/2 Nicollet.

Solitary Sandpiper
Unusually large number of southern re-

ports in July. Fall migrants observed in 21 southern and two northern counties; early migrant 6/29 Steele.

Willet
All reports: **6/8** Kandiyohi RJF, **7/6** Big Stone (3) LE.

Spotted Sandpiper
Seen in 34 counties in all regions except southwest.

Upland Sandpiper
Observed in 16 counties in all regions.

Hudsonian Godwit
Only report: 6/1 Marshall.

Marbled Godwit
Observed in Marshall, Polk, Norman, Clay, Wilkin, Kandiyohi.

Sanderling
Only record: 7/21 Pipestone.

Semipalmated Sandpiper
Observed in 16 counties; late migrant 6/8 St. Louis, early migrants 7/6 Big Stone and Watonwan.

Least Sandpiper
Fall migrants seen in 15 southern and one northern county; early migrants 7/6 Carver, Big Stone, Watonwan, and McLeod.

White-rumped Sandpiper
Only reports: 6/3 Dakota, 6/7 Rice.

Baird's Sandpiper
Early migrants 7/6 Big Stone, Watonwan, and McLeod; July migrants also observed in Carver, Sibley, Kandiyohi, Winona.

Pectoral Sandpiper
Fall migrants observed in 18 counties; early migrants 7/6 Big Stone and Sibley.

Dunlin
Only report: 6/3 Dakota.

Stilt Sandpiper
Early migrant 7/6 Big Stone; July migrants also observed in Brown, Renville, Kandiyohi, Carver.

Short-billed Dowitcher
Fall migrants seen in nine counties; early migrant 7/6 Big Stone.

Common Snipe
Nested in *Otter Tail* SDM; seen in 23 additional counties as far south as Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Hennepin.

American Woodcock
Fewest reports in 15+ years. Nested in Cass, Aitkin; also seen in Koochiching, Lake, Crow Wing, Stearns, Scott, Winona, Mower.

Wilson's Phalarope
Reported in Roseau, Marshall, Norman, Aitkin, Big Stone, Kandiyohi, Sherburne, Carver, Martin.

Franklin's Gull
Nested in Marshall (over 20,000 nests observed by staff at Agassiz NWR *fide* SKS); seen in 13 additional southern counties plus Roseau, Grant.

Bonaparte's Gull
All reports: 6/1–15 Marshall SKS, 7/20 Roseau (3) PS, 7/22 Crow Wing (2) MRN.

Ring-billed Gull
Probable nesting in St. Louis; seen in 41 other counties statewide.

Herring Gull
Nested in St. Louis; also seen in Koochiching, Cook, Itasca, Hubbard, Crow Wing, Carlton, Isanti, Hennepin, Cottonwood.

Caspian Tern
Observed in six northern counties; early June migrants seen in Isanti, Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Steele. Unusual were the **40** counted on 6/24 at Forest Lake in Washington Co. WL.

Common Tern
Probable nesting in St. Louis; also seen in

Roseau, Itasca, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin.

Forster's Tern
Nested in Marshall, Douglas; probable nesting in Todd. Observed in 22 additional counties in all regions except northeast and southeast.

Black Tern
Nested in *Becker* BBe; probable nesting in Kandiyohi, Wright, Steele. Seen in 40 additional counties in all regions except northeast.

Rock Dove
Probable nesting in Kandiyohi, Freeborn; observed in 50 other counties statewide.

Mourning Dove
Nested in six counties, probable nesting in four; seen in 54 additional counties throughout state.

Black-billed Cuckoo
Probable nesting in Anoka; observed in 31 other counties in all regions except southwest.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Reported in ten southern counties plus Todd, Kanabec.

Eastern Screech-Owl
Nested in *Todd* JSK, Brown; probable nesting in Freeborn. Also reported in Hennepin, Jackson.

Great Horned Owl
Nested in *Wilkin* SDM, *Big Stone* OJ, *Goodhue* JS/MRN, Carver; probable nesting in McLeod, Rice, Freeborn. Seen in 24 additional counties in all regions except northeast.

Barred Owl
Nested in Beltrami, Brown; probable nesting in Mower. Observed in 16 other eastern and central counties; plus Becker.

Great Gray Owl
Reported in Beltrami, Becker, St. Louis, Aitkin.

Short-eared Owl
Observed mobbing a Rough-legged Hawk in Roseau PS (***The Loon*** 68:179); also seen in Polk, Pennington and Aitkin counties.

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Only reports: Fillmore (no date) CS, Koochiching.

Common Nighthawk
Nested in Rice; seen in 39 other counties statewide.

Whip-poor-will
Nested in *Cass* MRN (***The Loon*** 68:186–188); also reported in Koochiching, Lake, Cook, Crow Wing, Morrison, Dakota, Houston.

Chimney Swift
Nested in Watonwan, Rice; probable nesting in Todd. Observed in 45 additional counties statewide.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Most reports in 12+ years. Probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing, Freeborn, Houston; seen in 40 other counties statewide.

Belted Kingfisher
Probable nesting in Kandiyohi, Renville; seen in 47 additional counties throughout the state.

Red-headed Woodpecker
Probable nesting in Isanti, Anoka, Freeborn; observed in 44 other counties in all regions except northeast.

Red-bellied Woodpecker
Most reports in 15+ years. Probable nesting in Hennepin, Fillmore; seen in 32 additional counties as far north as Otter Tail, Wadena, Aitkin.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Nested in *Cass* NRRI, *Aitkin* WN, Becker, Fillmore; probable nesting in St. Louis, Crow Wing, Hennepin. Seen in 27 additional counties in all regions except southwest.

Downy Woodpecker
Most reports since 1988. Nested in *Olmsted* CH, Rice, Brown; probable nesting in six counties. Observed in 46 other counties statewide.

Hairy Woodpecker
Most reports in 13+ years. Nested in Kandiyohi RJF, Crow Wing, Brown; probable nesting in four counties. Seen in 45 additional counties throughout state.

Three-toed Woodpecker
All reports: 6/5 Lake SS, 6/18 Cook (Gunflint Trail) KE *et al.*

Black-backed Woodpecker
Observed in Koochiching, Hubbard, Lake.

Northern Flicker
Nested in *McLeod* RbS, *Watonwan* DBr, Cass; probable nesting in Crow Wing, Freeborn. Seen in 53 additional counties statewide.

Pileated Woodpecker
Nested in Aitkin, Brown; probable nesting in Crow Wing. Seen in 34 other counties in all regions except west central and southwest.

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Seen in seven north central and northeast counties plus Becker. June migrants observed in six additional counties; late migrants 6/8 Brown, 6/10 Clay. One report of early migrant: 7/31 Fillmore NO.

Eastern Wood-Pewee
Most reports in 13+ years. Probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing; seen in 52 additional counties statewide.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Observed in Marshall, Koochiching, Itasca, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus late migrants 6/1 Fillmore, 6/8 Brown.

Acadian Flycatcher
Nested in Winona; also reported in Hennepin (Elm Creek Park Reserve), Rice, Wabasha, Fillmore.

Alder Flycatcher
Seen in 17 northern counties plus Isanti, Anoka, Washington. Migrants (?) observed 6/2 Hennepin, 6/8 Brown, **6/15** Scott DBS, 7/28 Dakota.

Willow Flycatcher
Most reports in 14+ years. Probable nesting in Kandiyohi; seen in 26 additional counties as far north as Roseau in the west and Todd, Pine in the central/east.

Least Flycatcher
Nested in Cass; probable nesting in Crow Wing. Observed in 39 other counties in all regions except southwest.

Eastern Phoebe
Nested in seven counties, probable nesting in three; seen in 34 additional counties statewide.

Great Crested Flycatcher
Most reports since 1988. Nested in *Todd* JSK, Crow Wing; probable nesting in Cass, Rice. Seen in 53 other counties throughout state.

Western Kingbird
Number of reports extremely low — half that of the ten-year average. Nested in Big Stone; also seen in Clay, Becker, Wilkin, Lac Qui Parle, Wadena, Stearns, Benton, Sherburne, Anoka, Hennepin.

Eastern Kingbird
Nested in five counties, probable nesting in five; observed in 56 additional counties statewide.

Horned Lark
Probable nesting in Wilkin, Todd, Carver. Seen in 34 other counties as far north and east as a line through Roseau, Hubbard, Morrison, Isanti.

Purple Martin
Probable nesting in six counties; seen in 37 additional counties statewide.

Tree Swallow
Most reports since 1989. Nested in 11

counties including *Wadena* PBi; probable nesting in eight. Seen in 45 additional counties throughout state.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Probable nesting in Washington; observed in 29 other counties in all regions.

Bank Swallow
Nested in Brown; probable nesting in Aitkin, Lac Qui Parle, Kandiyohi. Seen in 29 additional counties statewide.

Cliff Swallow
Nested in Crow Wing, Anoka; probable nesting in five counties. Reported in 44 additional counties throughout state.

Barn Swallow
Nested in four counties, probable nesting in nine; seen in 48 other counties statewide.

Gray Jay
Probable nesting in St. Louis; also seen in Koochiching, Itasca, Aitkin, Lake, Cook.

Blue Jay
Nested in Rice; probable nesting in Crow Wing, Anoka, Nicollet, Freeborn. Seen in 61 additional counties statewide.

Black-billed Magpie
Fewest reports since 1987. Nested in Aitkin; also seen in Roseau, Marshall, Polk.

American Crow
Most reports since 1986. Nested in Crow Wing; probable nesting in five counties. Observed in 62 additional counties statewide.

Common Raven
Nested in St. Louis, probable nesting in Aitkin; seen in eight additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Marshall, Pine, Anoka.

Black-capped Chickadee
Nested in three counties, probable nesting in eight; observed in 44 additional counties statewide.

Boreal Chickadee
Reported in Koochiching, St. Louis, Aitkin.

Tufted Titmouse
Probable nesting in Fillmore; also seen in Winona, Houston.

Red-breasted Nuthatch
Probable breeding in Crow Wing. Observed in nine additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker, Kanabec, Chisago, Hennepin, Washington.

White-breasted Nuthatch
Most reports since 1988. Nested in Crow Wing; probable nesting in Brown, Martin. Seen in 50 additional counties statewide.

Brown Creeper
Nested in Brown; also observed in Hubbard, Cass, Itasca, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Isanti, Wabasha.

House Wren
Nested in ten counties including *Cook* OSL; probable nesting in seven. Seen in 43 additional counties statewide.

Winter Wren
Nested in Cass; probable nesting at Flandrau State Park in Brown Co. JSp (***The Loon*** 68:178–179). Also observed in Roseau, Becker, Koochiching, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton; plus Fillmore (no date) CS.

Sedge Wren
Probable nesting in McLeod, Rice; seen in 42 other counties statewide.

Marsh Wren
Most reports since 1982. Observed in 39 counties in all regions except northeast.

Golden-crowned Kinglet
Reported in Roseau, Becker, Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Observed in Roseau, Becker, Koochi-

ching, St. Louis, Cook; plus 7/7 Kanabec BA. Late migrant (?) **6/20** Hennepin County RH.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Probable nesting in Houston. Seen in 17 additional counties roughly along a line from Fillmore to Todd and along the Minnesota River as far west as Brown.

Eastern Bluebird
Nested in 12 counties including *Carlton* ESH; probable nesting in nine. Observed in 30 other counties statewide.

Veery
Nested in Becker, Cass; probable nesting in Crow Wing. Seen in 26 additional counties as far south and west as a line through Clay, Stearns, Nicollet, Fillmore.

Swainson's Thrush
Reported in Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton.

Hermit Thrush
Probable nesting in Becker; seen in seven other north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Pine.

Wood Thrush
Nested in *Becker* KHu; probable nesting in Cass. Observed in 11 counties throughout south central and southeast; plus Sibley, Scott, Hennepin, Sherburne, Clay, Aitkin, **Koochiching**, St. Louis, Cook.

American Robin
Most reports in 13+ years. Nested in nine counties including *McLeod* RbS; probable nesting in seven. Seen in 53 additional counties statewide.

Gray Catbird
Nested in *Wadena* PBi, *Todd* JSK, Hennepin, Washington, Rice; probable nesting in eight counties. Observed in 44 other counties throughout state.

Northern Mockingbird
Many reports, including third nesting record for state. Successfully nested near downtown Minneapolis in *Hennepin* TT, mob; singing bird also reported 6/9 and 6/15 at different location in Hennepin SC. Additional records: 6/2 Pine *fide* AH, 6/5 Cook OSL, 6/8 Anoka AH, 6/9 Isanti TT.

Juvenile Northern Mockingbird, 10 July 1996, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photo by Terry Brashear.

Brown Thrasher
Nested in five counties including *Blue Earth* BBo; probable nesting in Crow Wing, Freeborn. Seen in 39 additional counties statewide.

Cedar Waxwing
Record high number of reports. Nested in six counties including *Itasca* JLa, *Fillmore* NO; probable nesting in four counties. Seen in 52 additional counties throughout state.

Loggerhead Shrike
Nested in Dakota, probable nesting in Blue Earth; also reported in Clay, Lac Qui Parle, Washington, Scott, Le Sueur, Rice, Waseca, Steele.

European Starling
Nested in *Watonwan* DBr, Brown; probable nesting in Kandiyohi, Freeborn. Seen in 49 additional counties statewide.

Bell's Vireo
Nested at Minneopa S.P. in Blue Earth Co. BBo. Also reported near Black Dog L. in Dakota TT, DBo; two singing at O.L. Kipp S.P. in Winona Co. PBu, DBS; plus Wabasha CS.

Solitary Vireo
Observed in Roseau, Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Aitkin; plus late migrant 6/2 Hennepin.

Yellow-throated Vireo
Probable nesting in Crow Wing; seen in 30 additional counties in all regions except southwest and northeast.

Warbling Vireo
Nested in Crow Wing, probable nesting in Rock; seen in 40 other counties in all regions (only St. Louis in the northeast).

Philadelphia Vireo
Only report from Koochiching.

Red-eyed Vireo
Nested in *Wadena* PBi, Becker, Crow Wing; probable nesting in four counties. Seen in 45 additional counties statewide.

Blue-winged Warbler
Most reports ever. Observed in eight southeast and east central counties as far north as Chisago; plus Scott, Rice, Nicollet, Brown. Singing male and Brewster's female reported during June in Stearns MJ/DT; also recorded 6/20 Becker BBe.

Golden-winged Warbler
Nested in *Becker* KHu, Crow Wing. Seen in nine additional north central and northeast counties plus Morrison, Stearns, Kanabec, Pine, Anoka, Chisago, Washington.

Tennessee Warbler
Many reports, especially of southern migrants. Observed in seven north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker. Late migrants Winona (no date), 6/1 Todd, 6/2 Lac Qui Parle and Isanti, 6/9 Hennepin, **6/12** Chisago RH; early migrants 7/25 Hennepin, 7/31 Brown.

Orange-crowned Warbler
Late migrant **6/1** Koochiching AH, PS; this species has been recorded in the summer only once (1992) in the previous 30 years.

Nashville Warbler
Nested in Crow Wing, probable nesting in Pine; seen in ten additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Marshall, Becker, Sherburne, Anoka, Hennepin.

Northern Parula
Reported in Becker, Beltrami, Koochiching, Itasca, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Yellow Warbler
Nested in *McLeod* RbS, Crow Wing, Brown; probable nesting in Cass, Martin, Freeborn. Seen in 47 additional counties statewide.

Chestnut-sided Warbler
Probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing; seen in 20 additional counties as far south and west as a line through Marshall, Stearns, Anoka.

Magnolia Warbler
Reported in Koochiching, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus late migrants 6/2 Isanti and Anoka.

Cape May Warbler
Observed in Koochiching, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus 7/5 Pine JJW.

Black-throated Blue Warbler
Reported in St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Yellow-rumped Warbler
Nested in Itasca, probable nesting in Crow Wing. Seen in nine additional north

central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Pennington, Becker, Pine.

Black-throated Green Warbler
Observed in eight north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker; late migrant 6/12 Chisago RH.

Blackburnian Warbler
Seen in eight north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker; late migrant **6/5** Ramsey WL.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER
Male on territory at Sibley State Park in Kandiyohi for third consecutive summer (mob).

Pine Warbler
Probable nesting in Becker, Crow Wing; also observed in Marshall, Beltrami, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cass, Aitkin, Pine, Sherburne, Isanti, Chisago, Ramsey.

PRAIRIE WARBLER
Third summer record for the state. Three singing males discovered on 6/4 at Cedar Creek Natural Area in Anoka Co. JH (***The Loon*** 68:183–186); birds remained on territory (although the number gradually diminished to one) through 6/24 mob.

Palm Warbler
Seen in Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Aitkin; late migrant (?) 6/15 Carlton ESH.

Bay-breasted Warbler
Only report from Marshall SKS.

Blackpoll Warbler
Several late migrants: 6/1 Hennepin (2) SC; 6/1 Koochiching PS, AH; **6/8** Lac Qui Parle JL.

Cerulean Warbler
Reported in Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Brown, Nicollet, Rice, Olmsted, Winona, Fillmore.

Black-and-white Warbler
Probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing. Seen in 13 additional northern counties plus Isanti, Anoka, Chisago; late migrant (?) 6/2 Brown.

American Redstart
Record number of reports. Nested in Cass, Crow Wing; probable nesting in Brown, Hennepin, Fillmore. Seen in 46 additional counties statewide, including Murray in southwest.

Prothonotary Warbler
Nested in Houston; probable nesting in Hennepin, Scott, Brown; also observed in Nicollet, Ramsey, Washington, Wabasha, Winona.

Ovenbird
Most reports in 15+ years. Nested in *Becker* KHu, Cass; probable nesting in Crow Wing, Aitkin. Seen in 33 additional counties in all regions except west central (and only Jackson in southwest).

Northern Waterthrush
Reported in Roseau, Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Aitkin, Pine, Anoka; plus late migrant 6/2 Lac Qui Parle.

Louisiana Waterthrush
All reports: Chisago (near St. Louis River at Franconia) WM, Winona, Fillmore; Washington 6/1, Browns Creek and Silver Creek WL.

Kentucky Warbler
Found for fifth consecutive year at Seven Mile Creek County Park in Nicollet mob.

Connecticut Warbler
Reported in Roseau, Pennington, Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Aitkin.

Mourning Warbler
Probable nesting in Crow Wing. Seen in nine additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker, Pine, Kanabec, Isanti, Chisago; also observed 6/15 Scott DBS, 7/20 Dakota TT. Late migrants Fillmore (no date), 6/4 Brown.

Common Yellowthroat
Nested in Becker BBe, Rice; probable

nesting in four counties. Seen in 55 additional counties statewide.

Hooded Warbler
Nested at Camp Ripley in ***Morrison*** Co. SMr (***The Loon*** 68:245–246); this represents the only documented nesting away from the traditional Murphy-Hanrahan Park site in Scott/Dakota counties. Also observed 6/15 Scott DBS.

Wilson's Warbler
Mid-summer observations in St. Louis, Lake and Cook; plus late migrants 6/1 Pennington, 6/2 Hennepin.

Canada Warbler
Reported in Pennington, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton.

Scarlet Tanager
Probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing, Anoka; seen in 31 additional counties in all regions of the state except the southwest.

Northern Cardinal
Record number of reports. Nested in Morrison, Washington, Brown, Rice; probable nesting in seven counties. Observed in 26 other counties as far north as Hubbard, Pine.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Most reports since 1988. Nested in Todd, Scott, Brown; probable nesting in five counties. Seen in 47 additional counties statewide.

Blue Grosbeak
Two adult males seen and heard 7/26–31 near Springfield in **Cottonwood** CMa, RJ; also reported in Rock.

Indigo Bunting
Nested in Brown; probable nesting in Fillmore. Seen in 49 additional counties.

Dickcissel
Probable nesting in Blue Earth. Observed in 27 other southern counties plus Clay, Crow Wing; also reported 6/16 St. Louis (Sax-Zim bog) *fide* KE.

Eastern Towhee
Nested in Crow Wing; seen in 21 additional counties in all regions except northeast, west central and southwest.

Chipping Sparrow
Most reports since 1986. Nested in six counties including *McLeod* RbS; probable nesting in six. Observed in 51 other counties throughout state.

Clay-colored Sparrow
Nested in *Kandiyohi* RJF, *Rice* JLa, JL; probable nesting in Cass, Crow Wing. Seen in 32 additional counties as far south as Cottonwood, Steele, Winona.

Field Sparrow
Nested in Anoka, Brown, Blue Earth; probable nesting in Becker. Seen in 25 additional southern counties plus Clay, Todd, Morrison.

Vesper Sparrow
Nested in Todd, probable nesting in Anoka; observed in 44 other counties statewide (but only St. Louis in northeast).

Lark Sparrow
Nested in Anoka; also reported in Roseau, Becker, Morrison, Sherburne, Brown, Scott, Dakota, Wabasha.

Savannah Sparrow
Reported in 50 counties statewide.

Grasshopper Sparrow
Observed in 25 counties as far north as Marshall in the west and Sherburne, Chisago in the central/east.

Henslow's Sparrow
One bird seen and heard on 6/1 at O.L. Kipp State Park in Winona PBu, DBS; five reported from same location SR; one bird seen on 6/1 and two birds seen and heard on 6/16 at Felton Prairie in Clay RO (***The Loon*** 69:49); also two reported 6/15–20 Chisago TT, mob.

Chestnut-collared Longspur, 30 June 1996, Felton Prairie, Clay County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

Le Conte's Sparrow
Fewer reports than in recent years. Observed in Roseau, Marshall, Clay, Wilkin, Otter Tail, Koochiching, St. Louis, Aitkin, Pine.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Reported on 7/20 at three traditional locations in Roseau PS; three birds observed on 7/13 east of Felton Prairie in Clay RO; reported at traditional McGregor marsh site in Aitkin; also observed 7/10–14 Wilkin SDM.

Song Sparrow
Nested in Dakota, Brown, *Cass* NRRI, MRN, *Rice* JLa, JL; probable nesting in six other counties. Seen in 54 additional counties statewide.

Lincoln's Sparrow
Reported in Roseau, Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Aitkin.

Swamp Sparrow
Probable nesting in Crow Wing; seen in 41 additional counties statewide.

White-throated Sparrow
Seen in ten north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Marshall, Becker, Pine; late migrant **6/20** McLeod RbS.

Dark-eyed Junco
Reported in Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake.

Chestnut-collared Longspur
Only report from traditional Felton Prairie site in Clay County.

Bobolink
Most reports since 1988. Probable nesting in Kandiyohi, Nobles, Rice, Freeborn; seen in 56 additional counties statewide.

Red-winged Blackbird
Nested in Anoka, Rice, Martin; probable nesting in five counties. Observed in 61 other counties throughout state.

Eastern Meadowlark
Record high number of reports. Observed in 30 central and eastern counties plus Lac Qui Parle, Jackson.

Western Meadowlark
Reported in 46 counties in all regions except northeast.

Yellow-headed Blackbird
Nested in Anoka, Ramsey; probable nesting in five counties. Seen in 39 additional counties in all regions except northeast.

Brewer's Blackbird
Reported in 17 northern counties plus Stearns, Sherburne, Meeker, Wright, Hennepin, Sibley, Dakota, Watonwan.

Common Grackle
Nested in six counties including *McLeod* RbS, *Watonwan* DBr; probable nesting in five others. Seen in 54 additional counties statewide.

Brown-headed Cowbird
Breeding confirmed in five counties, probable breeding in six; seen in 50 other counties throughout state. Parasitized species included Red-eyed Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary

Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

Orchard Oriole
Probable nesting in Grant, Big Stone, Freeborn. Seen in 12 additional southern counties plus Wilkin, Clay, Becker, Polk.

Baltimore Oriole
Most reports in 13+ years. Nested in Itasca, Becker, Brown, *Watonwan* BSe, DBr; probable nesting in 12 counties. Observed in 48 additional counties.

Purple Finch
Probable nesting in Crow Wing. Seen in 12 additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Becker, Kanabec, Pine, Sherburne, Chisago.

House Finch
Nested in *McLeod* RbS, *Martin* BBo, Hennepin, Rice; probable nesting in nine counties. Observed in 35 other counties statewide.

Red Crossbill
Probable nesting in Becker. Unusual number of southern reports: 6/30 – 7/6 Cottonwood (3+ males and one immature) ED; 7/15 Winona (immature) CS *et al.*; 7/20 Rock (Blue Mounds S.P.) KE *et al.*; 7/25–26 Brown (pair) JSp; 7/28 Dakota TT.

White-winged Crossbill
Observations throughout summer in St. Louis, Lake, Cook; common in late July in Aitkin. [Note April record of possible nesting in Lincoln in ***The Loon*** 68:243–244.]

Pine Siskin
Nested in Rice, *Cass* NRRI, MRN. Seen in 14 additional northern counties plus Hennepin, Ramsey; seen through 6/23 Brown JSp.

American Goldfinch
Nested in Crow Wing; seen in 64 additional counties statewide.

Evening Grosbeak
Probable nesting in Becker, Cass and Aitkin; seen in eight additional north central and northeast counties plus Roseau, Pine.

House Sparrow
Nested in *McLeod* RbS, Nicollet, Rice; probable nesting in four counties. Observed in 50 other counties statewide.

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Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committe

Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Chairman

There was a meeting of the Committee on 8 December 1996, and the agenda included decisions on the following: four records documented only by photographs (which are difficult to circulate by mail); four recirculated records with inconclusive first-round votes (each of which requires a second-round vote at a meeting); one record of a potential first state record (which requires a vote at a meeting); one record involving a question of origin (which also requires a vote at a meeting); and the procedure for dealing with records of a recently split species (Spotted Towhee).

At this meeting, the following records were voted on and found to be Acceptable:

- Pacific Loon, 2–16 July 1996, Minneapolis, Hennepin County (photo record; ***The Loon*** 68:133).
- Western Tanager, 18 May 1996, International Falls, Koochiching County (photo record).
- Spotted Towhee, no date, Woodbury, Washington County (photo record).
- Eurasian Wigeon, 14 April 1996, near Etter, Goodhue County (recirculated record).

• Clark's Grebe, 8 September 1996, Minnesota Lake, Faribault County (recirculated record).

• Pygmy Nuthatch, 26–28 October 1996, Moorhead, Clay County (identification accepted unanimously, with all ten members voting on potential first state records; see below for additional comments).

At this same meeting, the following records were voted on and found to be Unacceptable:

• Black-headed Grosbeak, late May 1996, Roseau County (photo record). There is no written description of this bird, with the only documentation consisting of photographs which are not clearly identifiable; however, they appear to be of a male Baltimore Oriole.

• Prothonotary Warbler, 15 May 1996, Robertson Park, Jackson County (recirculated record). Although the brief description is consistent with this species, it seems to refer to the species in general as found in a field guide, not to the individuals (three were reported) seen in the field. It also appears to only have been written weeks later from memory. The record is also questionable since more than one Prothonotary was reported, and since the observers did not know the species is unusual in southwestern Minnesota, having reported to have seen it there for three consecutive years.

• Tundra Swan, 30 May 1996, near Karlstad, Kittson County (recirculated record). The description of this immature swan suggests it was probably a Trumpeter Swan, since the overall plumage is described as a "light gray brown". In late spring, one-year-old Tundra Swans are essentially white overall, while Trumpeters retain more grayish brown coloration in their plumage, as described here.

There was a discussion and vote on the probable origin of the Rock Ptarmigan seen 20 May 1996 in Grand Marais, Cook County (***The Loon*** 68:79–81). On questions of origin all ten members vote, and a majority accepted it as an unqualified Accidental species: i.e., the bird was most likely a genuine wild vagrant, not an escape or release from captivity.

Another discussion was held on the status of the Spotted Towhee, which (along with the Eastern Towhee) was elevated to full species status in 1996, and the following was decided:

1) there are currently enough records to classify Spotted Towhee as a Regular species, but MORC will wait until the next official Minnesota checklist is drafted (December 1998) before declaring its status as Regular or Casual.

2) in the meantime, documentation will be requested for all current Spotted Towhee reports, and, if none is forthcoming or if the documentation is inadequate, the record will be disregarded.

3) all Spotted Towhee reports prior to 1996 are considered Acceptable, although documentation for any of these is also encouraged.

4) it is up to the discretion of the Chairman to decide whether or not a Spotted Towhee record is submitted to MORC for a vote (i.e., if the documentation is considered clearly satisfactory by the Chairman, it can be considered Acceptable without a vote).

After the identification of the Pygmy Nuthatch was accepted (see above), there was a discussion of whether or not to include it on the Minnesota list. The issue has been that the bird was only seen to enter Minnesota on a few occasions as a direct result of the use of tape recordings and/or whistled owl imitations, which attracted it across the Red River from a yard in Fargo, North Dakota. Eventually, the nuthatch was accepted to the state list as an Accidental$_O$ species — that is, a species involving a "reasonable doubt" qualification. In effect, this was a compromise vote.

Two points of view were expressed at the meeting. One opinion is the nuthatch should be included on the state list since the circumstances involved with the bird coming into Minnesota were not contrary to one set of commonly accepted listing guidelines — i.e., those of the American Birding Association (ABA). On the other hand, some are of the opinion it should

be excluded because it was an unnatural occurrence — i.e., an individual bird was specifically singled out to be attracted into the state.

The compromise involved amending the definition of the Accidental$_O$ species category, which includes "species for which there is a reasonable doubt as to the origin or wildness of the birds". (In other words, a bird for which it is felt the chances of wild vs. captive origin are about equal — both species of whistling-ducks as well as Crested Caracara are currently on this list.) The agreement was to expand this category to include species for which there is "reasonable doubt as to their natural occurrence or arrival in the state" — i.e., a bird like the Pygmy Nuthatch. A majority of the committee then voted to accept the nuthatch as an Accidental$_O$ species; although this vote was not unanimous, it did not need to be since such votes on a bird's origin are decided by majority vote. In effect, this means the nuthatch is now included on the state list on a qualified basis, with the (o) subscript attached.

After the December meeting, two MORC members who oppose including the Pygmy Nuthatch on the state list sent a letter to five professional ornithologists and to members of another state's records committee requesting their opinions on how they would treat the record. Of the four members of the records committee who responded, two were in favor of including the record and two were opposed, and, at the time of this writing (20 March 1997), I am unaware of what responses have been received from the five ornithologists.

In a similar vein, the MORC Chairman sent an e-mail message in January to nine other state records committees, describing the circumstances of this record and requesting their opinions on it (the committees contacted were those for which an e-mail address could be found). E-mail responses were received from seven of them — either from individual members or from a committee as a whole. At the same time a letter about this record was also received from another state's records committee, and in November opinions from the chairmen of the ABA's listing rules and birding ethics committees were also received.

In all, therefore, comments were received from members of ten committees, and the opinions have been heavily in favor of including the nuthatch on the Minnesota list — and with no need for our compromise involving the qualifying (o) subscript. Those in favor of the record are: three state records committees as a whole; the majority (5–2) of another state committee; the chairmen/secretaries of three other state committees and of the two ABA committees; and three individual members of another state committee. Other than the two dissenting votes cited above, the Chairman received no contrary opinions as a result of this inquiry.

It is MORC's policy that a decision on any record can be reconsidered after it is voted on, and two of our members have expressed the opinion that MORC should reconsider our acceptance of the Pygmy Nuthatch as an Accidental$_O$ species. However, in light of the comments received so far from those other committees, there may be no reason to do so.

The following records were voted on by mail July–December 1996 and found to be Acceptable:

- Groove-billed Ani, 15 October 1995, Lutsen, Cook County (***The Loon*** 68:172–173).
- Yellow-throated Warbler, late April–June 1996, Sibley S. P., Kandiyohi County.
- White-faced Ibis, 11–13 May 1996, Lake Augusta, Cottonwood County (***The Loon*** 68:179).
- Prairie Falcon, 18 June 1996, Norman County.
- Black-legged Kittiwake, 28 September 1996, Bena, Cass County (***The Loon*** 69:44).
- Louisiana Waterthrush, 6 October 1996, near Lancaster, Kittson County (***The Loon*** 68:247).
- Mississippi Kite, 15 September 1992, Duluth, St. Louis County (***The Loon*** 68:215–216).

• Mississippi Kite, 5 September 1993, Duluth, St. Louis County (***The Loon*** 68:215–216).

• Mississippi Kite, 9 September 1996, Duluth, St. Louis County (***The Loon*** 68:215–216).

• Sabine's Gull, 20 October 1996, Ortonville, Big Stone County (***The Loon*** 69:47–48).

• Pacific Loon, 21 October 1996, Duluth, St. Louis County (***The Loon*** 68:244–245).

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 7–10 December 1994, Rockford, Wright County (***The Loon*** 67:65–66).

• Clark's Grebe, 18 August 1996, Clear Lake, Stevens County.

• Burrowing Owl, 16–28 May 1996, Leota & Moulton Townships, Nobles & Murray counties.

• Pacific Loon, 25 October 1996, Garrison, Crow Wing County.

• Pacific Loon, 7 November 1996, White Bear Lake, Ramsey County.

• King Eider, 2 November 1996, Ray Berglund Wayside, Cook County.

• Great Black-backed Gull, 9 November 1996, Duluth, St. Louis County.

• Mew Gull, 10 November 1996, Bena, Cass County (***The Loon*** 69:7–11).

• Black-legged Kittiwake, 10 November 1996, Bena, Cass County (***The Loon*** 68:247).

The following records were voted on by mail July–December 1996 and found to be Unacceptable:

• Northern Waterthrush, 17 December 1995, near Austin, Mower County. The description includes mention of rusty coloration on the forehead and tail, a gray crown and eye line, pale yellow on the throat, and ground scratching behavior with the feet. None of these features is consistent with a waterthrush, and most of the Committee thought the bird was most likely a sparrow of some kind.

• Prairie Falcon, 3 January 1996, near Mountain Lake, Cottonwood County. No optics were used, the observation only lasted a few seconds, and the majority considered the documentation to be too brief and vague to be acceptable. The plumage description only includes mention of sandy brown upperparts and whitish underparts.

• Western Grebe, 23 March 1996, Lake Chandler, Jackson County. The incomplete description of the plumage only mentions the birds (six individuals) being black and white with a black cap, the documentation includes no information on optics, distance or light conditions, and it appears the observer was unaware of how unusually early the date was.

• Prairie Warbler, 13 June 1996, Agram Township, Morrison County. Although the observer is familiar with the song of this species and describes well the song which was heard, the bird was only heard and never seen. Because warblers often sing aberrant songs, the majority was reluctant to accept such a record of a heard-only accidental species. For example, the Golden-winged Warbler, which would be found in the habitat described, also has a buzzy song which can vary considerably in pattern and might conceivably resemble a Prairie Warbler's.

• White Ibis, 21–23 September 1996, near Minneiska, Wabasha County. The main problem with this record is that a flock of 80–100 individuals was reported, and this fact alone strongly suggests the identification was in error. Also, both the bills and legs are described as "reddish-yellow", which would be inconsistent with White Ibis.

• Whooping Crane, 17 September 1996, Lake Carlos State Park, Douglas County. Although the description of the two white "crane-shaped" birds with black wing tips is consistent with this species, no optics were used, and the majority felt a more definitive look and description should accompany any report of such an unusual species. In addition, the observers refer to themselves as relatively inexperienced birders, and the possibility of these being Wood Storks, White Ibis or even Sandhill Cranes (which under certain light conditions often can appear whitish overall with darker primaries) is not precluded. **8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804**.

BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Songs (Part Two)

Kim R. Eckert

The birds are back and singing! It's spring again — well, sort of. At least it was last week. As I write this, the windchill is close to 30 below and yesterday there was yet another snowstorm in parts of western Minnesota. Given these weather conditions, one has to wonder how those phoebes and other insectivores which migrated in last week are doing. Listen carefully, I fear, and you may hear some of them singing that proverbial swan song if all the bugs died last night. Now that certainly would be a challenge worthy of this column: trying to identify a nondescript flycatcher which sounds like a swan.

But I digress. It will warm up again — I think! — as April progresses, more and more migrants will arrive, and once again the woods and wetlands will be alive with sound. Now, therefore, is the time to brush up on your skill at identifying those sounds, and what follows is the second in a series on learning a few key bird vocalizations. Part One appeared last year at this time (see ***The Loon*** 68:62–66), and it is worth repeating here a few introductory comments from that article.

First and foremost, remember that learning bird songs and call notes is probably the single most valuable aid to finding and identifying birds. Second, this skill is certainly difficult to master and the learning process will be full of frustrations, but it is definitely worth the effort. And third, this article obviously cannot (and has no reason to) cover every bird sound one may encounter. Instead, a more helpful procedure will be to concentrate on those which may be unfamiliar to experienced birders, those often involved in misidentifications, and the vocalizations of those species which tend to be difficult to find or to visually identify.

Last year's article on songs and calls was limited to non-passerines; this second installment will cover the part of the checklist from flycatchers to vireos, and the third and final part planned for next spring will discuss warblers through winter finches.

Pewees don't always say "pewee"

So, you find yourself looking at a flycatcher with wing bars and no eye ring, and you figure it must be a pewee. Well, perhaps it is, but don't forget to first make sure it isn't a phoebe — which, contrary to what most books say, typically does have wings bars. Or a Willow or Alder flycatcher — which, contrary to what some books say, typically shows little or nothing in the way of an eye ring. Or even an Olive-sided Flycatcher — which typically covers up those white tufts with its folded wings while perched.

But wait: this article is supposed to be about bird songs, so let's assume you already knew that other stuff and, indeed, it is a pewee. And let's also assume you're clever enough to know the Western Wood-Pewee finds its way into Min-

nesota on a casual basis. And — what the heck — you're even savvy enough to know the two pewees are safely separated in the field only by their vocalizations. So you listen up and hope to hear something other than the familiar and expected "pee a wee" song of the Eastern Wood-Pewee. And, amazingly, it does start giving a down-slurred "peeur" call instead, along with an occasional brief twittering. It must be a Western Wood-Pewee!?

Sorry. (And you were doing so well there for awhile in the previous paragraph on your knowledge of pewee trivia.) The fact is that both Eastern and Western wood-pewees say "peeur" — and both can give similar twittering notes. Before claiming to have heard a Western Wood-Pewee in Minnesota, make sure that "peeur" call has a distinctive burry or nasal or buzzy quality to it, something totally lacking in the Eastern's call. Note as well this primary song of the Western typically sounds more one-syllabled than the clearly two-syllabled "pee ur" of the Eastern.

Empidonax? It must be Latin for "empossible"

A quiz. The hardest birds to identify are: a) hawks; b) shorebirds; c) immature gulls; d) silent Empidonax flycatchers; e) confusing fall warblers; f) sparrows; g) all of the above. If you chose (d), you probably have a lot of birders agreeing with you. (And if you chose [g], consider investing in a life membership in the MOU so you don't miss any issues of ***The Loon*** — it will take a few years before these "Birding By Hindsight" articles can address all your concerns.)

To be sure, there are some clues other than voice which might at times lead you to the correct identification of an Empidonax: e.g., breeding habitat, range, bill shape, length of primaries, and even some plumage characteristics. But certainly here is one group of birds whose songs and call notes should be among the first you try to learn.

There would be little reason here to discuss at length the territorial songs of the five species of Empidonax flycatchers which breed in Minnesota, since these can be readily heard on commercially available cassette tapes and CDs. But there are a few things to take note of as you listen to these recordings:

— The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher's song may sound similar to the Least's, but listen for the much longer pauses between the two-syllabled song phrases, which are accented on the first syllable. (The Least's snappy "che bek" call is repeated more often — often without pause — and accented on the second syllable.) Yellow-bellieds also have a whistled "chu wee" call note, which is curiously more musical than its territorial song — quite the opposite of what is normally the case with songbirds.

— Many birders are fond of describing the Acadian Flycatcher's song as "pizza", which would imply the accent is on the first syllable. But this translation is quite misleading, since the Acadian's explosive "peet seet!" song is clearly accented on the second syllable. Its call note is a loud and sharp "peet".

— Another inaccurate and misleading song description is imposed on the Alder Flycatcher: it hardly sings "fee bee o", as some field guides would describe it. Instead, listen for a burry, two-syllabled "free beeur", accented on the second syllable; at close range it might sound two-and-a-half-syllabled. The closely related Willow Flycatcher — which is virtually identical to the Alder visually, even in the hand — sings a sneezy "fitz bew", the syllables equally accented.

— Among the Alder's various call notes is a loud, buzzy, siskin-like "zhreer" (the Willow's corresponding note is a soft, dry "sprrit"), but be sure to be especially aware of its most distinctive call note: a soft but clear musical "peep". No other Minnesota Empidonax has such a note. The call note of both the closely related Willow Flycatcher and the Least Flycatcher is a flat "whit", although the Willow's note will often sound a bit more musical than the Least's "wheat".

Croaking crows

Is it true that crows only caw and ravens only croak? No, you should believe that nevermore! In reality, ravens have quite an array of vocalizations, but the issue here is the strong potential for heard-only American Crows to be misidentified as Common Ravens. Many birders are unaware that crows frequently give a guttural croaking call which is unlike their usual "caw". The result? I suspect that over the years most of the Common Raven reports in southern Minnesota have actually been of heard American Crows — i.e., those with their minds and mouths in the gutter.

And, as long as we're on the subject of corvids, a brief reminder about the need for caution when claiming to have located a heard-only Buteo. As discussed in Part One of this series (***The Loon*** 68:63), Blue Jays can give perfect imitations of the calls of Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged hawks.

Phoebes and White-throated Sparrows in January

It is a cold day in midwinter (sort of like what it is today in early April!), and a clear, two-syllabled whistle is heard: "fee bee" or, if you like, "phoebe". It never ceases to surprise me how many less experienced listeners assume they are hearing an Eastern Phoebe. Or, when informed it's not a phoebe, they then propose an alternate identification of the song: White-throated Sparrow.

Of course, most Minnesota birders would recognize the song as that of the Black-capped Chickadee. The next time you hear it, try quizzing your friends and neighbors who think they are familiar with the chickadees at their feeders. Odds are they believe that chickadees only say "chick-a-dee-dee-dee", and they will be impressed by your knowledge of bird songs. (Just don't tell them about that "raven" you reported hearing last year in the Cities!)

Winter Wrens call as well as sing

No other Minnesota bird has a song as musical and as elaborate as the Winter Wren, a song so distinctive that it is easily learned and remembered. Unfortunately, hearing this song usually doesn't help much if you're trying to see the wren, as it tends to choose a singing perch concealed high in the interior branches of a spruce tree. But at least you know it's there (somewhere!) and, besides, a Winter Wren isn't much to look at anyway.

Just as nondescript as the Winter Wren's plumage is its call note, a sound that many experienced bird listeners are unfamiliar with. But it is definitely worth learning, especially during migration, if you hope to find this secretive wren as it skulks in the undergrowth. At the pine plantation at Hawk Ridge in Duluth, for example, Winter Wrens are almost common each fall — but most visitors are unaware of this since they fail to recognize the call note. Tune your ear to its soft, usually two-syllabled, somewhat blackbird-like "chimp chimp" or "chak chak", and you'll probably be surprised as to how widespread the Winter Wren actually is in Minnesota during migration.

Marsh warblers and wrens

Once you learn the chattering song of the Sedge Wren, it becomes clear how common and widespread this species is in the state. To be sure, this is one of the most useful songs a birder can learn from the simple standpoint of locating the bird, since it often sings from the top of a shrub or tussock. Silent Sedge Wrens, however, can be virtually impossible to spot: in fact, I would rank this species as the most secretive skulker of any Minnesota species when it irrevocably sinks into a thicket as you approach.

But as you work on learning this song, there is one caveat to be aware of. Beware of Common Yellowthroats, which don't always sing "witchity witchity": they also have a little-known song which closely resembles the chattering series of the Sedge Wren. This alternate song of the yellowthroat, however, lacks the Sedge Wren's hesitating introductory notes (usually there are two) which pre-

cede its rapid and uniform chattering.

And as long as you're standing around in the marsh getting wet and feeding the mosquitoes, also start listening more closely to any Marsh Wrens you hear. It seems there has been talk (or is it chatter?) in recent years of yet another "split", with two distinct species of Marsh Wrens. I confess I know little about this, except that the primary difference between the two is said to involve the songs. The proposed split would involve separating the eastern and western populations, with the range division between the two apparently somewhere in the Great Plains. So it is therefore quite possible there are — or will be — two species of Marsh Wrens singing and breeding in western Minnesota.

As explained in *Birding* (22:99–100): "Eastern birds frequently introduce songs with a nasal note not heard in western birds, whose songs contain harsher, more grating sounds than do songs of eastern birds. Western birds have larger repertoires, and they shift between songs in their repertoire more rapidly but more predictably than do eastern birds." (Hmm... on second thought it might be easier to be eaten by mosquitoes in the north woods while listening to Winter Wrens.)

A creepy kinglet

I still remember how long it took me to recognize the Golden-crowned Kinglet's song, even though learning its high-pitched and more rapid "see see see" call note was a relative cinch. My problem was that its song descends at the end into some nasal or buzzy chickadee-like notes, and for a time I mistakenly thought I was hearing Boreal Chickadees. This kinglet's song, however, still has the strong potential for being confused with the Cape May Warbler's clear "seet seet seet seet" song. This often occurs since the kinglet frequently gives only the first half of its song; listen, however, for this series of deliberate "seet" notes to rise a bit in pitch, unlike the Cape May's song in which the notes remain on the same pitch.

But there is also a problem with one of the Golden-crowned Kinglet's call notes which still remains, at least to my ear. Instead of giving the characteristic "see see see" series, some Golden-crowneds just give a single, long "seeeet" note, and I still cannot usually tell it from the Brown Creeper's call note. And, to make matters worse, some Cedar Waxwing calls can be louder than normal and sound essentially the same as this kinglet/creeper note.

Thrushes underfoot and overhead

Regardless of the Winter Wren's vocal skills, some would vote for the thrushes as the best singers in Minnesota, and they do have a point. These songs of the Veery, Gray-cheeked, Swainson's, Hermit and Wood thrushes are not only melodious but useful as well, since thrushes during the breeding season are difficult to detect unless they are singing. With practice, these five songs are not difficult to distinguish from each other: only the songs of the Hermit and Wood thrushes are similar enough for beginners to confuse (but all you need to do is hear the Hermit's introductory "key" note which is not given by the Wood Thrush).

More useful here would be a brief summary of these thrushes' call notes, which are often quite helpful when identifying these birds. Visually they are not as easy to distinguish as many birders would think, especially since thrushes are fond of lurking in the shadows and under thickets where decent views are hard to come by. Therefore, start listening for their most typical call notes (unfortunately, there are a variety of other thrush call notes which are difficult to describe and identify):

— The Veery can give either a downslurred "veer" and a rising "vree", with both notes reminiscent of its full song.

— Gray-cheekeds have a similar "veer" call, but with practice it will sound sharper, higher-pitched and perhaps buzzier than a Veery.

— The Swainson's note is a fairly loud and sharp "wick", which curiously re-

sembles the Whip-poor-will's call note.

— Hermits have the softest call note: a somewhat blackbird-like "chuck".

— And the Wood Thrush has a loud, rapid and distinctively multi-syllabled call: "wick wick wick wick wick", somewhat like a repeated Swainson's note.

If you want a bigger challenge, try your hand — or ear — at identifying thrushes at night as they migrate overhead. Our own Bill Evans, Jr. (formerly a Rochester resident) has been a pioneer of sorts in working with these and other nocturnal call notes, and he has even produced a cassette tape on the subject. Some thrush calls heard overhead in the dark may not always be identifiable, and there are other nocturnal migrants which can sound like thrushes, but with practice some of these calls are quite recognizable:

— The Veery's and Gray-cheeked's typical nocturnal notes are essentially the same as their respective diurnal notes.

— The Swainson's note is a clear, spring peeper-like "peep".

— The Hermit's note resembles that of the Swainson's, but it is thinner and higher-pitched.

— The Wood Thrush's note is lower-pitched, more abrupt and burrier than the others.

A higher-than-normal Veery song?

One of the best sounds of the prairie grasslands of the northern Great Plains is the aerial song of the Sprague's Pipit — a song which resembles the pattern and breezy quality of the Veery's song. No, I'm not suggesting a birder would ever confuse the two, but there is a song of the grasslands of western Minnesota which could easily mislead a birder into thinking he or she has heard a pipit.

Although most experienced birders are familiar with the thin buzzing song of the Grasshopper Sparrow, not many are aware this sparrow has a longer alternate song. This song adds descending, Veery-like phrases to the end of its primary song which clearly do resemble the notes in a Sprague's Pipit's song: "tic zzzzzzzz zeeur zeeur zeeur zeer zeer zrr". Remember, though, the Grasshopper Sparrow sings from the grass, while the pipit's song comes from overhead. Also keep in mind that this pipit is only casual in Minnesota, so be sure to consider and eliminate the more likely possibility of having heard a Grasshopper Sparrow's song before reporting a heard-only Sprague's Pipit.

Buzzing among the Cedars

If you've spent any time at all in winter with Bohemian Waxwings, you've probably become familiar with their calls, which are lower-pitched and buzzier than the weaker and thinner notes of the typical Cedar Waxwing. One caution, however. Just as Cedar Waxwings can vary their calls enough to sound more like a Brown Creeper or Golden-crowned Kinglet (see above), they can alternately add a trilled quality to their calls which makes them sound atypically buzzy and enough like Bohemians to cause confusion. Therefore, make sure you see, as well as hear, that suspected Bohemian Waxwing when birding in southern Minnesota where this species is usually rare. And, of course, be especially skeptical of any Bohemian you think you hear anywhere in Minnesota from late April through early October.

Startling starlings

This paragraph could almost be safely omitted from this article, since I suspect most readers are aware of how well European Starlings can give essentially perfect imitations of the songs of other birds. But I'll be brief and not even try to list the wide and surprising array of species starlings have been known to mimic. Suffice it to say that before reporting any rarity you're pretty sure you hear but can't see, simply take a second to look around and make sure there aren't any starlings nearby.

Vireo variations

With one exception, the songs of the vireos found in Minnesota are distinctive enough for most practiced listeners to identify with a minimum of difficulty.

However, that one exception — the Red-eyed's song vs. the Philadelphia's — presents a maximum of difficulty, so much so that I cannot tell these songs apart with any consistency or confidence. I even doubt the vireos can tell themselves apart: on several occasions I have played a tape of a Red-eyed's song and had a Philadelphia fly in (or vice versa)!

It is said the Philadelphia's song is slower and higher-pitched than the Red-eyed's, and I am sure this is true much of the time. But I am equally sure there are many times when there is no apparent difference. I tend to have more confidence in the higher-pitched nature of the Philadelphia's song than I do in its slowness, since Red-eyeds often vary the length of the pauses between their song phrases. I certainly doubt we have an accurate notion of the Philadelphia Vireo's true status as a breeding species in Minnesota, since no one has ever tracked down all those ubiquitous Red-eyed Vireo-like songs to see how often they actually come from a Philadelphia.

There is a much clearer difference in call notes between the two. The Philadelphia has a multi-syllabled raspy scolding call, while the Red-eyed's gives a clearer, one-syllabled note that drops off in pitch. (As for the other vireos, the Warbling's note is somewhat catbird-like and rises in pitch and in volume at the end. I confess I'm unfamiliar with the Bell's Vireo's call note, but the Solitary, Yellow-throated and White-eyed all give a multi-syllabled scolding series similar to the Philadelphia's call — which tends to be shorter in duration than the scolding of the other three. I have also heard the notes in the Yellow-throated's series to descend in pitch, while the pitch of the Solitary's and White-eyed's series seems to stay the same.)

Finally, the Red-eyed Vireo is also involved at times with a misidentification of quite a different nature. While birders tend to be quite familiar with what a Purple Finch looks like, most are unaware that one of its call notes is a nondescript phrase which resembles a Red-eyed Vireo's song phrase. The result? More than once there have been reports of Red-eyed Vireos heard between late fall and early spring, and I strongly suspect the observers actually heard a Purple Finch.

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BOOK REVIEWS

ALL THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA, by The American Bird Conservancy, 1997, Roundtable Press. Reviewed by Jim Williams.

How many general North American birding field guides do you have in your library? How many do you like, seriously, every page, every feature? I've got several different Peterson guides, a Golden, the Stokes' new guide, the National Geographic, some Audubon guides from long ago. I like bits of all of them, but wish I

could take them to pieces and rebind a master guide combining all of the best parts and features.

And now I have yet another new guide that falls in the same category. It's title is "*All* the Birds of North America," the italics included at no extra charge. This new entry into the market comes from the American Bird Conservancy, produced by Roundtable Press, Inc., published by HarperPerennial, which is a division of HarperCollins. (You'd think this was a big-deal movie instead of a guide to birds!)

I saw the book in a book store, paged through it, liked what I saw, and bought it. I took it home and called a friend of mine to tell him of my find. He went right out and bought his own copy. Then he sent me a laundry list of the things he doesn't like about this book. Some of his complaints:

• The page numbering is weird. There is no left and right page. Each open page pair is counted as a single page. And page numbers appear only on the lower right, except for pages 13, 30, 41, 62, 78, 91, 148, and 163 where the page numbers appear on the left. None of the chapter headings are counted as pages and don't get a page number. Some occupy several pages — up to 13. (That's true.)

• Families are not in order (for example, blackbirds precede thrushes). Obviously this is intentional, but no effort is made to explain where these species actually occur systematically. (This is true, too.)

• Some families are split up without explanation. Greater Roadrunner is illustrated in with pheasants. "Chat" (as it is called) is with "Catbird" and neither are with other members of their family, but rather after larks on their own page. Again, no effort is made to explain that a chat is a warbler and is not related to Gray Catbird. Nowhere in the text is chat called a warbler. (Yup.)

• The section called "Conical Bills" — for sparrows and grosbeaks — begins with an explanation of how perching birds have flexor tendons to hold on to branches. Why here? The previous section, called "Warbler-sized Straight Bills" begins with a lengthy discussion on the use of the bill, feeding habits and migration. (He's right.)

• Colors are often off. The male Evening Grosbeak is painted more as a deep brownish-orange. (Right again.)

He went on and on. I won't bore you.

The strange part is, this isn't a bad field guide. I could create a list of complaints about each of the guides mentioned in the first paragraph. Nobody's perfect.

What's good about this new book?

• It does have all the North American birds (even though its drawings of birds found in Alaska and the Arctic look strangely round).

• It will fit into your pants pocket, which is one step ahead of the National Geographic my present field book of choice.

• This new guide provides good text on basic bird identification technique and on family characteristics, including silhouettes. Most family sections open with intelligent text that would be helpful to any beginner and interesting to more experienced birders.

• For the most part, my friend's comments aside, the illustrations are well done. The birds are shown in context, against natural backgrounds. The seabirds, for example, fly over an ocean, grassland birds are on a prairie. Where the authors deem it helpful, male, female, and juvenile plumages are clearly shown. The main illustration of a species often is accompanied by a drawing of the bird in flight, and sometimes by smaller presentations of species unrelated except in appearance, a helpful tool.

• There is a neat set of front-on silhouettes of hawks in flight, offering information I haven't seen before. This is one of several visual extras, scattered throughout the book, that offer useful in-

formation.

- The descriptive text is good, and the range maps are good, too.

As I write this, I am one week away from teaching a short-course in bird identification. I will bring *All the Birds of North America* to class with me and recommend it to my students. The list price is $19.95.

GEOLOGY ON DISPLAY. Geology and Scenery of Minnesota's North Shore State Parks, by John C. Green, 1996, State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Reviewed by Robert B. Janssen.

This is a beautiful book, just as Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior is one of the most beautiful places in the United States.

I can think of no one more qualified than John Green to write this book. He is one of the most knowledgeable geologists in the country and his expertise in volcanism and volcanic rock formations is known around the world. This makes John an expert on Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior. John has studied the region for over 30 years and this book represents his knowledge and most importantly his love for the area.

The book is divided into two basic parts.

Part One is a 21-page "Introduction to the Geology of the North Shore." These pages, read carefully, will give you an excellent background in geology and a feeling of having completed Geology 101 at the University of Minnesota. The introduction is a testimony to John's expertise in making geology come alive to a layman like myself.

Part Two is "Individual Park Descriptions," and contains information on the nine state parks of the North Shore, from Jay Cooke in the southwest to Grand Portage in the northeast. As the author states, Part Two presents a synopsis of the specific geological features to be seen in each park, with the hope that visitors' eyes will be opened and their curiosity increased. I think this comment is directed specifically to birders. When we are in these parks, we can increase our experience by looking at the geology as well as the birds.

Embedded within the book, you will find 94 color photos that enhance the text and certainly justify the cost of the book. I have listed below a few of my favorites:

Page 12: Potholes excavated in the asphalt bed of the Cascade River
Page 85: The mossy gorge of Gauthier Creek
Page 86: Devils Kettle on the Brule River

The author has also enhanced the text with 39 black and white figures used to illustrate geologic formations.

I have two minor complaints. The first one pertains to the black and white illustrations of the rocks that are used on the first page of each park description and also scattered throughout the book. These should have been printed in color and I could find no descriptions for them. Secondly, the Department of Natural Resources should have provided a review copy of this book.

This is the first time I have had to purchase a review copy of a book, although it was worth the investment.

SHARING THE WONDER OF BIRDS WITH KIDS, by Laura Erickson, Illustrated by Kathryn Marsaa, 1997, Peifer-Hamilton Publishers. Reviewed by Judy Viken.

"To give grown-ups both the information and the inspiration to make bird study with children magical and exciting" were the author's words in the introduction of this book. She accomplished her goal! Are you a beginner in the study of birds? Just the reading of this book will give you all the information and confidence needed to inspire self as well as children. Are you an expert? The book is chock full of creative ideas that will enhance your ability to instill enthusiasm in

others. If you are a parent, a grandparent, a scout leader, or involved in any other way with children, you will want this book. It is written in a delightful, relaxed, lighthearted manner. Jokes, riddles, and sketches are used throughout to make reading of the book as fun as it is educational.

If you are an educator, this book would be an incredible resource to enhance your curriculum. And it would not be difficult to do! Countless techniques for teaching about birds and their impact on the environment are spelled out in detail. Creative ways to integrate the topics, formal or informal, into all subject areas are offered. As a parent and teacher, the author shares her own journey about finding out what works and what doesn't work with children, and is not afraid to reveal the mistakes she has made along the way. When the subject becomes serious, as in discussing death in nature and the possible extinction of a bird species, she is honest, fair and hopeful in her approach. She is sensitive to the developing attitudes and needs of children.

The book begins with a chapter entitled "The Magic of Birds". In it you will find one example after another of the infusion and the impact birds have on us in our culture. Then, as it does throughout the book, it gives specific techniques on how to bring children to the understanding of birds on their own. It is followed by a chapter on what tools are needed in this pursuit. Field guides, binoculars etc. are compared with children's needs in mind. Requirements are kept simple and realistic since many budgets within schools, homes, and the community are limited.

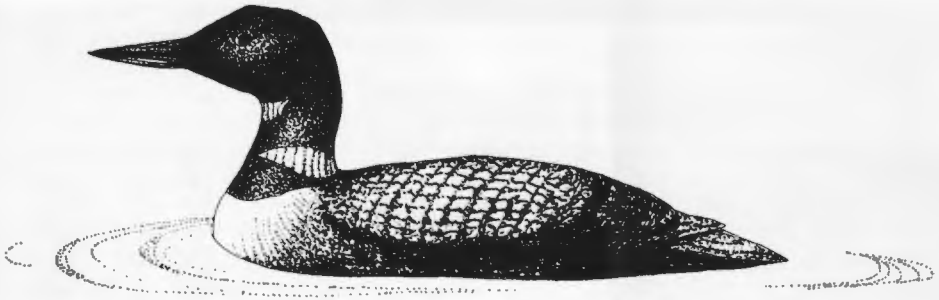
The next chapters are about how to attract birds and learning to identify them. Information on bird feeders, bird food and houses, pet birds, rehabilitation of wild birds is included. Planning, organizing and following through with bird outings with children are covered. Every effort is made to make the activities fun as well as educational. Many of the topics have sections entitled "especially for groups" to enable the reader to quickly select information that is most appropriate. Problems sometimes encountered (ex. when birds are not to be found anywhere) are anticipated and solutions offered.

Did you know that the weight of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird is so small that you could mail ten of them with a single 32-cent stamp? Facts such as this are just one of the many ways the author uses to whet the learning appetite of children (and adults). Learning about the behavior of birds and how their bodies work are complex topics. But the explanations in the book are done in a manner that gives the adult both the information and the techniques to interest the child at his or her own level. Raising baby birds by their parents, migration, seasonal changes, respiration, digestion, reproduction are a few of the topics introduced. Humor is laced throughout the book.

The last chapter is on "Helping Children Save Birds". The author's passion for saving the environment is apparent, as is her insistence on giving hope to those that care. An underlying theme throughout the book is the belief that the study of birds provides a perfect entree into the understanding of the environment and one of the hopes for learning how to save it. She is intent on finding ways for children (and others) to "make a difference".

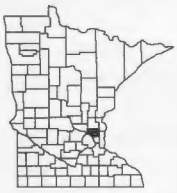
There are three appendices. The first is on helping the child learn to write about birds, an exceptional resource for teachers. The second gives ideas, drawings, and directions for making small bird related gifts. The last is listing of additional resource books relevant to topics included in the book.

As a newly retired educator, and as a newcomer into the world of studying birds, I see this book as a wonderful addition to my own resources. As a parent of adult children, I only wish it could have been available when my children were young — or better yet, when I was a kid.



NOTES OF INTEREST

GREBE PREDATION ON WOOD DUCK BROODS — After half a century of studying wildlife, new questions and answers still unfold. The most recent questions for me are about predation by Pied-billed Grebes on Wood Duck broods.



In 1987, I had observed a Pied-billed attack a brood of Wood Ducks about three days old. The grebe swam rapidly at the brood, but the female woody flew at the grebe and it retreated, with no loss to the brood. On 19 June, 1996, a new chapter was written in the Lyle Bradley's Wood Duck journal. During the morning, I was working in our hillside flower garden, just below an occupied metal Wood Duck box. It was about time for this brood to jump, but I had not checked this regularly and had seen no sign that the duck was ready to take her brood out.

At 12:30, my wife Carol exclaimed, "The female is sitting in the entrance of the metal house!" My reaction was to grab the camera — almost too late — I got only the last two ducklings as they "parachuted" into space. The female could be heard calling her brood to "muster" so she could lead them 40 feet to the pond. She quickly led them single-file to the water and then snaked the brood along the pond edge, in and out of overhanging vegetation and under a brush pile that had been placed there for their cover. I was videotaping the entire process from our balcony about 200 feet distant. Then the female took the brood across some open water (30–40 feet) to get to an island.

Suddenly Carol shouted, "A grebe is swimming under water toward the woodies!"

The grebe swam underwater for at least 100 feet and then hit the brood like an exploding torpedo. Ducklings were thrown about and swam in all directions. The mother woody flew at the grebe, but was at a disadvantage because the grebe could operate underwater. She called the ducklings together and led them under a fallen tree and into some fern cover on land. Can you imagine the trauma to those ducklings? In four minutes, they must jump into space to depart their house, wind their way behind their mother through a jungle, swim in the water for the first time, get hit by a grebe torpedo, and then race back to land.

Meanwhile, the grebe had snatched up its loot — a duckling was in its beak and was bashed against the water until it appeared limp. Then the grebe swallowed it. I didn't realize the duckling had been eaten until I reviewed the video.

After that episode, we started watching broods on the pond more carefully. On a very warm 28 June, a brood of eight jumped at 7:00 A.M. I followed their progress as

they entered our oxbow pond. The female led them to a second brush pile and jumped on a branch to preen when a grebe, maybe the same one as above, appeared about ten feet from them and attacked on the surface. This female flew at the intruder until it departed. Then she led her brood away, but then I counted only seven ducklings. The video showed the attack, but not what happened to the duckling.

On 2 July at 4:40 P.M., a female woody with three half-grown ducklings were attacked by a grebe. The female and ducklings all retreated to emergent vegetation, and the grebe swam away. This action appeared to be a territorial defense only.

These events have opened up new parameters concerning wildlife behavior on our pond. For many years, our boxes have produced from 12 to 21 Wood Duck broods each year. The nine-acre oxbow is managed for wildlife, yet few broods remain there through maturity. Woodies are secretive, but they can't escape my daily checks with binoculars. It is easy to blame something when results don't measure up to expectations — the usual predators (mink, raccoon, otter, snapping turtle, etc.), bad weather, pollution, poor habitat, mosquito control, human activities, whatever. Could Pied-billed Grebes be a factor in brood disappearance?

There are more questions than answers stemming from the grebe's actions. Did the grebe attack for territorial defense? Territorial offense? To eat? To get the feather wad that some fish-eaters like? Was this a rogue grebe bully? Did it mistake woodies for other grebes? Does the grebe attack only when it has young of its own?

I have questioned the Wood Duck editorial committee, D.N.R. biologists, and other Wood Duck observers for answers. To this date, no one else, to my knowledge, has witnessed this type of grebe behavior. If any reader has observed similar grebe attacks or predation on Wood Ducks, I would appreciate hearing from you. **Lyle Bradley, 15202 – 7th Ave NW, Anoka, MN 55304.**

HOUSE FINCH NESTING TENACITY — The House Finches that nested on my front porch last summer (1996) were disturbed several times during the nesting season. They built a nest in a hanging fuschia plant, which was only 18 inches above a well-used hanging feeder. Here are the notes I took:

18 May: Strong storm winds knocked down my hanging fuschia plant, which I brought inside until the end of the storm. Once inside, I noticed a nest made from pulled-up roots and other materials. Nest was empty.

19 May: Hanging basket was replaced in original location. I noticed a House Finch in the basket, but didn't note whether it was male or female.

20 May: One egg.

22 May: Three eggs total.

24 May: Five eggs total. Mom is sitting on them constantly.

5 June: All are hatched.

Some time between 6–14 June: I didn't write the exact dates, but a strong wind knocked the basket down again, pulling the hook out of the overhead beam, and knocking one nestling out of the nest. The others were still in the nest or in the basket. My wife spotted it and asked our neighbor to help the nestling back into the nest, which he did with his bare hands. That night, I hung the basket from another hook about ten feet away, and the parents quickly found it, though not until they hovered for a minute or two in the spot where the basket used to be. The next day, I fixed the original hook and moved the basket back to its original location. The parents found it immediately.

19 June: Mom and dad are both near basket, and mom repeatedly flies to and from the basket until one of the young ones flies after her. By the end of the day, they are

all flying.

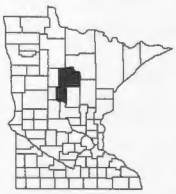
20 June: All five young ones are with parents in a nearby tree, flying and hopping from branch to branch. **Doug McNamara, 3125 – 34th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406.**

WHITE CARDINAL — After Christmas, I generally recycle my Christmas tree by putting it out on the deck and turn it into an additional feeding station for the birds, (I have four other stations and two suet feeders.) This becomes a popular area due to the fact that I stock it twice daily and also ground feed below the tree. January was normal for birdwatching in the yard, and I had my regular two to three pairs of cardinals, finches and chickadees. The Downy Woodpeckers and nuthatches were active at the suet feeders. There was one week when I didn't see any cardinals and other bird activity was limited.

Then came February and what I call "The Cardinal Phenomenon". There were as many as 17 cardinals lined up in my hedge at one time (11 were males). This was more cardinals than I had ever seen at one time. But my "phenomenon" was the presence of the "White Cardinal". She was active at my tree feeder for about ten days. This white cardinal, a female, had brown wings and tail with a splash of brown on the body and an orange crown. I have been told that this is a very rare occurrence and that it only happens with the female of the species. It was my day off and I was able to take several pictures. I did not see the "White Cardinal" again until 27 February and have not seen her since. The large number of cardinals are still a regular occurrence at my tree feeder but I still keep looking for the "White Cardinal". **Dick Brammer, 2730 Quentin Ave. S., St. Louis Park, MN 55416.**

Partial albino Northern Cardinal, 12 February 1997, St. Louis Park, Hennepin County. Photo by Richard Brammer.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN CASS COUNTY — On 28 September 1996 I spent the afternoon counting Bonaparte's Gulls *(Larus philadelphia)* on the Cass County portion of Lake Winnibigoshish, mostly from Bena where the birds were concentrated by strong northwest winds following passage of a cold front. At approximately 4:00 P.M. a Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* in first-winter plumage suddenly flew by about 75 yards off shore and remained in view for one minute. I carefully noted its black nuchal bar and black auricular spot, then studied its wing pattern and tail. A distinct black "M" pattern on the upper wing separated the pale gray back and inner forewing from a white triangular-shaped area on the outer wing. Its underwing pattern was not noted. The tail was clearly notched and had a black terminal band. Legs were not visible and bill color could not be seen. The bird flew off to the west and my attempts to relocate it from other access points to the lake were unsuccessful.



This represents the 21st Minnesota record of this Casual species and it is the latest of four September dates. It is currently the only acceptable record for "Lake Winnie." **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.**

LITTLE GULL IN PENNINGTON COUNTY — On 30 September 1996 at 9:45 A.M., I discovered an adult Little Gull *(Larus minutus)* with a small flock of Bonaparte's Gulls *(L. philadelphia)* at the Thief River Falls lagoons, Pennington County. Even before it took flight, its slightly smaller size, darker hindcrown, and lack of visible black on the folded wing aroused my suspicion. In flight, the diagnostic black underwing with a broad, white trailing edge on both surfaces of the wing was beautifully obvious. The characteristic rounded wing shape of an adult and its wedge-shaped tail were also noted and sketched.

After appreciating the bird for 30 minutes, I called Shelley Steva who agreed to meet me at the lagoons and we had excellent looks from 50 feet as it flew into the wind while staying in a corner of the lagoon. This is a first county record and one of very few fall records in Minnesota, although more fall records should be expected. **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.**

A PRAIRIE FALCON TAKES A BATH — The Mississippi River at the Ford Dam overlook in St. Paul occasionally holds a surprise. When I checked this location shortly after 11:00 A.M. on 29 November 1996, I noticed a bird perched on a small, snow-covered rock near the northern tip of the island just below the dam, about 250 feet from my vantage point. With binoculars, I could see that it was a falcon. The location is no more than a few hundred yards south of the Ford Bridge, where peregrines had nested the previous summer. The bird appeared to be about the same size as a peregrine, and had the pointed wings and long tail of a falcon; however, the view through a 20X spotting scope revealed not a peregrine, but a beautiful adult Prairie Falcon.

It had a bold but narrow dark mustache stripe extending vertically downward from between the eye and the beak. The beak was yellow with a black tip. It had buffy or tan spots on the back of its brown head (a prominent patch in the center, less distinct marks to either side), and a narrow buffy streak that began some distance behind the eyes and extended horizontally around the back of the crown. The throat was clear white. The extreme upper breast was white with fine dark vertical striping. The remainder of the underparts was white with sparse dark spots arranged in vertical stripes, more along the flanks than down the center of the breast. The background

color of the face and underparts was a very clean white. The tail extended noticeably beyond the folded wingtips. The upper parts appeared uniformly brown.

As the Prairie Falcon sat on the rock, it scanned the surrounding area and sky nervously. It took flight, and flew in a low circle over the island and the open water, banking once to show me its black wing linings and axillars, then landed again at the edge of the water near the rock where I had first seen it. After some hestiation, it walked slowly into the shallow water that flowed over an ice sheet which had formed around the edge of the island. It proceeded very cautiously, checking the sky constantly (wise behavior, considering the Bald Eagles that frequent the area). After at least ten minutes, the bird had waded in up to its belly. Then it spread its wings and took a quick bath. As it bathed, it was facing me, and when it spread its wings in this position, I could see that the very front edge of the wings was lighter brown or tan in color, similar to the marks on the head. The Prairie Falcon splashed for about 15 seconds, before flying to a tree on the St. Paul side of the river, 75 yards south of my location. From there, the bird took two or three short flights, circling over the river and the island, and returning to its perch. Then it flew north, passing at eye level about 100 feet in front of me, and continued over the Ford Bridge and out of sight. **Julian Sellers, 1875 Juliet Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104–1710.**

ANOTHER PRAIRIE FALCON SIGHTING — By 7:40 A.M. on 10 November, 1996, I was on the Ridge with a full day of raptor photography planned. Winds were northwest with gusts of 20–25 mph. The high temperature was about 22 degrees, with mostly overcast skies, speckled with distant breaks of blue.

Just before 9:00 A.M., a bird caught my attention high in the sky to the north. I looked at it and immediately knew it was a falcon. I did not use binoculars because they were deep inside my camera bag. I used my 400mm camera lens, as I often do these days to identify birds. I began looking for field marks between shutter clicks as I took pictures. The color reminded me of the sandy-colored dorsal side of a semipalmated plover, all uniform even from a distance of 75–100 yards away. The sandy, tan color quickly convinced me to eliminate kestrel, as both sexes show a great deal of rust on their dorsal sides. As I looked at the falcon's sandy color, my thoughts quickly turned to juvenile gray-morph Gyrfalcon, even though the bird in view was not thick-bodied like a Gyr. At one point, the bird banked away from me and I clearly saw the dark underwing coverts, an obvious field mark of Prairie Falcons; but for the moment, I stuck with Gyrfalcon.

The bird was in view for 15–25 seconds. It came close and flew within 40–50 feet of me at eye level, but I did not take any pictures because I could not get a fast enough shutter speed to freeze the motion.

Prairie Falcon, 10 November 1996, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Dudley Edmondson.

The last view I had of the bird was as it kited into the strong northwest winds above my head and slightly to my left. The bird hung in the wind for several seconds. Just before it left, I tried to take one last picture, but it tilted, catching the wind, and literally blew away. Only after viewing the images over again in my mind did I realize what I had seen. It finally clicked — a Prairie Falcon.

Once I got the photographs back, there was no doubt about the identification of the bird. Two photos clearly showed the dark underwings and the pale facial patch with thin mustache markings. Frank Nicoletti, Hawk Ridge counter, and Steve Millard, seasoned Prairie Falcon observer, agreed with this identification after viewing the slides. Frank concluded that it was probably an immature male of the year. This represents the fifth record of the species for Hawk Ridge and the sixth for the county. **Dudley Edmondson, 4302 Cooke St., Duluth, MN 55804.**

SUMMARY OF CATTLE EGRET SIGHTINGS IN BIG STONE COUNTY — August to October 1996 — The initial sighting of Cattle Egrets in Big Stone County in 1996 occurred 6 July when four were observed in the marsh area along the west side of Highway 25, two and a half miles north of Correll, in Akron township, at 6:30 A.M.

On 5 August, ten Cattle Egrets were seen feeding in a field on the north side of Highway 7, approximately one and a half miles east of Correll. These birds later rose and flew away in a southeasterly direction and were relocated about a mile south of 7 on the minimum maintenance road that straddles the Big Stone/Swift County line. They were feeding in a pasture among a herd of cattle. This was on the Swift County side of the road at 11:30 A.M. 'til 1:00 P.M.

At 5:30 P.M. on 24 August, 95 Cattle Egrets were observed in a field about one mile east of Correll on Highway 7, on the north side of the highway.

On 31 August, a single Cattle Egret was seen in a marsh area along the south side of Highway 10, a mile or so east of the junction with County Road 65. Numerous Great Egrets were also present. This was in Otrey township at 7:00 P.M.

On 7 September at 8:50 A.M., 16 Cattle Egrets were seen in a field on the south side of Highway 7, one and a half miles east of Correll.

On 15 September at 5:20 P.M., between 122 and 130 Cattle Egrets were seen in the cow pastures on the east side of Highway 25, approximately three miles north of Correll. A good third of these birds appeared to be juveniles, judging by the dark, slate gray bills and the lores, which were pinkish yellow, extending along the lower edge of the upper mandible. All the other birds had yellow bills and lores.

On this same date, 15 September, from 7:30 P.M. to 7:56 P.M., Cattle Egrets were found roosting on one of the islands in Marsh Lake. Access to this site is from Highway 7, south along a nameless road, one mile west of the Swift/Big Stone County line. On 4 August and 25 August, I suspected this might be a Cattle Egret roosting site, but could not be sure because of the large numbers of other birds present (American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, and Great Egrets) and because of distance. These other species of birds were either greatly diminished in numbers or not present at all on 15 September.

On 22 September at 9:00 A.M. and again at 6:40 P.M., at least 80 Cattle Egrets were seen in the cow pasture sites along Highway 25, two and a half miles north of Correll. They were observed at the roosting site in Marsh Lake by 7:30 P.M.

On 6 October, approximately 25 Cattle Egrets were seen in the same cow pasture on Highway 25, two and a half miles north of Correll, at 11:40 A.M. This was the last sighting of these birds. **Lane Ellwanger, 2906 W. 87th St., Bloomington, MN 55431.**

CLAY COUNTY OLDSQUAW SIGHTING — At about 4:30 P.M. on 12 December 1996, I stopped at the east gate of the Moorhead Crystal Sugar Ponds to see whether the remaining open water had attracted any ducks or geese. When I walked to the top of the dike, I could see that the northeast and southeast corners of the near pond were clear of ice and that in the southeast corner, about 40 feet from me, there were several very pale, stubby-billed ducks, very actively diving. I immediately recognized them as Oldsquaws, a species I'd often seen in the spring while growing up in central New York and whose fall plumage I know from sightings at Garrison Dam and (very rarely) at the North Fargo sewage lagoons, both in North Dakota.

The bills of these seven birds were grayish with darker tips. The wings and backs were grayish black mottled with whitish gray. The heads were largely white with darker patches on the crown and cheek; the whitish bodies and necks showed at least some gray-brown smudges. The dark eyes stood out clearly against the light face.

I watched the birds for three minutes or so in the last good light of a fairly gray day through 10X42 Leica binoculars. I then withdrew and called several local birders in the hope that someone else would get to see the birds (a first Clay County record) but it was too late for anyone to get to the ponds before dark. Several of us who looked for the birds on the morning of the 13th were unable to relocate them.

From the birds' active diving on the 12th, they clearly needed food, and the group may have been forced to fly on to find a better feeding area. One additional point worth noting about this sighting is that a group of seven Oldsquaws was being seen at the tailrace below Garrison Dam through early December. Checking the last date those birds were seen would indicate whether there's any chance that this was the same flock. **Bob O'Connor, 1353 4th St. N., Fargo, ND 58102.**

IMMATURE SABINE'S GULL IN BIG STONE COUNTY — On 20 October 1996 at 8:20 A.M., while scanning the east end of Big Stone Lake from the boat launch in Ortonville, I spotted an immature Sabine's Gull sitting on the water approximately 200 feet from shore. Other birds present were at least 2,000 Ring-billed Gulls, about 20 Franklin's Gulls, at least three Bonaparte's Gulls, and various water birds (coots, cormorants, Mallards, Ruddy Ducks, Buffleheads, ten Western Grebes, and Pied-billed Grebes).

The Sabine's Gull was swimming around among the other gulls. Direct comparison showed it to be smaller than these other gulls. The Bonaparte's were not near the Sabines for direct size comparison. The gull appeared to sit higher on the water and to be more buoyant than the Ring-billeds or Franklin's. In this sense, it was closer to the Bonaparte's.

The forehead, lores, chin, throat, breast, and visible underparts were white. The crown to the top of the eye and the nape and hindneck to the back of the eye, continuing downward to the mantle, was brown-gray. The mantle (the back, scapulars, and wing coverts) was a continuation of the brown-gray color of the crown, nape, and hindneck, and extended onto the sides of the upper breast from just above the area of the wing shoulder. The scapulars and wing coverts had pale white terminal edges and darker subterminal marks, giving a scalloped or scaled look. The primaries were black. The bill was black, short, thin, and pointed. The eye was dark.

After about ten minutes, the bird rose from the water, flew about 100 feet towards the shore, turned to its right (south), parallel with the shore for about 75–100 feet, then turned again, flying in a northwesterly direction across the water, where it was lost from sight in the distance among the many Ring-billed Gulls, etc. The bird did not

return and efforts to relocate it were unsuccessful. It flew with quick but deep wingbeats, with a dainty, fluttery flight about ten or twelve feet above the water.

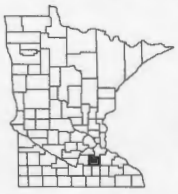
In flight, a black wedge, starting at about the wrist at the leading edge of the wing, was distinct. It extended down through the primary coverts and the first five or six outer primaries. The inner half of the wing, starting from below the wrist area and going down in a diagonal through the secondary coverts and the extreme inner secondaries, was brown-gray, like the scapulars and the rest of the upper parts. The center of the upper wing formed a distinct white triangle, the top point starting where the black outer wedge and the brown-gray inner wing met, broadening out to its widest extent along the trailing edge of the wing. The underwing was slightly grayish, but the white triangle was visible on the underwing. A slightly darker gray line stretched along the secondary underwing coverts. The tips of the underwing primaries were black or very dark gray. Overall, the wings were narrow and pointed. The tail and rump, like the rest of the underparts, were white, with a black terminal band on the tail. The fork of the tail was only apparent as the bird flew away, the tail appearing to be spread most of the time. A thickening or widening at the center of the black terminal band was noticeable. The legs and feet were never adequately seen to distinguish color. Field notes were taken while viewing the bird and more detailed notes were written immediately after the bird had disappeared. The *National Geographic Guide to Birds of North America* was consulted after the bird had disappeared and after the secondary notes had been written.

My previous experience with Sabine's Gull was limited to my life bird, seen this last 28 September 1996, in Le Sueur County, two miles west of Waterville at the DNR fish hatchery pools. I was not expecting to see another one again so soon.

Size, head, and mantle patterns and colors were completely different from the other gulls present. In size, it was probably close to the Bonaparte's, but was completely different from first winter or adults of that species. It differed from first winter Black-legged Kittiwakes in having the brown-gray inner half of wing the same color as the rest of the mantle and not the black carpal bar of the kittiwake. It lacked the dark collar around the hindneck and the black ear spot of that species, as well. Also, the crown was not white.

A pair of 8x42 binoculars and a scope equipped with a 15–45X zoom eyepiece were used. The morning was sunny, a few high scattered clouds. Sun was to the back of observer. Wind from the southeast about 15 mph, temperature 7°C. **Lane Elwanger, 2906 W. 87th St., Bloomington, MN 55431.**

GREAT GRAY OWL IN RICE COUNTY — The 28th of January 1997 was a nice, sunny, but cool day and since I had some free time, I decided to go for a walk at the Riverbend Nature Center in Faribault. After walking for about ten minutes, I noticed a large owl sunning itself in a small tree, right off the walking trail. After a closer look, to my surprise, I identified it as a Great Gray Owl. I immediately went home to call several other people and let them know about my sighting. Then I went back to the nature center and told the staff there about the owl.



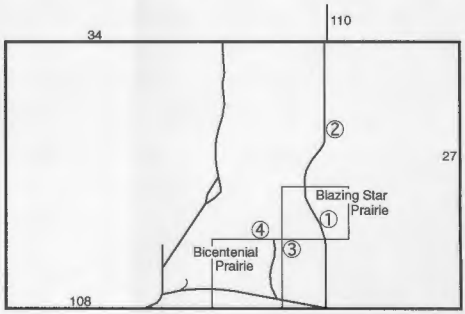
Some of the staff members and I walked down on the trail and we found that the owl had moved to a nearby field. It was actively hunting, and we watched it catch and eat something. After the owl perched, we saw it cast two pellets. When the owl flew off, we gathered the pellets (one was one and a half inches long, and the other was three and a half inches long). A few weeks later, after ample drying time, some of the other nature center staff members took apart the pellets. They later informed me that the two pellets had contained ten vole skulls and one shrew skull. I have taken owl pellets apart myself, but have never counted even half that many

Great Gray Owl, 9 March 1997, Riverbend Nature Center, Rice County. Photo by Forest Strnad.

skulls in one pellet (even in Great Horned Owl pellets of the same size or bigger).

Since this is my first experience with a Great Gray Owl, I am not sure if these numbers are high or typical for the species. The Great Gray Owl was still being seen in the same area as of 9 March 1997. **Tom Boevers, 820 Ravine St., Faribault, MN 55021–4408.**

HENSLOW'S SPARROWS — The accompanying map marks locations where Henslow's Sparrows were discovered during the summers of 1995 and 1996 at the Felton Prairie in Clay County. The points numbered 1 through 4 denote the precise locations where these birds were found; the other numbers on the map identify the surrounding county roads. The only bird found in 1995, discovered on 25 June, was at the point marked ① within the Nature Conservancy's "Blazing Star Prairie."

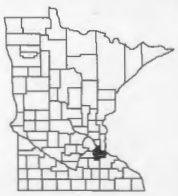


In 1996, three Henslow's Sparrows were discovered: one at the point marked ②, discovered 1 June; and two found on June 16 at the points marked ③ and ④. All of these birds were located and initially identified by their song and all were initially found between the hours of 6:30 and 9:00 in the morning. When the birds were at

close range, finding them was relatively simple because their song is distinctively short in duration. Finding them when they were at a distance, however, was much more difficult. Although their song is short, in my opinion, the notes that comprise the song are not qualitatively unique, and they sound quite similar to notes heard in the songs of other birds. This, combined with the fact that their song is relatively weak and short, makes it difficult to discern their song at a distance when other birds are singing.

In any case, the presence of these Henslow's Sparrows at the Felton Prairie suggests that the species may be present during the summer in other grassland tracts in the general area. During that time of year, it may be worthwhile for interested birders visiting this region to pay special attention to listening for the song of these inconspicuous little birds. **Cole Foster, 1124 – 27th Ave. S., #16, Moorhead, MN 56560.**

LEUCISTIC DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT — A leucistic Double-crested Cormorant was observed at Black Dog Lake, Dakota County in both 1995 and 1996 with the large gathering of cormorants that occurs there every fall. I observed the bird on 9 October 1996, and took the following notes on its plumage: although not pure white, this bird stood out from the other cormorants because of its overall very pale coloration. The entire bird was a pale cream color with areas of slightly darker buff or light tan on the back of the neck, the center of the back, under the wings, on the dorsal surface of the tail, and on the tarsus feathering. The rest of the head, foreneck, and breast were very pale, off-white.



The bill was similar to typical immature Double-crested Cormorants, with a pronounced orangish gular, but the tip of the bill was a pale orangish-lemon, without the darker coloration of the other cormorants. The true eye color could not be seen due to distance, but the eye stood out as dark against the whitish head and the pale orangish gular, in contrast to the other cormorants in which the eye blends in with the dark plumage of the head. The legs were a pale pinkish-buff, noticeably different from the dark legs of the other cormorants.

Interestingly, what I am certain was this same bird was seen at Black Dog Lake almost exactly one year previous on 4 October 1995; my notes on the plumage of the 1995 bird match what I observed in 1996. In 1996, after the sighting on 9 October at Black Dog Lake, I also observed the bird on 11 October roosting with the other cormorants in the stand of dead trees on Gun Club Lake, just south of the I–494 bridge over the Minnesota River. The cormorants which feed at Black Dog Lake fly twice daily to and from their communal roost on Gun Club Lake, several miles upstream along the Minnesota River. I last observed this cormorant in 1996 at Black Dog Lake on 16 October.

Leucism (or imperfect albinism) is different from albinism in that the plumage appears much paler than normal, resulting in a dilute or washed-out appearance; in true albinism, some or all of the feathers appear completely white. Albinism and leucism are apparently rare in cormorants. Gross (*Bird Banding* 36:67–71) listed only four records in two species of cormorants in his summary of incidences of albinism in North American birds (published in 1965), but he did not list the species. I checked Zoological Records (worldwide coverage) volumes from 1965–95, and found no further references to albino or leucistic cormorants in North America, although there were six records of albinism in three additional species of cormorants found in other parts of the world; there were no records of leucistic individuals listed. **Karl Bardon, 1430 – 100th Avenue NW #212, Coon Rapids, MN 55433.**

Robert B. Janssen Retires as Editor of *The Loon* After 37 Years

Anthony Hertzel

In the December 1958 issue of *The Flicker* (Volume 30:150) at the end of Mary Lupient's Seasonal Report appear these two unassuming sentences:

> *"Beginning with the March issue, 1959, the new editor will be Robert Janssen, 1817 W. 59th St., Minneapolis. All material for print should be sent to the above address."*

And so the following spring 26-year-old Robert Bruder Janssen took over as editor. And Except for a brief hiatus in 1970, Bob has been editor ever since, overseeing 144 issues of *The Flicker* and ***The Loon***.

He has been editor longer than all previous editors combined. This kind of dedication alone would be sufficient grounds for recognition.

But Bob did more than simply oversee the writing, editing and production of the state's official birding journal. He also molded it into one of the best state ornithological publications in the country.

Looking over a few "pre-Janssen" issues of *The Flicker* shows a modest journal with small type and few photographs, each issue averaging about 40 pages.

Bob's influence and style quickly became evident. In his inaugural year he added a complete index to *The Flicker* at the end of the Winter issue, where it still appears today. Bob had inherited a Seasonal Report which at the time was typically a three- to four-page description of the season's birding highlights. By the summer of 1961, the report had grown into a more detailed account, and for the first time each species was listed. By 1964 "The Season" appeared then much as it does today.

1929	Gustav Swanson, Sterling Brackett
1930–1931	Sterling Brackett
1932	Gustav Swanson, Alden Risser
1933	Alden Risser
1934	Ralph Woolsey
1935	Gustav Swanson
1936–1937	George Rysgaard
1938–1939	Charles Evans
1939–1941	Arnold Erickson
1941	Arnold Erickson, George Rysgaard
1942	Arnold Erickson, George Rysgaard, Charles Reif
1943	Arnold Erickson, Charles Reif
1944–1945	Arnold Erickson
1945–1948	Severena Holmberg
1948–1951	Dwain Warner
1952–1958	Pershing Hofslund
1951–1970	Robert Janssen
1970–1971	Robert Turner
1971–1996	Robert Janssen

Past editors of *The Flicker* and *The Loon*.

Though retired as Senior Editor, Bob remains active in the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and will continue as an associate editor of ***The Loon***. He is currently in his second term as president of the organization, is a member of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee and is engaged in numerous other MOU activities and functions.

It's impossible for this article to convey all of the appreciation MOU members feel for Bob's dedication, enthusiam, and years of work. And so, in thanks and gratitude, the MOU has decided to dedicate this year's MOU paper session to Robert B. Janssen — editor, birder, and friend. **8461 Pleasant View Drive, Mounds View, MN 55112.**

In This Issue

Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we: publish a magazine, ***The Loon***, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding;* conduct field trips; encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The M.O.U. wishes to point out that any or all phases of the M.O.U. program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of ***The Loon*** welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest" and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any stardard format on any 3 ½ inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird-sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See inside front cover.

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The Loon

SUMMER 1997

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EDITOR OF *Minnesota Birding:*
Jim Williams, 11608 Live Oak Dr., Minnetonka, MN 55345. Published bi-monthly.

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Duluth 218-525-5952

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Nectar Feeding by Cape May, Tennessee, And Nashville Warblers in Minnesota

Lynn L. Rogers

Over 1,200 species of birds world wide rely on nectar for part of their food (Meeuse 1961, Terres 1991). Several warblers that are primarily insectivorous on their summer range in North America rely on nectar for a portion of their diet on the winter range in Central America (Morton 1980, Morse 1989). For example, Tennessee Warblers *(Vermivora peregrina)* feed on fruit and nectar in Panama and are major pollinators of flowering tropical American vines (Morton 1980). However, little is known of the extent to which New World warblers feed on nectar and contribute to pollination during spring migrations (Sealy 1989). Wunderle (1978) observed migrating Palm Warblers *(Dendroica palmarum)*, Yellow-rumped Warblers *(Dendroica coronata)*, and Northern Parulas *(Parula americana)* feeding on nectar from flowers of a tiger claw tree in Miami, Florida, on 9 March 1975. Sealy (1989) observed Cape May Warblers *(Dendroica tigrina)* and Tennessee Warblers competing for nectar from the catkins of peach-leaved willow trees near Delta Marsh, Manitoba, during 18–24 May 1983.

On 17 May 1997, I observed and photographed a Cape May, a Tennessee and a Nashville Warbler *(Vermivora ruficapilla)* along with wild and domestic bees gathering nectar from flowers of wild plum trees in Goodhue County's Hok-Si-La Park near Lake City. The primary activity of these warblers during approximately two hours of observation (4:10–6:35 P.M.) was probing their bills deep into flower after flower as quickly as they could, moving from one cluster of flowers to the next. Occasionally, the birds flew to nearby trees but returned shortly. The Nashville Warbler was present for only about a half hour. There was no chasing in defense of flowers as was observed at the nectar sources reported by Wunderle (1978) and Sealy (1989). At about 4:45 P.M., I broke open approximately two dozen flowers looking for aphids, other insects, or insect eggs but found none.

Other birds foraged in or under the very fragrant plum trees but did not investigate the flowers. These included a Black-and-white Warbler *(Mniotilta varia)*, a Common Yellowthroat *(Geothlypis trichas)*, a Magnolia Warbler *(Dendroica magnolia)*, several Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Solitary Vireo *(Vireo solitarius)*.

Considering the scarcity of observations of nectar-feeding by warblers in North America, it remains unknown whether the observations reported here represent common behavior by Cape May, Tennessee, and Nashville Warblers or whether it represents uncommon utilization of a secondary food source due to low availability of insects. Temperatures during the preceding 42 days averaged 6°F below normal, and temperatures on four of the five days immediately preceding the observations were 12–16 degrees below normal with freezing and near freezing nighttime temperatures, which would suppress insect activity. MOU President Robert B. Janssen, author of *Birds in Minnesota*, and Anthony X. Hertzel, editor of the Minneapolis birding hotline, estimated that the cold weather delayed the main warbler migration through Minnesota 10–14 days, or until about a week after the nectar-feeding was observed. Sealy (1989) noted that temperatures were below normal the year he ob-

Cape May Warbler feeding on nectar, 17 May 1997, Hok-Si-La County Park, Goodhue County. Photo by Lynn L. Rogers.

served nectar feeding by Cape May and Tennessee Warblers in Manitoba; he did not observe nectar-feeding in five years with seasonable temperatures. If nectar-feeding is a common behavior in spring and summer, nectarivorous warblers may aid pollination in North America as they do on their winter range.

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Bird Observations at the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP), Arden Hills 1995 and 1996

Richard J. Oehlenschlager, Neil J. Vanderbosch and Frederick J. Jannett, Jr.

Introduction

The Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) is a largely undeveloped unit of land located in Ramsey County, Minnesota that is surrounded by the cities of New Brighton, Arden Hills, Shoreview, Blaine, and Mounds View. Owned by the United States Army since 1941, it is now occupied by a contracting caretaker, Alliant Technosystems, Inc., the United States Army Reserve, and the Minnesota Army National Guard. Owing in part to the very restricted public access into this facility and the rather unique types of land use activities contained within it, the enclosure has developed somewhat fortuitously a rather diverse but little known wildlife community situated within largely and increasingly urbanized surroundings.

The United States Department of Defense now considers the facility to be surplus and is proposing its transfer to other federal, state, or local governments. Considerable interest has been expressed in future commercial and residential development of the area. In view of significant environmental impacts likely to be associated with change of ownership, we conducted preliminary and basic inventories of mammals and herptiles at the site from 30 May to 5 August 1995 and 11 April to 16 August 1996. We report here some data for all species of birds recorded concurrently with those efforts. We believe these data are of general ornithological interest and also of value in identifying critical habitats and species which warrant protection from future overdevelopment of this tract of land.

Site Description

The TCAAP is a 907 ha, 10 km^2 unit of land that was, before its acquisition by the federal government in 1941, a mixture of private farmland, forest, woodlands and wetlands including two lakes and a short portion of Rice Creek which flows westward into the Mississippi River. Its geomorphic landscape is mostly glacial drift deposited by stagnant ice of the St. Croix moraine transported from northeastern Minnesota (Ojakangas and Matsch 1982). Kames are the most conspicuous land forms, one of which is the highest point in the facility and in the county. A deep gravel pit is now partially filled with water and is bordered by sandy beaches. The northwest corner of the property is covered by sandy outwash of the Anoka Sand Plain (Helgesen and Lindholm 1977).

Original vegetation at the time of settlement by white Europeans included oak barrens, big woods composed of maple, basswood, elm and oak, and wet prairie communities (Marshner 1974). More recently, Landwehr (1986) identified eleven current plant communities (Table 1). Existing lists of plants, birds, mammals and herptiles summarized for the arsenal by Landwehr (1986) and the County Biological Survey of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Table 1. Existing plant communities of the TCAAP.*

Community Type	Total Area (in hectares)	% of Total Area
Forest (oak-elm-maple)	111	12.1999
Parkland	29	3.2000
Brush	21	2.2999
Scrub-shrub	24	2.6000
Cattail marsh	76	8.4000
Grassland	205	22.6000
Savannah	36	4.0000
Forbland	90	9.6999
Open Water	16	1.8000
Developed	266	29.3000
Gravel pit	33	3.6000
Total	907	99.90 **

* Modified after Landwehr (1986) and Federal Cartridge Company (1987).

** Totals do not include roads; the total area has been reported to be 2,370 acres (959.12 ha) (Federal Cartridge Company 1987) and 2,403 acres (972.48 ha) (Landwehr 1986).

(1990) are incomplete. The public seems little aware of the natural resources present in this parcel of land, with the notable exceptions of past highly publicized control problems associated with excess deer populations and those currently relating to chemical contamination of local groundwater which have led to designating the arsenal a Superfund cleanup target.

Methods and Techniques

Observations were taken opportunistically on foot and by car from most portions of the area during surveys of other faunal resources. We did not attempt singing bird counts, point line surveys, or frequent nocturnal counts due to time limitations. Individual species counts were tallied and ranked to conform with the terms abundant (A), common (C), uncommon (U), and rare (R) as defined by Janssen (1987). The status of each species was also evaluated to classify it as breeding (B1), determined upon the basis of nests containing eggs or young; probable or possible breeding (B2) inferred from breeding behaviors such as pair formation, distractive displays, defense of territory and song, or sightings of fledged young; migrants (M) observed only as seasonal transients; aerial (A) for those species sighted flying over the area but which showed no other evidence of using it; and visiting (V) for species that visited the area frequently as feeding individuals but which showed no evidence of breeding. An abundance symbol (A, C, U, or R) and a following status symbol (B1, B2, M, A, or V) are listed in Table 2 under the habitat pair or pairs most frequently used by each species. We pair in Table 2 the most similar habitats Landwehr (1986) recognizes since no visible barriers seemed to restrict movement of representative species between them. Time limitations also prevented adequate coverage of some smaller habitats occupying less accessible locations.

Results

We recorded 125 species of birds during approximately 310 hours of field observations on 11 habitat types. We failed to detect fifteen species previously recorded in the area, of which summering Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), and Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) were probably misidentified, while the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), and Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) were likely overlooked by us because of their low visibility in undersampled habitats. The Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), and Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) might represent irregularly occurring uncommon or rare species. Still others, the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) and Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) are species recorded in seasons other than those we sampled.

We recorded two species designated as species of special concern and one proposed as threatened by the Minnesota

SPECIES:	HABITATS: Open water and cattail marsh	Grassland and Forbland	Parkland and Savannah	Brushland and Scrubland	Forest	Developed, gravel pit and aerial
Common Loon *(Gavia immer)*	U B1					
Pied-billed Grebe *(Podilymbus podiceps)*	U B1					
Red-necked Grebe *(Podiceps grisegena)*	R M					
Double-crested Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax auritus)*	U M					
Great Blue Heron *(Ardea herodias)*	C V					
Great Egret *(Casmerodius albus)*	C V					
Green Heron *(Butorides striatus)*	C B2					
Black-crowned Night-Heron *(Nycticorax nycticorax)*						U A
Trumpeter Swan *(Cygnus buccinator)*	U B1					
Canada Goose *(Branta canadensis)*	A B1					
Wood Duck *(Aix sponsa)*	A B1					
Green-winged Teal *(Anas crecca)*	U M					
Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)*	A B1					
Blue-winged Teal *(Anas discors)*	U B2					
American Wigeon *(Anas americana)*	U M					
Ring-necked Duck *(Aythya collaris)*	C M					
Lesser Scaup *(Aythya affinis)*	C M					
Common Goldeneye *(Bucephala clangula)*	C M					
Bufflehead *(Bucephala albeola)*	C M					
Hooded Merganser *(Lophodytes cucullatus)*	C M1 U B2					
Turkey Vulture *(Cathartes aura)*						R A
Osprey *(Pandion haliaetus)*						R A
Sharp-shinned Hawk *(Accipter striatus)*					U M	
Cooper's Hawk *(Accipter cooperii)*					U B2	
Red-shouldered Hawk *(Buteo lineatus)*					R B2	
Broad-winged Hawk *(Buteo platypterus)*						C M
Red-tailed Hawk *(Buteo jamaicensis)*			C B1			
American Kestrel *(Falco sparverius)*			C B1			
Ring-necked Pheasant *(Phasianus colchicus)*		C B2				
Sora *(Porzana carolina)*	C B2					
American Coot *(Fulica americana)*	A M					
Killdeer *(Charadrius vociferus)*	A B1					
Greater Yellowlegs *(Tringa melanoleuca)*	U M					
Spotted Sandpiper *(Actitis macularia)*	C B2					
American Woodcock *(Scolopax minor)*	C B2					
Ring-billed Gull *(Larus delawarensis)*						A V
Caspian Tern *(Sterna caspia)*	U M					
Black Tern *(Chlidonias niger)*	C B2 V					
Rock Dove *(Columba livia)*						C B2
Mourning Dove *(Zenaida macroura)*			C B1			C B1
Black-billed Cuckoo *(Coccyzus erythropthalmus)*					U B2	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo *(Coccyzus americanus)*					U B2	
Great Horned Owl *(Bubo virginianus)*					U B2	
Common Nighthawk *(Chordeiles minor)*						C M
Chimney Swift *(Chaetura pelagica)*						C V
Ruby-throated Hummingbird *(Archilochus colubris)*						R V
Belted Kingfisher *(Ceryle alcyon)*	U B2					
Red-headed Woodpecker *(Melanerpes erythrocephalus)*					R V	
Red-bellied Woodpecker *(Melanerpes carolinus)*					U B2	
Downy Woodpecker *(Picoides pubescens)*					C B2	
Hairy Woodpecker *(Picoides villosus)*					C	
Northern Flicker *(Colaptes auratus)*					C B1	
Olive-sided Flycatcher *(Contopus borealis)*					U M	
Eastern Wood-Pewee *(Contopus virens)*					C B2	
Willow Flycatcher *(Empidonax traillii)*					C B2	
Least Flycatcher *(Empidonax minimus)*					C B2	
Eastern Phoebe *(Sayornis phoebe)*						C B1
Great Crested Flycatcher *(Myiarchus crinitus)*					U B2	
Eastern Kingbird *(Tyrannus tyrannus)*			C B1			
Horned Lark *(Eremophila alpestris)*						U B2
Purple Martin *(Progne subis)*						C M
Tree Swallow *(Tachycineta bicolor)*			C B1			A M

Table 2. The abundance and status of all bird species observed in selected habitats at the TCAAP, 30 May – 5 August 1995 and 11 April – 15 August 1996.

SPECIES:	HABITATS:					
	Open water and cattail marsh	Grassland and Forbland	Parkland and Savannah	Brushland and Scrubland	Forest	Developed, gravel pit and aerial
Northern Rough-winged Swallow *(Stelgidopteryx serripennis)*						A B1
Bank Swallow *(Riparia riparia)*						U B2
Cliff Swallow *(Hirundo pyrrhonota)*						C B2
Barn Swallow *(Hirundo rustica)*						C B1
Blue Jay *(Cyanocitta cristata)*					C B2	
American Crow *(Corvus brachyrhynchos)*		A V	A V		A B2	
Black-capped Chickadee *(Parus atricapillus)*					C B2	
Red-breasted Nuthatch *(Sitta canadensis)*					U M	
White-breasted Nuthatch *(Sitta carolinensis)*					C B2	
House Wren *(Troglodytes aedon)*					C B1	
Winter Wren *(Troglodytes troglodytes)*					U M	
Sedge Wren *(Cistothorus platensis)*		U B2				
Marsh Wren *(Cistothorus palustris)*	C B2					
Ruby-crowned Kinglet *(Regulus calendula)*					C M	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *(Polioptila caerulea)*					U B2	
Eastern Bluebird *(Sialia sialis)*			A B1		C B1	
Swainson's Thrush *(Catharus ustulatus)*					U M	
American Robin *(Turdus migratorius)*			A M		A M	
Gray Catbird *(Dumetalla carolinensis)*				C B1	C B1	
Brown Thrasher *(Toxostoma rufum)*				C B1	C B1	
Cedar Waxwing *(Bombycilla cedrorum)*			C B2		C B2	
European Starling *(Sturnus vulgaris)*						A B1
Warbling Vireo *(Vireo gilvus)*					C B2	
Philadelphia Vireo *(Vireo philadelphicus)*					R M	
Red-eyed Vireo *(Vireo olivaceus)*					R B2	
Tennessee Warbler *(Vermivora peregrina)*					C M	
Orange-crowned Warbler *(Vermivora celata)*					U M	
Yellow Warbler *(Dendroica petechia)*				C B1		
Yellow-rumped Warbler *(Dendroica coronata)*					A M	
Palm Warbler *(Dendroica palmarum)*					C M	
American Redstart *(Setophaga ruticilla)*					U M	
Common Yellowthroat *(Geothlypis trichas)*	C B2			C B2		
Wilson's Warbler *(Wilsonia pusilla)*					U M	
Northern Cardinal *(Cardinalis cardinalis)*					C B2	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak *(Pheucticus ludovicianus)*					B2	
Indigo Bunting *(Passerina cyanea)*				C B2		
Dickcissel *(Spiza americana)*		C B2				
Eastern Towhee *(Pipilo erythrophthalmus)*					U B2	
American Tree Sparrow *(Spizella arborea)*				A M		
Chipping Sparrow *(Spizella passerina)*				C B2	C B2	
Clay-colored Sparrow *(Spizella pallida)*				C B2	C B2	
Field Sparrow *(Spizella pusilla)*			C B2			
Savannah Sparrow *(Passerculus sandwichensis)*		U B2				
Grasshopper Sparrow *(Ammodramus savannarum)*		R B2				
Fox Sparrow *(Passerella iliaca)*				U M		
Song Sparrow *(Melospiza melodia)*	A V			A B		
Lincoln's Sparrow *(Melospiza lincolnii)*				C M		
Swamp Sparrow *(Melospiza georgiana)*				C B2		
White-throated Sparrow *(Zonotrichia albicollis)*				CM		
White-crowned Sparrow *(Zonotrichia leucophrys)*				U M		
Dark-eyed Junco *(Junco hyemalis)*				A M		
Bobolink *(Dolichonyx oryzivorus)*		C B2				
Red-winged Blackbird *(Agelaius phoeniceus)*	A B1					
Eastern Meadowlark *(Sturnella magna)*		C B2	C B2			
Yellow-headed Blackbird *(Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus)*	U B1					
Brewer's Blackbird *(Euphagus cyanocephalus)*		C B2				
Common Grackle *(Quiscalus quiscula)*						C B2
Brown-headed Cowbird *(Molothrus ater)*		C B1	C B1	C B1	C B1	
Baltimore Oriole *(Icterus galbula)*					C B1	
House Finch *(Carpodacus mexicanus)*						C B2
American Goldfinch *(Carduelis tristis)*				C B1		
House Sparrow *(Passer domesticus)*			C B1			A B1

Table 2, continued.

Department of Natural Resources, these being respectively Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Trumpeter Swan. Single observations of one feeding Osprey on 15 June 1995 and a calling immature Red-shouldered Hawk soaring over lakes, shore, and hillside forest on 2 August 1995 are the only records obtained for those species. Trumpeter Swans sighted continuously during the 1995 field season appeared with two just-hatched young on 14 June 1995, the first successful breeding of the species in Ramsey County since the mid-1800s. Both parents guarded the young closely and attacked nearby Canada Geese frequently. A pair of swans was present at the same location in 1996 with three young on 24 June 1996.

An observation of a Philadelphia Vireo on 25 July 1995 apparently is the earliest migration date for this species in southern Minnesota (Janssen 1987). Other observations also include a number of species displaying either considerable declines over widespread portions of their range, (Grasshopper Sparrow, Purple Martin), or some that have shown noticeable local increases (Eastern Bluebird) or explosive range expansions (House Finch). Of equal interest, however, was our failure to detect some common and widespread species of expected occurrence such as Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), Western Meadowlark, and Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) in extensive tracts of seemingly suitable habitat.

Summary and Conclusions

Our preliminary inventory indicates the avifauna of the TCAAP is rather diverse, containing at least 100 or more breeding or probable breeding species, and probably a greater number of migrant and visitant species. Our failure to find some previously reported and expected species indicates the need to extend field surveys to all seasons and for many years. We intend to expand our efforts to explore such factors as nest parasitism and stealing, forest fragmentation, and also predation, as our frequent observations of predators suggest their possible involvement with many ground nesting species. A primary goal of our investigation is to help identify land management practices that are consistent with maintaining or enhancing the avian species diversity at the site.

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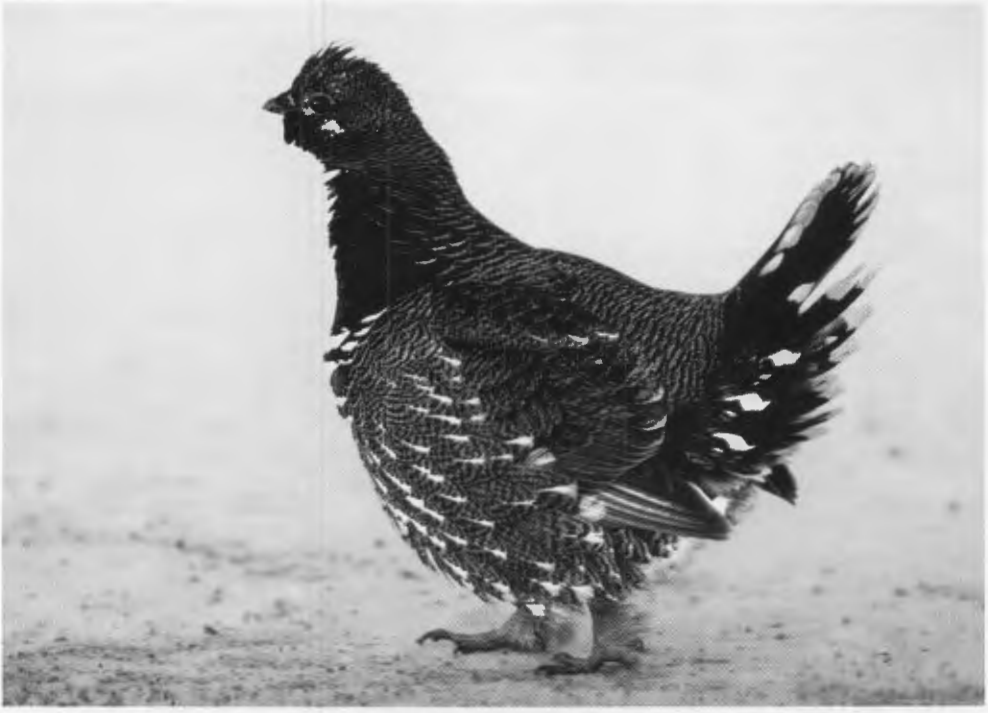

Spruce Grouse, 23 November 1996, Lake County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

The Fall Season
(1 August to 30 November 1996)

Paul Budde, Carol Schumacher, Wally Swanson, and Tom Tustison
Foreword by Peder Svingen

Larids provided most of the excitement again this fall, especially the juvenile ***Pomarine Jaeger*** *that spent more than two weeks on Lake Pepin! Much less cooperative was the adult* ***Mew Gull*** *seen for less than an hour on Lake Winnibigoshish, a long-overdue second state record. Photographs documented the* ***Band-tailed Pigeon*** *coming to a feeder in Itasca County, only the fifth state record. Meanwhile, a cameo by the diminutive* ***Pygmy Nuthatch*** *at River Oaks Park in Moorhead opened a debate about the "natural occurrence" of birds in Minnesota.*

Except for shorebirds, most observers reported a poor fall migration. Mild conditions through late October induced a wide variety of species to linger later than usual. The migration was "extremely dull" in Duluth according to Kim Eckert; data from Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (HRNR) and the Lakewood Pumping Station (LPS) census of fall migration certainly supported this assertion. The

HRNR counts were low except for the 799 **Turkey Vultures** on 29 September, a new daily high; also noteworthy was the record number of 511 **Osprey** for the season. The LPS census tallied only 790 migrants/hour, compared with about 1,340 migrants/hour during autumn 1995 during similar hours of coverage.

Species	*Composite Total*	*Comments*
Turkey Vulture	1,989	record peak 799 on Sep. 29
Osprey	511	peak migration Sep. 5–12 record season high (475 in 1993)
Bald Eagle	3,293	peak 644 on Oct. 31
Northern Harrier	331	lowest since 1983; 15-yr. avg. is 656
Sharp-shinned Hawk	16,370	peak 1,184 on Sep. 8
Cooper's Hawk	177	peak 20 on Sep. 29
Northern Goshawk	343	
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	
Broad-winged Hawk	13,385	very low; peak 4,907 on Sep. 11
Swainson's Hawk	3	
Red-tailed Hawk	9,678	peak 1,472 on Oct. 28
Rough-legged Hawk	413	peak 48 on Oct. 28
Golden Eagle	119	peak 20 on Nov. 9 (all-time record is 23)
American Kestrel	1,565	peak 116 on Sep. 24
Merlin	223	peak 19 on Oct. 6
Peregrine Falcon	42	peak migration Sep. 27–29
Gyrfalcon	1	imm. gray morph, Nov. 18 (FN)

Table 1. Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve raptor totals.

Rare but becoming more regular in fall, one **Red-throated Loon** and one **Pacific Loon** were located on Lake Superior. More unusual were the single Pacific Loons on Mille Lacs Lake and White Bear Lake; well over half of Minnesota's 41 records are from Lake Superior. The loon event of the season was the compact **flock of 1,090 Common Loons** on Lake Winnibigoshish on 20 October, the largest single flock ever found in the state. The **total of 1,497 loons** counted by Karl Bardon and Peder Svingen on Lake Winnibigoshish that same day was also a record high count for one Minnesota lake. The observers counted only from shore and were limited to public access points; more loons were undoubtedly present. Previous high counts from Mille Lacs Lake included data obtained by boat and/or aircraft surveys.

The **800 Western Grebes** reported by Robert Janssen on Lake Osakis also appears to be the highest count ever on one Minnesota lake. No fewer than five **Clark's Grebes** were found this fall, suggesting that we still have much to learn about this species' seasonal occurrence and distribution. Only one **Snowy Egret** and one **Little Blue Heron** were reported. Even though some were probably post-breeding wanderers from nearby colonies in South Dakota, the progression of **Cattle Egrets** recorded by Lane Ellwanger through Big Stone County is astonishing. It is also a classic example of how one observer can make an important contribution to Minnesota ornithology.

Always unexpected in the northeast region, **Greater White-fronted Geese** also occurred there in unusual numbers this season. Only one **Ross' Goose** was found, but recall that this species only recently became Regular in Minnesota. The **King Eider** was the fourth to be found in fall along the North Shore in Cook County within the past eight years. As usual, both **Oldsquaw** and **scoters** were found away from Lake Superior, but the latter were very scarce on Lake Superior. The male **Barrow's Goldeneye** returned to overwinter for the second consecutive year at Blue Lake settling ponds in Scott County.

The immature **Mississippi Kite** at HRNR was the third reported there in the past five years, contributing to an emerging pattern of August/September records in Minnesota. In 1993, Evered and Messick published an analysis of all spring records of the Mississippi Kite during 1970–1991 in the Midwest (*Birders Journal* 2:81–89). A similar article analyzing fall dispersal patterns is needed. Following June sightings in Lac Qui Parle and Norman counties, only the third and fourth summer records ever in Minnesota, an early occurrence of the **Prairie Falcon** in Otter Tail County on 8 August was of special interest. Another was relatively early in Roseau County on 20 August, while one photographed from Summit Ledge at HRNR was locally rare. Even more startling was the Prairie Falcon seen bathing in the Mississippi River at the Ford Dam in St. Paul!

Shorebird migration was protracted, providing extended opportunities for

study; many species lingered into October and unusual concentrations away from western Minnesota were reported. Duluth reported 20 species on 23–24 August and higher than normal numbers were reported all season from the Lewiston sewage ponds in Winona County. Reports of even one or two **Piping Plovers** are now noteworthy during migration, a sad commentary on their decline in Minnesota. **American Avocets** are rarely found after August in Minnesota; among several late fall reports, three birds lingered through 17 October in Polk County while the flock of eight in Wadena County provided a first county record. **Willets** and **Hudsonian Godwits** also got into the act; both are more expected during spring migration. The latter included singles lingering into late October in Polk and Roseau counties. The fall total of **18 Red Knots** was the highest in recent memory; all but two were in Duluth. **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were widely reported again, although totals remain undetermined as some observers failed to specify numbers. **Red-necked Phalaropes** were again scarce (see *The Spring Season*) for unclear reasons; in light of apparent declines off the coast of Maine and New Brunswick during fall migration (Duncan 1996, *Birding* 28:482–488) this species deserves closer scrutiny in Minnesota.

For many observers, the **Pomarine Jaeger** on Lake Pepin was the highlight of the season. This was the first "Pom" to be found away from Lake Superior, the first to be easily refound after its initial discovery, and it ultimately provided the latest date ever for any species of jaeger in Minnesota. The adult **Little Gull** in Pennington County was a first county record and only the fourth ever found in the Northwest region; approximately twelve of the state's forty records are now from fall and more should be expected (***The Loon*** 64:232–233). The adult **Mew Gull** on Lake Winnibigoshish showed characteristics of *brachyrhynchus,* the more expected of the three forms (species?) known to occur in North America. Karl Bardon continues to challenge our assumptions about distribution and timing of **Thayer's Gull** migration in Minnesota; first county records for Aitkin and McLeod were established this fall and record early arrival dates were established. The first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** on Lake Winnibigoshish in late September was the 21st state record; another (or the same) was seen when the Mew Gull was found! The **Sabine's Gull** found by Steve Dinsmore at Fox Lake was a first for Martin County and the latest date ever for this species in the state.

At least 33 **Snowy Owls** and 16 **Northern Hawk Owls** were clearly harbingers of winter irruptions but there were no early indications that **Great Gray** and **Boreal Owls** would eventually do the same. **Short-eared Owl** reports were close to the twenty-year fall average of four counties. Peak migration numbers of **Common Nighthawks** were paltry compared to those reported just a decade ago.

August is known for peak numbers of **Western Kingbirds** in western Minnesota and encouraging numbers were found in Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle counties. However, virtually nothing is known of **Common Raven** migration. Frank Nicoletti reported a peak of 350 southbound ravens on 25 October at HRNR and a total of 1,740 for the season — where are they going?

The **Pygmy Nuthatch** at River Oaks Park in Moorhead had first appeared in mid–October at a feeder on the Fargo side of the Red River, where it provided a second state record for North Dakota. Extensive and reasoned discussion of this first occurrence in Minnesota are presented elsewhere in this issue. Late fall vagrancy of the **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** is well known in eastern North America and a similar pattern is becoming apparent along the North Shore of Lake Superior, as evidenced by the three records this fall between 29 September and 26 October. Only two **Mountain Bluebirds** and no **Townsend's Solitaires** were found. Five of the season's seven **Varied**

Thrushes were in southern Minnesota while none were found along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Warbler migration peaked from late August to mid-September in most locations. Steve Carlson reported 21 species of warblers on 8 September and 20 species on 15 September in Hennepin County; Karl Bardon reported 23 species on the latter date in Anoka County. As with other genera of passerines, there were several late stragglers among the vireos and warblers. The **Solitary Vireo** in Duluth on 2 November was the latest north date ever while the juvenile **Red-eyed Vireo** in Croftville, Cook County on 26 October was closely scrutinized to rule out other vireos. More than the usual number of **Black-throated Blue Warblers** were detected as fall migrants. Most unexpected was the **Louisiana Waterthrush** on 6 October in Lancaster, Kittson County, about as far away as is possible from its range in southeastern Minnesota; it also provided the latest date on record for the state! The **Yellow-breasted Chat** was another excellent fall find in Breckenridge, Wilkin County.

Except in Anoka County, most observers reported a poor sparrow migration, but once again, a few stragglers were detected. The three **Henslow's Sparrows** at isolated Miller Prairie West in Traverse County were especially interesting in light of the reports from other areas earlier in the year. Rarely detected anywhere in the state as migrants, the **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was reported in Duluth and for the second consecutive autumn in Anoka County. After none last fall, the many reports of **Smith's Longspurs** were most welcome. Balmy weather alone cannot justify the presence of a **Bobolink** along Highway 61 on the record late date of 11 November — its a long, long way to South America!

Unconfirmed and Undocumented Reports: Gyrfalcon 11/18 at HRNR, Sabine's Gull 10/5 Goodhue Co. This section does not include records found Unacceptable by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee. Many recent reports of Spotted Towhee in the state still remain undocumented; the status of this species is discussed in ***The Loon*** 69:28–31.

Weather Summary: August was generally warm and dry, especially in the north-central and northeast regions where it was more than two degrees F. warmer than normal. September continued this warm and dry trend. In contrast, nearly every region reported average temperatures but above average precipitation for the month of October. The west-central region was the wettest, but Morris was still only 3.23 inches above normal for the month. These balmy conditions ended shockingly during a cold and wet November. Many western cities, including Crookston, Moorhead, Montevideo, Redwood Falls and Pipestone, were at least ten degrees F. colder than average during November. Indeed, the warmest of 40 reporting stations across the state was Hibbing (!) where it was "only" 5.9 degrees below normal for the month. In many areas, surprisingly heavy snowfall accompanied this early cold and brought back all-too-recent memories of winter 1995–96.

Acknowledgments: Once again, thanks to Kim Eckert and Anthony Hertzel for summarizing reports called in to the MOU "hotlines" in Duluth and the Twin Cities, respectively. Carol Schumacher summarized sightings posted on the Minnesota Birding Network and Kim Eckert provided data from the Lakewood Pumping Station census of fall migration. Data from Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve in Duluth were made available by Molly Evans and Frank Nicoletti. Median arrival and departure dates for the past 10–11 years were calculated by Paul Budde.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen. **2602 East 4th St, Duluth, MN 55812.**

KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case **(PACIFIC LOON)** indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold **(10/9)** indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold **(Aitkin)** indicate an unusual occurrence for that county. City of **Duluth** also bold when applicable.
4. Counties listed in underline **(Aitkin)** indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics *(Aitkin)* indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [ ] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.

Loons to Swans

Red-throated Loon
Reported 9/27 Lake Superior, St. Louis Co. (juvenile) KE.

PACIFIC LOON
Reported 10/21 Lake Superior, St. Louis Co. (adult) PS *et al.* (***The Loon*** 68:244–245); 10/25 Mille Lacs Lake, Crow Wing Co. (2 birds) KB; **11/7** White Bear Lake, Ramsey Co. (juvenile) KB.

Common Loon
Peak 10/20 Lake Winnibigoshish, Cass/Itasca (highest count ever on one Minnesota lake — **1497**) KB, PS. Reported in 28 counties statewide. Late north (median 11/24) 11/2 Aitkin WN, 11/10 Clay MRN and Mille Lacs AH, 11/17 Crow Wing KB. Late south 11/24 Hennepin PBu.

Pied-billed Grebe
Peak 10/11 Anoka (156) KB. Reported in 19 north and 33 south counties. Late north 11/10 Clay MRN, 11/19 Becker (1) BBe. One found stranded on land was released 11/26 Mountain Lake, Cottonwood ED.

Horned Grebe
Seen in 11 north and 6 south counties. Late north (median 11/22) 11/1 Morrison MJ/DT, 11/7 St. Louis TW. Late south (median 11/26) 11/12 Winona CS, 11/18 Wabasha KB, 11/24 Hennepin (3) SC.

Red-necked Grebe
Found in only eight north and five south counties. Late north 10/20 Cass KB, 10/25 Marshall SKS (no north reports in November). Late south 11/24 Hennepin (1) KB, SC (only late date).

Eared Grebe
Seen in six north and three south counties. Late north 10/3 Pennington KB (only October report). Late south (median 11/4) **11/24** Hennepin (1) KB, SC.

Western Grebe
Peak 10/28 Douglas (**800**) RJ. Reported in six north and eight south counties. Late north (median 10/31) 10/4 Todd KB, 10/6 Marshall PS. Late south 10/25 Chippewa ABo, 11/2 Big Stone (1) LE.

CLARK'S GREBE
Three records of five individuals: 8/18 Clear Lake, **Stevens** (1) KE *et al.*, 9/8 Minnesota Lake, Faribault (2) PeP *et al.*, 10/4 Lake Traverse, Traverse (2) SKS.

American White Pelican
Peak counts 8/4 Big Stone (**3000–3500**) LE, 9/29 Jackson (700) JCBC, 10/9 Houston (360) FL. Reported in 34 counties statewide, including an unusual report 9/11 Duluth mob. No north reports in October. **Note:** Please report all late flocks, as small numbers of injured birds may attempt to overwinter and their dates of occurrence are not representative of migration.

Double-crested Cormorant
Peak count 10/1 Dakota (2,000) KB. Seen in 54 of Minnesota's 87 counties. Late

north 11/1 Morrison MJ/DT, 11/3 Aitkin WN, 11/10 Clay (4) MRN. Late south (stragglers may overwinter) 11/24 Hennepin SC, 11/27 Ramsey KB.

American Bittern
Seen in six north and four south counties. Late north (median 10/8) 10/10 Aitkin DN, 10/15 Marshall SKS. Late south 10/8 Anoka KB.

Least Bittern
Only reports: 8/18 Hennepin DN, 8/31 Ramsey AH.

Great Blue Heron
Reported from 56 counties statewide. Late north (only November report) 11/3 Wadena PBi.

Great Egret
Reported from several unusual locations: 8/7-8 **Cook** (1) OSL, 8/20–9/18 **Beltrami** (1) *fide* DJo, SCM, 9/7 Marshall (6) KB, PS. Peak counts 8/10 Carver (59) PBu, 9/7 Big Stone (50–60) LE. Seen in total of 6 north and 31 south counties, and apparently departed the state earlier than usual. Only north reports in October: 10/4 Otter Tail SKS, 10/10 Otter Tail (6) SDM. Late south (median 11/8) 10/16 Dakota KB, 10/19 Big Stone LE, 10/20 Hennepin SC.

Snowy Egret
Only report: **9/10** Red Rock Lake, Washington Co. (1) BL.

Little Blue Heron
Only report: 8/6–7 Anoka DaB.

Cattle Egret
Unusually high numbers 8/5–10/6 Big Stone LE (***The Loon*** 69:46) with peaks 8/24 (95) and 9/15 (122–130). Also reported 10/26 Two Harbors, **Lake Co.** (1) MH, mob.

Green Heron
Seen in 7 north and 31 south counties. Late north 9/22 Aitkin WN. Apparently departed early (median 10/22) with only one south report after September, 10/12 Murray RgS.

Black-crowned Night-Heron
Reported in one north and eight south counties. Late north 8/24 Roseau PS. Only two late south reports in October (median 10/22) 10/6 Hennepin (5) TT, 10/11 Dakota KB.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
No reports.

Tundra Swan
Peak of 11,740 swans counted by U.S.F.W.S. during the week of 11/14 on the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge from Wabasha to Reno (pools 4-8). Early north 10/4 Pennington KB, 10/19 Polk (100) BBe. Early south 10/13 Cottonwood ED, 10/24 Murray RgS, 10/27 Stearns MJ/DT. Late north 11/9 Aitkin WN, 11/11 Crow Wing SDM and Pennington SKS. Late south (median 12/12) 11/30 Winona (250) CS. Reported from 7 north and 16 south counties. **Note:** Singles or small groups of swans at any season and all reports outside of usual migration dates need documentation as these could be Trumpeters.

[TRUMPETER SWAN]
Seen in **Cottonwood** (1), **Crow Wing**, Hubbard, Jackson (5), **Kittson** (1), Rice (max. 6), **Stearns** (1), **Todd** (2), and Wright (4) counties. Also reported 9/1 Upper Rice Lake, **Clearwater** Co. (pair with 6 young) ABo. **Note:** For all seasons, please indicate numbers of adults and young; except in winter, give dates seen at breeding areas.

Mute Swan
All reports: 9/6 **Pine** (2) TT, plus the usual pair in Rice (wild?) mob.

Waterfowl

Greater White-fronted Goose
All reports shown. Early north (median 9/16) 9/22 **St. Louis (18)** US, 9/28 **St. Louis (17)** FN, 9/30 Marshall (1) PS.

Early south (median 10/12) **8/5–9** Scott RJ, GS (wild?), **8/26** Freeborn ABa (summering? details requested); also reported 10/7 Cottonwood (30) ED, 10/12 Murray RgS. Late north (only report) 11/3 Otter Tail SDM.

Snow Goose
Early north 9/10 Pennington SKS, 9/21–29 Aitkin WN, 9/28 Beltrami (20+) SCM, Cass (35) PS and Itasca ABo. Early south (median 9/20) **8/10** (second earliest date south) Dakota DBS (wild?). No other August or September reports south. Late north 10/19 Itasca SD, 10/21 Beltrami DJo, 11/1 Otter Tail SDM. Late south 11/19 Jackson (125) LF, 11/25 Olmsted (1) DS, 11/25 Winona (14) CS.

Ross' Goose
Only report **9/21–23** (second earliest north) Rice Lake NWR, **Aitkin Co.** (1) WN, CB.

Canada Goose
Seen in 62 counties statewide. During the week of 11/11, cooperative DNR/USFWS surveys tallied 136,239 (*fide* CS).

Wood Duck
Seen in 33 counties statewide. No north reports in November (median 12/15). Overwinters south.

Green-winged Teal
Seen in 31 counties statewide. Late north 10/25 Marshall SKS, 10/27 St. Louis SS, 11/1 Morrison MJ/DT. Overwinters south.

American Black Duck
Reported from four north and eight south counties. Early south 8/14 Ramsey TT. No north reports in November (median 12/16).

Mallard
Single observer counts: 11/3 Big Stone (6,000) LE, 11/14 Dakota (8,000) KB. During early November, statewide DNR/USFWS surveys tallied 492,719 (*fide* CS). This included an estimated 300,000+ at Lac Qui Parle NWR on 11/3, possibly the highest count ever on the refuge (*fide* JS).

Northern Pintail
Late north (median 11/5) 10/10 Aitkin WN, 10/18 Wadena PBi, 10/25 Marshall SKS. Reported from 10 north and 13 south counties.

Blue-winged Teal
Reported from 19 north and 23 south counties. Late north 10/16 Clay (7) MRN, 10/19 Roseau KB, 10/28 Todd RJ. Late south 10/27 Hennepin KB, SC and Cottonwood ED, EEG.

Northern Shoveler
Peak counts 10/6 Big Stone (500+) LE, 11/9 Hennepin (100) DZ. Reported in 25 counties statewide. Late north (median 10/22) 10/25 Pennington SKS, 11/11 Aitkin CB.

Gadwall
Observed in 27 counties statewide. Late north (median 10/30) 10/25 Wadena PBi and Clearwater ABo. Overwinters south.

EURASIAN WIGEON
Reported 11/17 Ramsey SCh.

American Wigeon
Reported from 18 counties statewide. Late north (median 11/14) 10/4 St. Louis TW, 10/9 Aitkin CB, 10/18 Wadena PBi. Late south 11/14 Dakota DBS, 11/18 Scott RJ, 11/22 Ramsey KB.

Canvasback
Seen in 22 counties statewide. Late north (median 11/17) 10/28 Douglas RJ, 11/4 Clay (4) MRN. Median south departure date is 12/18.

Redhead
Reported in 24 counties statewide. Late north (median 12/5) 10/25 Marshall SKS, 11/4 Mille Lacs CW, 11/10 Clay (20) MRN. Median south departure date is 12/15.

Ring-necked Duck
Peak count 10/23 Drumbeater Lake, Cass Co. **(110,000)** KB. Seen in 29 counties statewide; during the week of 10/28, cooperative DNR/USFWS surveys tallied 422,345 (*fide* CS). Late north (median 11/

28) 11/1 Morrison MJ/DT, 11/9 Wadena PBi.

Greater Scaup
Reported from four north and two south counties. Early north **10/6** Marshall PS, 10/22 Cass KB. No early south or late north reports. Late south (median 12/14) 11/16 Wabasha ABo, 11/19 Chisago RJ, 11/27 Ramsey KB.

Lesser Scaup
Reported from 11 north and 11 south counties. During the week of 10/28, cooperative DNR/USFWS surveys tallied 68,002 (*fide* CS). No late dates can be given this season (median departures 12/15 north, 12/18 south).

KING EIDER
Reported 11/2 Ray Berglund Wayside, Cook Co. (immature/female) mob.

Harlequin Duck
All reports: 10/22–26 Stoney Point, St. Louis Co. (1–2) mob, 10/26 Grand Marais, Cook Co. (immature/female) mob, 11/3 Paradise, Cook Co. (male) KE *et al.*

Oldsquaw
All reports: 10/26–27 Cook (max. 8) mob; 11/3 Lake Winnibigoshish, **Cass Co**. (1) AH, PS; 11/12–23 Lake Pepin, Wabasha Co. (1) JPo, BL; 11/22 Mille Lacs Lake, Mille Lacs Co. (1) KB; 11/23 Lake Minnetonka, Hennepin Co. (1) KB.

Black Scoter
All reports: 10/20–26 Cook (1–2) mob, **10/24** Anoka *fide* AH; 10/25 Mille Lacs Lake, Crow Wing Co. (2) KB; 11/4–6 Lake Pepin, Wabasha Co. (1) CS; **11/25** Reads Landing, Wabasha Co. (1) KB.

Surf Scoter
All reports: 10/20–21 Lake Winnibigoshish, **Cass Co. (9)** KB, PS, 10/24 St. Louis (2) MB, 11/24 Lake Calhoun, Hennepin Co. (1) KB, SC.

White-winged Scoter
Early north 10/6 St. Louis TW. Other north reports through 10/27 on Lake Superior in Cook, St. Louis. All reports south: **10/7** Goodner Lake, **Stearns Co.** (2) SWi; 11/2–15 Lake Pepin, Wabasha Co. (1) BL, KB, mob; 11/22 White Bear Lake, Ramsey Co. (1) KB.

Common Goldeneye
Reported in 27 counties statewide.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
Reported 11/13+ (overwintered) at Blue Lake lagoons, Scott Co. (male) mob. This was considered the same individual that overwintered in 1995–96.

Bufflehead
Reported from 16 counties. Early north (median 9/26) **8/8** (second earliest record) St. Louis TW. Early south 10/16 Hennepin SC, Stearns TT and Renville CMa. Late dates shown in winter report.

Hooded Merganser
Peak counts 11/2 Pleasant Lake, Ramsey Co. (**1420**) KB; 11/11 Sucker Lake, Ramsey Co. (400+) DZ; 11/12 Forest Lake, Washington Co. (200) WL. Reported in 26 counties statewide. Only late north report 11/10 Cass (4) PS.

Common Merganser
Peak counts 11/22 White Bear Lake, Ramsey Co. (2,200) KB, 11/25 Lake Pepin, Wabasha Co. (11,000) KB. Seen in 25 counties statewide.

Red-breasted Merganser
Reported in only 12 counties, no peak counts.

Ruddy Duck
Reported from 20 counties. Late north 10/28 Todd RJ, 11/10 Clay (25) MRN. Late south (median 12/8) 11/20 Winona CS, 11/24 Hennepin (4) SC, 11/26 Ramsey KB.

Vultures to Falcons

Turkey Vulture
Reported in 49 counties. Late north 10/24

St. Louis TW, 10/28 Todd RJ, 11/9 St. Louis *fide* KE. Late south 10/7 Houston EMF, 10/9 Fillmore NO, 10/26 Winona CS. Unusual report 10/5 Goodhue (64 in one kettle) BL. Record high daily count on 9/29 HRNR, St. Louis (**799**) FN.

Osprey
Seen in 38 counties statewide. Late north (median 11/4) 10/6 Wadena PBi and Wilkin SDM, 10/16 Cook TEB. No south reports during November.

MISSISSIPPI KITE
Reported 9/9 HRNR, St. Louis Co. (juvenile) FN (***The Loon*** 68:215–216).

Bald Eagle
Seen in 43 counties statewide. Peak count 10/31 HRNR, St. Louis Co. (644) FN.

Northern Harrier
Found in 42 counties including 8/17 Waseca (2 fledglings) JSe. Late north 11/1 Kanabec CM, 11/9 Mahnomen BK. Late south 11/6 Murray ND, 11/9 Goodhue PBu, 11/18 Winona CS.

Sharp-shinned Hawk
Reported from 42 counties. Late north 11/24 Pennington SKS. Late south 11/23 Hennepin PBu, SC, 11/27 Dakota DBS, 11/30 Fillmore NO.

Cooper's Hawk
Reported from 34 counties statewide. First reports at feeders in October.

Northern Goshawk
Reported from eight counties north but only Houston in the south.

Red-shouldered Hawk
Seen in three north and seven south counties. All north reports: 9/8 Becker SDM, 9/28–9/30 Height of Land Twp., Becker Co. (2) DN; 10/10 Aitkin DN, 10/31–11/1 HRNR, St. Louis Co. (5) FN, 11/10 HRNR (1) SDM. Regularly overwinters south. Only October/November reports: 10/19 Hennepin TT, 10/24 Houston (2) FL, 11/23–30 Hennepin (adult) SC.

Red-shouldered Hawk, 3 November 1996, Anoka County. Photo by Christopher Hefty.

Broad-winged Hawk
Reported in 16 north and 12 south counties. Late north (median 10/15) 10/25 St. Louis SDM, **11/2** (latest date on record) Pine (1) CM. Late south 9/27 Brown JSp, 9/28 Hennepin TT and Waseca JSe.

Swainson's Hawk
Late north 9/28 Otter Tail SDM, 9/29 Marshall PS, 10/6 Kittson PS and Wilkin SDM, plus three September sightings at HRNR, St. Louis Co. FN. All reports southwest: 8/18 Stevens KE *et al.*, 8/19 Lincoln (3) TT, 9/14 Lincoln RgS, JAz, 9/21 Murray RgS, 8/24–9/22 Big Stone (peak of 4) LE. All reports southeast: 8/6 Dakota DBS, 8/17 Mower RRK, 8/20-9/9 Washington TEB, 8/31 Winona CS, 9/15 Scott KHe, JoW, 9/18 Dakota DBS and Anoka SC. Apparently left early, as median late south date is 10/2.

Red-tailed Hawk
Reported from 63 counties statewide. Interesting notes of a "Harlan's" on 9/25 Wilkin SDM, a total albino 10/27 HRNR, St. Louis Co. SDM, and a "Krider's" on 11/20 Cass TT. Peak count 10/28 HRNR (1472) FN.

Ferruginous Hawk
Two reports: **8/17** Red Lake (two immatures) SKS, 10/3 Red Lake (two, no details) WL.

Rough-legged Hawk
Reported in 21 counties statewide. Early north 9/6 (one oversummered) Roseau KB, 9/7 Marshall KB, PS. Early south 9/14 Murray RgS, 10/13 Brown BBo, 10/18 Dakota DBS. Peak non-HRNR count 11/23 Aitkin (17) WN.

Golden Eagle
Early north (median 10/3) 9/18 HRNR, St. Louis Co. FN, 10/19 Lake (1) AH; peak 11/9 HRNR (**20**) FN. One caught 11/7 at HRNR was only the 7th ever to be banded there and the first since 1984. Early south (median 10/19) 10/12 Renville (immature) BL, TT, 10/15 Sherburne (immature) *fide* AH. Also reported from Houston, Winona.

American Kestrel
Reported in 49 counties statewide.

Merlin
Unusual report 9/25 Wilkin (*richardsoni)* SDM. Reported in 15 north and 8 south counties. Early south 9/8 Hennepin, 9/13 Ramsey TT, 9/19 Dakota DBS.

Prairie Falcon
All reports: **8/8** Otter Tail SDM, 8/20 Roseau BSi (found injured, later died), 11/10 **St. Louis** DEd (***The Loon*** 69:45), 11/29 **Ramsey** JSe (***The Loon*** 69:44–45).

Peregrine Falcon
Reported from these non-metro counties: Aitkin (2), Brown, Clay (2), Clearwater, Kanabec, Lac Qui Parle, Martin, McLeod, Otter Tail (2–3), Pennington, Rice, Roseau, Wilkin, Winona, Yellow Medicine. One was observed taking a Bonaparte's Gull, 9/30 Roseau PS.

Partridges to Cranes

Gray Partridge
Only north report from Wilkin. Reported from twelve south counties including peak counts in Waseca (9) JSe, Watonwan (14–18) DBr, BSe, Houston (12) EMF.

Ring-necked Pheasant
Reported from 3 north and 31 south counties.

Spruce Grouse
All reports: 9/22 St. Louis SS, 9/28 Itasca ABo, 10/11 Beltrami DS, 11/26 Lake *fide* KE.

Ruffed Grouse
Reported from 11 north and 7 south counties.

Greater Prairie-Chicken
All Reports: 9/29–10/18 Wilkin (20) mob, 10/16 Otter Tail SDM.

Sharp-tailed Grouse
All reports: 8/3 Kittson (2) PS, 9/7 Roseau (7) KB, PS, 10/2 Beltrami (1) MRN, 10/7 Lake of the Woods (1) PS, 10/16 **Wilkin** (3) TT, 10/19–20 St. Louis (13) SD, 11/17 Aitkin (20) WN.

Wild Turkey
Reported from 1 north and 17 south counties including (wild?) birds in Becker, Lac Qui Parle, Lyon.

Yellow Rail
All reports: 8/3 Kittson (2) PS, 8/24 Roseau (1) PS.

Virginia Rail
Late north 8/28 Cass RJ, 9/6 Todd JSK, 9/9 Kanabec CM. All south reports: 9/24 Ramsey TT, 10/18 Hennepin TT.

Sora
Late north 9/15 Marshall PS, 9/22 Aitkin

WN, 10/4 St. Louis TW. Late south 9/28 Hennepin TT, 9/29 Anoka DS.

American Coot
Late north 9/30 Wadena PBi, 10/1 Morrison MJ/DT, 10/10 Aitkin DN. Late south 10/11 Ramsey DZ and Washington WL, 10/17 Hennepin PBu. Peak number estimated at 25,000 on 10/28 Lake Christina, Douglas Co. RJ.

Sandhill Crane
Late north 10/18 Pennington SKS, 10/19 Polk BBe, 10/27 Wilkin AH. Late south 9/15 Scott KHe, JoW, 9/29 Anoka JH, 10/14 Sherburne JJB. A total of 37 were seen during the season at Hawk Ridge, St. Louis Co. FN. A peak count of 1200 on 10/3 Polk KB.

Shorebirds

Black-bellied Plover
Late north 10/25 Carlton CG, BMu, 10/26 Lake WM, 10/27 Polk PS. Late south 10/27 Hennepin KB, SC, 10/28 Winona CS. Peak numbers 9/21 Hennepin (13) TT, 10/12 St. Louis (15) SCM.

American Golden-Plover
Late north 10/19 Wilkin BBo, 10/24 Lake MB, 10/27 Polk PS. Late south 10/18 Dakota DBS, 10/23 Lyon RgS, 10/25 Chippewa ABo. Peak counts 9/15 Roseau (62) PS, 10/12 Waseca (40) JSe.

Semipalmated Plover
Late north 9/9 Polk PS, 10/4 Kittson KB, **10/26** (second latest north date) Lake AH, PS. Late south 9/9 Winona CS, 9/14 Dakota TT, 10/6 Big Stone LE. Peak number 9/1 Duluth (15) AH.

Piping Plover
All reports: 8/5 Yellow Medicine (2) TT, 8/22 Goodhue (1) BL.

Killdeer
Late north 10/6 St. Louis TW, 10/9 Clay MRN, 10/19 Wilkin BBo. Late south 10/20 Big Stone LE and Sherburne GS, 10/27 Hennepin KB, 11/11 Rice TBo. Peak counts 8/2 Dakota (68) TT, 8/4 Big Stone (100s) LE.

American Avocet
All reports: 8/3 Big Stone (1) LE, 8/5 Lac Qui Parle (6) TT, 8/17 Renville (1) RF and Traverse (1) WM, 9/5–6 **Wadena** (8) PBi, 9/22 Dakota PBu, 10/6 Lac Qui Parle (1) LE, 9/29–10/17 Polk (3) mob. Although there were no summer reports, this was the end of an incredible avocet year!

Greater Yellowlegs
Late north 10/20 Cass PS, 10/25 Marshall SKS, 11/3 Crow Wing KB. Late south 11/3 Big Stone LE, 11/9 Anoka DS. Peak number 8/3 Roseau (15) PS.

Lesser Yellowlegs
Late north 10/22 Clay MRN, 10/24 Otter Tail DS, 10/28 Wilkin RJ. Late south 10/16 Hennepin SC, 10/17 Dakota DBS, 10/19 Big Stone LE. A peak of 800 on 8/3 Roseau PS.

Solitary Sandpiper
Late north 9/6 Morrison RJ, 9/7 Roseau KB, 10/2 Clay SKS. Late south 10/11 Hennepin OJ, 10/14 Anoka KB, 10/15 Cottonwood ED. Many late south dates.

Willet
All reports: 8/23 St. Louis BY, 8/5 Lac Qui Parle (6) TT, 8/6 Brown (5) CMa, 8/8 Renville (1) CMa.

Spotted Sandpiper
Late north 10/7 Cass PS, 10/22 Clay MRN, **11/3** (latest date ever in state) Lake KE. Late south 9/21 Hennepin SC, 9/28 Rice TT, 10/12 Anoka KB.

Upland Sandpiper
All reports: 8/1 Murray RgS, 8/5 Big Stone LE, 8/21 Brown BBo.

Whimbrel
Only report 9/8 St. Louis *fide* KE.

Hudsonian Godwit
All reports: 9/1 St. Louis (1) AH, 9/2 Clay CF, 9/7 Olmsted (1) BE, 9/14 Chippewa

RG, 10/12–13 Lyon (1) RgS, **10/13–19** Roseau (1) PS, KB, 9/29–**10/21** (second latest date north) Polk (1) PS, KB (***The Loon*** 68:245).

Marbled Godwit
Only report 8/3 Roseau PS.

Ruddy Turnstone
All north reports: 8/1 Cass SCM, seen off and on from 8/24–10/6 St. Louis mob and 10/24 St. Louis KB. Early south **8/5** Yellow Medicine TT, 9/22 Big Stone LE. Peak number 10/6 St. Louis (**24**) mob.

Red Knot
All reports: **8/5** Lac Qui Parle (1) TT, 8/10 Lake (1) DV, 8/23–24 St. Louis (max. 9) mob, 8/31–9/1 St. Louis (max. 5) DBS, AH, 9/14–17 St. Louis (2) mob.

Sanderling
Late north 10/21 Polk KB, 10/25 Marshall SKS and St. Louis KB, 10/26 Cook AH. Late south 9/30 Winona CS, 10/1 Murray RgS, 10/19 Big Stone LE. Peak numbers 9/5 St. Louis (55) TT, 9/19 Polk (20) PS, 10/6 Big Stone (25) LE.

Semipalmated Sandpiper
Late north 9/8 St. Louis TW, **10/19** Polk BBe, **10/25** Carlton CG, BMu. Few south reports; peak migration 8/31–9/15 Big Stone (100s) LE.

Least Sandpiper
Late north 9/1 Clearwater DJo, 9/7 St. Louis CM, 9/19 Polk PS. Late south 10/2 Renville KB, 10/7 Wabasha RJ, **10/28** Winona CS. Peak migration 8/31–9/15 Big Stone (100s) LE.

White-rumped Sandpiper
Late north 10/17 St. Louis mob, 10/27 Polk PS, 10/19–**11/2** Lake mob. Late south 9/22 Winona CS, **10/26–27** (second latest date south) Hennepin SC, KB.

Baird's Sandpiper
Late north 10/12 St. Louis SCM, 10/27 Polk PS. Late south 10/12 Wabasha RJ, 11/6 Le Sueur KB. Peak number 10/17 Polk (10) TT.

Pectoral Sandpiper
Late north 10/26 Cook and Lake AH, PS, 10/27 Polk PS, 11/3–**11/8** St. Louis DSa, TW. Late south 11/2 Hennepin SC, 11/6 Le Sueur KB, 11/7 Winona CS. Peak numbers 8/3 Roseau (450) PS and 10/17 Polk (350) KB.

Dunlin
Late north 10/21 Polk (peak of **180**) KB, 10/26 Cook and Lake AH, PS. Late south 10/16 Hennepin SC, 10/26 Goodhue BL, 10/30 Winona CS.

Stilt Sandpiper
Late north 9/14 St. Louis TT, 9/19 Polk PS. Late south 9/25 Winona CS, 10/2 Big Stone KB, 10/9 Le Sueur KB. Peak numbers 8/23–24 Duluth (**120**) mob and 8/25–9/15 Big Stone (50) LE.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Many reports again, all in August except as indicated. Reported north in Aitkin (max. 20 on 8/17) WN, Pine (2) TT, Traverse (1) WM; plus 8/23–9/17 St. Louis (peak 25) mob, 9/1 Roseau (1) PS, 9/5 Kittson (1) KB. Reported south in Carver, Dakota (peak 25) *fide* AH, Scott (15) KG, Washington (4) BL; plus 8/31–9/2 Winona (max. 4) CS, 9/8 Freeborn (several) ABa, 9/25–28 (3) Kandiyohi RJF.

Short-billed Dowitcher
Late north 9/1 St. Louis AH, 9/7 Roseau KB. Late south 8/31 Chisago RH, 9/8 Big Stone LE, **9/21** Lyon RgS. Peak count 8/3 Roseau (12) PS.

Long-billed Dowitcher
Only north report 10/19 Polk BBe. Late south 10/25 Winona CS, 10/27 Lincoln and Lyon RgS. Peak numbers 9/21 Waseca (15) JSe, 10/6 Big Stone (11) LE.

Common Snipe
Late north 10/19 Clay BBo and Wilkin BBa, 10/24 Beltrami DJo, 11/17 Mille Lacs KB. Late south 10/20 Dakota PBu, 10/27 Hennepin SC, 11/20 Winona CS. Peak

count 9/1 Anoka (**300**) SD.

American Woodcock
Late north 10/20 Itasca ABo and St. Louis SD, 11/4 Carlton LW. Late south 9/15 Scott KHe, JoW, 10/14 Sherburne JJB, 10/27 Brown JSp.

Wilson's Phalarope
Only reports north 8/3 Kittson (10) and Roseau (20) PS. Late south 8/21 Carver DJe, 8/25 Big Stone (peak 200) LE, 9/24 Murray RgS.

Red-necked Phalarope
Late north 9/7 Beltrami DJo and Roseau KB, **11/1** (latest date on record for state) Morrison (1) MJ/DT. Late south 9/25 Lincoln JA, RgS, 9/26 Lyon *fide* AH, 9/29 Winona CS. Peak numbers 8/24–9/7 Blackduck lagoons, Beltrami (max. 19) DJo.

Jaegers to Terns

jaeger sp?
Reported 9/1 St. Louis (2–3) *fide* KE, 9/5–6 St. Louis (1) TT *et al.*, 10/17 St. Louis (1) mob, all of these in Duluth.

POMARINE JAEGER
Exceptional report away from Lake Superior and the latest date ever for any species of jaeger in the state: **11/8–24** **Wabasha** KB, mob (***The Loon*** 69:3–6).

Parasitic Jaeger
Two Duluth reports 9/21 (adult) JWe, 9/28 (two adults) mob.

Franklin's Gull
Late north 10/20 **Cass** and Itasca KB, PS, 11/11 Clay MRN, 11/17 Mille Lacs (1) KB. Late south 11/1 Mower RRK, 11/6 Le Sueur KB and McLeod RJ. Unusual reports 9/8 and 10/20–21 **Duluth** TW, KE. Peak count of 15,000 on 10/10 at Lake Waconia, Carver Co. KB.

Little Gull
Only report 9/30 **Pennington** PS (***The Loon*** 69:44).

Bonaparte's Gull
Late north 11/2 Aitkin WN, 11/3 Wadena PBi, 11/17 Mille Lacs KB. Late south 11/14 Ramsey KB, 11/22 Brown and Nicollet BBo.

MEW GULL
Second state record 11/10 Lake Winnibigoshish, **Cass Co.** PS (***The Loon*** 69:7–10).

Ring-billed Gull
Reported from 20 counties north and 33 south.

Herring Gull
Reported from 11 counties north and 12 south.

Thayer's Gull
All reports: **9/30** (earliest date ever) Hennepin KB; **10/6** (earliest date north) St. Louis KB; **10/19**–11/24 Dakota mob; 10/21–Dec. in St. Louis, Lake and Cook mob; 11/2 **McLeod** (2) KB; 11/3 **Aitkin** (1) KB; 11/10 Wabasha RJ; 11/19 Hennepin SC and Ramsey (peak of 7) KB.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL
Two individuals well-documented by Bardon moved between Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. and Lake Calhoun, Hennepin Co., 9/30–10/16 (third-winter) and 10/9–10/31 (fourth-winter). One apparent adult **9/13** Hennepin PBu and undocumented reports of one–two "adults" in Dakota County likely referred to these two individuals since distinguishing adults from fourth-winter birds may not always be possible.

Glaucous Gull
All reports: **11/2** (earliest south date) Dakota (immature) TT, 11/10 Hennepin PBu, 11/10 Lake mob, 11/11 Cook mob.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL
Reported **11/9** Duluth, St. Louis Co. (third-winter) KB.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE
Two reports from Lake Winnibigoshish, possibly the same bird, **9/28** **Cass** PS

Juvenile Caspian Tern, 28 September 1996, Lake Winnibigoshish, Cass County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

(***The Loon*** 69:44) and 11/10 **Cass** PS (***The Loon*** 68:247).

SABINE'S GULL
Three reports of four birds: 9/27–10/4 Waterville, Le Sueur Co. (2) WS, mob; **10/20** Ortonville, Big Stone Co. LE (***The Loon*** 69:47–48); **10/29** (latest date ever) Fox Lake, **Martin Co.** SDi. All birds were juveniles, as expected.

Caspian Tern
Late north 9/27 Mille Lacs WL, 9/28 Cass PS, 9/29 Aitkin CB, WN. Late south 10/1 Dakota and Le Sueur KB, 10/5 Hennepin SC, 10/11 Carver MB.

Common Tern
Late north 9/7 Roseau KB, 9/8 St. Louis TW, **10/25** Mille Lacs KB (latest north date on record). Late south 8/2 **Brown** JSp, 8/25 Big Stone LE.

Forster's Tern
Late north 9/8 Becker SDM, 9/12 Beltrami DJo, **10/19** Roseau KB. Late south 8/19 Lincoln TT, 8/29 Jackson JCBC, 9/15 Big Stone LE.

Black Tern
Late north 9/2 St. Louis TW, 9/7 Roseau KB. Late south 9/6 Winona CS, 10/4 Big Stone KB.

Doves to Kingfishers

Rock Dove
Reported from 18 north and 32 south counties.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON
Fifth state record, photographed at Bonnie George's feeder, 9/8–19 Lawrence Township, **Itasca Co**.

Mourning Dove
Reported from 20 north and 35 south counties.

Black-billed Cuckoo
Late north 8/10 Clearwater ABo, 8/18 Wadena PBi, 9/29 Kittson PS. Late south

8/16 Freeborn ABa, 8/23 McLeod RbS, 9/25 Hennepin TT.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Only reports: 8/2 Washington WL, 8/7 Hennepin DN, 8/9 Scott GS, **10/15** Hennepin OJ.

Eastern Screech-Owl
Reported from Kanabec and Todd in the north, and Freeborn, Hennepin, Murray, Washington, and Winona in the south.

Great Horned Owl
Reported from 10 north and 18 south counties.

Snowy Owl
A major irruption started in early November with at least 33 individuals found by the end of the month. Reported from eight north counties plus Anoka, Big Stone, Cottonwood, Faribault, Hennepin, Jackson, Lac Qui Parle, Lyon, Mower, Ramsey, Swift, and Watonwan in the south.

Northern Hawk Owl
Approximately 16 individuals reported, also the start of a major irruption. October reports 10/12 Itasca DJo, 10/20 near Meadowlands, St. Louis Co. SD, 10/24 Hawk Ridge, St. Louis Co. FN; all others were in November. Unusual were the reports 11/10 Mentor Prairie, **Polk Co.** *fide* AH and 11/29+ Pelican Rapids, **Otter Tail Co.** (second county record) mob.

Barred Owl
Reported from 11 north and 12 south counties.

Great Gray Owl
Scarce. Only reports were three locations in Aitkin and two in St. Louis.

Long-eared Owl
Only report 10/1 Aitkin ABo.

Short-eared Owl
All reports: 10/13–20 Wilkin (4–5) CF, 10/24 St. Louis (1) FN, 10/27 Freeborn ABa, 10/28 St. Louis (1) SDM, FN, 11/3 Cook (1) KE *et al.*, 11/17 Otter Tail (7) SDM.

Boreal Owl
Only report: two banded at HRNR, St. Louis Co. DEv.

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Reported from Roseau, St. Louis, Hennepin, Rice.

Common Nighthawk
Late north 10/2 Clay KB, 10/3 Becker WL, 10/8 Otter Tail SDM. Late south 10/3 Ramsey TT, 10/5 Brown JSp, 10/8 Hennepin KB.

Whip-poor-will
Only reports 9/1 Roseau PS, 9/2 Cook OSL, 8/25 Houston EMF, and one found dead 9/20 Freeborn ABa.

Chimney Swift
Late north 8/17 Aitkin WN, 8/23 Pennington SKS and St. Louis TW. Late south 9/20 Brown JSp, 10/8 Lyon RgS, **10/22** Hennepin RJ.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Late north 9/14 St. Louis County TW, 9/22 Todd JSK, 9/23 Hubbard HJF. Late south 9/30 Nicollet LF, 10/22 Carver MB, 10/27 Cottonwood ED. An unidentified hummingbird was reported 11/9 Rice *fide* FKS.

Belted Kingfisher
Late north 11/2 Carlton LW, 11/3 Aitkin WN, 11/4 Clay MRN. Reported from 32 south counties.

Woodpeckers to Flycatchers

Red-headed Woodpecker
Reported from 12 north and 26 south counties.

Red-bellied Woodpecker
Reported from 6 north and 27 south counties.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Late north 9/30 Itasca ABo, 10/1 St. Louis TW, 10/3 Cass MRN. Late south 10/6

Anoka JH and Olmsted CH, 10/16 Houston EMF, 11/19 Hennepin SC.

Downy Woodpecker
Reported from 18 north and 35 south counties.

Hairy Woodpecker
Reported from 18 north and 29 south counties.

Three-toed Woodpecker
No reports.

Black-backed Woodpecker
Only reports from Roseau (2) PS and HRNR, St. Louis Co. (3) FN.

Northern Flicker
Reported from 21 north and 34 south counties.

Pileated Woodpecker
Reported from 15 north and 18 south counties.

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Early south **8/1** Fillmore NO, 8/3 Nicollet MF, 8/14 Winona CS. Late north 9/8 Wilkin KB; **9/22** Aitkin WN, **10/1** (second latest north) Itasca ABo. Late south 9/15 Ramsey TT, 9/23 Brown JSp, 9/25 Hennepin SC. Also reported 8/26 Ramsey (8) TT.

Eastern Wood-Pewee
Late north 9/4 Aitkin CB, 9/7 St. Louis AE, 9/15 Carlton LW. Late south 10/1 Hennepin PBu and Fillmore NO, 10/4 Murray RgS.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Late north 8/25 (only report) Kittson PS. Only south report 9/7 Brown JSp.

Acadian Flycatcher
Only report **9/7** (latest date on record — singing bird!) Goodhue BL.

Alder Flycatcher
All north reports: 8/3 Kittson (3) PS, 8/4 Lake of the Woods PS, 8/13 Cass MRN, 8/24 Roseau (2) PS, 8/30 Cass MRN. Only south reports, 8/27 and 8/31 Brown JSp.

Willow Flycatcher
All north reports: **9/15** (second latest north date) Marshall PS, **9/18** (latest north date) Crow Wing JS/MN. All south reports: 8/3 Dakota TT, 8/15 Dakota (2) TT.

Least Flycatcher
All north reports: 8/18 Cass MRN, 8/31 Lake of the Woods PS, 9/6 (banded) Cass MRN. All south reports: 8/24 Hennepin TT, 9/19 Hennepin TT, 9/24 Hennepin KB, 9/25 Brown JSp. **Note**: All of the *Empidonax* flycatchers reported here are singing/calling birds as indicated by the observers on their seasonal reports.

Eastern Phoebe
Late north 9/29 Wilkin SDM, 10/4 Kanabec CM, **10/15** Aitkin WN. Late south 10/13 Hennepin SC, 10/15 McLeod RbS, 10/16 Houston EMF.

Great Crested Flycatcher
Late north 9/7 Roseau KB, 9/14 St. Louis RJ, 9/18 Kanabec CM. Late south 9/23 Brown JSp, 9/24 Houston EMF, 10/2 Hennepin SC.

Western Kingbird
Late north 8/17 Traverse and Grant WM, 9/7 Roseau KB. Late south 8/9–11 Dakota (max. 3) DBS, TT, 8/19 Lincoln (2) TT, 8/31 Big Stone LE. Peak counts 8/3 Roseau (8) PS, 8/4 Lake of the Woods (5) PS, 8/4 Big Stone (10) LE, 8/5 Lac Qui Parle (23) TT.

Eastern Kingbird
Late north 9/14 St. Louis (2) TT, 9/14 St. Louis RJ, 9/15 St. Louis CS. Late south 9/14 Lincoln RgS, 9/22 Big Stone LE, 9/23 Brown JSp. Peak count 8/4 Big Stone (70) LE.

Larks to Ravens

Horned Lark
Late north 10/19 Becker (85) BBe, 11/19 St. Louis TW, 11/29 Clay RO. Late south

11/3 Big Stone LE, 11/19 Jackson JCBC, 11/21 Blue Earth (25) LF.

Purple Martin
Late north 9/2 Clay MRN, 9/6 Roseau KB, **9/22** St. Louis TW. Late south 8/19 Lyon (480) TT, 9/7 Washington DN. High count 8/15 Clay (>1,200) MRN.

Tree Swallow
Late north 9/14 Wadena PBi, 9/15 Marshall PS, 9/18 Kanabec CM. Late south 10/9 Dakota RH, 10/19 Dakota (4) TT, 10/24 Winona CS. Peak count 9/8 Rice (1,000) JLa.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Late north 8/3 Kittson and Roseau PS, 8/24 Aitkin WN, 8/31 Carlton LW. Late south 9/24 Brown JSp, 9/30 Dakota (12) TT, 10/4 Hennepin RH.

Bank Swallow
Late north 9/1 Clearwater DJo, 9/7 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/7 Big Stone LE, 9/25 Hennepin TT.

Cliff Swallow
Late north 9/7 Aitkin WN, 9/8 Morrison ABo, 9/15 Kanabec CM. Late south 9/21 Waseca JSe, 9/23 Brown JSp, **10/12** Lyon RgS. Peak count 8/31 Sibley (1,000) KHe, JoW.

Barn Swallow
Late north 9/13 Clay (200) CN. Late south 10/11 Winona CS, 10/16 Hennepin SC.

Gray Jay
Reported throughout the normal range.

Blue Jay
Reported throughout the state.

Black-billed Magpie
Reported throughout the normal range; peak numbers 8/24 Roseau (30) PS, 9/6 Kittson (46 in the same flock) KB, 9/7–11/23 Aitkin (max. 12) WN.

American Crow
Reported throughout the state.

Common Raven
Reported throughout the normal range, plus 10/10 **Wilkin** (second county record) SDM. Peak count 10/25 HRNR, St. Louis Co. (350) with 1740 counted there for the season FN.

Chickadees to Gnatcatchers

Black-capped Chickadee
Reported throughout the state.

Boreal Chickadee
Reported throughout the normal range in the north.

Tufted Titmouse
All reports: Winona, Fillmore, Houston CS, Houston (3) EMF, Fillmore (6) NO.

Red-breasted Nuthatch
Twenty-two north (25 l.y.) and nine (26 l.y.) south reports. Reported as scarce in the south.

White-breasted Nuthatch
Reported throughout the state.

PYGMY NUTHATCH
First state record, 10/26–28 **Clay** RO *et al.* See discussion elsewhere in this issue and ***The Loon*** 69:28–31.

Brown Creeper
Twenty north and twenty south reports. Late north 11/28 Cook OSL, 11/25 Becker BBe.

Carolina Wren
No reports.

House Wren
Late south 10/10 Houston EMF, 10/12 Hennepin SC, 10/12 Waseca JSe. Late north 9/8 Lake of the Woods PS, 9/14 Itasca ABo. North reports very scarce and not representative; 11 year median departure date is 10/5.

Winter Wren
Early south 8/25 (reported as a summering bird) Brown JSp, 9/11 Ramsey KB, 9/

12 Mower RRK. Late north 10/7 Carlton LW, 10/18 Beltrami DJo, 10/24 Beltrami DJo. Late south 10/15 Hennepin DBo, 10/16 Brown JSp, and 10/20 Hennepin SC.

Sedge Wren
Late north 9/14 St. Louis TT, 9/16 Aitkin (4) CB, 9/22 Aitkin WN. Late south 10/8 Anoka KB, 10/12 Renville TT, 10/12 Hennepin SC.

Marsh Wren
Late north 10/20 Aitkin DN, 10/22 Clay MRN, **11/2** (second latest north date) St. Louis JG. Late south 10/8 Anoka KB, 10/16 Hennepin SC.

Golden-crowned Kinglet
Early south 9/10 Jackson (7) JCBC, 9/17 Stearns MJ/DT, 9/25 Goodhue KB. Late north 11/23 Carlton LW. Late south 11/2 Nicollet MF, 11/3 Fillmore NO, 11/17 Olmsted CH.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Early south 8/25 Mower RRK, 9/12 Anoka KB, 9/13 Hennepin SC. Late north 10/20 Kanabec CM, 10/23 Cass KB, **11/25** (ties latest north date) Cook OSL. Late south 10/27 Olmsted CH, 11/1 Hennepin SC, 11/3 Anoka JH.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Late north **9/29 Lake** *fide* KE, **10/15–16 St. Louis** FN *et al.*, **10/26 Lake** mob. Late south 9/20 Brown JSp, **9/25** Goodhue KB, **10/5** Houston FL.

Bluebirds to Thrashers

Eastern Bluebird
Late north 11/2 Kanabec CM, 11/3 Aitkin WN, 11/8 St. Louis TW. Late south 11/29 Lac Qui Parle FE, 11/29–30 Rice TBo. Peak numbers 9/28 Becker (50) BK, 10/3 Kittson (45) KB.

Mountain Bluebird
Two reports: 10/18–19 Tamarac NWR, Becker Co. (male) BBe; 10/27 Co. Rds. 144 & 116, Hennepin Co. (female) SC.

Townsend's Solitaire
No reports.

Veery
Late north 8/17 Aitkin WN, 8/23 St. Louis TW, 9/14 Carlton LW. Late south 9/8 Hennepin TT, 9/15 Hennepin SC, 9/19 Anoka KB.

Gray-cheeked Thrush
All reports: **8/27** McLeod RbS, 9/8 Hennepin TT, 9/12 Carlton LW, **10/14** Fillmore NO.

Swainson's Thrush
Early south 8/28 Hennepin SC, DBo, 9/8 Hennepin (18) TT. Late north 10/3 Carlton LW, 10/6 Kittson PS, 10/8 Aitkin CB. Late south 10/14 Murray RgS, 10/15 Cottonwood ED, 10/25 Hennepin RH.

Hermit Thrush
Early south 9/29 Hennepin SC and Anoka KB, 10/4 Brown JSp. Late north 10/18 St. Louis TW, 10/28 Kanabec CM, 11/16 Clay CF. Late south 10/23 Brown JSp, 10/25 Washington TEB, 10/26 Ramsey RH.

Wood Thrush
All reports 8/2 Rice TBo, 8/25 Houston EMF, 9/4 Scott RH, 9/8 Brown JSp, 9/17 Hennepin KB, 10/1 Hennepin SC.

American Robin
Reported throughout the state.

Varied Thrush
All reports: 11/11–Dec. Lino Lakes, Anoka Co. *fide* AH; 11/14 Westwood Hills, Hennepin Co. *fide* AH; mid-Nov.–12/8 Welch, **Goodhue Co.** *fide* AH, RJ; 11/18–12/1 Whitewater State Park, Winona Co. *fide* CS, mob; 11/19 Almelund, Chisago Co. RJ; 11/23–25 Jones Twp., Beltrami Co. *fide* DJo; late Nov. (overwintered) Aitkin *fide* CB.

Gray Catbird
Late north 9/24 Kanabec CM, 9/29 Becker DN, 10/6 Carlton LW. Late south 10/12 Fillmore NO, 10/15 Ramsey RH, 10/16 Hennepin SC.

Varied Thrush, 12 November 1996, Lino Lakes, Anoka County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

Northern Mockingbird
All reports 8/7 Hennepin (two immatures) TT *et al.*, 10/31–11/1 Brown JSp.

Brown Thrasher
Late north 11/22, 11/30 Kanabec CM. Late south 10/6 Hennepin SC, 10/10 Lincoln JA, RgS, 10/14 Murray RgS.

Pipits to Vireos

American Pipit
Early north 9/7 Roseau KB, PS, 9/13 Aitkin CB and Carlton CG, BMu. Early south 9/15 Anoka KB, 9/18 Anoka (10) SC, 9/26 Dakota DBS. Late north 10/17 Polk (50) KB, 10/19 Cook WM and St. Louis TW, 10/25 Carlton CG, BMu. Late south 11/2 Hennepin SC and McLeod KB, 11/3 Hennepin TT. Also reported 10/19 Big Stone **(150)** LE.

Bohemian Waxwing
Early north **9/29** Lake KR, 10/13 Roseau PS, 10/14 St. Louis LW. No south reports.

Cedar Waxwing
Reported throughout the state.

Northern Shrike
Early north 10/16 Polk TT, 10/22 Becker KB, 10/24 Kanabec CM. Early south 10/16 Hennepin SC, 10/24 Stearns MJ/DT, 10/27 Dakota TT.

Loggerhead Shrike
Only north report 8/5 Clay (1) TBr. All reports south: 8/7 Kasota Prairie, Le Sueur Co. (1) WM; 8/7 Hwy. 55/Fahey Ave., Dakota Co. (4) ABa; 8/7–14 180th St. between Hwy. 55 and Goodwin Ave., Dakota Co. (max. 5) DBS; 8/10–17 Oakland Twp., Freeborn Co. (1) ABa; 8/17 Dakota TT. Also reported (early August?) Blooming Prairie Twp., Steele Co. (1) ABa and Lake Elmo, Washington Co. (2) CO.

European Starling
Reported throughout the state.

Bell's Vireo
Only report 8/11 Dakota TT.

Solitary Vireo
Early south 9/2 Houston EMF, 9/4 Murray ND. Late north 9/18 Crow Wing JS/MN, 10/6 Carlton LW, **11/2** St. Louis DSa. Late south 10/8 Anoka KB, 10/12 Hennepin SC, 10/20 Fillmore NO.

Yellow-throated Vireo
Late north 9/14 Kanabec CM, 9/16 Crow Wing JS/MN, 9/20 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/19 Winona CS, 9/22 Big Stone LE, 9/25 Hennepin SC. Also reported 8/25 Kittson (10) KB.

Warbling Vireo
Late north 9/7 Clay MRN, 9/8 St. Louis CM, 9/15 Itasca DBo. Late south 9/22 Big Stone LE, 9/23 Brown JSp, 9/25 Hennepin SC.

Philadelphia Vireo
Early south 8/15 Freeborn ABa, 8/21 McLeod RbS, 8/23 Winona CS. Late north 9/21 St. Louis CM, 9/30 Itasca ABo. Late

Northern Mockingbird, 31 October 1996, New Ulm, Brown County. Photo by Jack Sprenger.

south 9/25 Goodhue KB and Hennepin (2) SC, **10/9** Winona CS.

Red-eyed Vireo
Late north 9/20 Aitkin WN, 9/29 Kanabec CM, **10/26** (second latest north) Cook PB, AH, PS. Late south 9/27 Brown JSp, 9/28 Ramsey RH, 10/2 Hennepin SC.

Warblers

Blue-winged Warbler
All reports: 9/7 ("Brewster's" hybrid) Anoka JH, 9/8 Freeborn ABa, 9/9 Houston EMF, 9/11 Fillmore NO.

Golden-winged Warbler
Late north 9/6 Todd RJ and Kanabec CM, 9/9 Aitkin CB. Late south 9/21 Brown JSp and Waseca JSe, 9/24 Winona CS.

Tennessee Warbler
Early south 8/18 Hennepin DBo, 8/21 Hennepin SC, 8/23 Houston EMF. Late north 10/6 Kittson PS, 10/12 St. Louis DJo, SCM. Late south 10/6 Houston EMF, 10/12 Hennepin (3) SC, 10/15 Ramsey KB.

Orange-crowned Warbler
Early north 8/24 Roseau PS, 9/7 St. Louis CM, 9/14 Clay CN. Early south 8/30 Houston FL, 8/31 Chisago RH, 9/1 Houston EMF. Late north 10/5 Carlton LW, 10/6 Kittson PS, **10/24** St. Louis MB. Late south 10/20 Fillmore NO and Dakota TT, 10/23 Hennepin SC.

Nashville Warbler
Early south 8/2 Houston EMF, 8/8 Brown JSp, 8/11 Hennepin SC. Late north 10/6 Carlton LW, 10/11 Otter Tail SDM, 10/19 Cook BL. Late south 10/12 Waseca JSe, 10/12 Hennepin SC, 10/14 Lincoln RgS.

Northern Parula
Early south 9/4 Hennepin (4) SC, 9/6 Hennepin DBo, 9/8 Dakota TT. Late north 9/4 Aitkin CB, 9/7 St. Louis CM, 9/22 St. Louis AE. Late south 9/25 Goodhue KB, 9/27 Winona CS, 10/5 Hennepin SC.

Yellow Warbler
Late north 9/7 St. Louis AE and Clay MRN, 9/21 Clay CF, 9/25 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/11 Hennepin SC, 9/15 Scott KHe/JoW, 9/25 Goodhue KB.

Chestnut-sided Warbler
Early south 8/16 Hennepin SC, 8/22 Hennepin DBo, 8/23 Nicollet MF. Late north 9/21 Aitkin WN, 9/25 St. Louis AE, **10/5** (second latest north) Carlton LW. Late south 9/25 Hennepin TT and Houston EMF, 10/5 Big Stone SKS.

Magnolia Warbler
Early south 8/16 Hennepin SC, 8/23 Nicollet MF and Winona CS. Late north 9/23 Carlton LW, 9/24 St. Louis AE, 10/3 St. Louis PBu. Late south 10/5 Hennepin SC, 10/8 Fillmore NO, 10/9 Winona CS.

Cape May Warbler
Early south 8/26 Winona CS, 9/5 Hennepin SC, 9/6 Mower (2) RRK. Late north 9/15 Marshall (6) PS, 9/16–17 Aitkin CB, 9/

28 St. Louis LW. Late south 9/24 Winona CS, 9/28 Watonwan DBr, 10/5 Big Stone SKS.

Black-throated Blue Warbler
Early south 8/31 Brown JSp, 9/6 Winona CS, 9/15 Anoka KB. Late north 9/6 Todd RJ, 9/7 Carlton LW, 9/23 St. Louis *fide* KE. Late south 9/24 Hennepin SC, KB, 10/5 Hennepin SC.

Yellow-rumped Warbler
Early south 9/2 Lac Qui Parle FE, 9/14 Rice TBo and Hennepin SC. Late north 10/27 Cook WM, 11/2 Carlton LW, 11/9 Cook *fide* KE. Late south 10/30 Fillmore NO, 11/1 Hennepin SC, 11/3 Big Stone LE.

Black-throated Green Warbler
Early south 8/23 Winona CS, 8/24 Hennepin SC and Anoka DBo. Late north 9/14 Itasca ABo, 9/21 Carlton LW, 9/28 St. Louis AE. Late south 9/25 Hennepin SC and Goodhue KB, 9/27 Fillmore NO.

Blackburnian Warbler
Early south 8/17 Stevens WM, 8/21 Hennepin SC, 8/22 Hennepin DBo. Late north 9/13 Kanabec CM, 9/15 Carlton LW, 9/28 St. Louis AE. Late south 9/22 Anoka KB, 9/23 Fillmore NO, 9/25 Houston EMF.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER
Only report 8/27 Kandiyohi (male still at Sibley S. P.) TBr.

Pine Warbler
Early south 8/25 Houston EMF, 8/31 Chisago RH, 9/2 Houston EMF. Unusual report 9/7 Bonanza Grove, **Big Stone Co.** (1) LE. Late north 9/25 Aitkin WN, 9/28 **Clay** CN, BK, DW, GN, 10/24 St. Louis MB. Late south 9/15 Anoka KB, 9/21 and 9/25 Washington DS.

Palm Warbler
Early south 8/25 Murray ND, 9/4 Goodhue MF, 9/7 Hennepin SC. Late north 10/12 St. Louis SCM, 10/13 Carlton LW, 10/24 St. Louis TW. Late south 10/18 Hennepin TT, 10/25 Sherburne DBS, **11/9** Hennepin DZ.

Bay-breasted Warbler
Early south 8/21 Hennepin SC, 8/23 Winona CS, 8/25 Hennepin (2) TT. Late north 9/15 St. Louis TW, 9/21 Carlton LW, 9/28 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/29 Anoka KB, 9/30 Ramsey TT, 10/5 Hennepin SC.

Blackpoll Warbler
Early north **8/15** Itasca DBo, 9/2 Wadena PBi, 9/7 Roseau PS. Early south **8/10** Ramsey RH, 8/26 Brown JSp, 9/8 Washington WL. Late north 9/14 St. Louis RJ, 9/28 Aitkin WN, 10/4 St. Louis AE. Late south 9/30 Ramsey TT, 10/2 Rice JLa, 10/4 Hennepin RH.

Cerulean Warbler
Only report **9/4** (latest date on record) Goodhue MF (details requested).

Black-and-white Warbler
Late north 9/15 Aitkin CB and Carlton LW, **10/24** (second latest north) St. Louis MB. Late south 9/27 Olmsted CH, 9/29 Anoka KB and Hennepin SC.

American Redstart
Late north 9/28 Aitkin WN, 9/29 Kanabec CM, 10/6 Kittson PS and St. Louis KB. Late south 9/30 Ramsey TT, 10/8 Brown JSp, 10/9 Hennepin SC.

Prothonotary Warbler
All reports 8/1 Nicollet JSp, 9/2 Winona CS.

Ovenbird
Late north 9/24 Kanabec CM, 9/25 St. Louis AE, 10/8 Beltrami DJo. Late south 10/3 Hennepin TT, 10/5 Hennepin SC, 10/21 Ramsey AH.

Northern Waterthrush
Late north 9/14 St. Louis RJ, 9/30 St. Louis AE. Late south 9/21 Ramsey TT, 9/25 Goodhue KB, 10/14 Hennepin SC.

Louisiana Waterthrush
All reports: 8/3 Fillmore CS, 9/3 Winona CS, **10/6 Kittson** (second county record and latest date ever in Minnesota) PS (***The Loon*** 68:247).

Kentucky Warbler
No reports.

Connecticut Warbler
Early south 8/24 Wright RJ, 8/27 Hennepin PBu and Lac Qui Parle FE. Peak north 8/24 Roseau (8 singing) PS. No late north dates. Late south 9/12 Anoka KB, 9/21 Lac Qui Parle FE, 9/29 McLeod RbS.

Mourning Warbler
Early south 8/16 Rice TBo, 8/18 Hennepin SC, 8/22 Brown JSp and Murray ND. Late north 9/4 Aitkin CB, St. Louis AE (only dated north reports). Late south 9/10 Lac Qui Parle FE, 9/25 Hennepin KB, SC, **10/15** (third latest south date) McLeod RbS.

Common Yellowthroat
Late north 10/9 Clay MRN, **11/2** (second latest north date) Lake mob. Late south 9/28 Ramsey RH and Washington WL, 10/13 Hennepin SC.

Hooded Warbler
No reports.

Wilson's Warbler
Early north 8/29 St. Louis TW, 9/2 Carlton LW. Early south **8/1** (ties earliest south date) Winona CS, 8/18 Dakota TT. Late north 9/6 Todd RJ, 9/7 Kanabec CM. Late south 9/23 Brown JSp, 9/25 Hennepin SC.

Canada Warbler
Early south 8/21 Carver DJe, Fillmore NO and Hennepin SC. Late north 9/22 Carlton LW, **9/30** (latest north date) St. Louis AE. Late south 9/21 Brown JSp, 9/22 Big Stone LE and Hennepin SC, TT, 9/23 Anoka KB.

Yellow-breasted Chat
Only report 9/8 Breckenridge, **Wilkin Co.** KB.

Tanagers to Snow Bunting

Summer Tanager
No reports.

Scarlet Tanager
Late north 9/15 Carlton LW and Kanabec CM, 9/25 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/26 Anoka KB and Brown JSp, 10/2 Hennepin SC.

Northern Cardinal
Reported from 4 north and 27 south counties.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Late north 9/11 Kanabec CM, 9/14 Itasca ABo, 10/9 St. Louis SS. Late south 10/1 Hennepin KB, SC, 10/12 Winona CS, 10/15 Brown JSp.

Blue Grosbeak
All reports: 8/3 **Brown** CMa, JSp, 8/24 Rock ND, 9/19 Murray (female with young) ND.

Indigo Bunting
Late north 8/5 Kanabec CM, 8/9 Wadena ABo, 8/17 Aitkin WN. Late south 10/7 Dakota TT, 10/11 Winona CS, 10/14 Murray RgS.

Dickcissel
No north reports. Late south 8/16 Dakota DBS and Jackson JCBC, 8/20 Lincoln RgS, JA, **8/31** Murray RgS.

Eastern Towhee
No north reports. Late south 10/12 Fillmore NO, 10/25 Winona CS, 11/30 Houston EMF. Latest dates generally were from the southern tier of counties, possibly of individuals attempting to overwinter.

SPOTTED TOWHEE
Only report 9/29–10/2 **Murray** ND.

American Tree Sparrow
Early north 10/11 Beltrami DS, 10/12 Wilkin DBS, 10/13 Roseau PS. Early south 9/26 Freeborn ABa, 10/5 Rock ND, 10/15 Anoka KB. Peak migration through the northern half of the state during the week of 10/16–22.

Chipping Sparrow
Late north 11/1 Mille Lacs CS, 11/13 Todd

JSK, **11/24** Hubbard HJF. Late south 10/31 Lincoln RgS, JA, 11/2 Hennepin TT, **11/22** Anoka JBe, **11/23** Rice JLa.

Clay-colored Sparrow
Late north 9/15 Itasca DJo, 9/22 Kanabec CM, 9/28 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/29 Hennepin TT, 10/4 Murray RgS, **10/23** (ties second latest south date) Big Stone LE.

Field Sparrow
All north reports: 10/16 Wilkin Co. TT, **11/6** (latest north date) and Two Harbors, **Lake Co.** MH. Late south 10/23 Brown JSp and Hennepin SC, 10/27 Murray RgS.

Vesper Sparrow
Peak 9/22 Big Stone (50) LE. Late north 10/12 Wilkin DBS, 10/21 St. Louis JG, 11/2 Clay CF. Late south 10/18 Hennepin TT, 10/20 Dakota PBu, 10/27 Cottonwood ED, EEG.

Lark Sparrow
Only report 8/3 Nicollet MF.

Lark Bunting
No reports.

Savannah Sparrow
Late north 10/19 St. Louis TW, 10/26 Todd JSK, 10/27 Cook WM. Late south 11/23 McLeod RbS, 11/25 Winona CS.

Grasshopper Sparrow
All north reports: 9/10 Todd JSK, 10/2 Clay SKS. Late south 8/6 Brown CMa, 8/7 Freeborn ABa, 8/19 Jackson JCBC.

Henslow's Sparrow
Only report 8/17 Miller Prairie West, **Traverse Co.** (3) KE *et al.*

LeConte's Sparrow
Late north 9/15 Marshall PS, 10/2 Wilkin SKS, 10/4 Pennington KB. Late south 9/28 Hennepin TT, 10/12 Anoka KB, 10/14 Murray RgS. Notable numbers include 40 individuals in a single field, 9/7 Big Stone LE.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
All reports: 8/3 Kittson PS, **10/8** Wargo Nature Center, Anoka Co. KB, **10/12** (second latest north date) Duluth, St. Louis Co. CK *et al.*

Fox Sparrow
Early north 9/29 Itasca ABo and St. Louis TW, 10/3 Aitkin CB. Early south 9/20 Jackson JCBC, 9/22 Anoka KB, 9/26 Murray RgS. Late north 11/30 Hubbard RSm. Late south 11/30 Houston EMF.

Partial albino Fox Sparrow, 23 October 1996, Le Center, Le Sueur County. Photo by Katherine Meyer.

Song Sparrow
Late north 11/26 Lake DBe, 11/30 Aitkin WN. Observed in 29 south counties.

Lincoln's Sparrow
Early south 9/15 Anoka KB and Hennepin SC, 9/22 Houston EMF, Mower RRK and Winona CS. Peak migration 9/29 in the Twin Cities area (PBu). Late north 10/1 Itasca ABo, 10/3 St. Louis PBu, 10/7 Aitkin CB. Late south 10/20 Hennepin SC, 10/31 Washington WL, 11/2 Dakota TT.

Swamp Sparrow
Late north 10/15 Carlton LW, 10/17 St. Louis TW, 10/20 Cass KB. Late south 11/

28 Hennepin SC. Observed throughout the period in 21 southern counties.

White-throated Sparrow
Early south 8/27 Murray RgS, 9/11 Hennepin SC and Ramsey KB. Peak 9/19 Beltrami DJo and Cass MRN. Late north 11/6 Hubbard HJF, 11/7 St. Louis NJ, 11/16 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/30 Nicollet LF.

White-crowned Sparrow
Early north 9/12 St. Louis TW, 9/17 Aitkin CB. Early south 9/13 Winona CS, 9/21 Dakota TT. Peak numbers 9/19 in Beltrami DJo and Cass MRN. Late north 10/20 St. Louis NJ, TW, 10/26 Lake WM. Late south 10/23 Brown JSp, 11/6 Hennepin ABo.

Harris' Sparrow
Early north 9/18 St. Louis FN, 9/29 Aitkin CB, WN. Early south 9/25 Murray RgS, 9/30 Dakota TT and Rock ND. Late north 11/30 Aitkin CB. Late south 11/30 Brown JSp. Observers in the west-central (FE) and northeastern (KE) regions noted low numbers this season.

Dark-eyed Junco
Reported from 16 north counties throughout the period. Early south 9/21 Hennepin SC, 9/25 Lac Qui Parle FE and Murray RgS. Large numbers of this species were moving through Becker county 10/10–18 (BBe, BK). "Oregon" race individuals were reported 11/1 Hennepin OJ and 11/24 Anoka JBe.

Lapland Longspur
Early north 9/14 St. Louis TEB, RJ, TW, 10/3 Lake PBu. Early south 9/29 Hennepin TT, 10/4 Dakota DBS, 10/5 Anoka KB. Late north 11/10 Clay MRN, 11/20 St. Louis LW.

Smith's Longspur
After no reports last fall, there were surprisingly many this year. One was found 9/29 Kittson (Sec. 9, Norway Twp.) PS. Seven other reports came from Wilkin between 10/2 and 10/27. The largest flocks reported were 40–60 on 10/16 (SDM) and 25 on 10/20 (CF).

Chestnut-collared Longspur
Only report 8/5 Clay TBr.

Snow Bunting
Early north 10/3 Pennington KB, 10/11 Aitkin DN, 10/16 Clay TT and Otter Tail SDM. Early south 10/31 Hennepin PBu, 11/2 Dakota TT.

Blackbirds

Bobolink
Late north 9/7 Roseau (30) KB, 9/8 Lake of the Woods PS, **11/11** near Illgen City, Lake Co. KE, PS (latest date ever in state). Late south 9/26 Hennepin SC, 10/5 Houston CS, 10/11 Carver (13) MB.

Bobolink, 11 November 1996, Lake County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

Red-winged Blackbird
Late north 11/10 Clay MRN, 11/26 Aitkin WN. Reported from 33 south counties.

Eastern Meadowlark
Late north 9/14 Kanabec BA, 10/5 Aitkin WN. Reported from ten south counties.

Western Meadowlark
Late north 10/12 Wilkin DBS, 10/22 Clay MRN, 10/28 Todd JSK. Reported from 16 south counties.

Yellow-headed Blackbird
Late north 9/21 Aitkin WN, 10/4 Todd KB, 10/8 St. Louis DBe. Late south 10/12 Anoka KB, 11/2 Murray (15) ND. Largest flocks were noted between the end of August and mid-September.

Rusty Blackbird
Early north **8/26** (second earliest north date) Aitkin (3) CB, 9/29 Kittson PS, 9/30 Itasca ABo and Marshall PS. Early south **8/20** (ties earliest date in the state) Carver RH, **8/31** Sibley (10) KHe, JoW, 10/4 Dakota DBS, 10/5 Anoka JH. Late north 11/30 Aitkin CB. Late south 11/30 Lac Qui Parle FE.

Brewer's Blackbird
Late north 10/9 Clay MRN, 10/21 Polk KB, 10/29 Todd JSK. Late south 10/20 Freeborn ABa, 10/21 Winona CS, 11/7 Lincoln RgS, JA.

Common Grackle
Late north 11/9 Aitkin WN, 11/10 Beltrami SCM, 11/22 Becker BK. Observed in 34 south counties.

Brown-headed Cowbird
Late north 9/1 Wadena PBi, 9/7 Aitkin WN, 9/30 Morrison MJ/DT. Late south 11/23 Hennepin SC, 11/26 Lyon RgS. All but five reports were before 10/1.

Orchard Oriole
Only five south reports, including late dates 8/17 Stevens WM, 8/23 Dakota DBS, 8/30 Mower RRK.

Baltimore Oriole
Late north 9/3 St. Louis RJ, 9/7 Aitkin WN, 9/8 Kanabec BA. Late south 9/11 Washington WL, 9/15 Scott KHe, JoW. There were many (7) reports of this species on 9/8, including one of 40 birds in Rice (JLa).

Finches to Weaver Finches

Pine Grosbeak
Early north 11/1 St. Louis SS, 11/2 Beltrami SCM, 11/9 Pine CM. Noteworthy was one 11/23 Clay DWi; overall, fewer reports than normal in the state.

Purple Finch
Early south **8/2** (second earliest south date) Rice TBo, 9/8 Hennepin SC. Reported from 17 north and 15 south counties.

House Finch
Reported from 14 north and 33 south counties.

Red Crossbill
There were 20 different reports of this species from 11 north counties, with most reports in August and September, then again at the end of November. Only two south reports: 8/20 Jackson JCBC, 11/2 Lincoln RgS, JA.

White-winged Crossbill
Reported from 12 north counties throughout the period, though most reports were from the first half of the season. Only south report 9/11 Hennepin *fide* AH.

Common Redpoll
Very scarce. Only reports 10/18 Kittson KB and St. Louis FN, 11/3 Hennepin SC, 11/8 St. Louis TW, 11/20 Hennepin DBo, 11/27 Hubbard HJF.

Hoary Redpoll
No reports.

Pine Siskin
Reported from 18 north and 11 south counties. Though numbers were down throughout the state, FN counted 1000 on 10/9 at HRNR, St. Louis Co.

American Goldfinch
Reported from 20 north and 30 south counties.

Evening Grosbeak
Reported from 11 north counties. Largest flock was 100 on 11/16 in Beltrami SCM.

House Sparrow
Reported from 13 north and 34 south counties.

Observers

BA	Betty Ammerman
DA	Diane M. Anderson
JA	Jared P. Anez
BBa	Bruce Baer
KB	Karl Bardon
ABa	Al Batt
JBe	Joe Beck
TEB	Tom & Elizabeth Bell
BBe	Betsy A. Beneke
DBe	David R. Benson
PBi	Paul J. Binek
TBo	Tom F. Boevers
BBo	Brad Bolduan
ABo	Al Bolduc
DBo	Don A. Bolduc
DaB	Dave Bosanko
TBr	Terry P. Brashear
RB	Richard G. Brasket
WB	William L. Brown
DBr	Diane Brudelie
JJB	Jerry & Jared Bucksa
PBu	Paul Budde
CB	Cindy Butler
MB	Mike Butterfield
DC	Dave Cahlander
SC	Steve Carlson
SCh	Sharen Chappell
DaC	David Cohen
CDC	Carol & Don Crust
JDa	Jeff Dains
JD	Jeff B. Dankert
TD	Tim Dawson
SD	Steve Deger
ND	Nelvina DeKam
SDi	Steven Dinsmore
ED	Ed Duerksen
SDu	Sue Durrant
KE	Kim R. Eckert
FE	Fred A. Eckhardt
DEd	Dudley L. Edmondson
BE	Bob Ekblad
LE	Lane Ellwanger
RE	Ron A. Erpelding
DEv	David Evans
ME	Molly Evans
AE	Audrey L. Evers
BF	Bruce A. Fall
THF	Tom & Helen Ferry
LF	Lawrence W. Filter
HJF	Herbert & Jeanette Fisher
TF	Troy C. Flicek
EMF	Eugene L. & Marilynn Ford
CF	Cole Foster
RJF	Randy & Jean Frederickson
MF	Merrill J. Frydendall
JF	J. S. Futcher
EEG	Edna & Ellis Gerber
RG	Ray A. Glassel
JG	Janet Green
CG	Charlie Greenman
KG	Karol Gresser
JHa	Jay E. Hamernick
CH	Clifford Hansen
KH	Katie V. Haws
KHe	Kathy Heidel
MH	Mike Hendrickson
AnH	Ann Hertzel
AH	Anthony Hertzel
PH	Paul Hertzel
JHe	Joel Hessen
KMH	Ken & Molly Hoffman
RH	Robert E. Holtz
HH	Harlan Hostager
JH	James L. Howitz
KHu	Kathy Huffman
JCBC	Jackson County Bird Club
NJ	Nancy A. Jackson
RJ	Robert B. Janssen
PJ	Paul Jantscher
DJe	Douglas Jenness
RJe	Robert Jessen
DJo	Douglas P. Johnson
MJ/DT	Murdoch Johnson & Dianne Tuff
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson
PJo	Paul Johnson
MiK	Miki Keenan
TK	Tom Keenan
JK	Joe Kelly
BK	Byron R. Kinkade
SKi	Steve Kittelson
BKl	Bob Kloubec
RRK	Ron & Rose Kneeskern
RK	Rick Kostecke
JSK	John & Susan Kroll
CK	Chuck A. Krulas
SK	Scott Krych
DK	Dennis R. Kuecherer
PKL	Pat & Ken Lafond
JLa	Jacob Langeslag
CL	Carla Larson
FL	Fred Lesher
BL	Bill Litkey
JL	Jon Little
WL	William H. Longley
OSL	Orvis & Sandy Lunke
CMa	Craig R. Mandel

WM	William Marengo
DBM	Dennis & Barbara Martin
SLM	Suzanne & Lyle Mathews
CMy	Chuck Mayer
DMc	Douglas McKenzie
SM	Spencer Meeks
SMh	Scott A. Mehus
CM	Craig Menze
SMr	Sam Merrill
AM	A. Steven Midthune
SDM	Steve & Diane Millard
DM	Darryl S. Moen
JMy	John Moriarty
JM	John Morrison
SCM	Steve & Carol Mortensen
BMu	Bonnie Mulligan
DN	David F. Neitzel
BN	Bill Nelson
WN	Warren Nelson
JN	Jeff R. Newman
FN	Frank Nicoletti
GN	Gary E. Nielsen
CN	Connie M. Norheim
MRN	Michael R. North
MO	Mark Ochs
RO	Robert O'Connor
PO	Pat Odegaard
DO	Dan Orr
CO	Connie L. Osbeck
GO	Gary Otnes
NO	Nancy Overcott
JP	Johanna Pals
EP	Ethan Perry
PP	Pam Perry
DMP	Daphne & Meyers Peterson
PeP	Peter C. Peterson
JPk	Janine Polk
JPo	Jim Pomplun
WP	Walter Popp
JRa	Jim Rataczak
KR	Kim W. Risen
KRv	Kathryn Rivers
BR	Bill Rowe
MR/AP	Merrie Ann Rudelt & Amanda Phillips
OR	Orwin A. Rustad
DiS	Dick Sandve
DSa	Deb Savageau
ESH	Eileen Schantz-Hansen
JSc	John Schladweiler
SS	Steven Schon
RRS	Rick & Robyn Schroeder
RbS	Robert Schroeder
RgS	Roger Schroeder
CS	Carol A. Schumacher
BSe	Blaine Seeliger
JS/MN	Jean Segerstrom & Mark Newstrom
JSe	Julian P. Sellers
GS	Gary Simonson
BSi	Beth Siverhus
US	Ulf Skyllberg
MSl	Mike Slettes
RSm	Rolf C. Smeby
DBS	Drew & Becky Smith
TS/JB	Thom Soule & Janet Boe
DS	Dave P. Sovereign
JSp	Jack Sprenger
PSp	Paul Springer
CSp	Carol A. Spurbeck
MSt	Mark Stensaas
JSt	Jeff Stephenson
SKS	Shelley & Keith Steva
BSt	Bill Stjern
RSt	Rosa Stolzenburg
FKS	Forest & Kirsten Strnad
SSt	Steve Stucker
PS	Peder Svingen
WS	Wally Swanson
BT	Bill Tefft
DT	David W. Thurston
HT	Howard C. Towle
TT	Tom Tustison
DV	Dan Versaw
MV	Mary Ellen Vetter
SWa	Stuart Wagenius
JW	Jesse T. Wallace
DW	Don Wanschura
JoW	Jo Ward
JMW	John & Marlene Weber
LW	Larry A. Weber
JWe	Jason Weckstein
SWe	Steve Weston
KKW	Kristine & Kyle Wicklund
TW	Terry P. Wiens
DWi	Dennis D. Wiesenborn
JJW	Jim & Jude Williams
SW/MS	Steve Wilson & Mary Shedd
GW	Gerald E. Winkelman
SWi	Sylvia Winkelman
NW	Ned Winters
MW	Mary Wyatt
BY	Ben Yokel
JZ	James E. Zimmerman
DZ	Dave C. Zumeta
l.y.	last year
mob	many observers
HRNR	Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve
MCBS	Minnesota County Biological Survey
MDNR	Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
NRRI	Natural Resources Research Institute
SPAS	St. Paul Audubon Society

A Pygmy Nuthatch Sighting

Bob O'Connor

On Tuesday, 22 October 1996, in Fargo, N.D., birder Mary Alice Bergan informed other local birders that a Pygmy Nuthatch had spent the last few days at the feeder of Fred and Virginia Scheel in south Fargo along the banks of the Red River. Fred, a non-birder but an excellent photographer, had seen the bird first and had only realized, after consulting his wife's field guide, that the tiny bird was well out of its normal range. He then photographed it and informed Virginia of what he had seen, after which she confirmed the identification and called Mary Alice.

I dropped by to see the nuthatch on Wednesday morning and had views of the bird from as close as twenty feet as it came to a feeder stocked with sunflower seeds. Through 10X42 Leica binoculars in good light, I saw a nuthatch as small as, if not smaller than, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, with a gray cap just barely tinged with brown. The cap darkened somewhat at the bird's white cheek to produce a discernible but not particularly well defined blackish line from the bill through the eye to the stout neck. The back of the neck was somewhat lighter than the grayish cap and much lighter than the comparatively dark gray back, wings, and tail, thereby producing a very noticeable nape patch.

The underparts were a much dirtier white than the underparts of a White-breasted Nuthatch but lighter than the buff of the female Red-breasted Nuthatch. Nor did this bird have any hint of that species' white eyebrow line. Finally, the cap color distinguished this bird from the similar Brown-headed Nuthatch, as did the bird's call, which I heard several times in the next few days. The bird responded to a tape with a perfect imitation of the National Geographic recording of the Pygmy Nuthatch call and clearly was not making sounds corresponding to the recorded call of the Brown-headed Nuthatch.

After several of us had seen the bird on the North Dakota side of the river, where it was a second state record, we began speculating about whether the bird could be seen in Clay County, where it would establish a first record for Minnesota. This seemed quite possible since Moorhead's River Oaks Park lies directly across the Red River from the Scheel's backyard. I made an unsuccessful attempt at a Minnesota sighting during the late afternoon of 25 October but succeeded with the assistance of a tape recorder at about 4:00 P.M. on the 26th. Despite my recorder's low volume, I heard what I thought was a reply after I had played the Pygmy Nuthatch call at well spaced intervals over a period of about twenty minutes. A group of Black-capped Chickadees began mobbing me at about that moment, and suddenly the nuthatch joined them. The bird stared down at me from about twenty-five feet away for thirty seconds or so.

It was perched in typical nuthatch fashion in a tree on the Moorhead bank of the river and allowed me to see all the field marks I had seen on the Fargo side, except the light rump patch which was hidden because of the bird's position. The bird then flew to the topmost branch of a tree in the Scheel's backyard and, after a few seconds, disappeared. The next day, Cole Foster, Peder Svingen, and Tony Hertzel confirmed the Minnesota sighting, and several additional birders saw it in River Oaks Park on Monday, the 28th.

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Why the Pygmy Nuthatch Does Not Belong on the Minnesota State List

Harrison B. Tordoff and Bruce A. Fall

The Pygmy Nuthatch was discovered, identified and photographed at a feeder near the Red River in south Fargo, North Dakota, in October 1996, and was seen there by a number of observers over several days. Later (on 26, 27 and 28 October), it was lured across the river to the Minnesota side several times by different birders who played a tape of Pygmy Nuthatch vocalizations, apparently expressly for the purpose of adding the species to the observers' Minnesota lists. We are not criticizing these birders; they had every right to lure the nuthatch to Minnesota for their own listing purposes. Our point, however, is that the deliberate luring constitutes intentional data manipulation and therefore prohibits addition of the species to a scientifically based Minnesota list of naturally occurring birds. Others argue that there is nothing wrong with using taped calls in birding, birds are constantly responding to human-altered landscapes, the nuthatch was not physically restrained or transported, it did fly to Minnesota under its own power, and why are we being so picky anyway?

Pygmy Nuthatch, 27 October 1996, Clay County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

In our view, the primary justification of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee (MORC) and similar committees in other states is to evaluate the observations of birders and others so as to improve our understanding of the distribution of birds in time and space. MORC exists for sorting out scientifically useful records by evaluating them for accuracy and for documentation convincing enough to be preserved as part of the permanent scientific record of bird distribution and migration. MORC's purview includes only Minnesota and it has the self designated responsibility for maintaining the "official" state list.

Are state lists important? Yes. Although the original establishment of state boundaries was arbitrary, today they are real, permanent, universally accepted, and are important for organizing the mass of information on birds in the United States. State lists are the basis for much of what we know about bird distribution. It follows, then, that criteria for adding a species to a state list should be impeccable. Earlier, only specimen records were acceptable. Today, when scientific collecting is very restricted and information accumulated by birders is mushrooming, it would be foolish not to take advantage of the wealth of new information, but only if rigorous standards are applied so that a permanent scientific record emerges that can be independently evaluated any time in the future.

With the goal of accepting only wholly convincing first state records, MORC has

always required a unanimous favorable vote. Any member of MORC could veto any record and prevent its addition to the Minnesota list, based on identification concerns. What we evaluate is natural occurrences of wild birds, not merely their correct identification; this separate vote on natural occurrence requires only a majority. In response to this nuthatch situation, at the December 1996 MORC meeting an amendment (in italics) to the criteria for the state list was proposed: "The subscript 'o' indicates species for which there is reasonable doubt as to the origin or wildness of the bird, *or reasonable doubt as to its natural occurrence or arrival in the state.*" After this amendment was passed, the committee voted first on the nuthatch identification (unanimous approval), and then on the separate issue of wildness/origin/natural occurrence. The MORC vote was 7–3 in favor of accepting the nuthatch record with the amended 'o' qualification — i.e., seven voted for acceptance with this qualification, three voted against acceptance.

The Pygmy Nuthatch record may be unique among all species of birds on the Minnesota state list in that only for this species do we know exactly the circumstances of the arrival in the state of the first known individual. We do not have the convenience here of evading the question of origin by invoking "reasonable doubt." While we have no idea how it got to North Dakota, there is no doubt about how it got to Minnesota. In our opinion, it is the intentional manipulation of this bird's geographic location for the express purpose of adding it to the state list that excludes it from acceptance as a "naturally occurring" species in this state.

For most records, unless there is reason to suspect otherwise, natural occurrence is assumed and a single vote is taken by MORC on identification. Some typical problems regarding natural occurrence are, for example, how to treat out-of-range waterfowl, which are regularly kept in captivity and may be escapes? What about escaped cage birds, deliberate introductions, or birds possibly transported artificially, such as trapped in boxcars or barges? MORC's response has been to try to determine the probability that any given occurrence might have been human assisted. If clearly an escape, the record is rejected. If non-natural origin is less obvious or likely but still a possibility, the species may be admitted to the state list, but with the special 'o' designation.

Certainly the nuthatch record is quite different from the other three species with 'o' designations (two species of whistling-ducks and Crested Caracara). For those, we do not know how the individuals came into the state, but there was some concern that humans may have been directly involved (that is, that the birds escaped from captivity). This concern was not based on any direct evidence, but rather on the general prevalence of the species in captivity (whistling-ducks), or the relative absence of other extralimital records (caracara). If there had been direct evidence, these records would have been excluded.

Defenders of inclusion of the Pygmy Nuthatch on the Minnesota list have made these arguments:

— The use of taped calls in the case of vagrants does not violate the American Birding Association code of ethics, and thus there is no ethical reason why this bird can not be counted. However, we fail to see any necessary relationship between the ethical acceptability of a record for personal lists and the addition of that record to a scientifically based state or regional list. The criteria for determining natural occurrence in a geographic region do not depend upon whether or not the circumstances are in accordance with official or unofficial birding codes of ethics. A first state record discovered in a mist net during a banding operation, photographed by someone who had illegally entered posted private property, or shot illegally is certainly qualified for the state list, but is uncountable by ABA rules on *personal* lists. Conversely, we feel there are situations, such as this one under discussion,

where birding rules may not prohibit counting, but scientific rules do. The scientific rule violated here is that data (in this case, the location of an individual) must not be intentionally manipulated in order to achieve some desired result.

— Another argument is that this form of human intervention is not fundamentally different from other forms of human activity affecting birds, such as bird feeders, human-altered landscapes, pesticides, and the like. If we exclude the nuthatch from the state list on grounds of human interference, should we not exclude all records for which some human influence can be shown? The answer is clearly no. There is an important difference between the intentional manipulation of a specific individual bird for the sole purpose of adding it to some list and the inescapable impact of human activities on all vagrants. In the latter case, no specific individuals are targeted for deliberate manipulation, and we must live in the world as it is.

While the state line that was crossed has little biological significance, it is highly significant to MORC, which is constrained by political boundaries and does not consider records outside these boundaries, no matter how close. Suppose the nuthatch had been lured 100 or 500 meters instead of 50? Does the distance matter? If it does, how can one justify allowing a little fudging while not allowing obvious cheating? If distance does not matter, what prevents making all-out efforts to lure into the state whatever rarities appear nearby? Should we accept a bird deliberately herded or driven by car, foot, or boat across a state line, or one netted, transported across the line, and released? If luring the nuthatch to Minnesota was an acceptable way to increase the state list, why not do it really efficiently with powerful tape players, devices to upset magnetic orientation of migrants, and the like? We think that few birders would approve of such activities; the question is where on this slippery slope to draw the line. We feel the answer is clear. It is scientifically valuable for observers to discover, document, and report species that occur within the state; it is not scientifically acceptable to enhance the state list by luring specific individuals across the state boundary.

We asked 14 professional ornithologists (six queried by e-mail, eight in person) their opinion of the eligibility of this Pygmy Nuthatch for the Minnesota state list. Ten thought it ineligible on grounds of clear human interference, two thought it acceptable because not physically restrained and transported into the state, one invoked the "all birds are influenced by human activities so anything goes" argument, and one did not respond. We were interested to see that some of the birding community, as represented by all but three of us on MORC and by the various state committees contacted by the MORC chairman (***The Loon*** 69:28–31) view the nuthatch situation differently, approving adding the Pygmy Nuthatch to the state list. Neither of these informal polls can be described as scientific, but they are nevertheless informative. We think that the results of these informal surveys of records committee members and scientific ornithologists show that the definition of natural occurrence is viewed differently, on average, by these two groups. Clearly most ornithologists agree that any deliberate manipulation of a bird's location in order to add it to a state list is scientifically unacceptable. The reason for the continuing fuss about the Pygmy Nuthatch is that there is a fundamental issue involved here that needs to be faced and resolved. We urge members of MORC and similar committees in other states to maintain standards that ensure the highest possible level of scientific integrity in evaluating bird records. To do less reduces the scientific credibility of their important work.

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Why the Pygmy Nuthatch Should be Included on the Minnesota State List

Robert B. Janssen

As I write this article for ***The Loon***, my first thoughts are why write it at all, but Tony Hertzel has asked me to, so I will put my opinions on paper. My second thought is why the Pygmy Nuthatch record has raised so many emotions, caused so much divisiveness, and precipitated so many moralistic judgments. After reading the comments from other state records committees, ornithologists, and interested birders from within and outside of Minnesota, the vast majority feel it is a "tempest in a teapot" and not worth all the fuss. The consensus, it seems to me, has been "of course count the bird — it occurred in Minnesota — and then be done with it".

In my opinion the record can be dealt with easily and with common sense to satisfy both sides of the controversy. Emotion has clouded this record, which need not have been the case because the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee (MORC) had the answer from the beginning.

It seems to me that MORC had two simple functions concerning this record. These were 1) make sure the bird was identified properly and 2) make a non-judgmental statement as to how the bird occurred in the state. There are and were procedures in effect within MORC to handle this type of record. Kim Eckert, the Chairman of MORC, did an excellent job of explaining these procedures before a vote was taken. The first vote approved unanimously the identification. A second vote concerning the origin of the bird added a subscript "o" to the record. This allowed the conditions of the observation to be included (see ***The Loon*** 69:28–31). What could be more simple? The procedure was fair and it allowed the scientific researcher or amateur birder consulting the list to decide for themselves the validity of the record. Precedent for this type of procedure had already been set in MORC and on Minnesota lists going back to Thomas S. Roberts.

Pygmy Nuthatch, 27 October 1996, Clay County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

It is not unusual for MORC members to disagree with the conditions, identification or circumstances of a particular observation. Not all records are that easy or that perfect. Different perspectives and attitudes as well as interpretations of any record are inevitable. This is why we have a committee instead of a single person deciding these matters.

Here MORC did its job to the letter. The majority ruled and the minority had its say. Both parties had their opinions and they were heard by the Committee.

It was then that the matter ought to have been settled and MORC should have proceeded on to other matters, but a vociferous minority cried foul.

This minority was not satisfied and began making subjective claims that the record was tainted. "Fraudulent", "not scientific", "unethical", "a manipulation", and "dishonest" were some of the adjectives the minority used to make their point. The accusation of dishonesty is particularly disturbing to me. Nothing was done that could be described as being dishonest. The nuthatch was lured into Minnesota so that we could record the bird on our individual state lists — so we could say we saw the bird in Minnesota. Never did anyone deny this. For fifty years I have participated in such listing activities and have never been accused of being dishonest. The bird occurred in the state of its own fee will — lured if you will, by a tape — but this was always openly admitted. There was no dishonesty associated with the record, and certainly no attempt at deception.

The position of the minority is that this is a manipulated record. Of course it was manipulated, but tape recordings are often used in ornithological studies by amateurs and professionals alike. Why pick out this record and condemn it as fraudulent? Because of the observer's perceived intention to add to the state list? Certainly the Nuthatch knew nothing of this. It crossed the border of its own free will, regardless of the observer. MORC should be concerned with the question of whether or not a wild and free flying bird occurred in the state, not with the intent of the observer. By adding the subscript "o" to the record — which is a "species for which there is a reasonable doubt as to the origin or wildness of the bird or to its natural occurrence or arrival in the state" — we allow the observation to stand and let the researcher decide whether or not to use the record.

The question of whether or not the use of tapes in this situation was unethical has also come up. In my opinion, no ethical rules were violated (see Blake Maybank's article "The ABA Code of Ethics: What It Is, What It Does", *Bird Observer* 25:36–39). And it would be unscientific (and incorrect) to say the bird didn't occur in Minnesota. The simple fact is that it did occur in Minnesota, it was correctly identified, and we are stating unequivocally with the "o" subscript how it occurred. Let's leave the bird on the Minnesota list where it belongs.

Finally, there seems to be the feeling from those who oppose this record that we who are birders have lower standards than they, and that we want a less rigorous scholarship applied to the state list. This is another judgemental statement. It was birders who established the state list and have applied the most rigorous standards for the acceptance or rejection of records, and it is mainly birders who maintain the list.

I feel it necessary to challenge a statement that was made during the MORC meeting when the nuthatch record was being considered. That comment went something to the effect that "what is to prevent birders from putting up huge 'mega-recorders' all along the Minnesota border to attract birds into the state?" This is an insult to those of us who record birds in the state and to the total birding community.

As I write about manipulation my thoughts turn to a larger picture, not of a Pygmy Nuthatch flying across a narrow stream which happens to have an imaginary (human) line drawn through the center of it. What bird that we view hasn't been manipulated by man in some gross way? I could list hundreds, but just use your imagination. Man is the most pervasive living thing in this part of the world and his manipulation is the most obvious entity on the landscape. The purist who is troubled by a bird moving a few yards because of a tape recording has missed the joy and awe of the bird itself. The "o" designation was created to calm the heart of the troubled purist. Let it be so.

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BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Fall Warblers

Kim R. Eckert

You're probably looking at the title of this article and feel that some thing is missing. You may be thinking, "I've heard of confusing fall warblers, but never just fall warblers." After all, that three-word group of birds is an ornithological institution, something birders have been whining about for decades ever since the earlier editions of Peterson came out in print. The words "confusing fall warblers" just naturally roll off the tongue as smoothly as, well, the words "Roger Tory Peterson". To say merely "fall warblers" almost leaves one with a vague empty feeling. Why, it's practically blasphemous — almost as bad as saying just "Roger Peterson!"

Well, Roger Peterson is a friend of mine, a Duluth birder and Certified Public Accountant, his middle initial is "A", and to call him anything more than just plain ol' Rog is overdoing it and leaves him embarrassed. Similarly, now that fall migration is getting underway, it's high time birders learn to relax and get over their Confusing Fall Warblers phobia. If you take another look at these warblers, you'll find they're not all that confusing — most are actually as straightforward and as easy to get along with as my friend Rog. Honest! Sure, many of the ones you see in late summer and fall as they head south are not as colorful as most of the warblers you see during spring or on their breeding grounds, but the identification difficulties of fall warblers have long been overrated.

To begin with, and to keep this all in perspective, keep in mind the following:

1) While many fall warblers are not all that colorful, virtually all of them are at least in fresh plumage, having molted on their breeding grounds before heading south. (About the only exception to this in Minnesota that comes to mind would be all those ratty and ragged juvenile Yellow-rumped Warblers still in molt one sees in Duluth in August and early September.) Therefore, when looking at fall warblers, the birder at least does not have to deal with birds in molt or in worn plumage.

2) A common misconception is that all adult male warblers change into drab plumage before their fall migration. Yes, they do molt, but most adult warblers actually look about the same all year and are just as recognizable in fall as they are in spring. True, adult male Chestnut-sideds, Bay-breasteds and Blackpolls in fall do look entirely different and are much duller than in spring. But that's about it: these are the exceptions, not the rule. Just about all the other adult males look essentially the same as they do in spring — or, if duller like the Magnolia and Yellow-rumped, they still are distinctive enough to be recognized with little difficulty. And there is even one adult male (the Tennessee) that actually *looks* brighter in fall than in spring!

3) Most of the truly "confusing" war-

blers you encounter in fall are immatures, especially immature females. Immature males of most species resemble — and are often almost indistinguishable from — adult females, and since you never hear much about any Confusing Spring Female Warblers Complex, these should not be especially daunting. In sum, just be prepared for encountering three general plumage types this fall: adult males (almost all of which are relatively easy to identify), adult females/immature males (which are no more difficult than females in spring), and immature females (OK, I admit it, some of these are hard).

Not including the rarities and local species, there are perhaps 25 warbler species an active birder could potentially encounter in Minnesota in fall. But among these, I would say there are really only nine difficult identification groups, which are briefly discussed below. (Just nine?. . .so what's all this Confusing Fall Warbler fuss about?!)

Tennessee vs. Orange-crowned vs. Philadelphia Vireo. One of the more common warblers you see in fall may not have any obvious streaking or wing bars or face pattern, but it is colorful: generally bright greenish above and mostly clear yellow below. While the others are fumbling with their field guides, you just confidently say: "It's a Tennessee." Not only will you usually be right, but after a few days you'll find yourself saying, even more confidently, "It's just another Tennessee."

The most confusing thing about a fall Tennessee Warbler for novice warbler watchers is how bright and yellow they are — so much so, that it's one warbler that usually looks brighter in fall than in spring. Once the birder realizes this, and that Tennessees are relatively common, the identification of many of those formerly confusing green-and-yellow things you see is solved.

So far so good, but what about the similar Orange-crowned Warbler and Philadelphia Vireo? As far as the Orange-crowned goes, if your bird has white under tail coverts which contrast with the yellow of the belly and breast, it's a Tennessee (Orange-crowneds are always yellowish under the tail). The only problem is that a few Tennessees have a yellow tinge under the tail: however, they have brighter yellow underparts which contrast more with their greenish upperparts. An Orange-crowned's underparts are duller greenish yellow, usually faintly streaked, and this color contrasts little with its similar upperparts color.

Both adult and immature Philadelphia Vireos, like the Tennessee Warbler, also tend to look more colorful in fall than in spring with brighter and more extensive yellow on the underparts. With practice, however, you will be able to notice this vireo's thicker bill with its hooked tip and its higher, rounder crown profile. These combine to give the Philadelphia Vireo a much different head shape than the thinner-billed, flatter-crowned Tennessee Warbler. And, as is the case with most vireos, the Philadelphia tends to move around more slowly and deliberately than a warbler.

Orange-crowned vs. Yellow vs. Wilson's. If it's August or early September, and you see a nondescript warbler which is dull greenish yellow overall, don't assume it's an Orange-crowned. For one thing, Orange-crowneds don't usually arrive in Minnesota until late September. Consider the probability of it being a Yellow Warbler, probably an immature female, which can appear surprisingly dull and not very yellow. Look carefully to see if the bird has a "beady" black eye surrounded by the suggestion of a vague yellowish eye ring — a characteristic mark of the Yellow Warbler.

On the other hand, if it's October or even late September, and you think you see a Yellow Warbler, take another look. Most Yellow Warblers have left Minnesota by the first of October. Now is the time when Orange-crowneds are passing through. If it's not an Orange-crowned, consider a female Wilson's. Many birders have trouble telling female/immature Yellows from Wilson's, but, again, look for the Yellow Warbler's beady black eye. Or, if it's a Wilson's Warbler, look

for its grayer crown which is darker than on a Yellow.

Chestnut-sided. There's another fall warbler out there that's about as common as the Tennessee — and more confusing to novices than it ought to be. This bird is even more distinctively plumaged than a Tennessee: uniformly and cleanly whitish (or pale grayish) below, bright lime green above, with a bold white eye ring and thick yellowish wing bars. It sort of looks like the picture of a Chestnut-sided in the Geographic field guide, except the eye ring and wing bars are bolder than in the book. The Chestnut-sided picture in the Robbins guide also fails to portray a bold enough eye ring, and the painting in Peterson shows a Chestnut-sided with drab greenish upperparts.

So what is it? Indeed it is a Chestnut-sided, after all. Despite its lack of yellow cap and chestnut sides, a fall Chestnut-sided is still patterned distinctively enough that it should be relatively easy to identify. The next time you see one (and they're common enough), put the field guide aside and take a good look at the bird itself. It's not only a nice looking bird, but it will restore your faith in your fall warbler identification skills.

Cape May vs. Yellow-rumped. The Cape May is one fall warbler that varies widely in plumage. Some (usually adult males) have obviously yellowish underparts with dark streaking, bold wing bars, and the clear remains of chestnut color on the face. Others (usually immature females) have no color and little pattern on the face, only indistinct wing bars, and little or no streaking or yellow on the underparts. The plumage of most fall Cape Mays falls somewhere in between these two extremes, and such birds bear a strong resemblance to fall Yellow-rumpeds, especially since Cape Mays also have yellow rumps.

When looking at one of those dull or average Cape Mays, you should see a paler mark on the side of the neck, which hints at this species' distinctive facial pattern (also see Pine Warbler below). Note as well how the streaking and any yellowish color on the underparts extends uniformly across the breast. A Yellow-rumped Warbler lacks that mark on the side of the neck, and its streaking and yellow on the underparts are more limited to the sides of the breast.

One additional hint. If you see a warbler up in a spruce tree that has the general appearance of being just another one of those ubiquitous Yellow-rumpeds, take a second look. While lots of warblers will forage in spruce trees, migrating Cape Mays tend to be in a spruce more often than not. Be aware of this especially along the North Shore of Lake Superior, and you might be surprised at how relatively common the Cape May Warbler is during fall migration.

Other "yellow-rumped" warblers. So, you had never really thought about Cape May Warblers having yellow rumps before, did you? So do Magnolias, by the way. And there is yet another species, about as nondescript and as widespread as a Yellow-rumped Warbler, which often shows yellowish color on the rump. Of course, the Palm Warbler is brightest yellow under the tail, but when one flushes up and flies away from you the under tail coverts are not visible. What is visible then on many Palm Warblers, however, is the yellowish color on the rump — enough so that more than once I have found myself assuming the warbler flying off was just another Yellow-rumped until it landed to provide me with a better look.

Pine Warbler. Just as the Cape May Warbler has a tendency to spend its time in spruce trees, the Pine Warbler has even a stronger preference for pines. This association is strong enough that only rarely have I found a Pine Warbler singing or foraging in anything other than a stand of pines. And it's reassuring for a change to have a bird's name that actually describes something useful about the bird.

Less reassuring, however, is how often other things are misidentified as Pine Warblers. Too many birders assume this warbler is just another species one would

routinely encounter when out looking for migrants. In reality, the Pine is quite uncommon in Minnesota as a migrant, since it has a tendency to arrive on and depart from its breeding grounds without making many stops in Minnesota in transit. Many birders are also unaware how early this species migrates in spring and how late it moves in fall, and it is not likely to be seen in mid-May or in September during peak warbler-watching time.

Some fall Pine Warblers (again, probably adult males) are colorful enough to be relatively easy to tell. But others (probably immature females) can be quite nondescript, lacking any evidence of greenish color above or yellowish below. But even the dullest Pine Warbler should show obvious wing bars — and about the only other warblers with no obvious markings other than wing bars would be the Bay-breasted and Blackpoll. Look for the Pine's lack of back streaking (which is usually hard to determine), its somewhat vireo-like slower and more deliberate movements, and its distinctive face pattern which features an almost Peregrine Falcon-like dark wash on the ear coverts. Note, however, this dark wash may be set off by a paler area on the side of the neck, which may then suggest a Cape May Warbler.

Bay-breasted vs. Blackpoll. This pair of warblers has long been considered part of the quintessential confusing fall warbler problem, although usually the Pine Warbler is also included in the mix. However, as indicated above, I have never considered the Pine Warbler to resemble the other two: the Pine's face pattern in combination with other things always seems to give it away.

Of course, some Bay-breasted Warblers still retain enough of a buff or even chestnut tinge on the flanks to be easily recognized. Conversely, though, there have been a few Blackpoll/Bay-breasted types I have seen over the years which I was uncomfortable identifying. The identification of most of them, however, is straightforward: 1) streaked underparts = Blackpoll, unstreaked underparts = Bay-breasted, short or faint smudges on underparts = ?; 2) pale legs and feet = Blackpoll, dark legs and feet = ?; 3) yellowish breast = Blackpoll, buffy flanks = Bay-breasted, no color on underparts = ?

Time and space considerations preclude a complete analysis of the identification of those "?" individuals, and it is safe to say that a few of those Blackpoll/Bay-breasteds you see may have to be left as unidentified. But for further information on this ID problem, consult "The Blackpoll Trio" chapter in Kenn Kaufman's *A Field Guide to Advanced Birding*, or the *Birding* article "Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Pine Warblers in Fall Plumage" (15:219–222).

Waterthrushes. And while you're looking up Bay-breasteds and Blackpolls in Kaufman's *Advanced Birding* guide, you may as well continue on to the next chapter on waterthrush identification. Actually, I could have almost left waterthrushes out of this article, since the Advanced Birding chapter covers it well, since Louisianas are only infrequently encountered in migration in Minnesota, and since this ID is not really a "confusing fall warbler" problem. After all, it's hard to tell a Northern Waterthrush from a Louisiana at any time of year.

Briefly, however, one feature to consider is the bird's supercilium (i.e., the line over the eye): the Louisiana's is whiter and bolder and typically widens behind the eye; the Northern's supercilium is usually buff (but sometimes white) and narrows behind the eye. Another good mark is the Louisiana's buff flank patch which contrasts with the rest of the white underparts; the Northern's underparts are uniform in color overall, either white or buff. Finally, try to see the leg color: brighter pink on a Louisiana, duller grayish pink on a Northern.

Connecticut vs. Mourning. Because of the sought-after nature of the species, it is perhaps understandable how easily other things are mistaken for a Connecticut Warbler. After all, only three or four other warblers in the U. S. might rival the Connecticut in being so highly sought.

Perhaps the most obvious error that novice warbler watchers make is to get excited over a Nashville Warbler, which may superficially resemble the Connecticut in plumage but which hardly acts like the more secretive, slower-moving, ground-walking Connecticut. I have also seen birders puzzle over a female or immature Common Yellowthroat, wondering if it might be a Connecticut, and I have been told of Yellow Warblers also being misidentified as Connecticuts (although I'm not quite sure how).

In fall, however, the biggest source of confusion is with the Mourning Warbler, a highly sought warbler in its own right which often acts just as secretive as the Connecticut. The problem is that many Mournings show an obvious and essentially complete eye ring in fall: while it may not be as thick as on a Connecticut, this ring can look bold enough to mislead even the experienced birder. If possible, concentrate on the hood and throat colors: most Mournings have grayer hoods and yellower throats, while Connecticuts tend to have browner hoods and buffier throats.

Of course, given the secretive nature of both these warblers, it can be impossible to get a clear view of the eye ring, hood color or throat. They do have different call notes, although a migrant Connecticut only rarely has anything to say, and the notes of both species are difficult to describe here in words in any useful way. Just be thankful the MacGillivray's Warbler does not migrate through Minnesota (or does it?!), and for more information on this ID problem two helpful articles in *Birding* (20:96–99 and 22:222–229) have been published.

By the time this article has appeared, a new field guide to warblers may have come off the presses. I have seen some of the color plates, and one of its authors is Jon Dunn, one of the top bird identification experts anywhere, so it should be something to look forward to... especially if you still have a vague and nagging fear of fall warblers. But, not to worry: there are still Confusing Fall Shorebirds and Confusing Immature Gulls on which to vent your frustrations.

8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.

The Minnesota Big Day Report 1996–97

Paul Hertzel

Although the first officially declared Big Day in the state of Minnesota occurred twenty-seven years ago in May of 1970, birders had been doing things similar to a Big Day for much longer. Even Thomas S. Roberts shared a few ideas on how to maximize a day's list of species.

The parameters of a Big Day make natural modifications to the ordinary circumstances of most birding field trips. Since on any given field trip our time is limited, and since we like encountering as many species as we can, we create what seems like a sensible event when we formalize these two conditions.

But, whereas a "Big Second" or a "Big Minute" have little appeal except possibly as humor among birders, a "Big Day" seems quite natural. Counting the total species seen following a daily outing is rarely a forgotten ending, and it provides one way of comparing outings, especially if other factors can be kept constant.

In the early years, Minnesota bird finders understood and often discussed the satisfaction associated with a lengthy list. In *The Birds of Minnesota* (1932), T. S.

Roberts comments on the possibility of achieving a high total. On page 79 while discussing the typical conditions found in the state during the month of May, he says,

> "Warblers, Flycatchers, Vireos, Shore Birds, Waterfowl, Sparrows, and most of the other groups are all here in force during some time in May. The observer who wishes to make a record list of birds for a single day usually chooses one in the middle of that month, and at this time a list of a hundred species is not impossible."

There can be little doubt Roberts had first-hand experience at creating such a list. But it's hard to say if in those days lists of around 100 species were compiled in perhaps an unhurried fashion, because today it's known a list of 192 species is "not impossible" — if one hurries:

> "Because we were 45 minutes behind our anticipated schedule (the biggest challenge on a Big Day is not merely to find a lot of birds, but to find them as you constantly race the clock), we decided to forego the Waubun marsh and head directly to Felton." (Kim Eckert, "192 Species on a Minnesota Big Day", ***The Loon*** 56:15)

This particular Big Day occurred in the middle of May, 1983, involving a group of observers who wished to make a record list of birds for a single day, almost exactly 50 years after Roberts wrote his words. Besides relentless pursuit, it involved strategy, which may be the factor unconsidered in the day of T. S. Roberts. It's difficult to find any references to strategy beyond Roberts' simple observation that mid-May is a fine time of the year to see a lot of birds.

Even if yesterday's birders didn't stay up late planning each 15-minute period of the next day's outing, they often associated satisfaction with high species totals. The idea of measuring one's birding experience in terms of birds per unit of time was not newly introduced with the formal Big Day. For instance, the author of the following statement used a measure of warblers-per-hour:

> "We had a small warbler wave about May 4th, but from the 11th to the 16th they came by the thousands. I found eighteen species in less than an hour on the 16th, and the trees and bushes were full of them." (*Logbook of Minnesota Bird Life*, p.79 T.S. Roberts)

This easily could have been written in 1997 by some delirious May birder, but was written in 1923 by Mabel Densmore in relating to Roberts the favorable conditions present that spring at Red Wing. On the other hand, to convey the dismal conditions found during the spring of 1931 Roberts used a low species-per-day rate to make his point:

> "Few species were in their usual numbers and some were missed entirely. There were no large mixed bird waves, and it was necessary to work hard to make a day's list of more than fifty or sixty species even at the height of the season. Several lists of seventy-five to ninety were reported but they were the exception." (*Logbook of Minnesota Bird Life* p.262)

Birders often used daily totals to express sentiments about the birding conditions. In better years people seemed happy to achieve Roberts' standard of 100 in a single day. In 1944 The Minneapolis Audubon Society was pleased to announce in a "Note of Interest" that they encountered exactly 100 species on 19 May (*The Flicker* 16:55). Two years later, the Minneapolis Bird Club described a May 12th total of 115 as "a birding experience long to remember" (*The Flicker* 18:93).

Carver	136	5/17/97	Jim Williams, Bill Marengo, Denny Martin
Cass	46	11/3/96	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Clearwater	121	5/31/97	Doug Johnson, Matt Cole
Cottonwood	85	5/10/97	Ed Duerkson, and Edna and Ellis Gerber
Dakota	153	5/17/97	Mark Ochs, Paul Budde, Drew Smith, Tom Tustison
	114	5/18/96	Robert Holtz, Jim Bender
Hennepin	125	5/11/96	Terry Brashear, Jim Eikenberry, Kim Risen, David Trissel
	106	5/17/97	Michael Tarachow, Merce Dostale
Isanti	94	5/26/97	Robert Holtz
Kandiyohi	131	5/18/96	Ron Erpelding, Randy Frederickson
Kittson	24	2/23/97	Peder Svingen, Karl Bardon
Lac Qui Parle	126	5/15/96	Bill Marengo
Lake	27	2/09/97	Karl Bardon, Peder Svingen
Lincoln	104	5/05/96	Roger Schroeder, Jared Anez
	102	5/10/97	Doug and Maria Sheppard
Murray	109	5/21/97	Nelvina DeKam
Pine	146	5/27/97	Paul Hertzel, Tony Hertzel
Roseau	148	8/24/96	Peder Svingen
	136	9/01/96	Peder Svingen
Scott	148	5/21/97	Tony Hertzel, Paul Hertzel
	128	5/20/97	Bill Marengo Esther Gesich
	122	5/17/97	Robert Holtz, Andy Bicek, Jim Bender, John Wallner
St. Louis*	162	5/31/97	Peder Svingen, Tony Hertzel, Paul Hertzel
	155	5/31/97	Barb Akre, Louie Claeson, Kim Eckert, Richard Sanford
	146	5/31/97	Dave Benson, Paul Egeland, Jesse Ellis, John Ellis
	136	5/31/97	Dave Alexander, John O'Brien, Karen Sussman, Ben Yokel
	135	5/31/97	Dudley Edmondson, Dave Gilbertson, Mike Hendrickson
	135	5/31/97	Cory Bedeaux, Laura Erickson, Karen Keenan, Holly Peirson, Jane Wobken
	127	5/31/97	Don Kienholz, Bill Marengo, Peter Neubeck, Dick Sandve
	125	5/31/97	Tim Dawson, Howard Fenton, Frank Nicoletti
	110	5/31/97	Mary Gabrys, Esther Gesick, Frani Lowe, Leata Pearson
Steele	140	5/17/97	Leanne Alt, Darryl Hill, Gary Johnson, Cindy Raichle, Nels Thompson, Ken Vail
Winona	140	5/14/97	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen

* there were five additional, smaller St. Louis County totals on 31 May, 1997 as part of the birdathon conducted on that day.

Table 1. Additions to the county Big Day record since the last publication.

To achieve many more birds than one hundred usually required counting species over more than one day. Roberts wrote in 1925, "...the University bird class, which, under the guidance of Mr. Kilgore and the writer, had the exceptional experience of seeing and studying 142 species of birds in the field." (*Logbook of Minnesota Bird Life* p.106) This was the total over all spring field trips, and it was common for the University bird class to embark on ten or more trips during the spring semester. By 1956 the MOU Annual Spring Field Trip was

counting a similar total of 141 species in only two days (*The Flicker* 28:161).

But compare these totals with an average of 147 species reported by the top ten county-wide Big Days conducted in the state over the last year (1996–97). That's five more species on average in a single day in a single county than Roberts' class had over an entire and exceptional spring. Probably his class was not racing the clock trying to set these sorts of records, whereas every Big Day participant hopes to do just that. But it is still interesting that a cumulative spring list of 142 species was "exceptional", if for no other reason than to indicate a change in the expectations of birders over the last 70 years. Consider that in 1963 Bob Janssen reported in a spring (May-only) list for Ron Huber of 234 species (***The Loon*** 37:100).

It's hard to say when the first 20th-century, binocular-assisted, motorized birders set about to make as large a daily list as they could. Even before the MOU was formed, birders were organized in efforts to count bird species:

> "It was decided to hold a bird census on the 17th of May, [1931] on which date all members were urged to be in the field so that results could be compared at the next meeting." (*The Flicker* 3:9)

These members belonged to the Minnesota Bird Club, which seven years later in 1938 joined with two other clubs to form the MOU. Without knowing if the participants planned to count individuals or species, we can't say if this event should be compared to a modern Big Day, or perhaps a Christmas Bird Count. In either case, it's one of the earliest references indicating the making of a list of birds was more than a secondary goal of any birding trips.

Undoubtedly there were times when encountering as many species as possible was foremost in the minds of the members of groups, though perhaps undeclared. Today a declared effort has been formalized by the American Birding Association (ABA) and called a "Big Day" after a phrase that's been in use for a long time. Apparently early on it was a reference to any day in which the species count is high. T. S. Roberts wrote the following in 1924,

> "It was 'the time of one's life' for the warbler enthusiast! Fifteen or eighteen species, seen in the trees and shrubbery from the windows of a city home blessed with a yard, was the experience of several 'shut-ins' on the 23rd and 24th, which were the 'big days' at Minneapolis." (*Logbook of Minnesota Bird Life* p104.)

Table 1 lists the significant county-wide Big Days reported in the last year. Thirty-eight additional Minnesota Big Days have been added to the records, including four in counties that had no previous records. One of these, under-birded Scott County, was host to three Big Days, on 17 May, 20 May, and 21 May.

Some of the records were generated by two birdathons conducted in the state. On 10 May, 1997, The Southwest Minnesota Warblers Birding Club (SMWBC) held their first "Mother's Day Weekend Birdathon" to raise money for the club. Roger Schroeder wrote in an electronic correspondence to me, "17 people comprising 8 teams participated in the event, raising just under $300.00 for the SMWBC while identifying 147 species of birds." The highest team total on the day was 106 birds, while the highest county total was 102 birds found by a group who restricted their activities to Lincoln County.

On 31 May, the 11th Annual Hawk Ridge Birdathon and St. Louis County Big Day attracted 45 birders in 14 teams who found a total of 203 species within the political boundaries of St. Louis County. The winning team encountered 162 species, or about 80% of all species located.

May is still the most popular month to participate in a Big Day, because, as Rob-

Aitkin	151	5/15/93	Warren Nelson
Anoka	111	5/16/92	Robert Holtz, John Wallner
Becker	no record		
Beltrami	113	5/19/90	Doug Johnson, Tim Dawson
Benton	no record		
Big Stone	144	5/18/94	Tony Hertzel, Paul Hertzel
Blue Earth	no record		
Brown	no record		
Carlton	130	5/29/95	Peder Svingen and Sue Barton
Carver	139	5/15/94	Bill Marengo, Denny Martin, Mike Mulligan, Jim Williams
Cass	46	11/3/96	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Chippewa	no record		
Chisago	102	5/14/94	Robert Holtz, John Wallner, Jim Bender
Clay	111	5/14/95	Robert O'Commor, Gary Nielsen, Connie Norheim, Spencer Meeks
Clearwater	121	5/31/97	Doug Johnson, Matt Cole
Cook	116	5/3/95	Peder Svingen and Sue Barton
Cottonwood	118	5/13/89	Henry Schmidt, Walter Harder, Ed Duerksen
Crow Wing	no record		
Dakota	153	5/17/97	Mark Ochs, Paul Budde, Drew Smith, Tom Tustison
Dodge	100	5/14/91	Bob & Steve Ekblad, Jerry Bonkoski
Douglas	82	5/15/94	Kris & Kyle Wicklund
Faribault	no record		
Fillmore	97	5/13/89	Filmore County Birders Club
Freeborn	104	5/23/90	Anne Marie Plunkett
Goodhue	76	5/15/92	Harlan Hostager
Grant	no record		
Hennepin	125	5/11/96	Terry Brashear, Jim Eikenberry, Kim Risen, David Trissel
Houston	111	5/11/93	Jerry Bonkoski, Tony Casucci, Bob Ekblad, Jerry Pruett, Dave Squillace
Hubbard	96	5/11/91	Ralph & Jean Leckner and Cory & Terry Olson
Isanti	94	5/26/97	Robert Holtz
Itasca	no record		
Jackson	no record		
Kanabec	96	5/8/93	Craig Menze
Kandiyohi	140	5/20/95	Randy Fredrickson
Kittson	127	5/25/96	Peder Svingen
Koochiching	135	6/1/96	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Lac Qui Parle	126	5/15/96	Bill Marengo
Lake	117	5/22/95	Peder Svingen and Kim Eckert
Lake of the Woods	146	5/26/96	Peder Svingen, Tony & Ann Hertzel
Le Sueur	141	5/13/95	Ann & Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Lincoln	122	5/14/88	Ray Glassel, Bob Janssen, John Schladweiler
Lyon	142	5/14/88	Henry Kyllingstad, Paul Egeland
Mahnomen	no record		

Table 2. Record totals by county.

Marshall	114	5/8/93	Shelly Steva, Darlene Kelly, Randi Hodny, Linda Welk
Martin	no record		
McLeod	no record		
Meeker	no record		
Mille Lacs	no record		
Morrison	80	7/27/96	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Mower	no record		
Murray	109	5/21/97	Nelvina DeKam
Nicollet	139	5/15/93	Tony Hertzel, Paul Hertzel
Nobles	91	5/21/90	Nelvina DeKam
Norman	no record		
Olmsted	152	5/13/94	Jerry Bonkoski, Bob Ekblad, Jerry Pruett, Chuck Krulas, Jeff Stephenson
Otter Tail	144	5/15/91	Steve & Diane Millard
Pennington	no record		
Pine	146	5/27/97	Paul Hertzel, Tony Hertzel
Pipestone	77	5/14/88	Johanna Pals, Nelvina DeKam
Polk	156	5/19/90	Dave & Sharon Lambeth, Peder Svingen
Pope	no record		
Ramsey	114	5/8/93	Robert Holtz, John Wallner
Red Lake	no record		
Redwood	no record		
Renville	no record		
Rice	100	5/30/92	Rice County Bird Club
Rock	87	5/12/92	Nelvina DeKam
Roseau	162	5/27/95	Peder Svingen
Scott	148	5/21/97	Paul Hertzel, Tony Hertzel
Sherburne	130	5/16/96	Tony Hertzel, Paul Hertzel
Sibley	no record		
St. Louis	177	5/18/96	Mike Hendrickson, Mark Ochs, Terry Brashear, Kim Risen
Stearns	no record		
Steele	140	5/17/97	Leanne Alt, Darryl Hill, Gary Johnson, Cindy Raichle, Nels Thompson, Ken Vail
Stevens	no record		
Swift	113	5/14/94	Ray Glassel, Bob Janssen
Todd	no record		
Traverse	no record		
Wabasha	111	5/21/89	Helen Tucker, Alice Searles
Wadena	94	5/21/88	Jerome & Karol Gresser
Waseca	88	5/16/94	Ray Glassel
Washington	97	5/15/93	Robert Holtz and seven students
Watonwan	no record		
Wilkin	no record		
Winona	140	5/14/97	Tony Hertzel, Peder Svingen
Wright	112	5/16/92	Mark Stensaas, John Hokema
Yellow Medicine	141	5/8/93	Parker Backstrom, Karl Bardon, Peder Svingen

Table 2, continued.

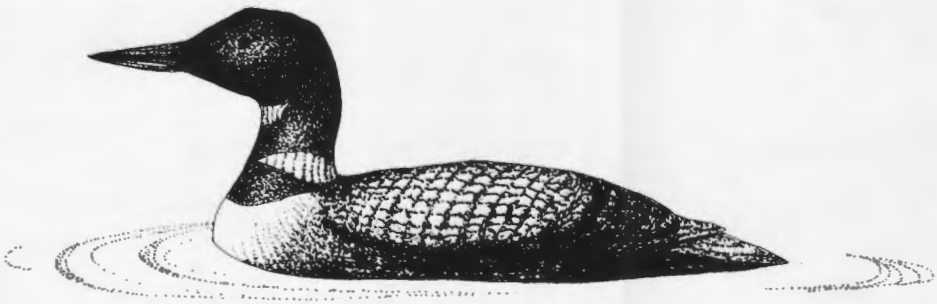
erts pointed out 65 years ago the simultaneous presence of migrants and breeding birds maximizes totals. However, a few birders have begun to generate some numbers for other months. At present Peder Svingen holds or shares all the non-May records. His total of 148 in Roseau County on the 24th of August, 1996, is the highest Big Day count outside of the month of May.

In the last year Svingen reported to the ABA Big Day information for four different months. In response, Blake Maybank wrote to a North American audience, "I understand the appeal of undertaking Big Days with restrictions of geography and season, and encourage more of you to take the challenge." (*1996 Big Day Report, supplement to Birding,* Volume XXIX Number 3) For instance, a July Big Day generally offers few encounters with migrants, but always holds the possibility of turning up some interesting breeding records.

Besides, with 87 counties, and 12 months, there are 1044 potential records to be filled. That ought to keep us busy for a while, with enough tasks to be shared throughout the MOU membership. Send your totals to the address below. Let us know the date, location, weather conditions, participants, and the species count. It would also be interesting to know what birds were found, what percentage was identified by the entire party, and any anecdotal information you'd like to share.

I would like to thank Anthony Hertzel for contributing material for this article, and Phil Miller and Anthony Hertzel for proofing the initial versions.

8461 Pleasant View Drive, Mounds View MN 55112.



NOTES OF INTEREST

FALL 1996 CENSUS OF MIGRANTS AT THE LAKEWOOD PUMPING STATION —

Again last fall, there was a systematic census of migrants along the North Shore in Duluth at the Lakewood Treatment Plant, also known as the Lakewood Pumping Station. Similar counts have been conducted in 1983–1985, 1987–1990 and 1994–1995, and results of these counts have been published in previous issues of ***The Loon*** (62:99–105, 63:60–61, 67:47–49 and 68:35–36).

The methods of this 1996 census were essentially the same as in 1994 and 1995: i.e., the coverage was on an every-other-day basis, from 21 August through 20 October; counting began at official sunrise and lasted two hours; and two observers were scheduled to be present on each count day. A total of 31 count days took place, although rain shortened the coverage to 1.5 hours on 16 September and to 0.5 hour on 26 September. In all, there were 60 hours of coverage,

and during this time a total of 47,382 migrants was counted.

This season's totals were considerably lower than in 1995, when 75,050 migrants were counted in 56 hours of coverage. In 1994, there were 59,333 migrants during 65.5 hours. As expected, days with northwest to west winds and/or cold fronts tend to be more conducive for migration, and in the fall of 1996 there were relatively few days with such conditions. Unfavorable weather conditions also predominated in 1994, while the weather conditions and migration in 1995 overall were considered to be closer to normal.

There were only two dates with counts of over 5,000 migrants: 6,270 on 28 September (a day with a cold front and northwest to west winds); and 5,889 on 6 October (cold front and west winds). There were no other days with counts of over 4,000, and only three dates with totals in the 3,000–4,000 range. By contrast, in 1995 there were six dates with totals of over 5,000.

Given the disappointing migration, there were relatively few highlights. Of interest, however, were:

— an early Red Crossbill on 21 August;
— a peak of 2,740 Cedar Waxwings on 4 September;
— an unexpected flight of 12 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, also on 4 September;
— a peak of 5,145 warblers (mostly Yellow-rumpeds) on 28 September;
— another peak of 4,903 warblers on 6 October;
— peaks of 1,757 and 1,721 Pine Siskins on 8 and 12 October respectively;
— an out-of-range Yellow-headed Blackbird on 8 October;
— a relatively low peak of 1,283 American Robins on 12 October;
— and an unusually late movement of 30 Tree Swallows on 18 October.

The primary counters during 1996 were Dave Benson, Laura Erickson and the author. We also acknowledge the counting assistance provided especially by Ken Huntley, Karen Keenan and John Heid; Tim Dawson and members of the Erickson family also assisted in the coverage. Funding for the 1996 census at Lakewood was again provided by Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**

FALL VAGRANCY OF THE BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER — During fall 1996, an unprecedented three records of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher along the North Shore of Lake Superior in one season reminded me of this species' changing status in the Maritime Provinces of Canada. A pattern of late fall vagrancy to the Maritimes has been noted as the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher expanded its breeding range into New England. Over the past decade, fall reports from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have become "too frequent to keep track of" (*Field Notes* 49:14). They were recorded each year from 1983 to 1994 in Newfoundland, well north of their breeding range (*Field Notes* 50:15) including several records from November.

In Minnesota, the summer distribution of this species has also been expanding, primarily toward the north and west (***The Loon*** 51:171–174, 59:216, 63:31–34). Within the past five years alone, nesting was documented for the first time in Clay County (***The Loon*** 65:26) and first county records were established in either May or June for Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington and Red Lake counties. Beyond the periphery of its summer range "post-breeding dispersal" probably accounts for most of the August and early September records. More difficult to characterize are the late September and October records along the North Shore of Lake Superior (see table). One in Grand Marais on 6 November 1994 is currently the latest date on record for the entire state. The few October records that are not from the North Shore include

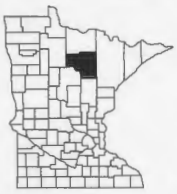
20–28 October 1994 in Winona County (***The Loon*** 66:211), 7 October 1995 in Hennepin County, 5 October 1986 in Fillmore County, 3 October 1988 in Todd County, and 1 October 1994 in Washington County. It will be interesting to see whether or not this emerging pattern of late fall vagrancy along the North Shore continues to develop.

North Shore records of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Date	Location	County	Reference
26 October 1996	Knife River	Lake	many observers
15–16 October 1996	Hawk Ridge, Duluth	St. Louis	F. Nicoletti
29 September 1996	Two Harbors	Lake	*fide* K. Eckert
6 November 1994	Grand Marais	Cook	***The Loon*** 67:91
20 May 1991	Duluth	St. Louis	***The Loon*** 63:259
21 September 1989	Park Point, Duluth	St. Louis	***The Loon*** 61:199
5 May 1989	Duluth	St. Louis	***The Loon*** 61:182
22 September 1985	Grand Marais	Cook	***The Loon*** 57:182
27–29 October 1982	Duluth	St. Louis	***The Loon*** 55:31–32, 76

Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON IN ITASCA COUNTY — My first sighting of this bird was on the morning of 8 September 1996. My husband and I were having coffee and watching the birds at the feeder, when we saw a pigeon or dove-like bird land on top of the feeder. It sat there a few minutes, then moved to the feeding area and ate oil sunflower seeds, then flew into the woods. This activity occurred three times daily for 10–15 minutes each time, from the period 8–19 September 1996, after which it was gone.



We had never seen a bird like this so referred to our field guide. Because of its size and shape we looked under the pigeon/dove section. The distinguishing marks were the band on the tail, white neck band and yellow bill. The only bird we found in our guide with these markings was the Band-tailed Pigeon. Our book indicated that this bird is found on the west coast and southwestern America.

Band-tailed Pigeon, 9 September 1996, Bovey, Itasca County. Photo by Bonnie George.

After identifying the bird to the best of our ability, we realized this was probably a rare sighting. This prompted me to take many pictures at different times and angles. I could get quite close to him and he was not frightened. Once I got really close to him and he flew up in a tree, but still in close view. Our son, David George of Hill City, also had the opportunity to observe this bird. After realizing this could be a rare sighting, I called and then forwarded five pictures and two feathers (found by the feeder) to Jeff Hines, DNR in Grand Rapids.

We have enjoyed watching birds as well as all species of wildlife most of our lives. I would like to dedicate this article to my late husband, Charles George who passed away 28 February 1997. **Bonnie George, 1047 Scenic Highway, Bovey, MN 55709.**

In This Issue

Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we: publish a magazine, ***The Loon***, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding;* conduct field trips; encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The MOU wishes to point out that any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of ***The Loon*** welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest" and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any stardard format on any 3 ½ inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird-sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".

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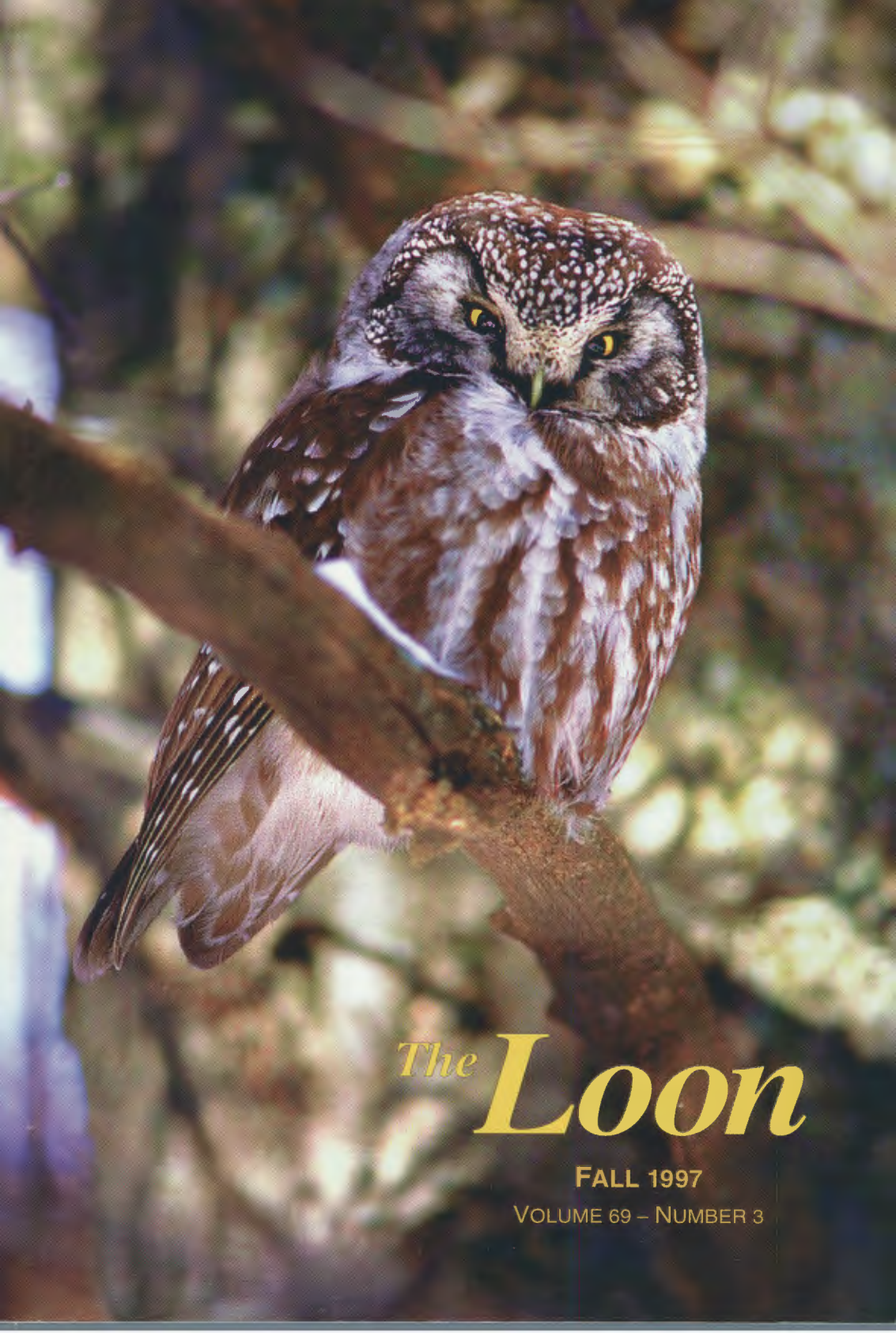

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MEMBERSHIPS:
Yearly donations to join the MOU: Single: $20, Youth (through age 17) $15; Family $30; Supporting $50; Life $400. Canadian / Foreign Subscriptions, $25. Also available are back issues of ***The Loon*** ($3 each ppd.) and checklists of Minnesota birds (minimum lots of 20 for $5 ppd).

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Springbrook Nature Center's Boreal Owl

An Unexpected Adventure

Siah St. Clair

On 16 January 1997 at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley, Minnesota, an unexpected adventure of wonder, excitement, learning and connections began. This adventure involved thousands of people, thousands of miles traveled, and one fairly small, but very patient and mostly indifferent Boreal Owl.

I first saw the owl at 4:00 P.M. on 16 January while filling bird feeders outside Springbrook's exhibit room windows. As the door from the exhibit room was opened, it flew off the dead tree the feeders hang from to a small oak about twenty feet away. Two hours earlier, nature center staff had been carefully checking the identifying marks on a dead Boreal Owl brought in the previous day. Seeing a live Boreal Owl, a life bird for all of us, was definitely much more exciting than holding a window-killed one in our hands.

Springbrook raises mice to feed reptiles and raptors used for exhibits and programs. Knowing that a Boreal Owl would be nearly starved if it had flown this far south (four miles north of the Minneapolis city limits) searching for food, I brought a live white mouse from our colony, and put it on the platform bird feeder outside the exhibit room door. The owl saw it instantly, without hesitation flew down on it and then flew about 30 feet into some oaks. It sat for about ten minutes with the mouse, and then ate it.

After 25 years as a naturalist and director at nature centers, where seeing rare and unusual things can become somewhat commonplace, it was very affirming to know that I could still feel tremendous excitement to see this rare owl fly down and catch a mouse, even a white mouse. At 9:00 P.M. that evening I called Ron Refsnider, a master bird bander who coordinates Springbrook's bird banding program, to tell him about the Boreal Owl. He asked if he could put an announcement about the owl on the internet rare bird alert, and naively, but with enthusiasm, I said yes. The adventure had begun.

I began to learn the extent to which birders and the internet are connected the next morning when people arrived at the center before the staff, in search of the owl. As more people arrived during the day and the owl was found in a new location, I had to make decisions concerning how stressful it was for the owl to allow birders access to it, how close to the owl we should let people approach, what the impact would be to the nature center land with people walking off trails, and how already busy staff schedules should accommodate the increasing phone calls and inquires at the desk about the owl.

After observing the owl awhile, it became apparent that it was completely indifferent to our presence, and certainly not stressed by being observed, especially if observers stayed ten to fifteen feet away. I decided then that Springbrook should take advantage of this rare opportunity and allow any who were interested a chance to see this Boreal Owl.

Boreal Owl, 27 January 1997, Springbrook Nature Center, Fridley, Anoka County. Photo by David Peterson.

I also decided that we would offer it a live mouse each afternoon at 4:00 P.M. I wanted to do this primarily for the health of the owl, but also to give the birders an opportunity to observe the owl as a predator — an unforgettable moment.

Any hesitation or concern I had about the owl being stressed by people was lost a few days later when a group of 2nd graders ran down the trail ahead of me gleefully shouting and searching for a "camouflaged student" I had hidden along the trail. A few moments later the Boreal Owl was discovered, within one foot of where these students had run past it. It seemed annoyed at being awakened, but otherwise aloof and again, indifferent.

I had anticipated that the owl would stay with us for a few days and then move on to a more private area, but it was apparently content, even with the attention of many visitors. After a week we were receiving calls from California, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, and many other places. Birders from California wanted to know if they flew to Minneapolis the next day would the owl still be here? We really had no idea from one day to the next if it still would be present. A group from Tennessee was carpooling and called to let us know when they would arrive. We quickly had hundreds of very excited people arriving daily. Crowd control became a factor. The nature center staff developed a routine of:

1. Searching for the owl each morning. This often took an hour or more and usually it moved 50' to 100' each night, but stayed within a one acre area during the entire stay.

2. If we found the owl, its location was marked on a map in the nature center's reception area. As a few birders soon became hundreds, we also put flagging in a 30–40 foot circle around the owl to let observers know that it deserved some "space". If we were unable to find it, we would suggest places for birders to search.

3. We answered questions and calls during the day, and gave out information and directions to find other rare owls that were being seen in the metro area.

4. We conducted the feeding activity at 4:00 P.M. This quickly became an interpretive program 30–35 minutes long, often with 50 to 100 people in attendance. We discussed owl biology, why owls fly south some years, how owls function as predators, owl pellets, and much more.

The owl remained at Springbrook for 66 days, from 16 January to 22 March. We conducted 55 public feeding programs, with 1,240 people attending the feedings. The largest attendance at one feeding program was 132. We responded to 1,362 phone calls about the owl. More than 7,500 visitors were recorded who came to see the owl during nature center open hours. People came from 60 Minnesota cities, 25 states, and four foreign countries. Ages ranged from a few months to 98 years.

During the first few weeks, the owl

was almost always observed against trees which had trunks of 3" to 24" in diameter, about four or five feet off the ground. It often was in thick underbrush.

During the first week the owl, when presented with a live mouse on a carpeted stool, would be instantly alert and quickly would seek and fly to a second perch, if the one it was on did not have a direct and open flight path to the mouse. It had difficulty a few times landing directly on the mouse, but always quickly recovered and never failed to capture and kill the mouse.

During the last few weeks of its stay, the owl perched 10 to 14 feet high, in small oaks on small branches that still had leaves, and it was often very difficult to find. It seemed much stronger, and would fly from any perch around branches and other obstacles directly onto the mouse and stool. After catching the mouse it always would fly to a protected spot 20 to 40 feet away, sit quietly for five to ten minutes and then eat the mouse.

On two occasions, visitors observed the owl catching and eating a shorttail shrew. Of the 24 pellets that Springbrook staff recovered, one third contained remains of shorttail shrews. All others were of white lab mice from the nature center.

There were six days during its 66 day stay that the Boreal Owl was not located. There were many days when nature center staff and numerous visitors spent several hours searching before locating the owl. It was not unusual for searchers to walk within ten feet of it several times and still miss it. On mornings after it had not been located on a previous day — or after a very cold night — I would offer the owl a small mouse in the early morning. It always took the mouse in these situations.

During the last few weeks of its stay, I developed a technique to find the owl on days when it hadn't been located. I would walk into the woods in the evening where it was last seen and put a mouse on the carpeted stool for one minute. If the owl didn't come down onto the mouse I would move 30 yards then try it again. By repeating this procedure, I was able to locate the owl on several evenings. This was also the method I used to make a formal determination on March 22 that the owl had probably left the park to return north, and that staff time would no longer be spent searching for the owl each day.

The people who came to see the owl were a refreshing, enthusiastic, and almost always courteous and grateful mix of hard-core birders, new birders, friends who were dragged along, and curious visitors who just wanted to see what the excitement was all about. It was the serious lifelong birders who were the most memorable and enjoyable.

It is impossible not to be moved by the joy and excitement of a person in their seventies who is literally jumping up and down and turning in circles as they are finally able to see up close their first Boreal Owl. Or sharing a moment with the birder who for decades had made regular, but unsuccessful pilgrimages to northern Minnesota for a glimpse of a Boreal Owl. Tears of joy literally froze to her cheeks when the owl flew and perched only three feet from where she stood. Or grandparents gently telling wide-eyed grandchildren about the rare and special bird they were both looking at. Or the grateful expression from non-ambulatory people who were carried through deep snow to see the owl.

The staff at Springbrook Nature Center had hundreds of special experiences as thousands came to see the owl. Activities involving the owl required one third of all staff time, but sharing that time with people who were experiencing life time memories was well worth it. Springbrook's Boreal Owl was an unexpected, but very special adventure that I hope will repeat itself in new and even more unexpected ways in the future.

Director, Springbrook Nature Center, 100 – 85th Ave. NE, Fridley, Minnesota.

The 1996–97 Influx of Northern Owls Into Minnesota

Peder Svingen

For the second consecutive winter, unusually high numbers of four northern owl species were recorded throughout Minnesota. Boreal Owls reached an all-time record, while three species established their second or third highest known totals. There have never been simultaneous irruptions of all four owl species in consecutive years. Similar to the 1995–96 influx, startling numbers of Great Gray Owls reached southern Minnesota and most of the Boreal Owls were found dying or dead.

When all the data from the 1995–96 influx of northern owls into Minnesota were finally published (Eckert 1996–97, Wilson 1996–97) the authors themselves, the compilers of hundreds of records, and scores of observers were relieved. After all, it could be many years before the four northern owl species would arrive simultaneously in record or near record numbers. Absolutely no one anticipated back-to-back irruptions of all four species in 1995–96 and 1996–97! Observers expected Boreal Owls *(Aegolius funereus)* to be especially scarce, considering their massive die-off during 1995–96 (178 dead or dying of 214 reported, Wilson 1996–97).

Although two Boreal Owls were banded at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve in Duluth, on 23 and 24 October 1996 (D. Evans *et al.*), there were no other harbingers of the 1996–97 irruption and die-off of Borealis that followed. Great Gray Owls *(Strix nebulosa)* were actually scarce before late December 1996 but by late winter, impressive numbers reached southern Minnesota for the second year in a row. In contrast to these first two owl species, by the end of November 1996, it was already clear that Snowy Owls *(Nyctea scandiaca)* and Northern Hawk Owls *(Surnia ulula)* were arriving in above normal numbers. For both Snowy and Northern Hawk Owls, their 1996–97 invasion totals are the second highest ever documented in Minnesota, and the final tally of Northern Hawk Owls is more than double that of 1995–96!

The methodology for determining total numbers of owls in this article is similar to that used by Kim Eckert in his six previous accounts of owl irruptions and invasions. Duplicate sightings of what are believed to be the same individual are not counted in these totals. Subjective decisions were made about several reports that could have been either new individuals or previously known individuals that had relocated. These decisions considered such factors as the distance in miles between locations, the number of days between sightings, and the apparent activity level of both birds and birders. Although a few individuals may have been counted more than once, there were undoubtedly more owls that either remained undetected in remote areas or went unreported by local observers.

The term "irruption" is generally used here for Great Gray and Boreal Owls since they are regular breeders and permanent residents in Minnesota. In contrast, the term "invasion" is used for both Snowy and Northern Hawk Owls, since they are assumed to originate from Canada (Godfrey 1986).

The totals presented here may underestimate the true magnitude of the 1996–97 irruption for several reasons. Firstly, it is possible that fewer birders than usual

Snowy Owl, 11 November 1996, Grand Marais, Cook County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

were actively seeking owls in northern and western Minnesota during the winter of 1996–97. There were so many "northern" owls in southern Minnesota that all four species could easily be observed in the Twin Cities area. These included the Northern Hawk Owl that overwintered in Blaine, Anoka County, several Great Grays that were reliably present in Washington County for at least two months, and the famous Boreal Owl that was seen by thousands of people at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley, Anoka County, during its ten week stay.

Secondly, deep snow hampered observers in many locations and travel conditions were frequently treacherous throughout western Minnesota, where blizzard after blizzard produced massive snowdrifts and repeatedly closed roads.

Lastly, observers may also have been somewhat sated after the 1995–96 irruption although there is no evidence they were less inclined to seek out and report these owls — could anyone <u>really</u> get tired of watching a Great Gray Owl plunge into the snow?

Snowy Owl

From 31 October 1996 through 6 June 1997, a total of 153 Snowy Owls was recorded in Minnesota (Figure 1). This total represents the second largest invasion of Snowys ever documented in the state (Table 1). The first few reports were from Cook County but then one appeared at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport on 3 November, relatively early for southern Minnesota. South arrivals became the theme as more than one-third of the 33

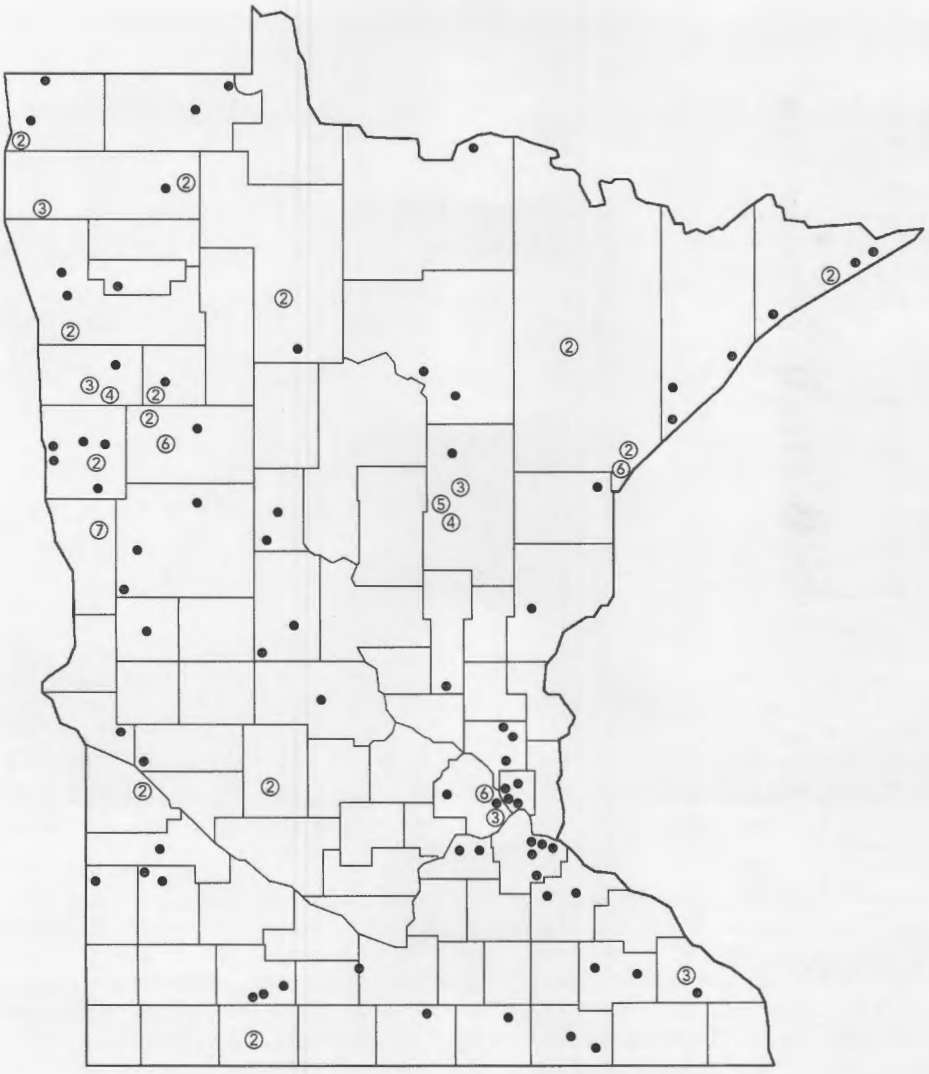

Figure 1. Locations of Snowy Owl records, Winter 1996–97 (n=153). Solid circle (●) depicts one individual, open circle (ⓝ) depicts two or more individuals.

individuals reported by the end of November were in southern Minnesota counties; these included a second bird in Hennepin plus Anoka, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Lac Qui Parle (2), Lyon, Mower, Ramsey, and Swift.

December was the peak month for arrivals with approximately 50 new individuals located throughout the state. Once again, the south was well-represented by arrivals in Dakota (2), Goodhue, Hennepin (3), Lyon, Olmsted (2), Ramsey (2), and Winona (4), plus one on the Cedar Creek Bog Christmas Bird Count (county?). The pace slowed in January as overwintering birds established territories; only 20 previously unre-

ported individuals were found. Presumably, the new February (26) and March (16) reports included a few birds wandering in late winter, a few birds on winter territories that had not been previously detected, and some individuals beginning to migrate back north, especially those discovered for the first time in March. Only four new individuals were found in April. The last four reports of Snowy Owls associated with the 1996–97 invasion in Minnesota were extremely late: 18 May near Long Siding, Mille Lacs County, 22 May in Duluth, and one turned in to the Raptor Center on 27 May from Warroad, Roseau County, and one on 6 June at Agassiz NWR, Marshall County.

On 6 March 1997, an incredible total of **20** Snowy Owls was found by Ray Glassel, Robert Janssen, and Steve Millard (***The Loon*** 69:153–154) in western Minnesota. Seven of these were located at Rothsay Wildlife Management Area in Wilkin County where at least five had overwintered, and six were at Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge in western Becker County where two had been seen in January and February. Elsewhere in the state, David Evans documented 31 different birds moving through the Duluth-Superior harbor area during the season (26 of these were on the Wisconsin side of the harbor). The only other localized concentration was around the city of Aitkin, where Warren Nelson tracked at least nine different birds; most of these were along Aitkin County Road 1.

The total of 13 different Snowy Owls in Aitkin County during 1996–97 surpassed the 11 in Hennepin and the ten in St. Louis; during the record 1993–94 invasion these same three counties led the way with the highest numbers of owls (Schladweiler 1994–95). Apart from these concentrations, Snowy Owls were fairly evenly distributed in 1996–97 among the 46 counties shown in Figure 1. Although obviously fewer than the total of 71 counties recording 351 Snowys during 1993–94 (Schladweiler 1994–95), this total is exactly twice as many counties as the 23 in 1991–92 when 121 Snowys were recorded (Eckert 1992). The 1991–92 invasion, now considered the third highest ever, was mostly confined to the northeast and north-central regions where >84% of the owls were found. As pointed out by both Eckert and Schladweiler, unfortunately there is an incomplete picture of the 1926–27 Snowy Owl invasion (Roberts 1932) which may have been the largest in Minnesota history. Another apparent invasion during 1949–50 (*The Flicker* 22:111–112) included duplicate sightings; thus, an accurate total cannot be determined.

There now have been at least three different "back-to-back" invasions of Snowy Owls, usually associated with an influx of other winter raptors. The first well-documented invasion of 92 Snowys in 1966–67 (Nicholls 1969) was followed by an apparent "echo invasion" in 1967–68 that previously has not been reviewed. Although it is difficult nearly thirty years later to compile an accurate total, the 1967–68 seasonal reports cite at least 41 individuals, including south reports in Anoka, Big Stone, Hennepin (2), Olmsted, Stevens (2), Washington, Watonwan (2), and Yellow Medicine counties. Arguably not representing an invasion, another unpublished influx of at least 25 individuals in 1990–91 (data from hot line transcripts, personal records and seasonal reports) was followed by the well-documented invasion of 121 Snowys in 1991–92 (Eckert 1992). Finally, the 1995–96 total of 51 Snowy Owls presaged the 1996–97 invasion of 153 individuals as reported herein.

In contrast to the many reports of weakened or emaciated birds during the 1993–94 invasion, most 1996–97 birds appeared healthy. One was hit by a car along Wadena County Road 104 in mid–November, one near Eyota, Olmsted Co. was found dead in early December, one was turned in dead to the DNR in Grand Rapids on 24 April, and five were turned in to the Raptor Center for rehabilitation. There was also a second-hand report on 9 November of two birds shot along County Road 2 in Lake County.

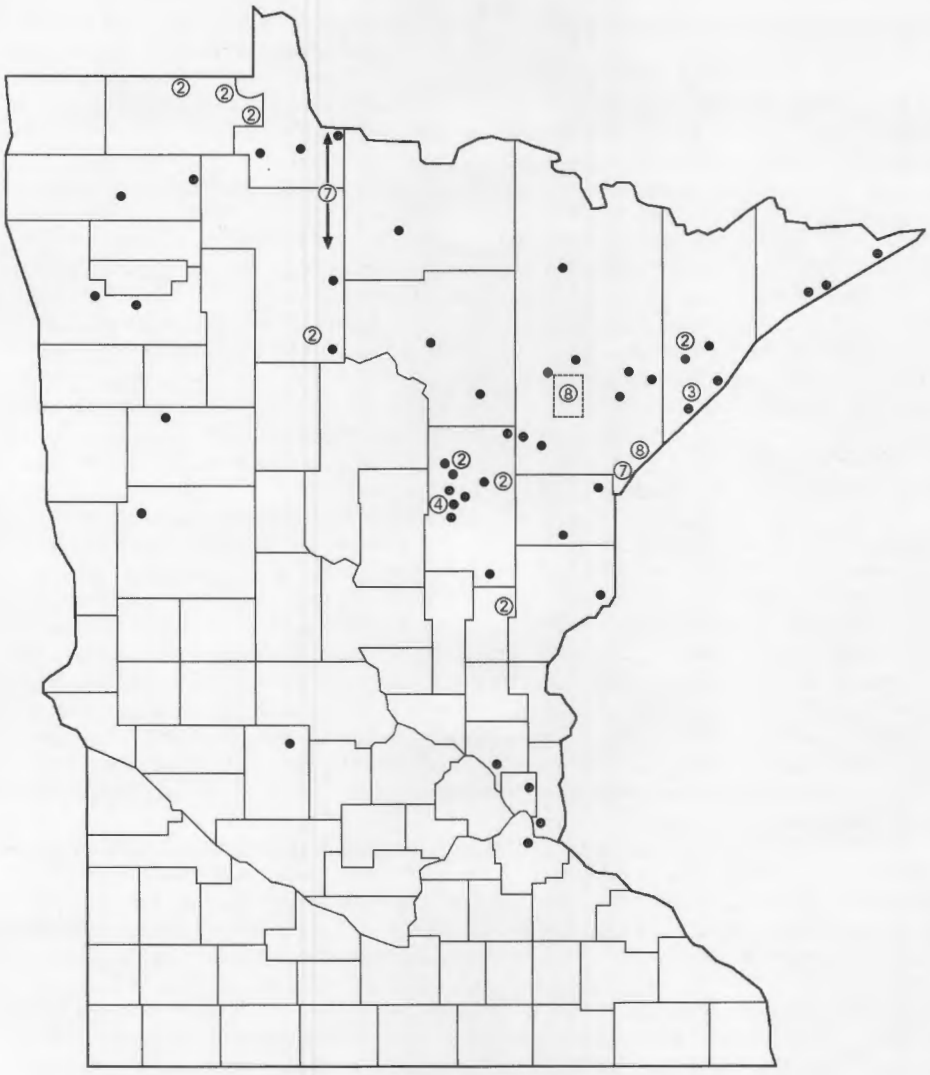

Figure 2. Locations of Northern Hawk Owl records, Winter 1996–97 (n=100). Solid circle (●) depicts one individual, open circle (ⓝ) depicts two or more individuals. The dashed rectangle outlines the Sax-Zim bog area.

Northern Hawk Owl

As depicted on the map in Figure 2, a total of 100 Northern Hawk Owls was recorded in Minnesota during the 1996–97 season. This represents the second largest documented invasion in the state (Table 1) and is exceeded only by the 159 individuals recorded in 1991–92 (Eckert 1992). The first individual was relatively early on 12 October, along Highway 2 in Itasca County, and was followed by two additional October reports. On 10 November, an unusual report came from the Mentor Prairie in Polk County. During the month of November, a total of 13 Hawk Owls was reported, all

Northern Hawk Owl, 10 January 1997, Sax-Zim bog, St. Louis County. Photo by Dudley Edmundson.

in northern Minnesota. Most unusual of these was one near Pelican Rapids, only the second record for Otter Tail County, which stayed there from 29 November to 8 December.

A strong influx in December scattered 34 additional Hawk Owls across the coniferous forest regions of northern Minnesota, from Cook County in the northeast to Roseau County in the northwest, and south to Cass and Pine counties. Even farther south and most visible, because it stayed put for about ten weeks after arriving by 10 December in the Twin Cities area, was the one along Cloverleaf Parkway in Blaine, Anoka County. The pace of arrival was less intense in January (24) but three more birds reached southern Minnesota: one on the 12th near the intersection of U.S. Highway 52 and State Highway 55 in Dakota County, one on the 18th in Cottage Grove, Washington County, and one seen for approximately three weeks near New London, Kandiyohi County. Although even fewer birds were first discovered in February (19), they included yet another southern Minnesota record, one in Ramsey County on the 15th where the species last occurred on 15 January 1963! No new Hawk Owls were reported after the six found in early March except for one in Lake of the Woods County during late May.

By mid-winter, it became increasingly challenging to keep track of owls in Aitkin and St. Louis counties. At least nine individuals were known to be present in Aitkin County on 25 January, according to Cindy Butler and Warren Nelson, both of whom provided detailed maps of their sightings. Aitkin County had a total of seventeen Hawk Owls during the season, compared to only two during 1995–96. St. Louis County (31) had the most by far of any county during the 1996–97 season, with the majority of these split equally among the Sax-Zim Bog area (8), Duluth (7), and the township roads northeast of Duluth (8).

Unlike the 1995–96 invasion of 47 Hawk Owls which was basically confined to the northeastern quarter of the state, the 1996–97 invasion produced good numbers in north-central and northwestern Minnesota, as well as in northern Aitkin County. Steve and Diane Millard counted seven Hawk Owls on 19 January while driving along Highway 72 in Beltrami and Lake of the Woods counties. Only one was reported from Koochiching County, but I am also aware of only one birding trip to this area all winter; during the record invasion of 1991–92, the "Big Bog" area in Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Beltrami counties held more than two dozen Hawk Owls.

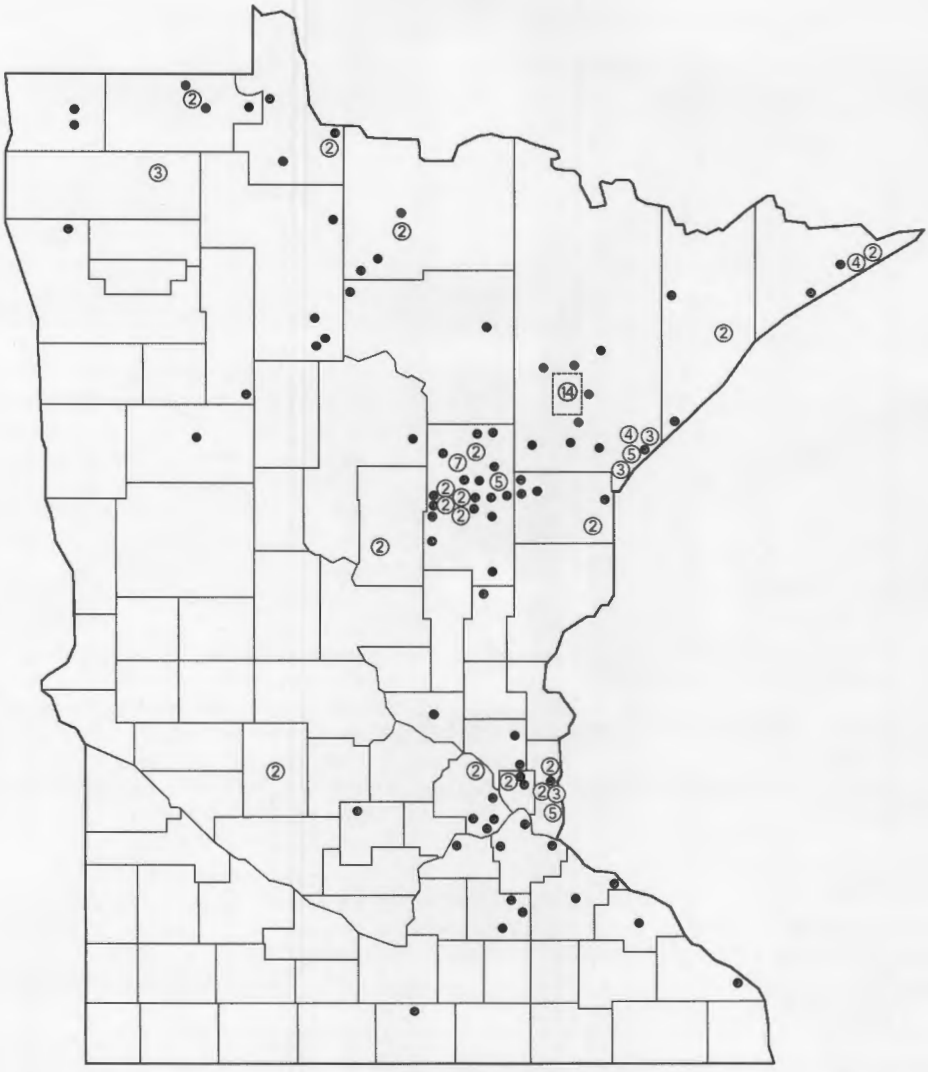

Figure 3. Locations of Great Gray Owl records, Winter 1996–97 (n=168). Solid circle (●) depicts one individual, open circle (ⓝ) depicts two or more individuals. The dashed rectangle outlines the Sax-Zim bog area.

The 1996–97 invasion was especially noteworthy for the five Northern Hawk Owl records in southern Minnesota cited earlier; these included first county records in Kandiyohi, Anoka, and Washington. During the 1995–96 invasion, there were no documented records from southern Minnesota. Even during the record invasion of 1991–92 there was only one Northern Hawk Owl farther south than Pine County, that at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge (Eckert 1992). During the 1962–63 invasion there were four south records, in Chisago, Ramsey, Traverse, and Wabasha counties (Green 1963). Only a handful of other

	Snowy Owl		Northern Hawk Owl		Great Gray Owl		Boreal Owl	
	total	rank	total	rank	total	rank	total	rank
1977–78							66	#4
1978–79								
1979–80								
1980–81								
1981–82							39	#5
1982–83								
1983–84					122	#5		
1984–85								
1985–86								
1986–87								
1987–88								
1988–89					115	#6	194	#3
1989–90								
1990–91			16	#5	134	#4		
1991–92	121	#3	159	#1	218	#2		
1992–93								
1993–94	351	#1						
1994–95								
1995–96	51	#6	47	#3?	342	#1	214*	#2
1996–97	153	#2	100	#2	168	#3	263	#1

Table 1. Irruptions of northern owls in Minnesota during the past twenty years. Not shown are the 1966–67 irruption of Snowy Owls (92, probably the fourth highest), the 1962–63 irruption of Northern Hawk Owls (approximately 47, either the third or fourth highest), and historic irruptions for which totals are uncertain.

***This number differs from the total reported in the winter 1996–97 issue of *The Loon*, (68:228–231), as two additional records have since been discovered.**

south counties have ever recorded this species (Janssen and Hertzel 1996).

As during previous invasions, these owls appeared healthy; one picked up dead in Virginia was the only report of either injury or death. Northern Hawk Owls are known to linger into late spring or even summer after invasions and the 1996–97 invasion is no exception. One first reported in early January was relocated nine miles north of Roseau, Roseau County on 25 May – 7 June 1997 (P. Svingen *et al.*). Another was discovered along the Hogsback-O'Brien Trail in the Beltrami Island State Forest, Lake of the Woods County on 26 May 1997 (C. Mandel). Although the Roseau bird was calling and appeared territorial, there was no breeding evidence in either location; thus, both individuals are included here as exceptionally late migrants.

Great Gray Owl

As depicted in Figure 3, a total of 168 Great Gray Owls was recorded in the state from mid-October 1996 through mid-April 1997. This total represents the third largest irruption of Great Grays ever recorded in Minnesota (Table 1). Spring reports from known breeding areas are not included in this total. The earliest report on 12 October was from the well-known vicinity of County Roads 5 and 18 in north-central Aitkin County. One was seen the next day near Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Aitkin County, but there were only five other reports until early December, when several were found in the Sax-Zim Bog area in St. Louis County. Although exact dates are unknown for a few records, individual owls were apparently located for the first time in October (2), November (5), De-

Great Gray Owl, 1 February 1997, Washington County. Photo by Terry Brashear.

cember (25), January (67), February (51), March (15), and April (3).

Virtually all the December reports were from either northeastern Minnesota in Cook, Lake, St. Louis, and Carlton counties, or from nearby Aitkin County. The Baudette and Beltrami Island Christmas Bird Counts finally produced sightings in the north-central region and the Warren CBC included a first Polk County record at the Wetlands-Pines-Prairie Audubon Sanctuary on 29 December. Late December – early January saw a surge of Great Grays into both Aitkin County and the Sax-Zim Bog area in St. Louis County. These two counties combined had nearly half of all the Great Gray Owls. The 1996–97 irruption total of 38 individuals in Aitkin County equaled the total of 38 in St. Louis County. Cindy Butler and Warren Nelson tracked birds in Aitkin County where a peak daily count of no fewer than 14 individuals was present on 1 February, with many of these lingering into March. Ben Yokel tracked birds in the Sax-Zim Bog area where 14 different individuals were considered present at various times during the irruption.

The first of approximately **41** Great Grays that reached southern Minnesota was reported at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Sanctuary in Wirth Park, Hennepin County, on 13 January, some two weeks later than the first south report during the 1995–96 irruption. Others soon followed with January reports in Anoka, two locations in Ramsey, two locations in Rice, and several in Washington counties. Those in Washington County, at Lake Elmo Regional Park (2), along Highway 95 south of Marine On St. Croix (1–2), and along 42nd Street in Afton (up to five birds by late February) were among the most well-watched of all the Great Grays in the Twin Cities area.

February brought Great Grays into two Goodhue County and two Dakota County locations for the first time. Also during February, at least five additional birds were reported in Hennepin, two more in Ramsey, and one more in Washington. One Great Gray Owl was west near Hutchinson, McLeod County on 7 February and one was as far southeast as Richmond Township, Winona County on 23 February. The farthest south report was also the most startling, that one on the Larry Swenson farm near Minnesota Lake in late February, a first record for Faribault County. Two were picked up injured

or dead in Kandiyohi County during February but new reports of apparently healthy birds in Washington (3), Rice, Dakota, Scott, and Wabasha counties came in during March (the latter a first county record, on 13 March near Theilman). The last report from southern Minnesota was on 12 April when the Raptor Center received a bird from Sherburne County.

As pointed out previously (Eckert 1996–97) significant numbers of Great Grays reached southern Minnesota during only one irruption prior to 1995–96; that was in 1968–69 when 27 owls were reported in the Twin Cities area (Green 1969). A much higher percentage (24.4%, or 41 of 168) reached southern Minnesota during the 1996–97 irruption than in 1995–96 (15.5%, or 53 of 342). Most of these reports were confirmed but there is a chance that some were actually Barred Owls, *(Strix varia)*, which are occasionally mistaken for Great Grays by inexperienced observers.

During the 1995–96 irruption, Great Grays suffered an 18% mortality rate. Although the ultimate fate of an additional 11 birds turned in to the Raptor Center was unspecified, I am aware of at least 11 dead during the 1996–97 irruption (approximately 6.5%). These data are in line with the mortality rates of 1%–6% recorded during four previous irruptions (see Eckert 1996–97) and obviously lower than either 1968–69 (about 19%) or 1977–78 (about 24%). The winter of 1996–97 was almost as severe in terms of snow depth and cold temperatures as the previous winter, when Great Gray Owl mortality was much higher; however, the deep snows did not accumulate as early in the season and thick crust did not develop as readily as it did during the late winter and early spring of 1995–96.

Boreal Owl

A total of 263 Boreal Owls was recorded, of which 202 were found dying or dead. This represents the highest total ever recorded during a winter irruption in Minnesota (Table 1). The interested reader is referred to the complete account of this species by Steve Wilson, which appears elsewhere in this issue.

Discussion

The 1996–97 influx of northern owls into Minnesota was especially noteworthy in several respects. Although there have been so-called "echo invasions" of owl species in the past, simultaneous irruptions of Snowy, Northern Hawk, Great Gray, and Boreal Owls during two consecutive winters are unprecedented in Minnesota. It nearly happened in 1990–91 and 1991–92 except that the total of Snowy Owls (~25) was modest in 1990–91, while numbers of Boreal Owls were above average but not outstanding during either of these two winters. The eight birds found in Minnesota during 1991–92 may actually have mirrored that winter's Boreal Owl irruption in eastern Canada and New England *(American Birds* 46:225). Interestingly, Ontario reported exceptional numbers of all four owl species in 1991–92 *(American Birds* 46:260). At the time of this writing, the winter regional reports for 1996–97 are not yet published in *Field Notes*, so the Minnesota data cannot be fully interpreted from either a regional or continental perspective.

Even more impressive than this season's actual totals, all four owl species reached southern Minnesota in good numbers during 1996–97. More than a third of all Snowy Owls (55 of 153) were in the south. Except for the 1991–92 invasion when only ten Snowys reached southern Minnesota, this ratio is similar to previous invasions (40 of 92 in 1966–67, 161 of 351 in 1993–94, 21 of 51 in 1995–96). No fewer than five Northern Hawk Owls invaded southern Minnesota; similar numbers have been documented only one other winter, that was in 1962–63 when four were found (Green 1963). Significant numbers of Great Gray Owls (41) reached southern Minnesota for the second consecutive winter and for only the third time ever; there were 27 in the south during the 1968–69 irruption and 53 in 1995–96 (Green 1969, Eckert 1996–

97). Finally, more than a dozen Boreal Owls were reported in the southern half of the state, most of these in the Twin Cities area.

An obvious question for consideration after a glance at Table 1 is "why are so many of the major irruptions and invasions of northern owls clustered within the past ten years?" Certainly there are more observers, burgeoning computer networks that facilitate faster communication, and intense interest in these owls. A complex interplay of prey selection, abundance of prey, snow depth and conditions, temperature and wind may affect hunting success and ultimately, winter movements. There may also be unidentified ecological factors modulating these irruptions and invasions. It remains to be seen whether northern owl populations will remain stable despite an apparent increase in the frequency and magnitude of these phenomena.

Acknowledgments

I thank the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff for assisting with birds turned in to their field offices. David Willard, Collection Manager at the Field Museum, provided a list of Minnesota owls that had been sent to Chicago. I also thank the Raptor Center staff, especially Jane Goggin, for providing a compilation of owls turned in for rehabilitation.

Many observers reported dates, numbers and locations of these owls throughout the state; special thanks to Cindy Butler, Kim Eckert, David Evans, Anthony Hertzel, Steve Millard, Warren Nelson, Pam Perry, John Schladweiler, Steve Wilson, and Ben Yokel for their compilations of multiple records which greatly improved the accuracy of the data presented here. Karl Bardon provided a summary of CBC records and Anthony Hertzel produced the maps. Steve Wilson compiled the total for Boreal Owls.

I am indebted to Kim Eckert whose six previous articles in ***The Loon*** set the standard for scholarly accounts of northern owl irruptions and invasions in Minnesota; this article benefited immeasurably from his experience and comment.

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2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.

Irruption of Boreal Owls
Winter 1996–97

Steve Wilson

For the second consecutive winter, record numbers of Boreal Owls *(Aegolius funereus)* were reported in Minnesota. From October 1996 to April 1997, a total of 263 was reported, surpassing the previous year's record of 214 (higher than previously reported, due to two additional carcasses received after publication). Unfortunately, not only was this the biggest irruption of Boreal Owls ever recorded in Minnesota (***The Loon*** 68:228), or perhaps anywhere, it was also the most severe. The total numbers, timing, and age structure of the birds involved all hint at the severe nature of the event. The most telling statistic leaves no doubt: 202 Boreal Owls were found dead or dying, compared with the previous winter's record 178.

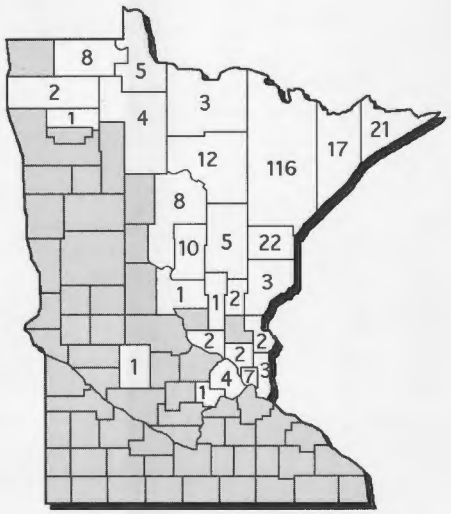

Figure 1. Boreal Owl records by county.

Methods

Owl observations included in this report were garnered much as they were for the 1988–89 and 1995–96 events, with some differences. Press releases were used to generate interest and instruct people on what to do with dead Boreal Owls in 1988–89 and 1995–96, but not last winter. However, in 1996–97, interest generated by the owl at Springbrook Nature Center (see ***The Loon*** 69:111–113) and the many owls showing up around Duluth resulted in several newspaper articles that served the same purpose. Many taxidermists were contacted for leads on dead birds in 1988–89, but not the next two irruptions. In all three events, MN DNR offices were notified and asked to collect carcasses and reports from individuals contacting them. Singing birds, presumably on breeding territories, were not counted in this report.

Many reports were simply of "small owls," which could have included either Boreal or Northern Saw-whet Owls *(Aegolius acadius)* — at least 22 Saw-whets were reported (19 dead or dying) from January to March 1997. Reports of dead birds were counted as Boreal Owls when a carcass was turned in (184), or a carcass was found, not turned in, but positively identified (11), or reported on a birding hot line (7). The total numbers of "dead and dying" birds cited includes nine birds rehabilitated and released by the Raptor Center. Sightings of live birds were counted as Boreal Owls if: reported to a birding hot line (14); photographed or identified by an experienced observer (28); identified by an inexperienced observer using a photo, book or noting an identifying characteristic (19). This left 26 reports (21 live, five dead) of small owls that were not identified to species.

Locations of all reported birds were plotted on maps. Any sightings poten-

tially within 1/4 mile of each other not confirmed as separate birds were assumed to be the same individual. For example, a live bird seen within 1/4 mile of a subsequently-found dead Boreal Owl was treated as one dead bird. Since Boreal Owls can obviously travel great distances, this 1/4-mile rule could result in the double-counting of some individuals. Most of the 263 reports, though, were of confirmed deaths (77%), so the opportunity for double-counting was limited. Also, the behavior of some birds — most notably "Springbrook" — suggests a tendency of birds to stay put once they reached "civilization."

The 1/4-mile rule is also warranted because of this species' tendency to concentrate in small areas during irruptions. During the last three irruptions, it has been fairly common for two dead Boreal Owls to turn up at the same location. Three at one spot is not unheard of, and on at least one occasion each, four (pers. comm., Dory Spence, Cook County), five (Cascade Lodge, Cook County), and six (private home, Lake County) different birds have appeared at one location over a winter. Thus, the seventeen live birds not counted because they were within 1/4-mile of a bird later found dead, probably included some additional birds not reflected in the totals reported here.

Of the carcasses recovered, 150 were forwarded to either the Bell Museum of Natural History or Chicago Field Museum, 18 were used by schools for mounts, and seven were discarded due to their deteriorated condition.

Geographic Extent

The geographical reach of this irruption was very similar to the 1995–96 and 1988–89 events, at least within Minnesota. Birds appeared as far west as Roseau, Pennington and Morrison counties,

Notes on Feeding

With awareness of the lethal nature of these events increasing in recent years, so too has the desire of people to help. This is especially true, since a peculiarity of Boreal Owl behavior during these events ensures most witnesses have a natural affinity for birds. During irruptions, Boreal Owls often show up at bird feeders, apparently one of the few places they can catch a small mammal under conditions of deep snow and low prey abundance.

During the peak of the irruption, a day seldom passed when I didn't receive at least one call for advice from someone with a Boreal Owl outside their window. Hopefully an event of this severity won't be repeated in the near future, but just in case, here are some reflections on what did — and didn't — work.

If the bird appears weak, listless, and/or unresponsive to the point it can be touched, or nearly touched, it may need immediate help to survive. The best option is capture and immediate care by a rehabilitator such as the Raptor Center, where they rehabilitated and released 9 of 12 Boreal Owls received last winter (Jane Goggin, pers. comm.).

If the owl appears healthy, several things can be tried. Almost invariably during irruptions, Boreal Owls appear near bird feeders, other animal feeding areas (rabbits, livestock, etc.), or woodpiles — all places where they have an increased chance of catching a mouse, vole, shrew, or occasionally, flying squirrel. Anything that would enhance the owl's chance of catching a small mammal — for example, shoveling the snow away from the feeder and sprinkling seed on the ground — could tip the scale in the bird's favor. A Duluth-area homeowner tried this and then watched his Boreal Owl make six dives into the snow-free area around the feeder, coming up with at least one small mammal.

An approach with more predictable results is to provide the owl with

Year	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
1988–89	1	2	11 (5)	15 (10)	56 (47)	61 (56)	13 (12)
1995–96	3 (1)*	1*	17 (10)	26 (21)	62 (47)	70 (65)	17 (16)
1996–97	2	1	14 (8)	105 (80)	76 (52)	49 (37)	4 (4)

*Banded at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (Dave Evans, pers. comm.)

Table 1. Comparison of monthly Boreal Owl reports for three different irruptions. Total number of Boreal Owls reported (# dead birds).

and as far south as Kandiyohi, Carver and Ramsey counties (see Figure 1). As one might guess from the map, the irruption also extended into Wisconsin. Ten dead Boreal Owls were collected in Douglas, Burnett, Washburn and Bayfield counties in the NW corner of Wisconsin, along with a report of a carcass from Brown County on the east side of the state (Dave Evans; Kerry Beheler-Amass, Wisc. DNR, pers. comm.). Further information on the regional nature of this event should come from the winter regional reports in Field Notes, not available at the time of this writing.

Compared to the two most recent irruptions, the geographic extent of the 1996–97 irruption didn't reflect the increased magnitude of the event, but the number of counties involved did. Boreal Owls were reported from 26 counties in Minnesota during the winter of 1996–97, compared with 22 counties in 1995–96 and 18 counties in 1988–89. The two other major Boreal Owl irruptions documented in Minnesota, during the winters

Boreal Owl taking a mouse. Photo by Steve Wilson.

"feeder mice" of a different sort, i.e., those raised in a pet store to feed snakes, etc. I tried this once, with favorable results. The mice were taken without hesitation. For those reluctant to handle mice, the bird can remove them from the box unassisted (see photo).

A method that almost never works is putting raw meat out for the birds. I have heard countless tales of "hamburger, steak, venison, sausage, etc." offered, often literally under the beak of the bird, without results. They apparently don't recognize these as food items. On only two occasions this past winter did I hear of Boreal Owls taking raw meat. One was a secondhand report for which I do not have details. The other involved a tactic that might work, depending on snow conditions and how good a throwing arm you have. In this instance, the good Samaritan threw the hamburger toward the owl, causing it to roll across the top of the snow. This apparently mimicked the action of a small mammal scurrying across the top of the snow closely enough that the owl pounced on the rolling meatball and ate it.

That movement might be key was also suggested by another anecdote reported to me by a homeowner with a visiting Boreal Owl. Actually, she wasn't aware of her visitor until she walked through her back yard carrying an armload of material that included a string with a small block of wood at-

of 1977–78 and 1981–82, were confined largely to Lake Superior's North Shore, and each covered only five counties (***The Loon*** 50:63–68, 54:176–177).

Although the last three irruptions in MN shared similar geographic ranges, noteworthy differences occurred in the distribution of birds within that range during the 1996–97 season. As in all previous irruptions, except 1922, the last three events saw birds concentrating along the North Shore of Lake Superior as they moved south from breeding areas in the boreal forest to the north. However, birds were less concentrated in Cook and Lake counties last winter (14% of all reports) than in either 1988–89 (31%) or 1995–96 (29%). Instead, birds apparently continued south and west, noticeably increasing the concentration of birds along the western edge of the irruption zone (essentially a line from Roseau to Hennepin counties). For example, Roseau County had eight reports, Crow Wing County ten reports, and diminutive Ramsey County reported seven birds, all significant increases over totals from the two previous irruptions (***The Loon*** 68:229).

Most birds, though, went no farther than the Duluth, Cloquet and Carlton area at the tip of Lake Superior. An amazing concentration of Boreal Owls occurred here. The number of reports in Carlton County more than tripled, from six in 1988–89, and again in 1995–96, to 22 in 1996–97. And in Duluth, Hermantown, and adjacent townships in St. Louis County, a remarkable 86 Boreal Owls were found. This relatively small area, then, accounted for 41% of all reports in the state.

Timing

More birds may have traveled farther than in 1988–89 or 1995–96 because they started moving sooner. In the latter two irruptions, significant numbers of birds first appeared in the state in December; numbers then steadily increased through January and February, and reached a peak in March (***The Loon*** 68:229–230). By contrast, last winter's irruption began in December but quickly peaked in January, although large numbers of birds continued to appear through March (Table 1).

Age

Both the numbers of birds involved and their early arrival suggest birds under stress; the death toll confirms it. A staggering 202 Boreal Owls were found dead or dying, for the most part presumably from starvation brought on by a combina-

tached. She accidentally dropped the block of wood, and rather than stop to pick it up, let it drag along behind her through the snow on the end of the string. Much to her surprise, a Boreal Owl descended from the tree she was passing and pounced on the block of wood, as if it were a mouse or other small mammal.

Armed with this information, I suggested to callers that they tie meat to a string and pull it across the top of the snow in front of visiting owls. Only one person tried this and reported back to me. Ward Herstad, of Duluth, had already found one dead Boreal Owl near his feeder in January 1997, so when a second bird appeared that same month, he was determined to help it. Recognizing the inherent limitation in my suggestion of tying the meat directly to the string ("I'm trying to feed the Boreal Owl, not catch it"), Ward improvised. He fashioned a miniature sled out of a section of plastic pop bottle, tied a length of fishing line to it, and set a mouse-sized piece of meat on the sled. The next time the owl appeared, he pulled this "meat on a sled" across the top of the snow. The Boreal Owl took three pieces of meat before apparently getting his fill. However, when he tried this on another occasion, the owl ignored it, so the technique needs more testing to gauge its effectiveness.

tion of deep snow and low prey abundance. Although the proportion of dead birds (77%) was slightly lower than in 1988–89 and 1995–96 (85% and 83%, respectively), the impact on the population of the 1996–97 season is likely to be greater, due to the age of the birds involved. Ages are determined based on wing molt patterns (*The Auk* 105:783–789) of the dead birds. Preliminary results indicate adult birds (those entering at least their second winter) were most affected in the 1996–97 irruption. In 1988-89, only 24% of the dead birds were adults (n=139); in 1995–96 it jumped to 50% (n=105), and in 1996–97 to 62% (n=155).

Older birds are presumably the most successful breeders, so the impact of last winter's die-off on Boreal Owls may be relatively greater than the total number of dead birds suggests. The absolute impact is difficult to gauge, though, without knowing what proportion of the dead birds originated from Canada, and how large a breeding range they represent. That Bill Lane was successful locating singing males and breeding pairs on surveys, (see ***The Loon*** 69:145–150), conducted primarily in Cook County during and following the die-off (MnBirdNet, 4/25/97), shows how complex Boreal Owl demography can be.

Acknowledgments

I thank the scores of individuals that contributed Boreal Owl reports or carcasses last winter. Special thanks go to those who shared multiple records or collected multiple carcasses, including Kim Eckert, Dave Evans, Dave Duncan, Anthony Hertzel, Peder Svingen, Jane Goggin and the Raptor Center, and the Minnesota DNR personnel, particularly at the Cloquet Wildlife Office. Mary Shedd reviewed the manuscript, and Anthony Hertzel produced the map.

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The Winter Season
(1 December 1996 to 28 February 1997)

Karl Bardon

For the second year in a row, Minnesota experienced record snow fall, frequent blizzards, and severe windchills, once again forcing near record numbers of northern owls all the way to southern regions of the state. Over 7,500 people observed the Boreal Owl at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley, undoubtedly making this the most watched bird in state history.

December and January were miserable, especially for those living in southern and western Minnesota. Storm after storm hit these areas, often once each week, and often completely shutting down large areas of the state. Many in the west were ice storms, while record or near-record amounts of snow fell in other areas, including Duluth and Fargo-Moorhead. After each blizzard, the winds blew, often creating -50 to -70°F windchills, and blowing snow into drifts as high as ten feet or more. By mid-January, Minnesota had received at least nine major storms; almost half (40) of all 87 counties were declared disaster areas and eligible to receive federal assistance for snow removal, the first time in state history that this has been necessary. The entire state except far southeastern Minnesota had over two feet of snow on the ground in mid-January.

Temperatures in December were overall 3.7°F below normal, with western re-

gions reporting temperatures 4.6–6.7°F below normal. January temps were also several degrees below normal, with the western regions still 2.9–4.2°F below normal. February by comparison was quite enjoyable, and overall temperatures were 2.1°F above normal. Interestingly, while most of the state was exasperated with all the severe weather, observers in Houston Co. were enjoying a relatively mild season, and the first overwintering **Killdeer** in over 16 years was reported!

Numbers of **Snowy**, **Northern Hawk**, **Great Gray**, and **Boreal Owls** were all at or near record levels, with numerous reports of Snowy Owls from throughout the state, and many reports of the latter three species from at least as far south as the Twin Cities region. Perhaps for the first time ever, it was possible for birders in the Twin Cities area to rather easily see all four species of "northern owls" throughout most of the winter. Unfortunately, very large numbers of dead and dying Boreal Owls were found for the second year in a row.

Most of the significant increases and decreases in overall numbers of individual species can probably be attributed to the weather. For example, for the first time in over 25 years, **Northern Harriers** were not reported this winter. No doubt the continuous onslaught of blizzards in the southern and western regions held many ground feeding raptors such as harriers much farther south. Interestingly, although the number of **American Kestrels** was the lowest in 14 years, the number of **Red-tailed Hawks** was about average. Conversely, the record number of **Ring-necked Pheasants** and the sharp increase in numbers of **Gray Partridge** can also be attributed to the heavy snowfall and extensive drifting, since these birds were probably forced out near roadsides where they were more visible. It is unclear whether these increased numbers represent any population increase.

Many northern species were down in numbers, including **Northern Shrike**, **Gray Jay** and **Boreal Chickadee**. Also noteworthy were continued low numbers of **Three-toed** and **Black-backed Woodpeckers**, and particularly low numbers of **Bohemian Waxwings**, which had one of their worst seasons on record. The reasons for these declines are unknown. Such declines are all the more noteworthy when one considers that about 50% fewer observers were reporting birds 15 years ago.

Passerines which showed a noticeable increase in numbers were those more dependent on berries or feeders, such as the near record number of **American Robins** and the **Mountain Bluebirds** discovered in Olmsted and Scott counties. Both **Varied Thrushes** and **Townsend's Solitaires** had their second best seasons ever, and there were more **Brown Thrashers** reported than ever before.

Gulls left the state early this year, and with only one notable exception, there were no reports of unusual species. Many observers may remember the report of a possible adult Slaty-backed Gull seen and photographed at the Superior, Wisconsin landfill and also seen briefly on the Minnesota side of the Superior entry. Consultation with a number of gull identification experts indicates that this individual was most likely a hybrid HerringXLesser Black-backed Gull or a HerringXGreat Black-backed Gull. The bird was clearly not a Slaty-backed Gull, but showed many characteristics consistent with and suggestive of this species, including the oft-mentioned subapical tongue tips on several of the outer primaries. This points out the difficulty in confirming and documenting the presence of unusual dark-mantled gull species, even those in adult plumage.

This season was dubbed "the winter of the summer finch" by Doug Johnson of Bemidji. As in other recent winters when **Common Redpolls** were on the low side of their roughly two-year cycle (1992–93 and 1994–95), reports of **American Goldfinches** and **Pine Siskins** were up noticeably in northern regions. More remarkable, however, was the unprecedented number of **Purple Finches** in the north. Although some ob-

servers have suggested a decrease in Purple Finch numbers at the expense of the ever-increasing **House Finch**, analysis of over 13 years of data from winter seasons shows no corresponding decrease in overall numbers of Purple Finches. **Pine** and **Evening Grosbeaks** were entirely confined to the northern regions, and numbers were generally below average. Both **Red** and **White-winged Crossbills** showed up in excellent numbers within the coniferous forested regions, and White-winged Crossbills were particularly abundant wherever there was spruce-tamarack forest. The numbers of White-winged Crossbills present appeared to be at record levels, but because there are fewer observers in the north, and few observers take the time to count common species, the full extent of this invasion cannot be quantified. These birds did not reach the southern part of the state.

Many species which are relatively common in December and early January are often rarely reported in later January and February. For example, although there were 10 **Fox Sparrows**, 35 **Song Sparrows**, 40 **White-throated Sparrows**, and 19 **Harris's Sparrows** reported during the first half of the season, very few of these individuals overwintered. It is often difficult to know if such skewed temporal differences are due to actual reductions in the population as the season progresses, or whether it only represents the greater observer coverage through early January, mostly due to the large number of Christmas Bird Counts. Observers are encouraged to do the field work necessary to determine if a particular half-hardy bird found in December or on a CBC has attempted wintering, and to note this information in their reports.

A total of 140 species was seen by 101 seasonal report observers, plus many additional observers participating in 51 Christmas Bird Counts. Although the number of observers is similar to last year, the total number of species is the lowest total in five years. There were still many counties from which there were virtually no reports, including Traverse, Douglas, Stevens, Pope, Swift, Mille Lacs, Le Sueur, Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, Murray, Lincoln and Meeker. Assuming these counties are not inundated by blizzards once again, perhaps someone can adopt them for observations next winter.

As always, I would like to thank Peder Svingen for continued professional editorship of this report. I would also like to thank Anthony Hertzel who provided a transcript of all species reported to the statewide rare bird hot line. And finally, a thanks to all observers who braved the winter weather and reported their sightings!

1430 – 100th Ave. NW, #212, Coon Rapids MN 55433.

KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case **(PACIFIC LOON)** indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold **(10/9)** indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold **(Aitkin)** indicate an unusual occurrence for that county.
4. Counties listed in underline **(Aitkin)** indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics *(Aitkin)* indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [ ] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2603 E. 4th St., Duluth MN 55812.

Loons to Swans

Pied-billed Grebe
More reports than usual. Overwintered in Otter Tail SDM, the first such report since 1982–83. Two additional reports on the Bloomington CBC and 2/16 Minnesota River, Eagan, Dakota County SWe may represent the same overwintering individual. Additional reports as late as early January were in Todd, Cottonwood, Winona and Olmsted. The Rochester, Olmsted Co. bird was picked up dead on 1/1 CH.

American White Pelican
One overwintered at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. mob, and more unusual, another overwintered at Red Wing, Goodhue Co. HH, CS. It is unknown if the bird recorded on the Albert Lea CBC overwintered.

Double-crested Cormorant
One at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. lingered as late as 1/2 AH, mob. Also reported on the Little Falls and St. Paul CBCs.

Great Blue Heron
Overwintered at the usual location along the Mississippi River near Pigs Eye Lake, St. Paul, Ramsey Co. where a peak of 14 individuals seen in Dec. KB (but only two of these overwintered). Also reported through early January in six other south counties, plus 12/19 Otter Tail SDM in the north. An additional bird may have wintered at the Old Cedar Avenue bridge, Hennepin Co. where reported as late as 2/1 *fide* SC.

Tundra Swan
One adult overwintered with the Trumpeter Swans at Monticello, Wright Co. KB.

[Trumpeter Swan]
As many as 200 overwintered at Monticello, Sherburne/Wright counties KB. Also overwintered at Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. where 52 counted on the CBC. Similar to last year, there were many widely scattered additional reports from St. Paul, Ramsey Co.; Wild River State Park, Chisago Co.; Elk River, Sherburne Co.; Sylvan Dam, Morrison Co.; Tamarac NWR, Becker Co., and Wabasha Co. (location?).

[Mute Swan]
Two individuals of questionable origin continue to be reported near Faribault, Rice Co., and another was reported on the Owatonna CBC.

Waterfowl

Greater White-fronted Goose
Late migrant reported 12/7 Olmsted CH.

Snow Goose
A flock of four overwintered in South St. Paul, Dakota and Ramsey counties KB. Another individual overwintered at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. PJ.

Canada Goose
Reported from 34 counties throughout most of the state. The 22,374 counted on CBCs is down considerably from previous years, especially at Lac qui Parle where only 2,000 seen (down 98% from previous five year average). Reasons for this decline were unspecified, but more than likely were due to the severe weather. The 17,000 on the Rochester CBC is more normal.

Wood Duck
Overwintered in Dakota and Freeborn. An additional 13 birds were reported from 8 south counties through 1/1. Difficult to classify were the reports 2/7 Goodhue DBS and 2/17 Lyon *fide* AH.

Green-winged Teal
A flock of 35 overwintered at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. PJ. Also noted 1/2 Old Cedar Avenue bridge, Hennepin Co. and 1/7 Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. AH (wandering birds from the Black Dog flock?).

American Black Duck
Reported from 14 eastern counties, plus 12/11 Clay CN in the west. CBC total 117.

Mallard
Reported from 41 counties throughout the

state. CBC total 22,915, less than the record 33,049 l.y., but similar to recent high counts.

Northern Pintail
One overwintered at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. PJ and (same bird?) reported in Edina, Hennepin Co. on the Bloomington CBC.

Northern Shoveler
Only report on the Excelsior CBC (Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co.).

Gadwall
Overwintered in Scott at the Blue Lake treatment plant and the Mill Pond, mob. More unusual was the report of possible overwintering at Moorhead, **Clay Co**. RO. Additional reports through early January include Dakota, Goodhue and Mower; also seen on the Bloomington, Winona, St. Paul and Bemidji CBCs. Apparent early migrants noted 2/16 Winona (40) CS and 2/20 Rice OR.

American Wigeon
Only reports 1/18 & 2/28 Albert Lea, Freeborn Co. ABa (same bird?), and on the Grand Marais CBC.

Canvasback
Only report 12/11–13 Moorhead, **Clay Co**. (2) CN, RO. Very few previous north reports in winter.

Redhead
Two females overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. mob. Also reported in Edina, Hennepin Co. on the Bloomington CBC.

Ring-necked Duck
Only reports 12/4 & 2/23 Otter Tail SDM (differerent birds?), 1/7–18 Wright KB, and the Willmar CBC.

Greater Scaup
Subadult male probably overwintered along the Mississippi River in South St. Paul, Ramsey and Dakota counties where observed through 12/19, and then seen again **1/31** KB. The only previous overwintering report was in 1987–88 (***The Loon*** 60:112, but see also 63:173).

Lesser Scaup
Male and female overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. mob. Late migrants reported 12/11 Otter Tail SDM and Ramsey KB. Early migrants reported 2/18 Dakota (12) PJ, 2/26 Goodhue (12) CS, and 2/27 Cottonwood ED.

Harlequin Duck
Immature male reported 12/19–21 Duluth, St. Louis Co. *fide* KE.

Oldsquaw
North Shore reports from the Grand Marais (68) and Duluth (2) CBCs, and reported again 1/8 Cook (6) AH, but it's unlikely that any wintered within sight of Minnesota shores due to ice formation. Unusual was the report of seven on 12/12 at Moorhead, **Clay Co**. RO (***The Loon*** 69:47); this may have been the same flock of seven reported at Garrison Dam, North Dakota in early December.

Common Goldeneye
Reported from 31 counties throughout most of the state, but the only report in the Southwest region was 2/17 Cottonwood ED. Peak of 1700 on 1/7 at Monticello, Wright Co. KB. Noted overwintering at inland locations as far north as Biwabik, St. Louis Co. and International Falls, Koochiching Co.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
For the second year in a row, an adult male overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. mob.

Bufflehead
Overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant and the Mill Pond, Scott Co. where up to six birds reported by mob. May have also overwintered at Moorhead, Clay Co. where reported through 2/1 RO. Late migrant noted 12/6 Ramsey KB. The usual scattered reports were received from the North Shore of Lake Superior in St. Louis, Lake and Cook, all in December except 1/20 Lake DPV.

Hooded Merganser
At least ten individuals reported from six counties within the Twin Cities area, five of which overwintered in Scott and Dakota counties PJ. Also overwintered in Mower RRK and Olmsted CH. Additional south reports were two birds on 2/6 Goodhue RJ and one on the Winona CBC. The only north reports were 12/11 Otter Tail (2) SDM, the Fergus Falls (1) CBC, 12/21 Lake (Birch Lake Dam) SS, and 2/15 St. Louis (Virginia) KB.

Common Merganser
Reported from 20 eastern counties plus the Fergus Falls CBC and 1/30 Cottonwood ED in the west.

Red-breasted Merganser
Although normally reported only along the North Shore in mid-winter, this season the only Lake Superior report was 2/27 Cook SOL, and there were five reports from the southeast: 12/11 Ramsey (female) KB, 1/7 Goodhue AH, 1/20 Ramsey (male) KB, 2/20 Dakota (male) PJ, and the Excelsior CBC (male). Perhaps some of the Twin Cities reports were the same bird.

Ruddy Duck
Only report 12/2 Ramsey KB.

Vultures to Falcons

Bald Eagle
Reported from 40 counties throughout the state (record 50 l.y.). CBC total a record **326** (174 l.y.).

Northern Harrier
No reports (in the last 25 years, there has been an average of 6.5 reports, with no year missed!).

Sharp-shinned Hawk
Reported from 30 counties throughout the state (record 31 l.y.). Similar to last year, there were many north reports (nine counties), and well over 50 reports statewide. The majority of reports were from December; only eight February reports were received. CBC total 30 (32 l.y.).

Cooper's Hawk
A record **31** reports were recieved from **17** south counties, including a CBC total of 11. The majority of reports were in December (18), plus January (6) and February (7). The Twin Cities region accounted for 17 of the reports. North reports from Clay, Hubbard and Todd were deleted because of poor details or lack of details. Additionally, details were solicited for most southern observations, but only three were documented: 1/11 Hennepin TT, 1/19 Rice JL, and 1/20–24 McLeod RbS. Although Cooper's Hawks have increased signficantly in the past 10 years as a breeding species, and probably as a wintering species as well, observers are asked to adequately document accipiter sightings (see below).

Northern Goshawk
Very scarce. Only 17 individuals reported from 15 counties. Only four south reports, all from the Twin Cities region (all accurate?).

Red-shouldered Hawk
Record number of reports (all accurate?). As many as 17 individuals reported from 12 south counties. Overwintered in Kandiyohi RJF, Hennepin SC, and Winona mob. A number of reports were received from odd locations; for example, a well-described adult wintered at the Meadowbrook golf course, Hennepin Co.

Red-tailed Hawk
Reported from 32 south and 6 north counties. CBC total 378.

Rough-legged Hawk
Reported from 23 eastern and central counties, plus the following western reports: the Lac qui Parle CBC, 12/11 Wilkin SDM and 2/28 Becker BBe. The only additional north reports were from Morrison, Aitkin, Carlton, and St. Louis, with none later than 1/1. Wintering birds noted 12/7–2/8 Olmsted CH and 12/21–2/16 Fillmore NO; additional birds may have wintered in other southern counties, but most observations were in December. CBC total only 23 (64 l.y. and 249 two years ago).

Golden Eagle, 9 December 1996, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Dudley Edmundson.

Golden Eagle
Only six individuals reported (record thirteen l.y.). Besides the usual reports from Houston and Winona in the Southeast region, there were additional reports from 12/30 Becker BBe and 2/16 Percy Twp., Kittson Co. (2) PS. The latter may be early migrants or overwintering individuals; analysis of reports from the last 15 years (excluding CBCs and reports from Southeast region) indicates only a slight increase in reports during mid–late February.

American Kestrel
Although the range was identical to l.y., reports were received from only 28 counties (41 l.y.) and the CBC total was only 54 (81 l.y.). This is the lowest CBC total since 1982–83, when there were over 50% fewer observers.

Merlin
Nine individuals (eight l.y.) reported from scattered locations and dates: the Excelsior, Grand Forks, Hastings and Mountain Lake-Windom CBCs, 1/1 Hennepin TT, 1/2 St. Louis JN, 2/8 Clay GN, 2/14 Wilkin CF and 2/25 Dakota ABo.

Prairie Falcon
Only report 1/19 Moorhead, Clay Co. CF.

Peregrine Falcon
Reintroduced birds overwintered at population centers in Ramsey, Hennepin, and Olmsted. Also reported 12/2 Duluth (?), St. Louis Co. *fide* KE. The report in February from Becker Co. needs details.

Partridges to Coots

Gray Partridge
Numbers up dramatically. Reported from 28 counties in the south and west (15 l.y. and 6 two years ago). CBC total 397 (98 l.y.).

Ring-necked Pheasant
Reported from 46 counties throughout range. CBC total a record **2,463** (1,172 l.y.),

which is nearly four times the ten year average. As with Gray Partridge, larger numbers during this harsh winter may reflect the many birds which were forced onto roadsides where they could be visibly counted, as happened on the Faribault CBC, which tallied a remarkable total of **496** individuals.

Spruce Grouse
Only reports on the Grand Marais and Isabella CBCs, and in the Hwy 1/County Road 2 area of Lake Co. mob.

Ruffed Grouse
Reported from 28 counties in range. CBC total 1881 (46 l.y.).

Greater Prairie-Chicken
Reported from Wilkin, Clay, Norman and on the Crookston CBC.

Sharp-tailed Grouse
Reported from Marshall, Beltrami, Aitkin, St. Louis, 2/22 Kanabec CM, and on the Warren and Baudette CBCs. CBC total 14 (52 l.y.).

Wild Turkey
Numbers continue to increase. Reported from 25 south counties plus Clay and Becker (wild?) in the north. CBC total 744.

American Coot
Overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. mob and in Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. SDM. Also reported on the Willmar, Winona and St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBCs.

Shorebirds to Gulls

Killdeer
Overwintered 1/28–2/25 Houston EMF. This is the first overwintering report since at least 1981. Early migrants noted **2/17** Anoka KB (earliest date on record) and 2/26 Fillmore NO. Both of the latter records were heard only.

Common Snipe
Approximately ten indivduals reported in five counties. Apparent overwintering birds seen through late January and early February include four at the Bass Ponds, Hennepin Co. mob, one at Nicol's Fen, Eagan, Dakota Co. SWe *et al.*, plus 1/1–28 Todd JSK and 12/13–2/6 Rice TBo. Also reported from two additional Hennepin locations in December, and on the LaCrosse CBC.

Ring-billed Gull
Late migrants noted 12/21–28 on the Albert Lea (5), Bloomington (2), Duluth (1) and Rochester (1) CBCs. Unusual was one lingering until 1/8 in Grand Marais, Cook Co. AH.

Herring Gull
Peak of 3,600 noted 12/1 Grand Marais, Cook Co. PS, and last reported on the North Shore 1/8 Cook AH. Twin Cities peak only 1,815 on 12/2 Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. KB; last reported in south 12/21–28 on the St. Paul, Bloomington and Winona CBCs. Possible early migrants noted 2/22 Silver Bay, Lake Co. (2) SL.

Thayer's Gull
Only reports from the Twin Cities region where a peak of nine was noted 12/6 Mississippi River, South St. Paul, Ramsey and Dakota counties KB, and last reported 12/14 Washington PBu.

Glaucous Gull
Up to eight seen 12/7 Superior entry, Duluth, St. Louis Co. KB, PS, but as usual, most gulls attempted wintering on the Superior side of the harbor. Two individuals reported 12/1 Grand Marais, Cook Co. PS, and two additional immatures noted in Dakota and Ramsey where last seen 12/19 Ramsey KB.

Doves to Kingfishers

Rock Dove
Reported from 60 counties throughout the state. CBC total 10,565 (13,586 l.y.).

Mourning Dove
Reported from 34 counties in all regions (record 42 l.y.), but concentrated to the south and east. CBC total 986 (1,035 l.y.), with a peak of 221 on the Winona CBC.

Eastern Screech-Owl, 15 February 1997, St. Paul, Ramsey County. Photo by Craig Menze.

Eastern Screech-Owl
Reported from 13 counties as far north and west as Clay. CBC total 13 (26 l.y.).

Great Horned Owl
Reported from 37 counties throughout the state. CBC total 62.

Snowy Owl
Second highest documented invasion on record, with nearly 100 individuals reported this season alone. Reports came from throughout the state as far south as Jackson and Freeborn on the Iowa border. First county record 1/10 **Mahnomen** BBe; this

Snowy Owl, 15 December 1996, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photo by B. Pannkuk and S. Woods.

species has now been recorded in all 87 counties.

Northern Hawk Owl
Second highest documented invasion on record. Over 90 individuals reported through the end of February, with observations as far south as the Twin Cities area in **Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington**. Another first county record 1/26–2/15 **Kandiyohi** *fide* RJF.

Barred Owl
Reported from 29 counties in range. CBC total 32 (43 l.y.).

Great Gray Owl
Major irruption. Over 130 individuals reported this season alone, with unusual Twin Cities reports from **Anoka**, **Dakota**, **Hennepin**, **Ramsey** and **Washington**, and even further south in **Faribault**, **Goodhue**, **Rice** and **Winona**.

Long-eared Owl
Only report 1/12 Eagan, Dakota Co. AH, DC.

Short-eared Owl
Only reports 12/7 Wilder, Jackson Co. *fide* AH and 12/8 Wilkin SDM.

Boreal Owl
For the second consecutive winter, more than 100 Boreal Owls have been picked up starving or dead *fide* SW. Additionally, a number of individuals ventured south where reported from **Kandiyohi**, plus **Anoka**, **Hennepin**, **Ramsey** and **Washington** in the Twin Cities area. A first county record established 1/27 **Mille Lacs** *fide* PP.

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Fifteen individuals reported from twelve counties as far northwest as the Warren CBC. Reports spanned the period.

Belted Kingfisher
Overwintered in Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. SDM and reported 12/18 Little Falls, Morrison Co. WB/SMr. Also reported from an additional 15 south counties, where the majority of reports were in December. CBC total 27 (24 l.y.).

Woodpeckers to Larks

Red-headed Woodpecker
As usual, very locally distributed. Reported in 12 counties from Becker and Aitkin southeastward. Only overwintering noted was in Anoka (20 attempted wintering) JH, Crow Wing (peak of 19 on the Crosby CBC), and Olmsted DA, BE. All other reports were in December (all but one of these on CBCs). CBC total 38 (33 l.y.)

Red-bellied Woodpecker
Reported from 45 counties (record 49 l.y.) in all regions except the Northeast. Unusual northwest reports were the Warren and Roseau CBCs. CBC total 469 (record 498 l.y.).

Downy Woodpecker
Reported from 63 counties throughout the state. CBC total 2,055 (record 2,142 l.y.).

Hairy Woodpecker
Reported from 62 counties throughout the

Great Gray Owl, 18 December 1996, Sax-Zim bog, St. Louis County. Photo by Dudley Edmundson.

state (record 68 l.y.). CBC total 955.

Three-toed Woodpecker
Only report along the Spruce Road, Lake Co. mob.

Black-backed Woodpecker
Only six individuals (eleven l.y.) reported from St. Louis and Lake, and on the Bemidji, International Falls and Grand Marais CBCs.

Northern Flicker
Reported from 21 south and 4 north counties. At least 15 of these counties had December reports only, suggesting few birds overwintered (as usual), but overwintering was specifically noted in Hennepin, Rice, and possibly Kanabec. CBC total 31. Above average number of reports.

Pileated Woodpecker
Reported from 49 counties throughout the state. CBC total 192.

Horned Lark
Reported from 48 counties in all regions except the Northeast. Although January reports were confined to the far south, by 2/9 migration was well underway; peaks of 1,000+ birds were noted 2/20 Renville CMa and Becker BBe.

Jays to Kinglets

Gray Jay
Notably scarcer than last year. Although the 13 counties with reports were the same as l.y., the CBC total was a very low 97 (268 l.y.). The report 2/16 Kittson (1) PS was the only observation outside the coniferous zone.

Blue Jay
Reported from 69 counties throughout the state. CBC total 5,248.

Black-billed Magpie
Numbers down. Reported from ten counties in range (13 l.y.), with a CBC total of 27 (69 l.y.).

American Crow
Reported from 69 counties throughout the state. CBC total 11,966. Peak of 500 noted

12/3 Rochester, Olmsted Co. CH.

Common Raven
Reported from 21 counties within range (record 25 l.y.) as far southeast as Anoka and Chisago counties. CBC total 686 (975 l.y.).

Black-capped Chickadee
Reported from 65 counties throughout the state. CBC total 11,019 (record 15,733 l.y.).

Boreal Chickadee
Noticeably scarce. Only about ten reports from seven counties in range. CBC total 17.

Tufted Titmouse
Reported in usual range from Olmsted, Winona, Houston and Fillmore, plus Freeborn ABa, RJ.

Red-breasted Nuthatch
Reported from only 40 counties throughout the state (record 59 l.y.). After last year's incursion into southern regions, this season only 48 of the total 882 individuals on CBCs were in the south. Common in northern regions where a peak of 266 was noted on the Grand Marais CBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch
Reported from 64 counties throughout the state. CBC total 2,004.

Brown Creeper
Reported from 34 counties throughout the state (record 39 l.y.). Although widely distributed, the CBC total of 76 is the lowest in over 13 years. As with a number of other species, most reports were in December or on CBCs, and the extent of overwintering is unknown. Interestingly, numbers were up in Duluth, and overwintering was noted in St. Louis JN and Cook OSL.

Carolina Wren
No reports.

Winter Wren
Overwintered at the Bass Ponds, Hennepin Co. mob. Also reported 12/6 Rice TBo and 12/11 Winona CS.

Golden-crowned Kinglet
Reported from six north and two south counties. The only report after early January was 2/21 Kanabec BA.

Bluebirds to Thrashers

Eastern Bluebird
Only reports were on the LaCrosse CBC, 1/3 Flandrau State Park, Brown Co. (4) JSp, and 12/4–1/15 Rice (up to 12) TBo.

Mountain Bluebird
One male was present 1/26–2/15 near Jordan, Scott Co. KHe/JoW, mob; female reported there 2/2–8 AH, TT. Incredibly, a flock of four was reported on 2/17 at the Jordan location KHe/JoW. Another female was reported on 2/19 near Rochester, **Olmsted Co**. DA/BE. There has not been a winter record since 1985, and there is only one previous winter report in the south (***The Loon*** 50:119–20).

Townsend's Solitaire
Ten individuals reported, the second highest total ever in winter. Most unusual were the first county records 1/4–Feb. Weaver, **Wabasha Co**. HT, CS, and 2/17 Roseau, **Roseau Co**. PS. Additional south reports were from Winona (at least three birds), Hennepin, Ramsey and Carver. The only additional north reports were on the Tamarac NWR CBC, and 1/6–11 Duluth, St. Louis Co. ME/DEv, mob.

Hermit Thrush
Reported 12/1 Freeborn ABa, through 1/1 Hennepin TT, 1/19 Olmsted TT and on the St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC.

American Robin
Near record numbers. Reported from 14 north and 25 south counties throughout the state (28 total counties l.y.). CBC total 796 (210 l.y.); the only year with higher numbers was 1989–90 (798 individuals). Unlike 1989–90, no large flocks were reported.

Varied Thrush
Sixteen individuals reported from twelve different counties, the second highest total

Varied Thrush, 21 December 1996, Mora, Kanabec County. Photo by Craig Menze.

ever; this total includes three birds first seen in November. Most unusual were the first county records 12/8 **Goodhue** RJ, mob and 12/14–28 Hayward, **Freeborn Co**. ABa, mob. The only birds reported after early January were one overwintering through 4/6 Aitkin *fide* CB, 12/18–3/7 Mora, Kanabec Co. BA, CM, and Duluth, St. Louis Co. *fide* KE.

Gray Catbird
Only reports on the Grand Marais and St. Paul CBCs.

Brown Thrasher
A record **ten** individuals. Reported 1/10 Otter Tail SDM, 1/11 Kanabec CM and 1/19 Blue Earth MF. Also reported on the Afton, Albert Lea, Duluth, Faribault and Grand Marais CBCs. Lack of subsequent reports suggests none of the birds successfully overwintered, and the Kanabec Co. bird was found dead on 2/2.

Waxwings to Warblers

Bohemian Waxwing
Even scarcer than last year; the lowest numbers in over 13 years. Reported from 10 north counties (15 l.y.) with a peak of 130 on 2/23 Roseau PS. In Duluth and Two Harbors, vastly outnumbered by Cedar Waxwings (!) but more healthy numbers noted to the north in Ely and Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis Co. (50–70 individuals). The only south report was 1/27 Scott AH. CBC total 519 (low 710 l.y.).

Cedar Waxwing
Reported from 20 south and 9 north counties. CBC total 1,054. Peak of 200–275 noted in Scott mob.

Northern Shrike
Relatively scarce. Reported from 47 counties throughout the state (record 64 l.y.). CBC total only 75 (record 146 l.y.).

European Starling
Reported from 64 counties throughout the state. CBC total 14,622 (16,869 l.y.).

Yellow-rumped Warbler
Only report on the Excelsior CBC.

Cardinals to Snow Bunting

Northern Cardinal
Northward expansion continues slowly. Reported from 43 counties throughout the state (46 l.y.). Unusual was a female overwintering at Lake Bronson, Kittson Co. *fide* KB, PS. CBC total **2,347**, apparently the highest ever.

Eastern Towhee
Only reports 12/1 Houston EMF and on the Winona CBC.

Spotted Towhee
Overwintered in Rochester, Olmsted Co. mob.

American Tree Sparrow
Reported from 33 south and 7 north counties throughout the state. The only birds which overwintered in the north were in Duluth, St. Louis Co. and Grand Marais, Cook Co. CBC total 1,355 (3,486 l.y.), the second lowest total in over 13 years.

Chipping Sparrow
Reported on the Bloomington CBC.

Fox Sparrow
Ten reports (three l.y.). Noted as far north as the Crosby CBC and Duluth, St. Louis Co., but the only report after mid-January was overwintering noted in Houston EMF.

Song Sparrow
Reported from a record **18** counties. The only north reports were 12/23 Otter Tail SDM, 12/7–28 Aitkin WN, and most unusual, 1/18 **Koochiching** SDM. Despite the presence of about 35 individuals (30 of which were on CBCs) early in the season, the only other report after early January was 1/26 Richardson's Nature Center, Hennepin Co. DJe.

Swamp Sparrow
Only reports 12/1 Mound Springs, Hennepin Co. SC, and on the Bloomington and Fairmont CBCs.

White-throated Sparrow
Reported from 13 south and 7 north counties, a record number (total 15 counties l.y.). The only overwintering noted was in Hennepin, Ramsey, Houston and 12/7–2/8 Aitkin WN. CBC total 45 (record 59 l.y.).

White-crowned Sparrow
Reported 2/1 St. Louis *fide* KE, and on the Bloomington, Grand Marais and Hastings CBCs.

Harris' Sparrow
A record 19 individuals reported from 12 counties, but the only overwintering noted was in Blaine, Anoka Co. KB, SC and Duluth, St. Louis Co. *fide* KE.

Dark-eyed Junco
Although the reports from 59 counties throughout the state is a near-record number, the CBC total of 4,695 is only average (7,537 l.y.).

Lapland Longspur
Reported from 13 counties south and west of Kandiyohi, except an unusual report on the Grand Marais CBC. CBC total 47 (74 l.y.). The only reports after 1/1 were 12/8–1/26 Wilkin SDM, 1/16 Watonwan DBr, 2/12 Brown CMa, 2/26 Olmsted CH, and late February Kandiyohi RJF.

Snow Bunting
Reported from 55 counties throughout the state, with a peak of 1,000 noted 12/9 Polk SKS. CBC total 4,931.

Blackbirds to Weaver Finches

Red-winged Blackbird
Reported from 5 north and 14 south counties. Overwintering noted only in Becker BBe and Hennepin SC, and the only other reports after early January were 1/19 Clay CF, 1/20 McLeod BS, and 2/25–28 St. Louis JN. CBC total 167.

meadowlark, sp.
Reported 12/4 Winona CS, 12/8 Wilkin SDM, 2/9 Jackson ED and on the Rochester CBC.

Rusty Blackbird
Reported from ten south counties, plus 12/1–6 Aitkin CB in the north. The only reports after early January were 1/1–20 Hennepin SC and 2/17 Cottonwood ED.

Brewer's Blackbird
No reports; first time since 1985–86.

Common Grackle
Scarce. Reported from 6 north and 20 south counties. Possible overwintering birds reported after early January in Otter Tail, Cook, Aitkin, McLeod, Hennepin, Olmsted and Dakota. CBC total 80 (107 l.y.).

Brown-headed Cowbird
Reported 12/1 Freeborn ABa, 1/3 Houston CS, Dodge DA (no date), and on the Hastings, LaCrosse and Winona CBCs. Only the LaCrosse report included a description.

Pine Grosbeak
Reported from 14 north counties in normal winter range. Although scarce in the Northeast region, reported as common in

Red Crossbill, 2 February 1997, Pine County. Photo by Marcus Martin.

Koochiching where 285 were seen on the International Falls CBC and 118 were counted 2/9 Big Falls, Koochiching Co. KB, PS. CBC total 607 (1,444 l.y.). There were no south reports; this species has been virtually absent in southern regions since the 1989–90 invasion.

Purple Finch
Unprecedented numbers (for winter) found in the Northeast and North-central regions. Peak counts included 150 on 2/9 in Big Falls, Koochiching Co. KB, PS, 170+ at a Cotton, St. Louis Co. feeder *fide* KE, and an amazing 503 on the Grand Marais CBC. The total CBC count was 1,500, which is over three times the ten year average, and five times last year's count of 300. Also, in a normal year, relatively few are found in northern regions; for example, only 42 of last year's 300 individuals on CBCs were found in the north, compared with 1,398 individuals in the north this season.

House Finch
Numbers continue to increase. Reported from a record **43** counties throughout the state (41 l.y.). CBC total a record **4,920** (2,478 l.y.), with a peak of **738** on the St. Paul CBC.

Red Crossbill
Invasion noted in the coniferous forest. Locally common in northern regions where reported from 17 counties (8 l.y.), the most since 1984–85. Reported south from the Faribault CBC and Olmsted *fide* AH. CBC total 286 (55 l.y.).

White-winged Crossbill
Abundant in spruce bogs throughout the northern region where reported from 16 counties (27 l.y.), with peak counts of 300 tallied on 1/11 Aitkin WN and 1/26 Sax-Zim, St. Louis Co. BBo. There were no south reports. CBC total 1,547 (378 l.y.).

Common Redpoll
Very scarce. Reported from 13 north and 6 south counties (65 total counties l.y.). CBC total a dismal 214, the lowest in at least 14 years (7,490 l.y.).

Hoary Redpoll
No reports.

Pine Siskin
Reported from 21 north and 15 south counties (50 total counties l.y.). Exceptionally scarce in the south regions with most counties represented by only a single observation. Locally common in north (e.g., Beltrami and Lake). CBC total 756, of which only 84 were in the south (3,844 total individuals l.y.).

American Goldfinch
Reported from a record **53** counties throughout the state. CBC total 3,032 (2,928 l.y.). More common than usual in the north. Peak numbers include 230 counted 1/4 Hubbard JMW.

Evening Grosbeak
Reported from 15 counties north. Many observers reported scarcity, but a peak of 300 was noted 2/9 Big Falls, Koochiching Co. KB, PS. There were no south reports. CBC total an above average 2,021 (1,974 l.y.).

House Sparrow
Reported from 64 counties throughout the state. CBC total 27,124.

Contributors

BA	Betty Ammerman
DA	Diane Anderson
KB	Karl Bardon
ABa	Al Batt
TEB	Tom & Elizabeth Bell
BBe	Betsy Beneke
PBi	Paul Binek
TBo	Tom Boevers
BBo	Brad Bolduan
ABo	Al Bolduc
WB	William L. Brown
DBr	Diane Brudelie
PBu	Paul Budde
CB	Cindy Butler
SC	Steve Carlson
MJC	Mary Jo Christopherson
ED	Ed Duerksen
SDu	Sue Durrant
KE	Kim Eckert
FE	Fred Eckhardt
BE	Bob Ekblad
LE	Lane Ellwanger
DEv	Dave Evans
ME	Molly Evans
AE	Audrey L. Evers
THF	Tom & Helen Ferry
LF	Lawrence W. Filter
HJF	Herbert & Jeanette Fisher
EMF	Eugene & Marilynn Ford
RJF	Randy & Jean Frederickson
MF	Merrill Frydendall
CGr	Cathy Graham
CH	Clifford Hansen
KHe	Kathy Heidel
AH	Anthony Hertzel
RH	Robert E. Holtz
HH	Harlan Hostager
JH	James L. Howitz
JCBC	Jackson County Bird Club
NJ	Nancy A. Jackson
RJ	Robert B. Janssen
PJ	Paul Jantscher
DJe	Douglas Jenness
DJo	Douglas P. Johnson
MJ/DT	Murdoch Johnson & Dianne Tuff
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson
TK	Tom Keenan
BK	Byron R. Kinkade
RRK	Ron & Rose Kneeskern
RK	Rick Kostecke
JSK	John & Susan Kroll
FL	Fred Lesher
SL	Sue E. Levy
JL	Jon Little
WL	William H. Longley
OSL	Orvis & Sandy Lunke
CMa	Craig Mandel
DBM	Dennis & Barbara Martin
CM	Craig Menze
SMr	Sam Merrill
SDM	Steve & Diane Millard
SCM	Steve & Carol Mortensen
DN	David Neitzel
BN	Bill Nelson
WN	Warren Nelson
JN	Jeff R. Newman
GN	Gary E. Nielsen
CN	Connie M. Norheim
MRN	Michael R. North
RO	Robert O'Connor
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DMP	Daphne & Meyers Peterson
KRv	Kathryn A. Rivers
OR	Orwin A. Rustad
ESH	Eileen Schantz-Hansen
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RbS	Robert Schroeder
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RSm	Rolf C. Smeby
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TT	Tom Tustison
DV	Dan Versaw
JMW	John & Marlene Weber
NW	Nick Wedge
SWe	Steve Weston
TW	Terry Wiens
SW	Steve Wilson
SWi	Sylvia Winkelman
JoW	Jo Ward
DZ	Dave Zumeta
mob	many observers

Continued Monitoring of Boreal and Other Northern Forest Owls in Northeast Minnesota

1997 Annual Report

William H. Lane

In 1997, I continued nocturnal auditory surveys to detect Boreal and other northern forest owls in northeast Minnesota. Each of five routes was surveyed once during three time blocks: 15-31 March, 1-14 April, and 15 April - 1 May. Boreal Owls were detected on 44 occasions during 662.8 km of surveys, representing an overall detection rate of 0.066 owls/km. Female Boreal Owls were observed on eight territories, four of which resulted in nesting. Two nests occurred in cavities previously used by Boreal Owls. Six new cavities were located, five in quaking aspen and one in paper birch. Concurrently, detection rates for Barred Owls (0.078 owls/km), Northern Sawwhet (0.049 owls/km), Great Horned (0.007 owls/km), Great Gray, and Long-eared Owls (0.003 owls/km, each) were recorded.

Introduction

The Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) is found at low densities as a regular breeding species throughout northeast Minnesota (Lane 1997). The owl is associated with older quaking aspen for nesting and lowland black spruce for roosting and foraging activities (Lane and Andersen 1995). Habitat depletion is implicated in projected long-term population declines of the species throughout North America (Hayward 1994), and specifically, in portions of northern Minnesota (Jaako Pöyry 1992).

This study continues a long-term effort to assess the distribution, status, and the ecology of Boreal Owls in northeastern Minnesota using standardized nocturnal surveys. In addition to Boreal Owls, I also recorded the vocalization activities of Barred (*Strix varia*), Northern Sawwhet (*Aegolius acadicus*), Great Horned (*Bubo virginianus*), Great Gray (*Strix nebulosa*), and Long-eared (*Asio otus*) Owls. Herein, I report the results of 1997 survey efforts.

Study Area

This study was conducted in northeastern Minnesota, within Cook County and along the eastern quarter of Lake County (Fig. 1). Approximately 80% of the surface area is forested, while 18% is covered by water. Urban or developed land is minimally represented (Spadaccini and Whiting 1985). Climate in the region is characterized by cold winters and short summers. The mean temperature ranges from -17° C in January to 17° C in July. Annual snowfall averages 152 cm, and rainfall averages 45 cm (Ahlgren 1969).

Vegetation in the study area is characterized by forest-types representative of three biotic communities: the southernmost portion of the boreal forest life zone (Rowe 1972), the broadleaf deciduous forest (Larsen 1980) and the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence forest biome (Rowe 1972) (for more detailed descriptions, see Lane 1997). Pockets of boreal, hardwood, and softwood forests persist regionally, although fire, fire suppression, and tim-

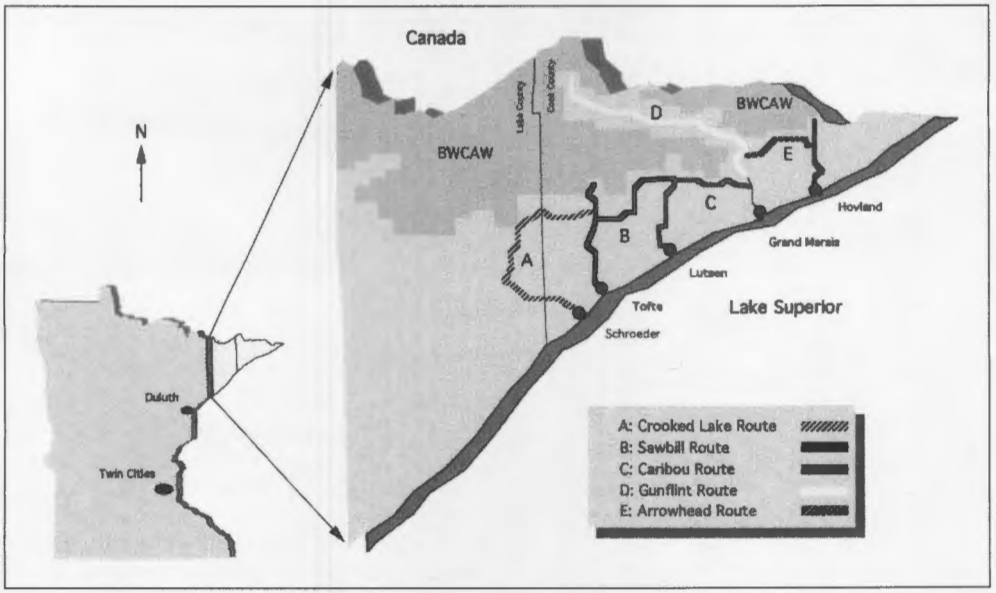

Figure 1. Location of study area and the survey routes used to detect vocalizing boreal and other northern forest owls in northeast Minnesota from 1987–1997.

ber harvests have had considerable impacts in shaping the present-day forest mosaic (Heinselman 1973).

Methods

Standardized nocturnal auditory surveys were conducted from 15 March to 1 May 1997. Each of five survey routes (Fig. 1; see Lane 1997 for more detailed route descriptions) were surveyed once during three time blocks: 15–31 March, 1–14 April, and 15 April – 1 May. Three minute listening stations, separated by 0.8 km, were used to detect the staccato song (Bondrup-Nielsen 1984) of the male Boreal Owl. In addition, the vocalizations of Barred, Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, Great Gray, and Long-eared Owls were recorded. Surveys were initiated at least 0.5 h after sunset and continued until the route was completed. Surveys were not conducted in winds exceeding 18 kph or during moderate to heavy precipitation. If a route was not completed due to weather restrictions, it was completed when conditions allowed, usually within the allotted time period.

Two abundance indices were derived for Boreal Owls. The *detection rate* is the number of owls detected per the sum total km surveyed (owls/effort); the *abundance index* is the number of individual owls detected per route (a rough density estimate). Indices for other owl species are presented according to *detection rate* only.

Results

Boreal Owls

Surveys were initiated on 15 March and completed on 27 April. Forty-four Boreal Owls were detected over 662.8 km of surveys, representing an overall *detection rate* of 0.066 owls/km surveyed. The *abundance index* for individual owls/route length was 0.143 owls/km, a 20-fold increase in owl abundance over 1996, and the third highest number of Boreal Owls detected using survey methodology since 1987 (Fig. 2). The Crooked Lake, Sawbill, and Gunflint routes accounted for 41 of 44 (93.2%), and the Caribou route 3 of 44 (6.8%) total detections (Fig. 3). Owls were not detected along the Arrowhead route. The *detection*

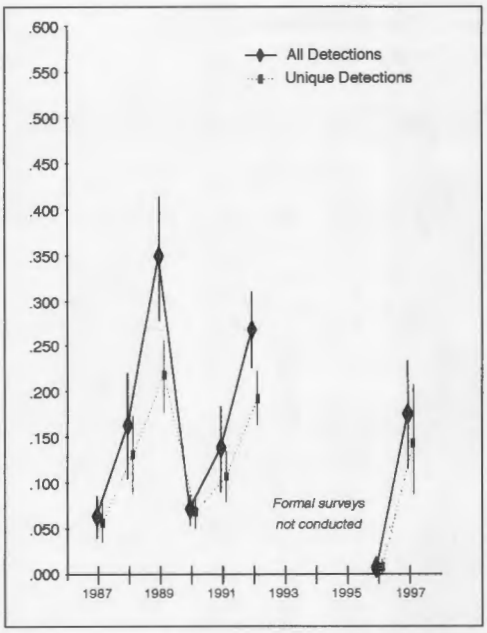

Figure 2. Annual abundance indices from 1987 through 1997, for territorial male Boreal Owls in northeast Minnesota. Individual owls detected per route length (km) is represented by a dashed, gray line and the total detections per route length (km) by a solid, black line. Error bars represent SD of abundance index, using survey routes as replicates.

rate for vocalizing owls increased during each of the three time blocks (Fig. 4). Female owls were observed on eight territories, four of which resulted in nesting. Two nests occurred in cavities previously used by Boreal Owls, one in 1992, and one in 1992, 1993, and 1995. All nests were active on 5 May, when I left the study area.

Barred Owls

Fifty-seven Barred Owls were detected during 728.2 km of surveys, representing an overall *detection rate* of 0.077 owls/km surveyed. Barred Owls were widely distributed across the study area, and were especially numerous in deciduous upland forests. The *detection rate* for Barred Owls increased during each time block, ranging from 0.046 to 0.117 owls detected/km surveyed.

Northern Saw-whet Owls

Thirty-six Northern Saw-whet Owls were detected during 728.2 km of surveys, representing an overall *detection rate* of 0.049 owls/km surveyed. Saw-whets were widely distributed but most frequently heard along the Crooked Lake and Caribou routes (24 of 36 detections; 66.7%), while the remaining three routes accounted for 12 of 36 (33.3 %) of the total detections. Owl detections increased during each time block, ranging from 0.007 to 0.103 owls detected/km surveyed.

Great Horned Owls

Great Horned Owls were infrequently heard during surveys. Five owls were located during 728.2 km of surveys, a 0.007 *detection rate.*

Other Owls

Two Great Gray and two Long-eared Owls were heard during survey efforts, a 0.003 *detection rate.*

Discussion

Boreal Owls

Despite a second consecutive winter irruption and die-off of Boreal Owls in northern Minnesota, results from 1997 surveys represent the third highest detection rate since monitoring began in 1987. If regionally a large number of owls are dying of starvation, yet locally high numbers of owls are attempting to or successfully nesting, then suitable resources must be available within the landscape to support owl activities. The most plausible resource would be increases in the small mammal biomass.

Throughout their distribution, Boreal Owl populations respond rapidly to localized prey cycles. The response is characterized by immigration towards high prey densities and subsequent high reproductive effort, or emigration from low prey densities and low reproductive effort (Korpimäki 1986, Korpimäki and

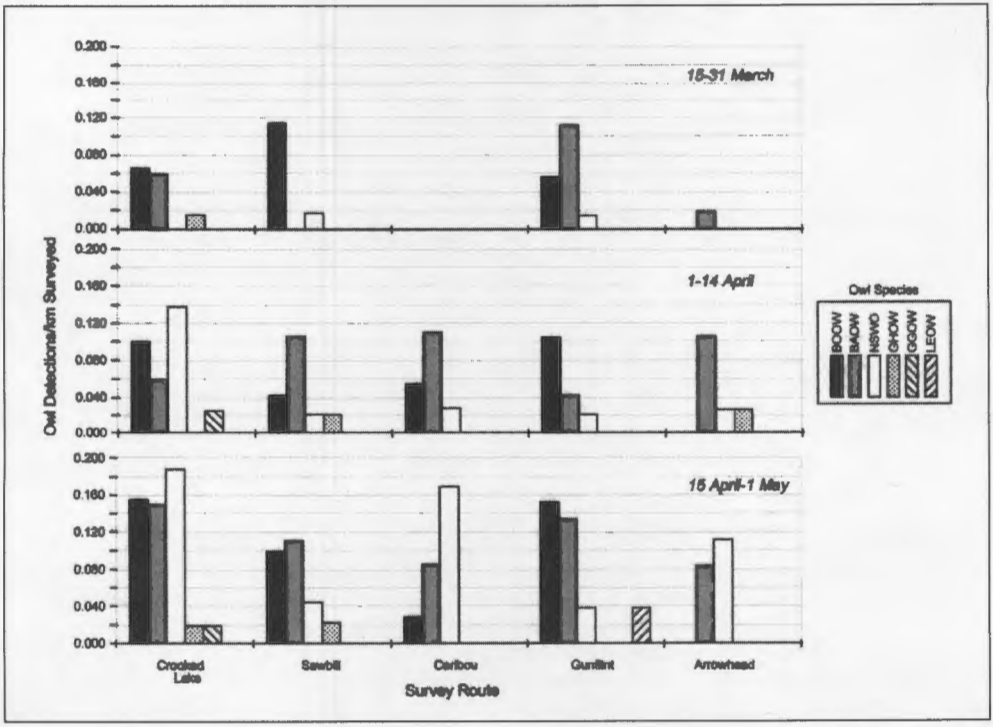

Figure 3. Detection rates of vocalizing boreal and other northern forest owls in northeast Minnesota during 1997. Each of five routes was surveyed once during the depicted time blocks.

Norrdahl 1989, Hayward 1994). Several observations from my study area suggest similar population patterns in Minnesota. First, I observed high numbers of deer mice (*Peromyscus spp.*) along survey routes, and an unusually high number of food deliveries by male owls at active nests (suggesting increased small mammal biomass); and 2) no nest failures occurred during the study period (suggesting a reproductive response to prey availability).

Additional observations from 1997 may provide further insight into the structure of Minnesota's Boreal Owl population: 1) the four nests I located were initiated early in the study period and all nesting male owls were second year (SY) or older; and 2) new male owls continued to be located late in the survey period. Lundberg (1979) and Korpimäki and Hongell (1986) suggested that residency and early nesting by experienced males, and migration by females and first year birds described population and movement patterns in Scandinavia. Similarly, Carlsson (1991) suggested that owls singing late in the breeding season tended to be young birds that had immigrated into the area. If these patterns apply to Boreal Owls in northern Minnesota, then the surveyed population is likely comprised of both resident and transient owls.

Although the structure of Minnesota's Boreal Owl population will remain a topic of conjecture, the species' habitat association (using survey methodology) is more precisely defined. The presence of older upland, mixed-type forests (especially aspen) adjacent to lowland conifer forests continues to define the distribution of the owl in the study area. Of

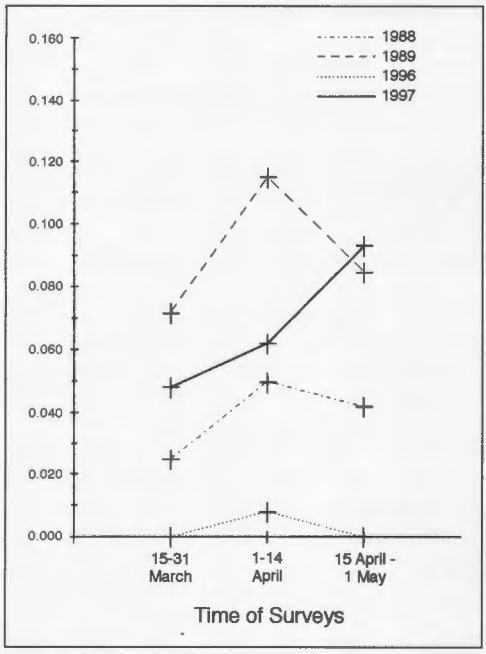

Figure 4. Detection rate of vocalizing Boreal Owls during four years of standardized nocturnal surveys in northeast Minnesota. Each of five routes was surveyed once during the three depicted time blocks.

eight cavities located during on-the-ground searches in 1997, seven occurred in older aspen (two in cavities previously used by Boreal Owls), and one in paper birch. Since 1987, 55 of 59 (93.2%) observations of cavity use by Boreal Owls have occurred in aspen, while non-aspen cavity use accounts for only four of 59 (6.3%) total observations.

Given the preponderance of aspen cavity trees used by Boreal Owls and the age of those trees (Lane and Andersen 1995), the impact of timber harvests on owls in my study area can be immediate: For example, following clear-cutting, no owls were detected along the Hog Creek drainage for the first time in five years. Additionally, extensive timber harvests along the Arrowhead route have likely impacted the distribution of the owl in the eastern-most portion of the study area. The reality of these observations is that the Boreal Owl will not occur as a breeding species in areas where nesting cavities are not available.

Despite an increase in information pertaining to the distribution and ecology of Boreal Owls, an assessment of population trends of the species in Minnesota is restricted by the short duration of monitoring efforts. The owl has diverse, yet specific habitat preferences for its diel activities, making it an excellent indicator of the health of the boreal forest ecosystem in northeast Minnesota. We know that Boreal Owls can be negatively affected in the short-term by timber harvests, yet there are very few — if any — plans in place to address the long-term viability of the species. Reserve trees, reserve areas, and forests maintained for purposes other than forest products can provide those habitats, but not without some conflict with economic interests. Future monitoring of Boreal Owl populations using standardized surveys, continued identification of critical nesting habitat, and analysis of the population structure employing capture/recapture methodology will improve our knowledge of the owl in northeast Minnesota, and ensure its future as a resident species in the state.

Other Northern Forest Owls

Given the limited time frame of this study it is difficult to assess the population trends of other northern forest owls in my study area. Some conclusions, however, are possible. Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls are regularly heard and widely distributed in the study area. Barred Owls are most frequently detected in deciduous-upland habitats, and Northern Saw-whets in upland or lowland mixed-type forests. Great Horned and Great Gray Owls are infrequently but regularly detected. Great Horned Owls are most commonly found in older mixed-forest tracts and typically in areas of fragmentation, and Great Gray Owls within lowland conifers associated with boreal forest vegetation. Long-eared Owls

are rarely encountered in the study area, although typically observed along the Highway 61 corridor during a presumed spring migration in mid- to late-April.

To supplement existing population and habitat-selection data, continued monitoring of indigenous owl populations is warranted. Only with long-term efforts will we be able to separate short-term (annual) fluctuations from long-term population trends, and accurately assess the impact of land management practices on the owl community in northeast Minnesota.

Acknowledgments

Funding or support for this project were provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage and Nongame Wildlife Program (MNDNR), the Tofte Ranger District of the Superior National Forest (SNF), the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU), and the Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Minnesota. My personal thanks to Rich Baker (MNDNR), Duane Kick, Wayne Russ (SNF), and Bob Janssen (MOU) for their interest and support for my research. And as always, Oksana.

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Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, MORC Chairman

There was a meeting of the Committee on 20 July 1997, and the agenda included votes on the following: two records documented primarily by photographs (which are difficult to circulate by mail); three records with inconclusive first-round votes (which require a discussion and vote at a meeting); and three previously accepted records which were reconsidered at the request of a Committee member. (It was also decided to include the record numbers, which are assigned to the records the Committee votes on, in these Proceedings articles.)

At this meeting the following records were voted on and found to be Acceptable:

- Band-tailed Pigeon, 8–19 September 1996, Lawrence Twp., Itasca Co. (photo record #97–30, vote 7–0, ***The Loon*** 69:107).
- Yellow-throated Warbler, 13–16 May 1997, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (photo record #97–31, vote 7–0.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse, 16 October 1996, Rothsay WMA, Wilkin Co. (reconsidered record #97–16, reaffirmed as Acceptable by 5–2 vote).

The following records were voted on at the meeting and found to be Unacceptable:

- Rufous Hummingbird, 7 August 1996, near Waubun, Becker Co. (recirculated record #97–01, vote 0–7). The Committee unanimously felt this was indeed a Selasphorus hummingbird; however, the possibility of it being an Allen's is not ruled out since the description includes no information about the back color.
- Gyrfalcon, 9 December 1996, Brandt Twp., Polk Co. (recirculated record #97–12, vote 3–4). While the Committee felt the identification was probably correct, the description is too vague and confusing for the majority to find it acceptable. For example, no one was sure what was meant by the wings being described as "pointed in the middle" and "pointed at the shoulders". There is no clear description of the under wing pattern or of the head/face pattern, and the more likely Northern Goshawk only seemed to be eliminated by the lack of a "broad eye stripe"; however, immature goshawks often lack an obvious white supercilium.
- Connecticut Warbler, 6 October 1996, near Barnum, Carlton Co. (recirculated record #97–15, vote 1–6). The possibility of this bird being a Mourning Warbler was not precluded since the observer only eliminated that species on the basis of the presence of a "complete eye ring" on the bird. However, Mourning Warblers in the fall frequently have complete and noticeable white eye rings.
- Chipping Sparrow, 4 December 1995, Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis Co. (reconsidered record #96–30, vote 2–5). The majority of the Committee had originally accepted this record, primarily because it had been seen by experienced observers and since it had been present at a feeder for several weeks previously. However, the Committee reconsidered the record and decided to reverse its earlier vote when it was pointed out that a Chipping Sparrow in December would not normally appear as described. The documentation includes mention of a "solid rusty cap with distinct white line below it"; however, fall and winter Chipping Sparrows have streaked brownish crowns that

should not appear as "solid rusty", and at that time of year their supercilia are no longer white.

• Lesser Black-backed Gull, 25 March 1996, Rainy River, Lake of the Woods Co. (reconsidered record #96–38, vote 0–7). These two adult gulls were originally accepted by the majority of the Committee, but the record was reconsidered and unanimously found to be Unacceptable; it was pointed out that the observer was not using any optics during his observation, and the possibility of California Gull is not ruled out by the description.

The following records were voted on by mail January–June 1997 and found to be Acceptable:

• Sabine's Gull, 27 September – 3 October 1996, Waterville, Le Sueur Co. (record #97–03, vote 7–0).

• Clark's Grebe, 4 October 1996, Lake Traverse, Traverse Co. (record #97–04, vote 6–1).

• Sabine's Gull, 29 October 1996, Fox Lake, Martin Co. (record #97–06, vote 7–0).

• Red-necked Phalarope, 1 November 1996, Lake Alexander, Morrison Co. (record #97–07, vote 7–0).

• Pomarine Jaeger, 8-13 November 1996, Lake Pepin, Wabasha Co. (record #97–09, vote 7–0, ***The Loon*** 69:3–6).

• Eurasian Wigeon, 17 November 1996, Lake Phalen, Ramsey Co. (record #97–11, vote 5–2).

• Least Tern, 16 May 1996, Whitewater WMA, Winona Co. (record #97–13, vote 7–0).

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 19 May 1996, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #97–14, vote 7–0).

• Chipping Sparrow, 21 December 1996, Burnsville, Dakota Co. (record #97–17, vote 7–0).

• Barrow's Goldeneye, 28 November 1996 – 16 February 1997, Blue Lake sewage ponds, Scott Co. (record #97–18, vote 7–0).

• Eurasian Wigeon, 19 April 1997, near Bohemian WMA, Lincoln Co. (record #97–20, vote 7–0).

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 27 April 1997, Northfield, Rice Co. (record #97–21, vote 7–0).

• Lesser Black-backed Gull, 6 April 1997, Athens Twp., Isanti Co. (record #97–22, vote 6–1).

• Say's Phoebe, 27 April 1997, Keene Twp., Clay Co. (record #97–23, vote 7–0).

• Western Tanager, 16 May 1997, Byron, Olmsted Co. (record #97–24, vote 7–0).

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 23–24 May 1997, Agassiz NWR, Marshall Co. (record #97–25, vote 7–0).

• Lazuli Bunting (male), 25–26 May 1997, near Lynd, Lyon Co. (record #97–26, vote 7–0).

• Lazuli Bunting (female), 28 May 1997, near Lynd, Lyon Co. (record #97–27, vote 6–1).

• Burrowing Owl, 31 May 1997, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #97–28, vote 7–0, ***The Loon*** 69:168–169).

The following records were voted on by mail January–June 1997 and found to be Unacceptable:

• Acadian Flycatcher, 23 September 1996, location? (record #97–02, vote 1–6). The description of the plumage of this silent Empidonax flycatcher does not include any information useful enough to preclude any of the other members of this genus.

• Red-throated Loon, 24 October 1996, Gooseberry Falls SP, Lake Co. (record #97–05, vote 2–5). Although there was a Common Loon present for direct size comparison with the loon in question, its identity apparently was only determined by "the bill always being upward a bit". However, since the actual shape of the bill itself was not noted, Pacific Loon is not precluded since that species frequently holds its bill uptilted as well.

• Red-shouldered Hawk, 3 November 1996, near Two Harbors, Lake Co. (record #97–08, vote 2–5). Portions of the lengthy and detailed description do suggest the hawk may have been correctly identified, but other parts of the documentation seem inconsistent with Red-

shouldered. The sketched tail pattern would also fit a dark-morph Rough-legged Hawk, and the overall darkness of the described plumage would also be more consistent with a Rough-legged than a Red-shouldered. The description also mentions "the wing tips reached very close to the tip of the tail", yet another feature favoring Rough-legged over Red-shouldered.

• Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 9 November 1996, Faribault, Rice Co. (record #97–10, vote 1–6). The brief description of this hummingbird is not nearly detailed enough to preclude some other vagrant species (e.g., Anna's).

• Cooper's Hawk, 3 January 1997, near Nevis, Hubbard Co. (record #97–19, vote 1–6). The brief description includes nothing about the plumage itself, with the identification based entirely on the observer's impression of its size. However, nothing was available for direct size comparison, and therefore the more likely Northern Goshawk is not ruled out. In addition, no optics were used during the observation.

• Sprague's Pipit, 25 April 1997, near East Grand Forks, Polk Co. (record #97–29, vote 0–7). The observer did not consider the species to be unusual, and his description is therefore not detailed enough to indicate this species. For one thing the leg color was not noted; in addition, the bill is described as black, which alone would preclude Sprague's Pipit.

Summary: 33 records voted on; 22 Acceptable (67%), 11 Unacceptable (33%).

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Minnesota Snowy Owl Notes From 1997

Steve Millard

My memories of the 1996–97 winter will be of an abundance of snow and Snowy Owls. In early November 1996, Snowy Owls began arriving in Minnesota with about twenty-five reported by month's end. By the end of December that number was nearly doubled, with birds scattered across the state. The eastern and metro counties had numerous birds, reflecting heavy coverage by birders. Many western counties also had reports, and western Minnesota may have hosted the most birds. This is only speculative, since coverage of this large region is not nearly as thorough as in the east. A few birds were also seen in several central counties.

In my area, Snowys began showing up in good numbers in late December with several establishing winter feeding territories in west central Minnesota along the east beach line of glacial Lake Agassiz. By January several birds were on territory near my home, most of them in northeastern Wilkin County. The area of Wilkin County immediately west of Lawndale hosts at least one Snowy every year and is consistently a good place to find the species. Others were on territory in Otter Tail, Clay, and Norman counties, and farther north.

The Snowy Owls were the high point of an otherwise lackluster season for birds. During the winter I made many trips to observe them. I also noted behavior that I was previously unaware of for the species. One day while standing on the prairie scanning for signs of life, I spotted a Snowy Owl flying in my direction from several hundred yards away. Its

flight technique reminded me of the manner employed by hunting Prairie Falcons. It flew steadily and quite rapidly very low (less than six feet from the ground), then rose abruptly several feet to look around, before dropping to resume the low flight.

On another occasion I watched a Snowy leave a high perch in a cottonwood and fly out over open ground. It gained a bit of altitude until it was perhaps eighty to one hundred feet high, then turned into the wind and hovered in the manner of a Rough-legged Hawk. This act was repeated again as the bird drifted away. Although a large bird, the Snowy Owl has low wing loading and is certainly adapted for hovering, even soaring, and to what extent these flight modes are utilized in hunting is worthy of much study.

As the winter progressed, I began to note the number of owls seen each time I went out. On several occasions I saw five or six, and on January 29th I saw seven. It is well known that veteran birders are always trying to set new birding records, and I'm no exception, but I could not top my daily high of seven. Not until March, that is.

On 6 March 1997. I met Bob Janssen and Ray Glassel near Fergus Falls. Our mission: to enhance their county list totals. Of course, I had a "staked out" immature Snowy in southwest Otter Tail County and the bird did not disappoint us! With that good start in the day, our next objective was to try to find a Snowy in Clay County. Initially I'd thought of bypassing the Rothsay-Lawndale area of Wilkin County, but since we were close and had plenty of time, we left I-94 and began looking for birds west of Lawndale. In the next twenty minutes along approximately four miles of highway, we saw seven owls. My old record had fallen and it was only 10:00 A.M.! Naturally talk turned to finding more birds, and we began speculating on how many we might find. I'd seen a beautiful adult in Clay County near Barnesville earlier, but we couldn't find that bird. We proceeded north and a few miles northeast of Buffalo River State Park we found our only Clay County owl, an incredible white beauty as clean and vibrant as the snow on which it was perched.

From Clay County we continued north into Norman County where we added three more birds. At this point our objective had been fufilled, but with several hours left we decided to continue on into Mahnomen County where we quickly added two more birds near Waubun. Then it was on to Becker County and the Hamden National Wildlife Refuge. Before reaching Detroit Lakes we had seen six more Snowys, bringing our total for the day to twenty.

Nearly all the owls we saw were immatures. Super-white adults are always a great bonus. Our pace was relaxed but steady; we were not pushing hard as one would on a big day. I'm convinced that had we gone dawn to dusk and really worked, we would probably have seen at least ten to fifteen more owls, possibly even more. Our timing was sheer luck, apparently. We saw both migrants moving north and birds still on their winter territories. Three days later I retraced most of our route but could find only seven birds with none in Mahnomen or Becker counties where we had previously seen two and six respectively. Bob added the species for five counties, and Ray to three.

It would be interesting to know what the true density of birds is during the years when they "invade" the lower 48. Areas such as the Duluth harbor or a large metro airport can be censused quite accurately, but what about an entire county or group of counties? Some birds will undoubtedly be missed, although a veteran birder making repeated trips through a given region should be able to find a majority of the winter residents. In the winter of 1993–94, twenty-two Snowys were seen in Aitkin County and approximately thirty birds have overwintered in Duluth in at least two years.

Our sighting of twenty birds in six counties has surely been bettered some-

where around the country, but was significant to us and lots of fun! Bored with winter? Go out and beat our total, maybe in a much smaller area. Records were made to be broken.

Thanks to Peder Svingen and Karl Bardon for providing data. **630 W Laurel, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.**

BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Owls

Kim R. Eckert

A second look? How about a first look? Typically nocturnal and consequently relatively difficult to see, owls invariably rank prominently on many birders' "most wanted" lists. Yes, owls can be heard by those willing to venture out at night, but they often end up on the list as "heard only".

Fortunately, the visual and aural identification of most owls is pretty straightforward — at least in Minnesota — so it usually only takes one look or listen to accurately determine their identities. Still, there are a few potential problems lurking out there which might mislead those birders who are still in the dark when it comes to identifying owls. And now is as good a time as any to address these with winter rapidly approaching. 'Tis the season, after all, when birders' thoughts turn to northern owls, especially since the past two winters forced so many Snowy, Northern Hawk, Great Gray and Boreal owls into southern Minnesota and beyond.

A Heart-shaped Face in the Barn

It would sure be a lucky find, but there is always the possibility that some day you or someone you know actually turns up an owl in a barn — just like the ones in Dakota County not too many years ago. It would then be a Barn Owl, right? Well, probably — but not necessarily. It seems that Great Horned Owls on occasion have been known to roost or even nest in buildings, barns included. And once I was surprised to find two Burrowing Owls roosting by day in a large storage shed in Texas.

Of course, given a decent look at a Barn Owl and all its field marks, this owl doesn't really resemble anything else. Its combination of a heart-shaped face, brown eyes, essentially all-white underparts and under wings, and unique blend of solid buff and gray on the back and upper wing surface make this a relatively easy species to identify. Beware, however, if you concentrate too much on one field mark to the exclusion of others. As noted below, Barred Owls also have brown eyes and a heart-shaped face, and any owl flying overhead can appear white at night when illuminated by flashlight or car headlights.

Two other caveats. First, since the Barn Owl is about the most strictly nocturnal of all owls, it is not something birders observe hunting very often. It was quite a revelation, therefore, the first time I saw one hunting at dusk: its flight style was identical to the Short-eared Owl's, so much so that I initially identified it as a Short-eared. And, second, since the Barn Owl has a reputation for its unnerving calls which can sound quite frightening (especially when you're alone), more than one owler has incorrectly assumed that unfamiliar sound heard in the dark was by default a Barn Owl's cry. However, as noted below, some Long-eared Owl calls can literally sound like someone screaming bloody murder. And juveniles of all owl species can give food-begging cries that are quite atypical, difficult to describe, and therefore tempting to inaccurately ascribe to the Barn Owl.

An Eerie Lack of Ears

It was nothing short of amazing for that Boreal Owl to spend much of last winter at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley. First, this species of owl hardly ever ventures into southern Minnesota, and, second, winter individuals seldom stay put at a location for two consecutive days — let alone for several weeks!

However, it is actually quite routine for small owls with Boreal Owl-like black facial frames and no visible "ear" tufts to be seen in southern Minnesota. And certainly more of these will appear this fall and winter — and perhaps end up being misidentified as Borealss by those recalling the famous Springbrook owl. But if not Boreal Owls, what are they? Take a second look, and odds are they will turn out to be Eastern Screech-Owls with their ear tufts flattened out of sight. (I'm reasonably sure, for example, that an owl documented as a Boreal several years ago in Winona County was in reality a screech-owl.) It is important to keep in mind that screech-owls and Great Horneds and Long-eareds can frequently appear quite "earless" when they flatten those tufts.

Ascots vs. Bow Ties

Even though the field guides fail to adequately stress the presence of the Great Gray Owl's white "bow tie" mark, anyone who has ever seen a Great Gray cannot fail to notice how prominent this field mark is — even at a distance or in poor light. There is a potential source of confusion here, however, as I know of more than one birder whose Great Gray sighting ended up being that of a Great Horned Owl. How could this happen? It seems that Great Horneds also have a noticeable white area on the throat, their plumage typically looks more gray than brown overall, and, as mentioned above, they can flatten those ear tufts and have a rounder-looking head profile.

But note the Great Horned Owl's white throat patch is larger than the Great Gray's and not as clearly delineated. I'm for calling it more of a white "ascot", but the thing to remember is the Great Gray's white "bow tie" is sharply outlined, more contrasting, and it actually has a black "knot" in the middle.

Great Horned Owls may also have the potential for being confused with Snowy and Long-eared Owls. As far as the Snowy is concerned, be aware that the subarctic form of the Great Horned Owl does winter in Minnesota on occasion, its plumage is grayish white overall, and it consequently is a source of confusion with the Snowy. And, when relative size is unclear, it is not all that easy to tell a Great Horned from a Long-eared: a Great Horned's ear tufts do not always appear to be shorter and spaced farther apart than a Long-eared's, as the field guides suggest. When in doubt, try to see the owl's underparts pattern. A Great Horned does have short vertical smudges below its ascot, but below this it only has horizontal barring; a Long-eared has dark vertical streaks as well as barring down on its breast and belly.

Green-winged Black-capped Owls

As long as birders make sure that whitish owl in front of them is not one of those subarctic Great Horneds, what else

could possibly be confused with a Snowy Owl? Probably nothing, although it cannot be stressed enough, as mentioned earlier, that almost any owl can appear whiter than it really is when illuminated by the artificial light of a flashlight or car headlights. This is especially true when flying overhead, since owls are typically paler on their underparts and under wings than on their upperparts.

So, if a Snowy Owl is so easy to recognize, what was that heavily barred owl with the green wing patch and black cap you saw in the Duluth–Superior harbor area last winter? It seems that owl researcher and bander Dave Evans has been netting, color marking and keeping track of Snowy Owls wintering in this area for several years. The green on the wing is a numbered wing tag, and the black on the head is a temporary dye which makes the owls easier to spot by day as they sit on the harbor ice.

Even without these artificial markings, however, many birders are surprised to find that many Snowy Owls wintering in Minnesota are not as photogenic or as snowy white as the field guides show. Typically, immature Snowys tend to winter farther south than adults (and to a Snowy Owl Minnesota is south!), and these immatures, especially females, can be heavily marked with dusky barring overall and are consequently not all that white or attractive. Even the darkest immature female, however, will still have a pure white face, and in flight its under wings are also essentially all white.

So Who Needs Talons?

If any predator were able to successfully hunt by pure intimidation, it would have to be the Northern Hawk Owl. No other bird has as fierce a facial expression (well, the Yellow-eyed Junco does come close), and if you've ever had a hawk owl stare at you it's not too hard to imagine how a mouse might simply drop dead from fright when confronted with this owl's glare.

Actually, the head pattern of a Northern Hawk Owl is remarkably similar to that of a Boreal Owl. Both owls have black facial frames, a yellow bill and white-spotted forehead. They even share the same back-of-the-head pattern: broad stripes of dark and light that to my eye suggest a "skunk skin" cap. Of course, despite their almost interchangeable heads, these two owls would probably not be mixed up by even the novice owler: the hawk owl is clearly larger with a longer tail, and it is heavily and uniformly barred underneath down to the under tail coverts. It also typically hunts by day out in the open from conspicuous perches in the same area for days or weeks at a time — which, alas, is quite different from the much more elusive and reclusive Boreal Owl.

Northern Hawk Owls and Borealss can be quite difficult to separate, however, when only heard calling on territory. After decades of being mislead by the field guides, birders are finally becoming aware that the male Boreal Owl's territorial song resembles the winnowing of the Common Snipe. The problem is that the hawk owl, which does nest occasionally in Minnesota, has a very similar territorial song. It is longer in duration and more on one pitch than a typical Boreal Owl song phrase (which rises in pitch); however, note that after a male Boreal attracts a female into his territory he prolongs the duration of his call and holds it on one pitch — and to my ear it then sounds just like the hawk owl's song.

Owls in the Hole

Finally, an owl that would seem to be impossible to confuse with any other: no other grasslands owl but the Burrowing is so small and long-legged. (The only other owls which hang around in Burrowing country would be the dissimilar Barn, Great Horned and Short-eared.) But while birders should have no difficulty identifying this underground-nesting owl, they certainly do have difficulty just trying to find one in the first place. In decades past, the Burrowing Owl regularly nested in western Minnesota; now they are scarce enough to have been demoted

to Casual status. In fact, for reasons which are not entirely understood, the Burrowing Owl seems to be declining in numbers in many places. In more ways than one, then, this is one owl that's definitely in the hole.

An Owl Telephone Directory

I still remember that cover of the Minneapolis phone book from several years ago: it featured a nice photo of a brown-eyed owl with a clearly visible heart-shaped face. So why would the telephone company choose the exceptionally rare Barn Owl for the cover of its directory? Well, it didn't actually. As noted earlier in this article, the Barred Owl — which was on the cover — shares the same eye color and facial frames shape as the Barn Owl.

But no one would actually confuse these two species in the field, would they? Perhaps. I am of the opinion that the report of a Barn Owl family in St. Louis County not too many years ago actually referred to some Barred Owls. The owls were never clearly seen and only glimpsed in a flashlight beam flying overhead (which can make any owl look Snowy- or Barn-white). And the owls were quite vocal, giving several strange calls (as Barred Owls often do, especially when juveniles are begging for food) which the listeners assumed had to be Barn Owl calls.

Barred Owls have an even stronger potential to be misidentified as Great Grays. Several times over the years I have gone to check out a Great Gray Owl report only to find a Barred Owl at the given location. And with so many Great Grays turning up in southern Minnesota during the past two winters, there may be a tendency by novice owlers to assume that any large "earless" owl from now on will be the more glamorous Great Gray rather than the more routine Barred Owl. For that matter, we will never really know how many of those "Great Grays" in southern Minnesota during the two most recent invasions were actually Barred Owls, since not all of them were documented.

When Mating Sounds Boring

This article has already discussed how one might confuse a Great Horned or a Barred owl with a Great Gray. (Again, remember that the Great Horned wears a white ascot, not a black-knotted white bow tie — and that its ear tufts may not always be visible. And, again, just consider the Barred Owl's eye color — and that Barreds are more likely in most parts of Minnesota than Great Grays.)

It's also worth commenting here on what a Great Gray sounds like. If you've never heard in real life a male Great Gray Owl calling on territory, it's worth listening to a tape of one. The deep, slowly paced series of hooting typically trails off in pitch and volume at the end, making the owl actually sound like it is quite bored and disinterested in the prospect of attracting a female. He sounds weary, like it's all he can do to muster the effort to complete his call. This quality and cadence of the Great Gray's hooting is not only almost comical to hear, but it will also serve to separate it from the calls of the Great Horned and Long-eared Owls — the two other owls with low-pitched hooting which a listener might be tempted to ascribe to a Great Gray.

The Owl of the Baskervilles

It was pointed out earlier in this article that the length and position of the Long-eared's "ears" may not look all that different from the Great Horned's — and that the ears of both species can disappear from view altogether. The Long-eared's flight (as discussed below) and calls can also lead to confusion. It seems, as mentioned earlier, the Barn Owl is not the only owl with calls strange enough to unnerve even veteran listeners who claim not to be afraid of the dark. Barred Owls, especially hungry juveniles, are also good at giving such sounds, but even more uncanny are some of the noises which can emanate from a Long-eared Owl. Besides single low-pitched hoots, Long-eareds also produce dog-like barking

sounds as well as a variety of shrieks and screams that can really sound like nothing less than a victim in a Sherlock Holmes murder mystery.

Nothing Flies Quite Like It

Or at least that's what I used to think about the distinctive flight of the Short-eared Owl. Its curious wing stroke with a noticeable pause at the top seemed to be something unmatched by any other creature capable of flight. (Moths included, by the way: I never did understand how the Short-eared's flight could be described as "moth-like".) Sandhill Cranes, Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks and even Golden Eagles at times can have somewhat similar wing beats, but what was amazing to me was how much a hunting and flying Barn Owl (as noted earlier) or Long-eared Owl can resemble a Short-eared. Long-eareds especially, since they have a buff patch on the primaries and a black carpal smudge on the under wings, just like a Short-eared. One difference between the two in flight is the pale trailing edge on the wings of a Short-eared, which is not difficult to see and which is lacking on a Long-eared Owl.

And it was just this past spring that Hawk Ridge's hawk identification ace, Frank Nicoletti, pointed out another Short-eared look-alike of which I wasn't aware. In the distance was this raptor flying around which behaved for all the world like a typical Short-eared Owl. But it wasn't even an owl: rather, it was a Cooper's Hawk doing a courtship flight! Beware, then, not only of Barn and Long-eared owls, but also of courting accipiters: they seem to get a lot more excited about mating than Great Gray Owls.

Going on a Snipe Hunt

Hopefully, by this point in the article, readers will no longer be tempted to misidentify an "earless" black-facial-framed screech-owl as a Boreal Owl. And readers are reminded here to appreciate how similar are the head patterns and songs of the Boreal and Northern Hawk Owls. It was also pointed out earlier that the territorial song of the male Boreal Owl closely resembles the sound made by a winnowing Common Snipe. But this is worth repeating and emphasizing, since too many references for too long have incorrectly compared the Boreal Owl's call to that of a high-pitched bell or dripping water. In reality, of course, that description fits perfectly the primary call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl.

So, when listening and looking for Boreal Owls on territory, don't be misled by the sounds of bells and dripping water. Instead, go hunting for the sound of the snipe. It may just turn out to a Boreal Owl if the sound appears to be coming from one spot in the trees (winnowing snipe are moving around in flight overhead) and if the pauses between the phrases are uniform (the snipe's winnowing sounds occur at irregular intervals).

As Cute as a Chickadee

Of course, there's nothing wrong with wandering off in the direction of high-pitched bells or dripping water if it leads to a Northern Saw-whet Owl. After all, there is nothing cuter than a saw-whet — unless it's the Black-capped Chickadee. And, as everyone agrees, these are the only two cute birds to occur in Minnesota. (So be careful and don't confuse the two: note the chickadee has a black cap and throat and eats sunflower seeds; a saw-whet lacks these black markings and eats, well, chickadees on occasion.)

As mentioned earlier, it is likely that some of those "Great Gray" sightings from southern Minnesota from the last two winter invasions may actually have been of Barred Owls. Similarly, Northern Saw-whet Owls can also be misrepresented as Boreals and cloud our conclusions as to how many of those small owls were actually Borealis. Note, however, that Boreal Owls simply aren't cute: their black facial frames not only can make them look as mean as a hawk owl, but this black outline (which extends down in a "V" to the eyes) also serves as the best distinction between a Boreal and a saw-whet. Some birders struggle to see

whether the bill is pale or dark and whether those white markings on the forehead are spots or streaks, but the presence/absence of facial frames is much easier to see. And while the Boreal Owl is larger than a saw-whet and tends to have a squarer head profile than the rounder-headed saw-whet, these differences are often difficult to determine without direct comparison.

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BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDS IN IOWA, by Thomas H. Kent and James J. Dinsmore, 1996, privately published, Iowa City and Ames.

This book updates the information presented in previous works on Iowa's birds, the most recent being "*Iowa Birds*," by Dinsmore, Kent, Koenig, Petersen and Roosa (Iowa State Univ. Press, Ames, 1984), which summarized information on the state's avifauna through 1982. Kent and Dinsmore summarize information on 398 species recorded through 1995 (and part of 1996), which is an increase of 37 species (!) since 1982. As stated by the authors, "More data on Iowa birds have accumulated since 1982 than in all previous history."

Individual chapters include The State List, Geography and Birding Areas, History of Iowa Ornithology, and the Species Accounts. Three appendixes detail Selected Other Species Reported in Iowa, Species Not Represented by a Specimen, and First Accepted Records by Year. Included with all species accounts is a timeline that shows changes in abundance throughout the year, early and late arrival and departure dates, and all records for many casual and all accidental species. Maps show the county distribution of all accidental and some casual species, and regular species whose distribution does not include the entire state. Nesting records are also often included in these maps. Within each species account is a section on Occurrence which summarizes the state's records by such parameters as date, location, habitat, age, plumage, etc., and often summarizes Unacceptable records as well. Summaries of Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, and peak migration counts for spring and fall are sometimes given. An additional section (Comments) discusses each species' continental range, breeding distribution, and migration routes, all in relation to Iowa. A brief summary of the main characteristics of each order and family of birds is given before each of these major taxon.

One of the major goals of this work is to not only update the old information with all the recent data that has been published (mostly in Iowa's state bird journal, *Iowa Bird Life*), but to also provide a database framework under which the occurrence of rare and unusual species can be better understood and predicted. In this vein, the author's have included a lengthy section which details virtually all the species that could conceivably occur in Iowa in the future (86 species!). Discussion of each potential new species for the Iowa state list includes a summary of all records that have occurred in the Midwest and in states

surrounding Iowa. Most citations involving Minnesota were correct except the following: there are only two Wilson's Plover records (not three), there are two Violet-green Swallow records (not one), the Cassin's Finch record from Minnesota was not included, and Baird's Sparrows do not breed in extreme northwestern Minnesota (this species is only casual, with nearly all records from Clay Co., and there are apparently only two confirmed nesting records, both from the 1930s). As the authors point out, however, "it is difficult to be sure that all pertinent records in the literature have been located and to judge the accuracy of some records," and "it was not feasible to check the acceptance of all of the records by state committees." Thus the errors discovered do not detract from the ambitious goal the authors set out to accomplish. In my opinion, the task of summarizing all records of vagrants in the Midwest and in states surrounding Iowa was succinctly and admirably accomplished. This list is far more comprehensive than anything of this type that I have seen published, and it is nearly as useful to birders from Minnesota and other Midwestern states as it is to Iowa birders. In addition to the annotated list of species not recorded in Iowa, similar information is given within the species accounts for vagrants which have already been recorded in the state. As a result, this is not just a work on Iowa's birds, since it useful to anyone interested in vagrancy patterns of birds in the Midwest.

The only major criticism I have of this work is an inconsistency in the data which is presented for each species. Although certain parameters which were discussed for some species do no apply to other species or groups of species, there are other parameters which were noticeably lacking where I thought they would be appropriate. For example, although the authors discuss the peak counts for nearly all shorebirds species in spring and fall migration, they fail to mention these types of counts for most other groups of birds. Perhaps because of my own interest in counting birds, I was disappointed not to see peak counts for groups of species like gulls, terns, ducks, and many others (even warblers), especially since I know this data is available from the Field Reports sections of *Iowa Bird Life*. These omissions made discussions of high counts in December (on Christmas Bird Counts?) misleading since higher counts exist for other months (e.g., Ring-billed Gull). As another example, timing of many species' nesting cycles are given, but this information is noticeably lacking for many other common breeding species. In addition, breeding chronologies could have been made more precise by including actual dates (e.g., first and last egg dates). These types of inconsistencies could have been made more uniform by further dividing the Occurrence section into such topics as High Counts, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, Nesting Chronology, etc.

I have several other minor criticisms. Although identification discussions in this work are generally left to the field guides, a few difficult problems are briefly included when it has a direct bearing on a species' occurrence in Iowa. The risk of such brief discussions is oversimplification, as happened under Thayer's Gull. It is not completely accurate to say that "wing tip pattern and eye color" are used to separate adults from Herring and Iceland Gulls, since it is not unusual to see Thayer's Gulls with pale eyes. Other similar comments for additional species were both accurate and useful, however. Although the layout is attractive, the spacing between species accounts is inconsistent, and with the exception of the cover, there are no illustrations.

Even Minnesota birders who never visit Iowa can learn a lot from this book. For example, Iowans have been turning up large flocks of Smith's Longspurs in spring in eastern Iowa since 1981, in contrast to Minnesota where there are only two spring records of large flocks (***The Loon*** 62:157), and nearly all spring records occur in the western-most tier of

counties. Similarly, although small numbers of Smith's Longspurs are found almost annually in western Minnesota in fall migration, there are no modern fall records in Iowa. As another example, although there are only two records of Great-tailed Grackle in Minnesota, the recent range expansion is well developed in Iowa, with large flocks reported and nesting recorded within one county of the Minnesota border. Additionally, as an enticement to Minnesota birders interested in discovering a first state record, Iowa has recorded seven Brown Pelicans, two Black Vultures, four Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, three Fish Crows, and single observations of Reddish Egret, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, Bean Goose, Slaty-backed Gull, Marbled Murrelet, Western Flycatcher, and Pinyon Jay.

Gratifying was the lengthy and thoughtful acknowledgment given to all the contributors to *Iowa Bird Life*'s Field Reports section, since it is the hard work of these observers which make a book like this possible. This is a scholarly, thoroughly researched work, and there are many innovations which would be welcome in the next publication on Minnesota birds. **Karl Bardon, 1430 – 100th Ave. NW, #212, Coon Rapids MN 55433.**

LIFE OF THE FLYCATCHER, by Alexander Skutch.

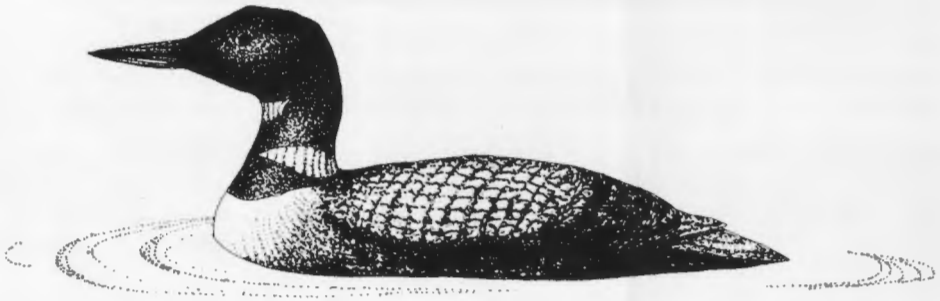
A couple of years ago, when former MOU president Mike Mulligan returned from one of his many trips to Costa Rica, he eagerly shared with me highlights of his expedition. At the top of the list was his visit with ornithologist Alexander Skutch, a resident of that country and a student of birds for over 50 years.

Sometime later, I came upon the then-newest of the many books Mr. Skutch has written about birds. Remembering Mr. Mulligan's fond recollection of his visit, I bought the book. It was entitled *The Minds of Birds*. I read it with enjoyment. I now have finished another of Mr. Skutch's books, *Life of the Flycatcher,* published by the University of Oklahoma Press in July of this year.

Mr. Skutch writes as an uncommon student of birds, an observer of the highest skill. He has distilled decades of field work on flycatchers, one of many families he has studied, into 145 pages of clear and concise prose. Much of the material he offers is anecdotal, stories well told to illustrate the points he pursues. It is hard to tell if he is an ornithologist who writes well or a fine writer who studies birds. In this book, Mr. Skutch introduces the family of flycatchers, later explaining why they bear what he considers the misnomer of tyrant (the Tyrannidae family). He examines their habits and quirks as they feed, breed, bathe, sing, and intermingle. There are almost 380 species of American flycatchers, making this the largest family of birds in the New World. Our flycatchers, those to be seen in Minnesota, are part of the northern extension of a family much more prominent as one moves south; there are 185 flycatcher species in Brazil, for example.

Minnesota's flycatchers are mentioned frequently, as their behavior on wintering ground fits the template of Mr. Skutch's narrative. We get to see northern flycatchers in the light of a southern sun. And those flycatchers serve as the chalkboard on which Mr. Skutch sketches a broader outline of bird life in general, all of this presented by a man who has mastered two difficult disciplines, birds and words. The book has been illustrated with drawings by artist Dana Gardner. Some of the drawings are in color. My favorites, however, were the black-and-white scratchboard drawings which appear frequently throughout the volume. Mr. Gardner is particularly noted for his scratchboard work.

The book has a bibliography and an index. It also should be mentioned that this is a handsome book overall, well designed, well made, hard-bound and tightly sewn, with jacket illustrations by Mr. Gardner. It is priced at $40. **Jim Williams, 5239 Cranberry Lane, Webster WI 54893.**



NOTES OF INTEREST

ANOTHER KING EIDER RECORD FOR COOK COUNTY — On 2 November 1996, a Minnesota Birding Weekends group observed a female-plumaged King Eider *(Somateria spectabilis)* on Lake Superior from the Ray Berglund Wayside between Tofte and Lutsen in Cook County.

The bird was initially spotted by Chuck Krulas while the group was separated into various vehicles driving up Highway 61, and, although the initial observers to arrive and observe the bird were uncertain as to the duck's identity, they knew this was something unusual. After a few minutes the entire group of 22 observers arrived to see the bird, and, since I had seen the female King Eiders in recent years in Grand Marais, I could tell right away it was an eider and knew it was most likely a King.

The skies were overcast, but the light was good as we studied the eider for close to a half hour as it swam and dove about 100 yards away. A variety of optics were used, including the 40X Kowa TSN–4 spotting scope I used, and, though some observers were using field guides to reinforce the features pointed out to them, the identification was made without consulting any references, and some sketchy field notes were written later in the day.

Though there were no other ducks nearby for direct size comparison, its overall size eliminated all but a few other duck species (e.g., Mallard, Canvasback, scoters and mergansers), and its uniformly barred and spotted medium brownish plumage overall, along with its plain wing pattern (visible when it half spread its wings when diving), indicated this was a female-plumaged eider.

Because of the favorable viewing conditions, which included a relatively smooth lake surface, it was relatively easy to see two features that confirmed this as a King Eider — rather than a hoped-for Common. First, the breast and sides were marked with spots and short curved bars, unlike the longer and straighter barring present on a Common Eider. And second, the facial feathering extending forward on the bill clearly stopped short of the nostril; this feathering extends up to the nostril on a Common Eider. We could also see a hint of an eye ring, and the head was somewhat two-toned, with the crown generally a darker shade of brown than the rest of the face. It is not known if this eider was present on subsequent days.

No other observers reported seeing it (and perhaps no one else came to look for it), although our group rechecked this location the next day and saw a duck in the distance that kept diving and disappearing behind waves that might have been the eider, but a positive identification was impossible. Although the King Eider is cur-

rently listed as Accidental on the Minnesota checklist, this sighting represents the fourth record in eight years in the state, with the other three in late fall in nearby Grand Marais: from 30 October to 2 November 1988 (***The Loon*** 61:38–39), from 20 October until late November 1990 (***The Loon*** 63:66–67), and 28–30 November 1994 (***The Loon*** 67:62–63). **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE MOBS DEAD BOREAL OWL IN ROSEAU — During the past two winters when Boreal Owls irrupted in Minnesota, I specifically looked for them in Roseau County. On the morning of 17 February 1997 while driving slowly around the town of Roseau with undue optimism, I actually found one!

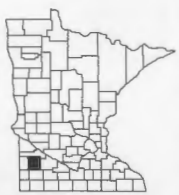
My attention was drawn by a noisy collection of Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches that were scolding an owl perched in a dogwood. *Voila*! It was a Boreal Owl and one of the birds mobbing it was an obvious Townsend's Solitaire — *Voila* again! Then I noticed that the owl wasn't moving and that its posture wasn't quite right. My elation quickly deflated as it dawned on me that the owl must be dead.

I first took notes on the solitaire, which sometimes perched in the same dogwood as the owl: "slim shape, long tail; small, thin dark bill; legs not seen; obvious white eye ring; gray head, nape and back; wings darker than back with buffy secondary patch; tail darker than upperparts, slightly notched; white outer tail feathers; central tail feathers also dark from below; underparts including undertail coverts pale gray, paler than the upperparts." It was seen in flight several times, when its white outer rectrices and buffy wing patches showed well. The identification was easy because I had just seen numerous solitaires during a trip to northeastern Arizona in January 1997.

After knocking on several doors in the area without success, I picked up the owl so that it could be turned in to Steve Wilson at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Once the owl was gone from the dogwood, the mob dispersed and the solitaire could not be relocated despite extensive searching.

This represents the first Roseau County record for Townsend's Solitaire. In addition, it is only the fourth for the entire Northwest region; my 1993 review article (***The Loon*** 65:110–115) includes an 18 November 1990 record from Norman County but not two recent records (4 November 1994 and 20 December 1996) from Tamarac NWR, Becker County. **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.**

EASTERN SCREECH-OWLS — In early July of 1997 we were hearing the descending quaver of several Eastern Screech-Owls in the twilight each evening. The birds were often close to our screen porch, and even an hour after sunset we could see their dark silhouettes as they flew from tree to tree. This midsummer owl show has been pretty much an annual event for a quarter century. Our block has many mature trees and the Screech-Owls usually nest here. We always look forward to glimpsing them flying against the late evening sky and roosting during the day. One year we saw an adult and four very new fledgings lined up on a branch in our backyard! However, all these years of Screech-Owl watching hadn't prepared us for the treat of 14 July 1997.



We were on the porch at 4:30 P.M. on a brilliant, sunny day when my husband, Hugh, nudged me and asked what he was seeing on the ground near our bird bath. He wispered, "I thought at first it was a Mourning Dove, but I believe it it may be an owl!" Immediately the bird flew up onto the rim of the bird bath, his silhouette revealing that he was, in fact, an owl. We marvelled that he was out and about in broad daylight instead of roosting, and assumed he was heading for the over-hanging

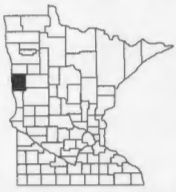
Eastern Screech-Owl at bird bath, 14 July 1997, Cottonwood, Lyon County. Photo by Hugh Curtler.

branches of our white mulberry tree.

Not so. he had come to drink, which he did — twice. Amazingly, he was joined by a second owl on the rim of the bird bath. We expectd the second owl to drink also, but it never did; apparently it was just a watcher, like us. As we sat with binoculars trained hoping the second bird would drink too, suddenly the first bird jumped smack into the middle of the bath, splashing with all the exhuberance of a Blue Jay or American Robin and displaying no timidity whatever. We hadn't yet recovered from our surprise when he jumped in again for a repeat performance!

During all this flapping and splashing the second owl sat quietly on the rim, making no attempt to join in the fun. (Apparently it wasn't his week for a bath!) When the bather returned to the rim to shake off, the second bird flew to a nearby tree where we discovered him sitting next to a third owl. The bather remained on the rim of the bird bath for about five more minutes, allowing Hugh to take several photos. Eventually he flew to the limb with the other owls and the three of them remained there for twenty minutes more. **Linda Curtler, Box 102, Cottonwood, MN 56229.**

CLAY COUNTY OLDSQUAW SIGHTING — At about 4:30 P.M. on 12 December 1996, I stopped at the east gate of the Moorhead Crystal Sugar Ponds to see whether the remaining open water had attracted any ducks or geese. When I walked to the top of the dike, I could see that the northeast and southeast corners of the near pond were clear of ice and that in the southeast corner, about 40 feet from me, there were several very pale, stubby-billed ducks, very actively diving. I immediately recognized them as Oldsquaws, a species I'd often seen in the spring while growing up in central New York and whose fall plumage I know from sightings at Garrison Dam and (very rarely) at the North Fargo sewage lagoons, both in North Dakota.



The bills of these seven birds were grayish with darker tips. The wings and backs were grayish black mottled with whitish gray. The heads were largely white with darker patches on the crown and cheek; the whitish bodies and necks showed at least some gray-brown smudges. The dark eyes stood out clearly against the light face. I watched the birds for three minutes or so in the last good light of a fairly gray day through 10x42 Leica binoculars. I then withdrew and called several local birders in the hope that someone else would get to see the birds (a first Clay County record) but it was too late for anyone to get to the ponds before dark. Several of us who looked for the birds on the morning of the 13th were unable to relocate them. From the birds' active diving on the 12th, they clearly needed food, and the group may have been forced to fly on to find a better feeding area. One additional point worth noting

about this sighting is that a group of seven Oldsquaws was being seen below Garrison Dam through early December. Checking the last date those birds were seen would indicate whether there's any chance that this was the same flock. **Bob O'Connor, 1353 4th St. N., Fargo, ND 58102.**

SPOTTED TOWHEE IN LINCOLN COUNTY —

Date and Time of Observation: 5 May 1996, about 1:00 P.M.
Location: Memorial Cemetery, Lake Benton, MN, Lincoln County,
Weather: Cold and Windy. 55 F, winds South at 15 mph. Heavy overcast skies.
Light rain.
Lighting conditions: fair.
Optics used: 10X binoculars.
Distance of observation: 15–30 feet.
Time of Observation: 20–25 minutes.
Birds were actively feeding.

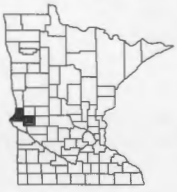
On 5 May 1996, after observing juvenile White-winged Crossbills, we continued to walk through the Lake Benton cemetery, walking on opposite sides of a row of pines. Near the southwest corner of the cemetery, Jared observed a group of towhees foraging under the pines. We both concluded immediately that these were Spotted Towhee.

A total of five adult Spotted Towhees, three males and two females was observed. We were within 15–30 feet of the birds at all times, and were able to observe them for 20–25 minutes as they actively foraged under the pines. They were very tolerant of us, probably due to the weather conditions, available food, and good cover.

The spots on the back were clearly present, as was the red eye. The males' back, tail, head, and throat were distinctly black, while the females were dark brown. All birds showed a white breast with rufous sides, and white on the corners of the tail. During our observation, none of the birds vocalized.

No additional Towhees were seen in other part of the cemetery. The birds were not present when Roger returned two days later. **Jared Anez, 723 – 135th Avenue SW, Wilmar MN 56201; Roger Schroeder, 505 S Whitney, Marshall MN 56258.**

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF A CLARK'S GREBE AND AN INTERMEDIATE GREBE



— During a mid-August Minnesota Birding Weekends trip through west central Minnesota, our group observed both a full-plumaged Clark's Grebe *(Aechmophorus clarkii)* plus a grebe with characters intermediate between Clark's and Western *(A. occidentalis)* Grebes. The Clark's Grebe was seen 18 August 1996 on Clear Lake in Stevens County, and it was studied by the group of 18 observers for about 20 minutes at a distance of about 100 yards. Light conditions were good under a bright overcast, and we were looking north, studying the grebe with a variety of spotting scopes, including the 40X Kowa TSN–4 I was using. Some sketchy field notes were written later in the day, and no field guides were used or needed to confirm the identification.

This grebe was an adult and was seen in the company of several Western Grebes of varying ages, which provided direct comparison as we studied the diagnostic field marks. The bill was consistently and clearly brighter and more orange yellow than the duller, greenish yellow bills of the Western Grebes. Its face pattern, though not as easy to see, was also diagnostic, with the lower edge of the black cap stopping above the eye on both sides of the head, leaving the eye surrounded by white. Secondary characters also easily observed were the flanks which were whiter overall on both

sides of the body than the Westerns, and its hindneck stripe was narrower than on any Western Grebe present. This stripe was especially narrow at the nape or the top of the neck, and this feature was even visible when the grebe was seen from the side.

Since it has become increasingly evident in recent years that the Clark's Grebe is probably a Regular Minnesota species, instead of Casual, it is perhaps more significant that we also were able to study an intermediate Clark's–Western Grebe on the same weekend. This individual was seen on Lake Traverse in Traverse County on 17 August in the company of several adult Western Grebes. The circumstances of this observation were mostly the same as with the Clark's Grebe, except this grebe was usually closer to us at a range of perhaps 80 yards, and the sun was out and to our left as we looked to the northwest. Its hindneck stripe was somewhat narrower than on any of the Western Grebes, and both sides of its bill were orange yellow rather than dull greenish yellow, although neither of these features were as obvious as on the Clark's Grebe seen the next day.

What is interesting about this grebe is that the plumage on the right side of its body was like a Clark's, while its left side was more like a Western. That is, its right eye was surrounded by white while its left eye was within its blackish cap, and its flanks were whitish overall on its right side and darker overall on its left side. This intermediate grebe should serve as reminder to Minnesota birders that all apparent Clark's Grebes should continue to be carefully studied, even if this species is added to the Regular list. If possible, try to see both the right and left sides of the grebe and, whenever possible, study its field marks within the context of direct comparison with any Western Grebes present. **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**

A RECORD LATE BOBOLINK IN LAKE COUNTY — On 11 November 1996, we observed and photographed an unexpected Bobolink along the grassy shoulder of Highway 61 in Lake County, about a half mile northeast of the Highway 1 intersection. Peder first spotted the bird as we were driving towards Duluth and actually had the impression of it being a possible Bobolink, even though he had only a brief glimpse of it. The car was turned around, and we relocated the bird after a brief search and were surprised that it actually turned out to be a Bobolink. During the next 15 minutes, from about 2:15 to 2:30 P.M., we carefully studied the bird with the sun at our backs at a distance of as close as 15 feet.

In case the bird turned out to be something really unusual, we began writing field notes and took several photographs as the bird fed on grass and weed seeds along the road. Its overall length was about the same as a pop can in the ditch (the only object available for direct size comparison), and its flat-headed profile recalled that of an Ammodramus sparrow. Its bill was sharply pointed, shorter than a meadowlark's, but longer than any sparrow's. The bill was mostly pinkish with some darkness on the culmen. The two lateral crown stripes were dark brown, bordering a median crown stripe and supercilium which were rich buff. A dark eye line extended posteriorly from each eye, but the lores were unmarked and grayish. The underparts were also rich buff overall, brightest and almost orange on the throat and upper breast, and palest on the lower belly. The sides of the breast and the flanks were marked with short dark streaks. The upperparts were mostly nondescript, with two broad, buff, dark-bordered stripes down the back, some light streaking on the rump, and a dark tail. The bird appeared to be in fresh plumage and was strikingly brighter overall than female Bobolinks in summer.

To confirm the identification, at one point the bird called as it took flight, and Peder was able to hear its distinctive "pink" note. According to Janssen's *Birds in*

Minnesota, this species is not normally seen after early October, and there are only two November dates on record, on the 3rd and 10th. **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804; Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812.**

A EURASIAN WIGEON IN RAMSEY COUNTY — A friend of ours, Sharen Chappell of North Saint Paul, frequently walks around Lake Phalen (Ramsey County) for exercise and the enjoyment of nature — and some birding. Her bird sightings are mainly waterfowl on the lake. She calls us when she sees something special or unusual. For example, one day in the fall of 1995, on her walk around Lake Phalen, she saw 13 species of waterfowl. She called us recently (November 18, 1996) to tell us that she had seen a Eurasian Wigeon on Lake Phalen the previous day. I had just received a copy of the booklet *County Occurrences of Minnesota Birds* (by Robert B. Janssen and Anthony X. Hertzel) with the fall 1996 issue of ***The Loon***. I looked up the occurrence of the Eurasian Wigeon in Minnesota counties and found (page 13) that it had been seen in 15 Minnesota counties, but had not been previously reported in Ramsey County. I suggested to Sharen that she write up the details of her sighting and I would send it to the MOU — of which I was a member. Her account, described in the note she gave me, follows:

"Sunday, November 17, 1996, I was walking and observing the ducks at Lake Phalen, Ramsey County in St. Paul. There were dozens of Mallards, a few Common Goldeneyes, Ring-neckeds and Canvasbacks swimming in open water on the western side of the lake near the public boat launch (NW corner of the lake). It was 9:40 A.M. My attention was drawn to a duck swimming about 25 feet offshore. It was hanging around a coot that was diving and surfacing with water plants in its bill. This duck was trying to take the plants from the coot. It had a yellow patch on its head, a patch that ran from the crown of the head down between the eyes to the bill. Its head was rust color. I pulled out my binoculars and focused on my first sighting of a Eurasian Wigeon! I knew what it was right away. It was slightly smaller than the Mallards. Its body color was a grayish rust. There were white wingpits and white and black tail feathers. It was a beautiful Eurasian Wigeon! Sharen Chappell."

I called Sharen and read my introduction to her note quoted above, which she said was accurate. I then asked her why she was so confident that it was a Eurasian Wigeon stating — as quoted above — "I knew what it was right away." She told me that two days earlier she had seen American Wigeons on Lake Phalen and had confirmed their identity in Peterson's field guide (eastern), and had also noted the markings of the Eurasian Wigeon on the same page. So she was well prepared to identify her Eurasian Wigeon when she saw it. **Sharen Chappell, P. O. Box 9091 N, St. Paul, MN 55109. Submitted by LaMar Zollinger, 2138 Greenbrier St., Maplewood, MN 55117.**

THIRD RECORD OF THE BURROWING OWL IN DULUTH — During the 31 May 1997 Hawk Ridge Birdathon and St. Louis County Big Day, while hiking around the 40th Avenue West impoundment in Duluth at approximately 1:15 P.M., I spotted a Burrowing Owl *(Athene cunicularia)* flying nearby with Common Terns *(Sterna hirundo)* in hot pursuit. I immediately yelled "Heads up! Burrowing Owl!" so that team members Anthony and Paul Hertzel could quickly focus on it before it landed on top of a dirt pile.

The terns continued to harass the owl, which ducked its head every time a tern dive-bombed its position. We observed it through a Swarowski spotting scope from 75 yards away and verbalized a description that was written

Burrowing Owl, 31 May 1997, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Craig Menze.

down as soon as we returned to our vehicle.

During flight, its wings appeared broad and rounded in shape, while its tail appeared rounded at the tip and was held slightly spread. Each time it landed, it bobbed up and down briefly while assuming an upright stance on its long legs. In flight, its upperparts were a uniform, pale, sandy-buff color with fine vermiculations, especially on the coverts and on the tail. Through the scope, we noted its pale brown crown, white eyebrows that joined above the bill, obvious yellow irides, and a brown wash across the upper breast, with faint brown mottling on the lower breast. My notes indicate that the bill appeared gray (it should be yellow) which was undoubtedly an artifact of the harsh lighting.

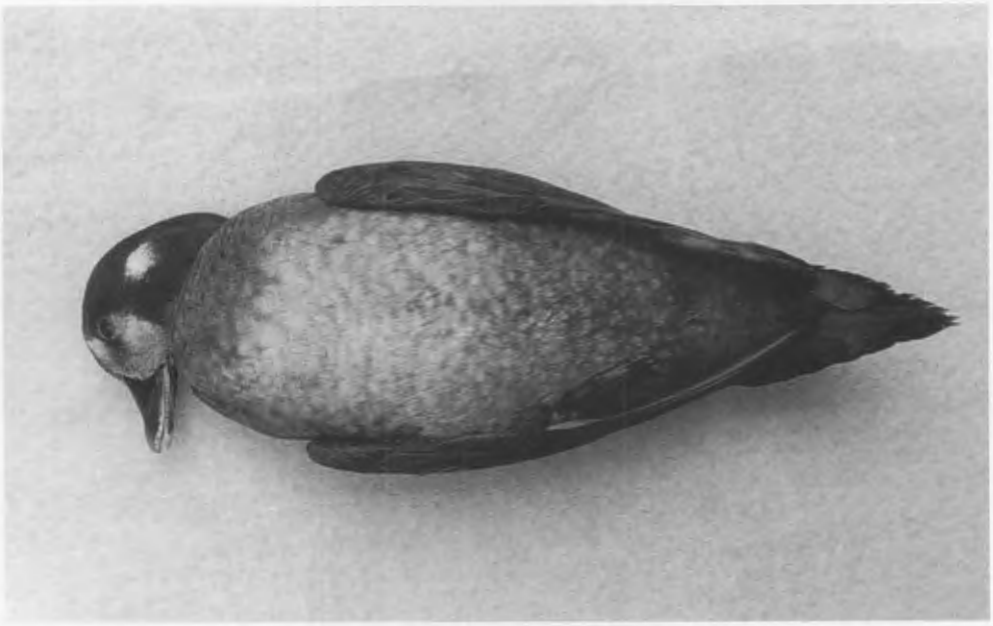
We alerted other birding teams and virtually everyone who looked for it that day was able to see it; however, it could not be relocated the following day. The first record of the Burrowing Owl for Duluth and northeastern Minnesota was at the Park Point Recreation Area during an "annual May Day count of bird migration" on 26 May 1956 (*The Flicker* 28:160). The second and only other record for Duluth was at the Port Terminal on 15 May 1979 (***The Loon*** 51:186).

This species is now considered Casual in the state; since 1965 when "The Burrowing Owl in Minnesota" was published (***The Loon*** 37:2–17), there have been very few records away from its historic range in the prairie regions of southwestern and west-central Minnesota. **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.**

A SUMMER RECORD OF HARLEQUIN DUCK IN COOK COUNTY — In early June 1997 I was leading a group of birdwatchers in northeastern Minnesota. At about 4:30 A.M. on 7 June 1997, under a heavy drizzle punctuated by light rain, our group turned north out of the town of Grand Marais and began driving up Cook County Road 12, known to many people as the Gunflint Trail. I was driving a van and was being followed by a car containing three of our group. Sunrise at this time of year in Grand Marais is roughly 5:15 A.M. so it was still almost fully dark. Just under four miles north of Grand Marais a bird materialized in front of the lead van I was driving. It flew directly in front of my van down the corridor cut through the woods by the roadway. The shape, size and whirring

wingbeats led me to believe the bird was a duck, perhaps, I thought, a Hooded Merganser. It was too dark to see any details on the bird and within ten seconds I lost sight of it as it blended back into the pre-dawn darkness. Perhaps twenty seconds later we rounded a curve at the junction of county roads 58/60, about 100 yards south of where the Devil Track River passes under county road 12. I saw a bird flailing about on the surface of the road in the middle of the southbound lane. Thinking it to be a Ruffed Grouse that had been struck by a car I pulled the van over and trotted back to pick the bird up to show the tour participants. When I bent over to pick the bird up I was shocked to see that the bird was a female Harlequin Duck!

As I reached down to pick the bird up dawned, it on me that the bird I'd seen flying down the road was almost certainly the bird I was now holding. Her neck was limp but her powerful legs, well designed for diving, were kicking in an attempt to



Harlequin Duck specimen picked up 7 June 1997 near Grand Marais, Cook County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

liberate herself from my grasp. The bird quickly expired. Recognizing the dearth of summer Harlequin Duck records I wrapped the bird in a plastic bag and placed the specimen in a cooler.

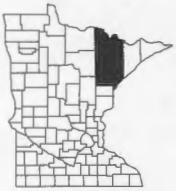
Upon arrival in Duluth later that day the bird was transferred to a freezer and, ultimately, delivered to Dr. Bud Tordoff at the University of Minnesota. The specimen is now preserved in the collection of the Bell Museum of Natural History. I was told later by the birders in the trailing vehicle that the duck actually had been flying between their car and my van for almost a mile, at a consistant 40 mph. Although we'll never know for certain, my guess is that the duck met its demise when it tried to land on the rain-slick roadway. There are many instances of waterbirds, including grebes and ducks, alighting at night on wet roadways they apparently mistook for water (Terres 1980). This is the fourth June record of this species for Minnesota and only the sixth summer record.

Literature Cited

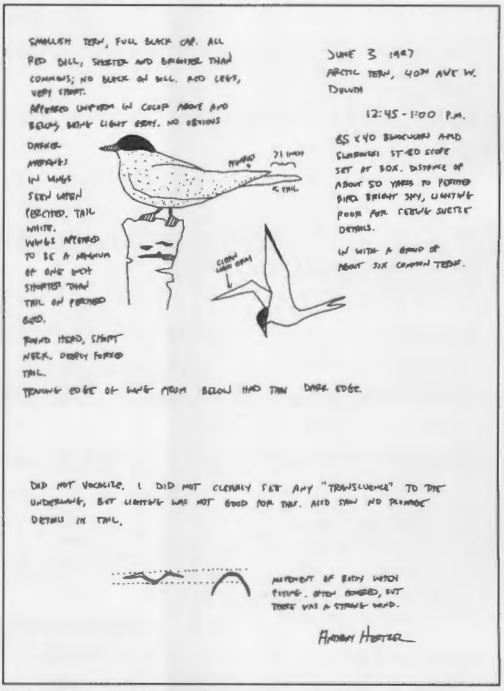
Terres, John K. 1980. The Audubon Society Encyclopedia Of North American Birds. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Parker Backstrom, 1310 N Jones Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85716.

AN ADULT ARCTIC TERN IN DULUTH — On 2 June 1997 at approximately 2:00 P.M., while standing with Sue Barton on the southeast corner of the Erie Pier impoundment in Duluth and trying to relocate the Burrowing Owl found there on 31 May, our attention was arrested by the call of a tern that sounded raspy and high-pitched compared to the Common Terns *(Sterna hirundo)* that we had heard during our hike around the impoundment. We quickly turned around and watched a tern fly overhead within 20 feet of us as it approached the impoundment from the southeast. As it passed overhead we saw very obvious contrast between its gray underbody and its whitish, translucent wings.



The trailing edge of the underwing showed a sharply defined black line along the primary tips that was thinner than the dark trailing edge on Common Tern's underwing. These features suggested Arctic Tern *(Sterna paradisaea)* so we carefully studied it during the next 15 minutes as it flew around the pond, occasionally hovering or plunging to the surface. Its size was slightly smaller but very similar to the Common Terns and its wings appeared slimmer. In profile, it gave an impression of being "neck-less" and plump. Its bill appeared all red, without a dark tip as in Common Tern. Its cap and nape were completely black. The upper wing surface was uniform gray, lacking any hint of the darker wedge on the primaries that is typical of Common Tern. The upperwing also showed neither the dusky carpal bar nor the whitish secondaries that were described by Kim Eckert for a second-summer Arctic Tern that he found at Park Point on 29 May 1997, thus proving that different individuals were involved.



Sketch and notes of Arctic Tern by Anthony Hertzel.

Our tern eventually landed near the edge of the water but thick vegetation prevented us from ever seeing it perched on the ground. Anthony Hertzel relocated this bird at approximately 12:45 P.M. on 3 June at the Erie Pier impoundment and had excellent looks from close range as it perched on a birch stump. He was able to confirm the identification as an adult Arctic Tern by documenting very short legs compared to the Common Terns on nearby perches, and he sketched an extension of the tail streamers more than one inch beyond the wingtips (these are approximately the same length in adult Common Tern). There was a rash of Arctic Tern records in Duluth during the early 1980s but none since 1985! **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. Fourth St., Duluth, MN 55812–1533.**

In This Issue

Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we: publish a magazine, ***The Loon***, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding;* conduct field trips; encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The MOU wishes to point out that any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of ***The Loon*** welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest" and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any stardard format on any 3 ½ inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editor. See inside front cover. Bird-sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".

The Loon

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In Memoriam: William R. Pieper

1927–1997

Richard Ruhme

In 1955, a small, wire-bound book was published entitled *Where to Find Birds in Minnesota*. In it was a brief chapter detailing locations in the Sand Dunes State Forest and the species to be found there, written by an eager 28-year-old: William R. Pieper. It was one of Bill's early contributions to Minnesota birding, but far from the last.

To explore areas in the state beyond a few well-known hot spots, Bill organized the legendary Avifaunal Club whose members included such stalwarts as Ron Huber, Ray Glassel and Bob Janssen. Together with this gung-ho young group, he helped make several important discoveries, including Yellow Rail population at Waubun and the Chestnut-collared Longspur breeding area in Clay County.

In the years that followed, Bill expanded his birding horizons across North America from St. Lawrence Island off Alaska to the Dry Tortugas off the Florida Keys, but remained an avid, active Minnesota birder as well, compiling a very respectable Minnesota life list of 360 species. He also contributed his knowledge and experience as a longtime member of MORC, the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee. Although he retired to Arizona nearly ten years ago, he still closely followed events here through ***The Loon*** and *Minnesota Birding*, and even managed to record a Black-headed Grosbeak and an Ivory Gull on visits back to his home state.

Bill was a valuable and delightful birding companion, sharp-eyed and quick in the field. Over the long miles of travel, his equally quick wit and dry sense of humor made the time pass enjoyably with laughter and lively discussion. The last time we birded together, his legs were weakening fast from long illness, but from his car we spotted a pair of dippers along Red Rock Creek in Arizona; he was every bit as eager, pleased and enthusiastic as that 28-year-old who once wrote about the birds of Sand Dune State Forest.

Beyond birding, Bill enjoyed a highly successful career in banking, rising to become president of the Marquette Brookdale Bank. He was a devout and generous supporter of his church and active in his Arizona Lions Club; despite ill health, he served as club president in 1996 and directed their annual White Cane Drive.

Bill Pieper died on September 12, 1997, in Mesa, Arizona, survived by his wife, Gerry, three sons, a daughter, eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He returned to Minnesota for the last time on September 19 when he was interred at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis. As every local birder knows, that's just a few quick wingbeats from the famous Thomas Roberts Bird Sanctuary. We'd like to think he might still be listening some fine spring morning to the songs of returning migrants.

Hey, Bill — wasn't that a Connecticut Warbler?

9655 Upton Road S., Bloomington, MN 55431.

Predation on Artificial Ground Nests At Itasca State Park

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Introduction

Fragmentation of once-continuous habitats is recognized as a serious threat to bird populations. Not only does fragmentation reduce the areal extent of habitat, it creates more habitat "edges." Edges are thought to increase nest depredation in the forest interior by facilitating access to predators. Thus, more edges means that bird nests within adjoining habitat should experience greater depredation, as there is relatively less of the "safe" forest interior. Many experiments have shown that nest depredation is indeed higher nearer habitat edges than further into the forest, although some of the evidence is conflicting. Many observations of increased nest predation at habitat edges come from agricultural areas, where the edges are sharply demarcated (Paton 1994). Alternatively, studies in "forest-dominated landscapes" in general have not shown such an effect (Fenske-Crawford and Niemi 1997).

To evaluate the effects of edges in forest-dominated landscapes, Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) put artificial bamboo wicker nests containing two Northern Bobwhite *(Colinus virginianus)* eggs in the ground at varying distances (5 m, 50 m, 100 m) from two types of edges, "soft" and "hard". A soft edge is one in which there is relatively little contrast between the forest and adjacent edge vegetation, whereas a hard edge is the abutment of an open area and a forest, reminiscent of edges occurring in agricultural landscapes. They conducted their experiments in the Walker Ranger District of the Chippewa National Forest in north-central Minnesota, ca. 14 km SE of Walker. They repeated their experiments three times, starting in mid-May and ending in mid-July. They found that nest depredation near both hard and soft edges was greater than that 50 m and 100 m into the forest interior. However, they

Fig. 1A. Hard edge site.

Fig. 1B. Understory at hard edge site.

found that overall predation rates were lowest at hard edges, contrary to results from studies done in agricultural areas (see also Hanski *et al.* 1996). They concluded that the relationships between edges, predators and nest depredation are complex and require additional study.

We attempted to replicate the experiments of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) at Itasca State Park (Clearwater County, Minnesota), 60 km WNW of their study site, during June and July of 1997, as part of an ornithology class project. We set out identical, artificial ground nests at a hard edge to test the findings of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997). Lacking a clearly defined soft edge, we put out a second set of nests in a relatively mature secondary forest adjacent to a mature stand of pines in which a road cut separated the two habitats. The dates of our experiments correspond to the mid and late trials of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997). Our findings generally support previous work, although we concluded that the "edge" created by the road cut did not substantially increase nest depredation rates in the secondary forest.

Methods

We replicated the study of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) as closely as possible. Fenske-Crawford (pers. comm. to RMZ) described the nests used and where they were purchased; we used bamboo wicker nests ("Bamboo Canary Nest", made by Vo-Toys Inc., Harrison, NJ 07029; catalogue number 7457); nests are 11 cm in diameter and 6 cm in depth. Although there is a metal wire for hanging the nests in captive bird cages, it was not used. Northern Bobwhite eggs were purchased from the Georgia Quail Farm. Although brown chicken eggs are potentially less visible to predators (Yahner and Mahan 1996), they are too large and hard-shelled for many small ground predators to handle, resulting in underestimate of predation; hence we used quail eggs. Before placement into the forest,

Fig. 2. Habitat of the secondary forest site. Road visible in Fig. 1A is in foreground.

nests were left outside for one week to "acclimatize" them to the local environment (M. Hammer, pers. comm.). Nests and eggs were handled by persons wearing rubber gloves to prevent transference of human scent (although such handling was not followed during packing and shipment of eggs). Eggs were not rinsed in distilled water as done by Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997).

The hard edge site (Fig. 1) includes a relatively open grassy area that borders a coniferous forest. The 100 m transect is a closed canopy forest dominated by white pine and red pine with scattered balsam fir and paper birch. The understory consists of scattered arrow wood shrubs and a thick ground cover, primarily big leafed aster and bracken fern. The 50 m transect is much the same as the 100 m transect, but traveling east the ground cover becomes less dense, and there are more paper birch and balsam fir. The edge transect (5 m) parallels the edge of the pine forest and the hard edge (and maintenance road). Dominant trees here include red pine, paper birch, white spruce and green ash. There is thick ground cover dominated by big leaf aster, bracken fern, and vetch. There was no actual shrub layer, but the white spruce were relatively dense.

The secondary habitat site was in general a heavy second growth forest across from mature red pines (Fig. 2). The 100 m transect started in deciduous forest dominated by bur oak, which provided a relatively open canopy. There were scattered paper birch and hop-horn beam. The shrub layer was thick and dominated by arrow wood and American hazelnut. The ground cover was also thick with assorted grasses, meadow rue, and bracken fern. The 50 m transect included a white pine stand surrounded by bur oak. There were several green ash, and a flooded location which eliminated much of the ground cover. The shrub layer was not as thick, and dominated by arrow wood and quaking aspen saplings. The

Fig. 3. Artificial nest with Northern Bobwhite eggs.

edge (5 m) transect paralleled the maintenance road and the bur oak forest in an almost impenetrable shrub layer dominated by American hazelnut and arrow wood. The dominant trees were bur oak, white spruce, paper birch, and scattered red pines. The ground cover was predominately meadow rue, grasses, bracken fern and big leaf aster.

Although we technically did not use a soft edge because we placed the artificial nests in the "edge" environment itself, we felt that this would provide interesting baseline information on nest depredation because this area is adjacent to a maintained but seldom-used road. Given the number of such logging and maintenance roads throughout forested areas, we decided that this would be of interest to the forest management of wild birds. The road facilitates our movement through the forest and we hypothesized that such might be true for nest predators as well. Hence, we term this experimental site "secondary forest" although it is bordered by a mature stand of pines, and the two habitats are separated by the road cut.

We placed 10 (secondary forest) or 11 (hard edge) nests in a line parallel to the edge at 5 m, 50 m, and 100 m into the forest. We used a surveyors tape and every 10 m we alternated artificial nests either 3 m to the right or left of the tape over a course of 100 m. All persons wore rubber boots and we did not leave "dead-end" trails, factors that we hoped would help minimize predation by mammals that might learn to follow human scent trails (Fenske-Crawford and Niemi 1997). Nests were placed in a shallow depression (usually made with the heel of a boot) and to minimize nest conspicuousness, some surrounding leaf litter was placed in the nest to enhance the appearance (Fig. 3).

Nests were placed on 23 June 1997, and the experiment was repeated beginning 7 July 1997. Once placed, nests were not disturbed. Nests were checked at 7 and 14 days after placement, and the contents of the nests were noted and described; rubber boots were worn during nest checks and again we were careful not to leave dead-end trails. As with Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997), the 14-day period was intended to simulate the incubation period of the Ovenbird *(Seirus auricapillus)*, which is a common local nesting species (however, a basic difference between the artificial nests used by us and Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) and those of the Ovenbird is that ours were not covered or domed). After 14 days, the experiment was replicated. We moved each nest to the other side of the 100 m transect line, and put fresh eggs into each nest. If the nest had been destroyed, a new acclimatized one was used. Eggs remaining after 14 days were discarded a safe distance from the experimental plots so as not to encourage egg predators.

Results

First experiment (Table 1). Combining data from both sites, 27 of 58 (47%) nests were depredated. Nest depredation was highest at the hard edge site, where after seven days, 16 of 32 (50%) nests were depredated. Predation was highest at the edge (50%) and 50 m (82%) transects at the hard edge site, and lowest (27%) 100 m from the edge. The secondary forest

Fig. 4. Result of egg depredation.

site experienced a 12% depredation rate (3 of 26). There was little difference in secondary forest whether nests were 5, 50, or 100 m from the road cut (10%, 17%, and 10%, respectively). After 14 days, predation increased (as expected). At the hard edge site, 70% of the 5 m, 100% of the 50 m nests, and 45% of the 100 m transects were depredated; for all three transects combined, 72% of nests were depredated. In the secondary forest the 5 m and 50 m transects were unchanged (10% and 17%, respectively) and one additional nest was depredated at the 100 m transect (20% total); total nest predation for the three transects in secondary forest was 15.4% (4 of 26). Thus, after 14 days, the hard edge experienced much greater (72%) nest predation than the secondary forest (15.4%).

In most cases, eggs were missing and nests were either left in place, displaced or removed entirely. In some cases, egg shell fragments were near the nests, and had obviously been chewed by a rodent (Fig. 4).

Experiment 2 (Table 2). Combining habitats, predation was 49% after seven days, with the hard edge again experiencing more (61%) than the secondary forest (37%). Both the 5 m and the 50 m transects at the hard edge were heavily depredated (100% and 73%, respectively) whereas the 100 m transect experienced loss of only one egg set (9%). In secondary forest, predation on nests was more uniform: 20% at 5 m, 50% at 50 m and 20% at 100 m. After 14 days 31 of 33 (94%) total nests at the hard edge site were depredated, with one each remaining intact at the 50 m and 100 m transects. At the secondary site, 14 of 30 (47%) were depredated, with depredation relatively constant at the three transects: 40%, 60%, and 40%, respectively. Overall, after 14 days, 45 of 63 (71%) nests were depredated.

Nest depredation clearly increased during the second experiment at both study sites, from 27 of 58 (47%) at the hard edge, and 45 of 63 (71%) in secondary forest. Combining results from the two trials showed that after seven days of nest exposure, the hard edge experienced much higher predation (36/65 or 55%) relative to the secondary forest (14/56 or 25%). After 14 days, the hard edge was much more severely depredated (54/65; 83%) relative to the secondary forest (18/56; 32%). Combining all data from both plots revealed a nest predation frequency of 72/121 or 60%. If we assume that deer mice further would have destroyed 5% additional egg sets (Fenske-Crawford and Niemi 19972), the frequency would increase to 78/121 or 64%.

Discussion

Is there an edge effect?. Our first experiment showed a clear edge effect at the hard edge, with the 100 m transect showing 45% depredation relative to the 5 m and 50 m transects. However, in the second trial, nearly all nests were lost at the hard edge. The secondary forest

Table 1. Results of first experiment. 7 and 14 refer to the contents of the nest at days 7 and 14 of the experiment. A "D" indicates depredation whereas no entry indicates no depredation at that time. A "*" indicates that the nest was flooded and these were not used in subsequent calculations. A dash indicates that there was not an eleventh nest in the secondary forest site.

	Hard Edge						Secondary Forest					
	Edge		50m		100m		Edge		50m		100m	
Nest #	7	14	7	14	7	14	7	14	7	14	7	14
1			D	D	D	D						D
2			D	D								
3			D	D								
4		D	D	D	D	D	D	D				
5		D	D	D		D						
6	D	D	D	D					*	*		
7	D	D	D	D	D	D			*	*	D	D
8	D	D	D	D		D			*	*		
9	D	D		D					D	D		
10	D	D	D	D					*	*		
11	*	*		D			-	-	-	-	-	-
% Predation	50	70	82	100	27	45	10	10	17	17	10	20

showed no edge effect in either experiment.

The increase in nest depredation rates increased from the first to the second experiment as it did in the study of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997); however, during their third experiment, rates declined somewhat. It seems likely that predators were increasing their search efforts for ground nests after finding some of the first egg sets, although this is speculative.

The effects of the maintenance road bordering the secondary forest site can be put in perspective. First, there was no clear edge effect, suggesting that the road did not provide a corridor to facilitate access by nest predators. That is, although the road creates an edge of sorts, it did not appear to enhance predators abilities to find nearby nests with eggs. Second, the overall rates of nest depredation were lower in secondary forest. Therefore, even though the two sets of nest transects were 150 m apart, the habitat difference apparently suited nest predators better in the hard edge site. That is, whatever predator(s) eliminated 92% of nests in the second experiment did not find the nests placed nearby in the secondary forest. This could reflect the differences in nest detectability, or the habitat preference of the predator(s).

What are the predators?. Although we have no direct observations, potential predators include black bear, raccoon, mink, fisher, red squirrel, striped skunk, eastern chipmunk, short-tailed weasel, long-tailed weasel, deer mouse, and red-backed vole.

Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) observed predation rates at the hard edge after seven days of 80% and 54% during their middle and late trial periods. We observed comparable values of 56% and 66%. They observed rates of 89% and 68% after 14 days; we observed rates of 69% and 94%. Thus, our results appear comparable. Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) observed decreasing rates of nest predation as the distance from the edge increased. We found a different pattern in experiment 1, in which both the edge and 50 m transects experienced relatively high rates of predation. In our second experiment, all transects were essentially

Table 2. Results of second experiment; see legend to Table 1.

	Hard Edge			Secondary Forest		
	Edge	50m	100m	Edge	50m	100m
Nest #	7 14	7 14	7 14	7 14	7 14	7 14
1	D D		D D			D D
2	D D	D D	D			
3	D D	D D	D		D	
4	D D	D	D		D D	D D
5	D D	D D	D D		D D	
6	D D	D D	D	D	D D	D
7	D D	D D	D	D D	D D	
8	D D	D D	D	D D	D D	
9	D D	D	D			
10	D D	D D		D		D
11	D D	D D	D	- -	- -	- -
% Predation	100	73 91	9 91	20 40	50 60	20 40

100% depredated. It is possible that the reason for the difference is that Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997) had five separate edges with 18 nests per site, whereas we had only one hard edge, and we placed 33 nests in each experiment. Thus it is possible that in our study, we "trained" local predators at the hard edge site by providing a large "resource" (Linder and Bollinger 1995, Bowman and Harris 1980).

Significance of artificial nest experiments. The significance of these nest experiments merits consideration. Our experimental protocol, and that of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997), creates an unnatural density of ground nests. For example, our studies at Itasca State Park suggest that in habitat comparable to that at the hard edge site, nests of Ovenbirds are 50–100 m apart on average (we indeed observed an ovenbird nest near the 100 m transect); this results in approximately two nests per hectare (see data in Canterbury and Blockstein, in press). However, the experimental protocol of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997), which we followed, results in a nest density of 33 per hectare, an order of magnitude greater than naturally occurring ground nests of Ovenbirds. Therefore, our experiments created an unnaturally rich environment for nest predators (Bowman and Harris 1980). Our tables also show a tendency for predation events to be somewhat clumped, suggesting that a predator might be "encouraged" after finding a nest or two. Future studies might place artificial nests in a pattern and density replicating that of the Ovenbird. Furthermore, artificial nests with domes mimicking the Ovenbird nest have been shown to have lower depredation rates than open cup nests (Linder and Bollinger 1995); future experiments might opt for domed nests.

Despite potential shortcomings, field experiments on nest depredation aid our evaluation of the effects of alterations to forested landscapes on the breeding bird fauna. There is reason for concern about the effects of increased edges facilitating access to nests by predators. Our study helps show that the effect, although significant, is perhaps more complicated than previously assumed.

Acknowledgments

We thank Mary Hammer, Timothy Fenske-Crawford and Gerald Niemi for advice.

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Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Paired With Western Kingbird

Bruce A. Fall

On 4 June 1997, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *(Tyrannus forficatus)* was reported to the MOU Rare Bird Alert (RBA) by an unnamed caller. The location was about five km SE of Elk River in southeastern Sherburne County, at the Cargill Animal Nutrition Center on 165th St. NW. Although individuals of this barely casual species are reported from Minnesota almost annually, most records are during migration and the birds typically do not remain long at the same locality. This bird, however, was an exception. Eventually it paired with a Western Kingbird *(T. verticalis),* built or contributed to at least three nests (each of which was destroyed before completion), and remained in the area for six weeks, through 17 July. The following account is based on personal observation (three visits, on 14 and 29 June, and 4 July, totaling about three hours), from reports submitted by many observers to the Minnesota RBA, and to the Minnesota Birding Network (MNBirdNet). Special thanks go to Anthony Hertzel, compiler of the RBA, who kept me updated on RBA information, and to Erika Sitz, a regular contributor of her observations.

The surrounding habitat was mostly open agricultural land of short grass, fences and some farm buildings, railroad tracks, grain fields, and a row of 10 to 15 meter tall deciduous trees (predominantly ash plus a few cottonwoods) bordering 165th St. on the north.

During the first few days of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher's (STF) known presence, some suggested that there might have been a second individual. To my

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 7 June 1997, Sherburne County. Photo by Terry Brashear.

knowledge, this possible second STF was never confirmed, and I am aware of no further reports of it after 6 June. It is clear, however, that at first there were two Western Kingbirds (WK), apparently a pair; WK is a regular, but not common, breeding species in this area. Reports of the second WK continued at least through 7 June and possibly longer.

Initially the STF seemed to be competing with the two WK for access to the first known nest, which was in the trunk crotch of a tall cottonwood. Descriptions indicated that the STF contributed material to the nest, and apparently one WK did also. There were reports of aggression involving both the STF and a WK chasing the other from the nest.

By 13 June, only a single WK was being reported, and a new (second) nest was under construction in an ash tree a short distance east of the first nest. Several observers saw the STF building the nest, with one WK in attendance; one person saw the STF visit both the old and new nest sites consecutively. On my first visit the following day (14 June), I saw the STF and only one WK, each foraging for insects from fences some 100 m or more from the nest and not obviously interacting with each other, although they remained within 25–75 m. Neither visited the new nest nor the old one (which was partly dismantled) during the 30 min that I watched.

During an hour of observation on 18 June, Anthony Hertzel reported that the STF was still attempting to add material to the second nest, but he saw several instances of aggression as the WK drove the STF away from it. Only a few strands remained from the first nest.

By 27 June, the second nest was visibly smaller, and apparently was being dismantled by one or both birds. At about the same time, but not documented, the STF started a third nest. On 29 June from 3:30–5:30 P.M., I recorded the behavior and movements of the birds at this newest nest, which was under construction and nearing completion in the same location (same cottonwood tree and trunk crotch) as the first nest; the second nest in the ash was nearly gone. During this time, there was only one WK and one STF, and it was evident from their behavior that the STF was a female and the WK a male.

During my two hours of observation, the STF made 12 trips to the nest with nesting material, which she gathered from fields up to 200 m away. I (and others earlier) also watched her collecting strips of shredded insulation hanging from nearby power lines. The WK did not accompany the STF on any of these trips. On at least seven of them he remained near the nest (from 0.5–3 m away); on other occasions he left the nest tree, but he never brought in material. Several times, immediately before the return of the STF with new nest material, the WK entered and shaped the nest, then perched beside it (sometimes only 0.3 m away) while the STF added the new material and then also shaped the nest. The WK frequently vocalized upon the STF's return, but I saw no aggression between the two. They behaved as if they were a conspecific pair.

My final visit to the site was 4 July. At this time, the third nest was nearly gone, and neither bird was present. A few days earlier (1 July) a very severe storm with 175 km/hr winds struck this area, causing extensive damage to trees and buildings. The neighboring cottonwood in the fence row was blown down by the storm, and although the winds may have been responsible for the destruction of this third nest, it is likely that the STF and/or WK dismantled the first two, and probably all three. There were a few continued reports of both the STF and WK from this area until at least 17 July, including some accounts of the STF carrying material for what may have been the fourth (but undiscovered) nest. There is no evidence that eggs were ever laid in any of the three known nests, nor did anyone report seeing copulation.

Although this interspecific pair probably did not produce offspring, hybridization between STF and WK has been documented at least twice elsewhere. One involved a sight record in Texas of a hybrid male (which more closely resembled STF than WK) paired with a female WK (Davis and Webster 1970). The other was of an Oklahoma bird observed and then collected, which was intermediate between STF and WK in almost every color and structural character (Tyler and Parkes 1992). According to these authors, hybridization among flycatchers has seldom been reported, and these two represent the only occurrences known to them of hybridization within the genus Tyrannus.

In both species only the female contributes to nest building and incubation (Gamble and Bergin 1996, Regosin and Pruett-Jones 1995), which is the reason I concluded that the STF was a female and the WK a male. Both species are behaviorally monogamous, with pair bonds that persist through fledging of young, and both sexes defend the nesting territory. In areas where they are regularly sympatric, both WK and STF are interspecifically aggressive, including chasing, removal of the other's nest material and even eviction from a nest (Regosin and Pruett-Jones 1995).

Since the return of adults to prior nesting areas is regular among passerines, including these species, it will be valuable to check this site again in 1998, and to continue behavioral observations if another interspecific pair bond is formed.

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Worm-eating Warbler, 30 May 1997, St. Paul, Ramsey County. Photo by Steve Roman.

The Spring Season
(1 March to 31 May 1997)

Dave Benson, Paul Budde, Wally Swanson, and Tom Tustison
Foreword by Peder Svingen

*An **Arctic Tern** and a **Burrowing Owl** in Duluth, a **Say's Phoebe** in Clay County, a **Rock Wren** in Bloomington, a cooperative **Sage Thrasher** at the Anoka County Airport, and two **Lazuli Buntings** in Lyon County were among the many unusual species reported in Minnesota this spring. An unprecedented number of **Yellow-throated Warblers** appeared in the state, while single **Prairie** and **Worm-eating Warblers** were appreciated by many observers over several successive days. Bob Janssen considered this "the best warbler migration in years" with many observers reporting daily counts of 20–25 species during late May.*

The 1997 spring migration in Minnesota was delayed by cold temperatures, unfavorable winds, and lack of available food for insectivores. Even by the end of May, trees were not yet fully leafed out in northern regions. Flycatchers and vireos were especially late and passerine migration extended well into June. Shorebird migration was perceived as lackluster, except in flooded backwaters of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and in the southwest region. Staggering snowdrifts in western regions contributed to equally staggering floods, especially in the Minnesota River Valley and along the

Red River Valley all the way north through Kittson County.

Lake Superior produced several **Red-throated Loons** and the only sizeable concentration of **Horned Grebes**, but none of the latter species could be found in the northwest region during late May. Big Stone County is becoming an expected location for the rare but apparently regular **Clark's Grebe**. Both **American** and **Least Bitterns** were scarce, following a few unexpectedly early arrivals. Even more startling were late March records of the **Great Egret** in northern Minnesota. Continuing the recent trend, only one **Snowy Egret** and no **Little Blue Herons** were reported. **Cattle Egrets** were also relatively scarce.

Many species of waterfowl overwinter in small numbers, especially in the southeast region and in the Twin Cities area; distinguishing overwintering birds from early migrants is impossible when locations and numbers are not specified by observers. It is much more informative to cite locations and dates for peak migration and to specify high counts. One informative example is the total of >2,500 **Greater White-fronted Geese** reported in a four-county area on 19 April by Paul Jantscher and David Neitzel. Recent population increases notwithstanding, the late May occurrence of the **Ross' Goose** in two different St. Louis County locations is still startling. For the second spring in a row, an **Eurasian Wigeon** was reported; this year's male in Lincoln County was one of very few ever found southwest of the Twin Cities area.

Three **Ferruginous Hawks** were all in southwestern Minnesota where they are most expected; most unexpected was the lack of previous records for Jackson County. Frank Nicoletti initiated a spring census of raptor migration in Duluth; highlights included a **Red-shouldered Hawk** in late May and a high count of six **Golden Eagles** on 11 April. Three records of the **Prairie Falcon** were certainly more than usual for spring but all were from expected locales.

The 19 **Sharp-tailed Grouse** in Aitkin County was the only significant number of this declining species reported. Few **Yellow Rails** were discovered in breeding locations by the end of May and no migrants were detected anywhere in the state. Except for two early reports from Winona and Washington counties, the **Common Moorhen** was apparently absent from the state.

Shorebird migration was condensed during mid-May, with 20 species found on 11 and 12 May in Rock and Jackson counties respectively, plus 18 species on 17 May in Dakota County. Most interesting were the *five* widely scattered **Piping Plovers** detected as migrants between 10 and 18 May. Compared to last spring's total of 115+, the 22 **American Avocets** seemed low but actually equalled the ten-year average for 1986–95. **Willets** are unusual anywhere in northeastern Minnesota so the *flock of nine* in Hoyt Lakes was astonishing. Records of the **Whimbrel** away from the North Shore are even more surprising; the reports from Dakota and Sherburne were both county firsts. The number of **Hudsonian Godwits** more than doubled compared to last spring. An impressive 12 **Red Knots** at the St. Peter lagoons in LeSueur County was one of the largest flocks ever reported in the state. On the downside, **Red-necked Phala-ropes** were again scarce with only six reports.

There are still <10 spring records for jaegers in Minnesota, so the unidentified jaeger in Duluth is noteworthy. Three **Little Gulls** were found although for the fourth consecutive spring, none were in Duluth. The first-year bird in Big Stone County was especially well-documented. Several other unusual larids were found in unusual places, including two **Glaucous Gulls** in Jackson County, but most exciting of all was the second-year **Arctic Tern** in Duluth, the first one since 1985!

The remarkable total of 20 **Snowy Owls** found in western Minnesota by one party in a single day would itself be a fitting climax to their 1996–97 invasion, but two Snowys in late May (and stay tuned for June!) provided an undeniable en-

core, as did the two **Northern Hawk Owls** found in appropriate breeding habitat during late May. **Short-eared Owl** reports were down sharply from last spring's exceptional numbers but were close to the average of 16 birds seen in nine counties for the preceding ten years.

The **Say's Phoebe** on 27 April was remarkably early considering this spring's late migration. Also remarkable was the single flock of 21 **Western Kingbirds** near Rocky Point; flocks of this species are rarely detected anywhere in Minnesota and especially in Lake of the Woods County! The **Rock Wren** seen *on* the headquarters building of the Minnesota River Valley NWR was one of the few ever seen by multiple observers. The pairing of a male **Mountain Bluebird** with a female **Eastern Bluebird** in Bemidji was the most ecumenical bluebird event since a similar pairing in 1986 (***The Loon*** 58:194–196). Only two new **Townsend's Solitaires** were discovered, bringing the 1996–97 seasonal total to 12. The total of seven **Northern Mockingbirds** was more than usual. A seventh state record **Sage Thrasher** at the Anoka County Airport was one of the more cooperative rarities found this spring.

Although some of the vireo species were late and/or scarce, observers raved about the quality of warbler migration during the latter half of May. Representative daily counts included 24 species in Winona County on 14 May (AH, PS), 25 species in Scott County on 21 May (*fide* AH), 23 species in Hennepin County (DZ) and in Duluth (MH) on 24 May, and an amazing 24 species at Agassiz NWR Headquarters in Marshall County on 24 May (MBW) including a far out of range **Yellow-throated Warbler**. No fewer than six additional Yellow-throateds were reported, clearly the most ever in one season, although two remain undocumented at the time of this writing. Uncharacteristically, the **Prairie Warbler** in Anoka County and the **Worm-eating Warbler** in St. Paul both stayed put for several days and were easily relocated.

The **Summer Tanager** has been scarce in recent years, so this spring's three reports were encouraging. Nearly all of the six **Western Tanager** reports were documented; a significant improvement from spring 1995. What are the odds of going to look for a male **Lazuli Bunting** at a feeder in Lyon County and finding a female instead? Probably not as good as the chances of finding a **Spotted Towhee** in Lyon County during migration. We are beginning to accumulate records in late April/early May for this "new" species and the Southwest region appears to be the most reliable location in both spring and fall. One consequence of this spring's late migration was the dearth of **LeConte's Sparrows** in northwestern Minnesota by the end of the period. During the second week of May, unusually high numbers of **Harris' Sparrows** were found throughout southwestern Minnesota.

Unconfirmed and Undocumented Reports: Gyrfalcon in Duluth, adult Great Black-backed Gull in Duluth, Yellow-throated Warblers in Anoka and Kandiyohi counties, Townsend's Warbler in Rice County, Black-headed Grosbeak in Clay County, and Western Tanager in St. Louis County. This section does not include records found Unacceptable by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee.

Temperature and Precipitation Summary: Temperatures were significantly below average for each of the three spring months in all nine districts, as reported by the Minnesota Extension Service and the State Climatology Office. Precipitation was also below normal in nearly all districts during April and May, except in the Northwest during April (1.43 inches above normal) where it was most unwelcome. The Northwest district remained 4.6–5.0 degrees colder than normal during all three months. The Southwest was also one of the coldest areas; it was 4.8° below normal for the month of April and 5.8° below normal for the month of May. The statewide departure from average was 2.0° colder for March, 3.3° colder for April, and 5.2°

colder for May.

Acknowledgments: I thank Carol Schumacher for helping to compile the spring and fall reports over the past two years. Kim Eckert and Anthony Hertzel summarized reports called in to the MOU "hotlines" in Duluth and the Twin Cities, respectively. Median arrival and departure dates were calculated by Paul Budde.

2602 E. 4th St., Duluth MN 55812.

KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case **(PACIFIC LOON)** indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold **(10/9)** indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold **(Aitkin)** indicate an unusual occurrence for that county. City of **Duluth** also bold when applicable.
4. Counties listed in underline **(Aitkin)** indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics *(Aitkin)* indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [ ] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2603 E. 4th St., Duluth MN 55812.

Loons to Swans

Red-throated Loon
All reports: 5/24–6/1 St. Louis (max 5) mob.

Common Loon
Reported from 20 south and 31 north counties. Early south 3/29 Winona PJ, DN and Dakota KB. Early north 4/1 Kanabec CM.

Pied-billed Grebe
Reported from 61 counties statewide.

Horned Grebe
Reported from 40 counties. Peak counts 4/18 Hennepin (100+ on Lake Harriet) PBu, 4/26 St. Louis (1000+ on Lake Superior) ME. None found 5/24–26 in northwest region MBW.

Red-necked Grebe
Reported from 31 counties. Early north 4/6 Kanabec CM (ten-year median early date 4/7).

Eared Grebe
Reported from ten south and three north counties. Early south 4/13 Carver DBM. Early north 5/8 **St. Louis** SL, 5/10 Cass DJo.

Western Grebe
Reported from 20 south and 4 north counties. Early south 4/11 Nicollet DS (ten-year median early date 4/14). Peak 5/19 Big Stone (34) LE.

CLARK'S GREBE
Only report: 5/25 Big Stone LE.

American White Pelican
Reported from 53 counties. Overwintered in Freeborn ABa. Probably overintered in Dakota DN, DZ. (Ten-year median arrival 3/27). Early north 4/6 St. Louis KE (ten-year median 4/8).

Double-crested Cormorant
Reported from 60 counties. Early north **3/20** Otter Tail SDM (ten-year median 4/1).

American Bittern
Reported from 8 south and 12 north counties. Early south **4/5** Hennepin TT

and Dodge THF. Early north 4/26 Wadena PBi, 4/27 Aitkin WN, 4/28 Kanabec CM.

Least Bittern
All reports: **5/10** Lincoln PS and Lyon RgS.

Great Blue Heron
Reported from 67 counties.

Great Egret
Reported from 36 south and 11 north counties. Early south **3/20** Goodhue DN and Dakota SC, **3/21** Houston DN, **3/22** Rice RJ. Early north **3/26** Becker (30) BBe, **3/30 St. Louis** CL. Peak 5/17 Douglas (100) SWa.

Snowy Egret
Only report: 5/1 Hennepin DBM.

Little Blue Heron
No reports.

Cattle Egret
Reported from only seven counties. All south reports: 5/6 Dakota DBS, 5/10 Big Stone (28) LE, 5/18 Big Stone (3) LE, 5/24 Freeborn ABa, 5/26 Kandiyohi RJF. All north reports: 5/10 Becker (6) BBe, 5/24 Traverse (15) WM and Wilkin (1) WM.

Green Heron
Reported from 29 counties. Most reports were from 5/4–18.

Black-crowned Night-Heron
Reported from 24 counties. Early south 4/3 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/9 Douglas SWa.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
No reports.

Tundra Swan
Reported from 41 counties. Peak 4/2 Aitkin (1,000) WN.

[TRUMPETER SWAN]
Reported from 23 counties. One (patagial tag #215) reported 3/2–29 Houston mob, was first captured near Fairbanks, Alaska in 1992 and released in 1994 at Tamarac NWR, Becker Co. (MDNR *fide* FL). Peak counts 3/15 Wright (25+) KB, 3/21 Becker (19) BBe. Probable nesting 5/16 Hubbard and 5/17 Becker RJ.

Mute Swan
Only report: 3/28 Rice (wild?) JL.

Waterfowl

Greater White-fronted Goose
Reported from 21 counties. Peak counts 4/13 Jackson (620) KB; 4/19 Lac Qui Parle, Lyon, Lincoln, Big Stone (2,500 combined) PJ, DN. Late south **5/12** Jackson (1) PS, **5/17** Dakota TT, **5/18** Big Stone LE.

Snow Goose
Reported from 24 counties. Late north **5/24** Wadena PBi. Peak counts 3/29 Rock (2,500) WM, 4/13 Jackson (1,000) KB.

Ross' Goose
Eleven reports from nine south and one north counties, including **3/22–25 Rice** (1) RG, **3/26–27 Anoka** (1) mob, **3/27** Olmsted (3) DA, BE, **3/29 Meeker** (7) RJ. Late south **5/3** Lac Qui Parle (1) PJ. Late north **5/31 St. Louis** (one at 40th Avenue West in Duluth and one at Meadowlands) mob. Singles also reported from Cottonwood, Dakota, Jackson, Renville.

Canada Goose
Reported from 70 counties.

Wood Duck
Reported from 69 counties. Overwintered in several locations.

Green-winged Teal
Reported from 48 counties. Overwintering flock reported 3/1 Dakota PJ. Early north 4/1 Morrison WB and Becker BBe.

American Black Duck
Reported from 19 counties.

Mallard
Reported from 73 counties.

Northern Pintail
Reported from 50 counties. One overwintered through at least 3/1 at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. PJ. Early north 3/18 St. Louis FN.

Blue-winged Teal
Reported from 68 counties. Early south **3/2** Houston EMF. Early north 4/3 Morrison WB.

Cinnamon Teal
All reports: 5/9 Otter Tail AE, 5/10 Dakota SWe.

Northern Shoveler
Reported from 62 counties. Early south 3/9 Cottonwood ED. Early north 3/29 Clay (3) RO.

Gadwall
Reported from 52 counties. Overwintered in several south locations and probably in Moorhead, where reported 3/2 Clay (3) RO.

EURASIAN WIGEON
Reported 4/19 **Lincoln** (male near Bohemian WMA) PJ/DN.

American Wigeon
Reported from 51 counties. Early north 4/1 Kanabec (2) CM.

Canvasback
Reported from 50 counties. Peak 4/13 Nicollet (100+) TEB.

Redhead
Reported from 51 counties. Early north **3/11** Grant KKW (ten-year median early date 3/25). Several reports of 50+ birds south from 4/4–11.

Ring-necked Duck
Reported from 51 counties. Peak 4/3 Anoka (250) DS.

Greater Scaup
Reported from 29 counties. Early south **3/1** (overwintered?) Scott ABo, RO, 3/18 Kandiyohi RJF. Early north 4/16 Aitkin CB, 4/17 Beltrami DJo.

Lesser Scaup
Reported from 65 counties. Several reports of 100+ birds from 3/26–4/20, including 4/11 Nicollet (2,000) DS.

Oldsquaw
All reports: 4/14 Ramsey (4) KB, 4/19–23 Hennepin SC, mob, late April Cook (60) TD, 5/17 Cook *fide* KE, 5/25 Cook (10) DN, 5/25 Winona CS.

Black Scoter
No reports.

Surf Scoter
One report: 5/17 St. Louis *fide* KE.

White-winged Scoter
One report: 5/25 Cook (9) DN.

Common Goldeneye
Reported from 58 counties. Peak 3/16 Wright (1,400) KB.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE
Overwintered through 3/16 Scott (male) mob.

Bufflehead
Reported from 55 counties.

Hooded Merganser
Reported from 59 counties. Overwintered south. Early north 3/21 Becker KKW (ten-year median early date 3/22).

Common Merganser
Reported from 55 counties. Unusual local concentration 3/23 Dakota (360) KB.

Red-breasted Merganser
Reported from 39 counties. Late south **5/28** (second latest date south) Hennepin SC. Unusual local concentration 4/17 Ramsey (236) KB.

Ruddy Duck
Reported from 44 counties. Early south 3/10 Kandiyohi RJF, Cottonwood ED and Anoka KB. Early north 3/27 Clay CN and

Grant KKW.

Vultures to Falcons

Turkey Vulture
Reported from a total of 49 counties. Early north **3/27** St. Louis TW, 3/31 Carlton, 4/1 Becker (2) BBe (ten-year median early date 4/2).

Osprey
Reported from 40 counties. Early north 3/28 Hubbard HJF, 3/29 Aitkin WN (ten-year median early date 4/1). At nest 4/21 St. Louis AE, 4/22 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/12 Hubbard RSM, 5/14 Winona AH, PS, 5/22 Mahnomen BK.

Bald Eagle
Reported from 63 counties. At nest 4/2 Mahnomen BK, 4/9 Becker BK, 4/28 Renville JL, 4/29 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/10 Hennepin DZ, 5/17 Becker SL, 5/24 Sherburne DJe, 5/30 Renville JL.

Northern Harrier
Reported from 63 counties.

Sharp-shinned Hawk
Reported from 45 counties.

Cooper's Hawk
Reported from 42 counties. Early south **3/2** Waseca JZ (ten-year median early date 3/7). Early north **3/18** Becker BBe. At nest 4/13 Hennepin DZ, 5/31 McLeod RbS.

Northern Goshawk
Two reports south: 3/28 Rice JL, 4/18 Chisago SWe. Reported from five counties north.

Red-shouldered Hawk
Reported from 17 south and 10 north counties. Early north 3/16 Becker BBe. Unusual records north 3/28 **Clay** DW and 5/31 St. Louis FN.

Broad-winged Hawk
Reported in 27 south and 20 north counties.

Rough-legged Hawk, 20 April 1997, Roseau County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

Swainson's Hawk
Reported from 18 south and 4 north counties, including 5/20 St. Louis FN. Early north **3/31** Clay RO, **4/8 Pine** SL, 4/20 Wilkin SDM.

Red-tailed Hawk
Reported from 66 counties. Early north **3/3** (overwintered?) Morrison WB. At nest 5/24 Todd JSK/SDu. Unusual local concentration 3/31 Otter Tail (332) SDM.

Ferruginous Hawk
All reports: **5/10** Lincoln (Tyler) PS, **5/12 Jackson** (Delafield Twp.) PS, **5/18** Lac Qui Parle (Perry Twp.) AH, PH, PS.

Rough-legged Hawk
Reported from 27 counties. Peak 4/20 Roseau (32) PS.

Golden Eagle
All reports: 3/9 St. Louis BY, 3/18 St. Louis BY, 3/29 Watonwan (4) DBr, 4/2 Stearns MJ/DT, 4/11 St. Louis (6) FN.

American Kestrel
Reported from 68 counties. Several ob-

servers south noted lower numbers than usual.

Merlin
Reported from 17 counties. Overwintered in Duluth. Early north **3/1** (overwintered?) Clay RK. Late south **5/12** Houston RJ, **5/24** Hennepin DBM. Noteworthy reports **3/9** Clay SDM and 3/30 Wilkin SDM both of adult male *richardsonii*.

Prairie Falcon
Only reports: 3/22 Marshall (Agassiz NWR) JJ, SKS, **4/26** Lac Qui Parle mob, **5/20** (ties latest date north) Marshall (Warren lagoons) CMa.

Peregrine Falcon
Some birds overwintered. Reported from 16 counties. Early north 3/14 St. Louis ME, 3/17 St. Louis TW, 3/23 Morrison MJ/DT.

GYRFALCON
Only documented report: 3/2 Beltrami (Waskish) DJo.

Partridges to Cranes

Gray Partridge
Reported from 11 south and 1 north counties. Numbers remain down.

Ring-necked Pheasant
Reported from 37 south and 4 north counties.

Spruce Grouse
Only report from Lake (Co. Road 2) KE.

Ruffed Grouse
Reported from 7 south and 17 north counties.

Greater Prairie-Chicken
Numbers up again: 3/2 Wilkin **(205)** SDM, 3/6 Norman (41) RJ, 3/8 Wadena (14) PBi, also Clay (13) mob.

Sharp-tailed Grouse
Numbers continue to dwindle: reported only from Aitkin (19), Roseau (3), and St. Louis (two locations).

Wild Turkey
Reported from 23 south and 2 north (wild?) counties.

Northern Bobwhite
No reports of this struggling species except for an escapee in Hennepin SC.

Yellow Rail
All reports: 5/17–24 Aitkin (max. 3) WN, 5/25 Roseau (3) mob, 5/31 St. Louis (1) mob.

Virginia Rail
All reports: 4/25 Kanabec CM, 4/30 Dakota TT, 5/4 Hennepin SC, 5/9 Olmsted CH, 5/25 Roseau KE *et al.*

Sora
Early south **4/8** Hennepin TT, 4/24 Olmsted DA, BE, 4/26 Yellow Medicine ABo. Early north 4/27 Aitkin WN, 5/6 Kanabec CM, 5/10 Clay GN, DW.

Common Moorhen
Only reports: **4/11** Winona *fide* AH, **4/12** Washington DS.

American Coot
Overwintered in Scott mob. Early south 3/1 Winona BL, 3/8 Cottonwood ED. Early north 4/12 Kanabec CM, 4/19 Aitkin PP and Wadena PBi.

Sandhill Crane
Early south **3/15** Freeborn ABa, 3/20 Houston FL, 3/21 Anoka WL. Early north 3/28 Pine KE, 3/29 Todd JSK/SDu, 3/30 Wilkin SDM.

Shorebirds

Black-bellied Plover
Early south 5/15 Freeborn ABa, 5/18 Big Stone LE and Lac Qui Parle PS. Early north 5/18 Becker RJ and Clay PP, 5/23 Morrison RJ. Peak count 5/24 Traverse (13) WM.

American Golden-Plover
Early south **3/29** Dodge (3) DC, RG, 4/26 Lac Qui Parle TT, 5/10 Cottonwood ED.

Upland Sandpiper, 2 June 1997, Yellow Medecine County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

Early north 5/18 Marshall GS, 5/22 Otter Tail and Wilkin DN. Peak count 5/11 Rock (175) PS.

Semipalmated Plover
Early south 5/1 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/3 Lyon RgS. Early north 5/18 Becker RJ, Clay PP, and Morrison RJ. Peak 5/26 Douglas (20) SWa.

Piping Plover
Five reports of migrants (all singles): 5/10 Renville (beet ponds) BL, TT, 5/11 **Rock** (Vienna Twp.) PS, 5/12–13 Olmsted mob, 5/17 Dakota (Lake Byllesby) mob, 5/18 Big Stone (Almond Twp.) LE. Also reported 5/25 Lake of the Woods (two on Pine-Curry Island) mob.

Killdeer
Overwintered in Houston EMF; 3/7 Olmsted CH. Early north 3/27 Otter Tail KKW, 4/1 St. Louis TW, 4/2 Aitkin WN. Peak of >100 on 3/30 Big Stone LE. Nested in Nicollet LF *et al.*

American Avocet
All reports: **4/15** Blue Earth (2) MF, **4/19–20** Rock (3) *fide* AH, 4/28–5/1 Aitkin *fide* AH, 5/5 Olmsted DA, BE, CH, 5/10 Kandiyohi (11) RJF, 5/12 Jackson PS, **5/18** Renville PS, **5/23** Lac Qui Parle (2) WM. Total of 22 birds, numbers down from last spring.

Greater Yellowlegs
Early south 4/3 Olmsted DA, BE, 4/4 Houston FL and Martin RJ. Early north 4/19 Aitkin PP, 4/20 Marshall SCM and Wilkin SDM. Peak 5/10 Big Stone (36) LE.

Lesser Yellowlegs
Early south 4/5 Lac Qui Parle PJ, DN, 4/12 Hennepin SC, 4/13 McLeod TT. Early north **4/6** Kanabec CM, 4/19 Aitkin WN, 4/26 Wadena PBi. Peak 5/14 Winona (75) AH, PS.

Solitary Sandpiper
Early south 4/19 Hennepin SC, 4/26 Lac Qui Parle TT, RH, 4/29 Dakota DBS. Early north 4/30 Aitkin WN, 5/8 Beltrami DJo, Kanabec CM.

Willet
Early south 4/26 Yellow Medicine ABo, 4/27 Hennepin mob and Olmsted (2) DA, BE. Early north 5/5 Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis Co. (**9**) AE, NJ, 5/17 **Becker** SDM. Unusual report 5/31 Duluth (1–2) mob. Total at least 38 birds in 13 counties.

Spotted Sandpiper
Early south 4/25 Lac Qui Parle RH, 4/26 Yellow Medicine WM. Early north 5/3 Kanabec CM, 5/7 Mahnomen GS, 5/10 Clay CN. Peak 5/14 Winona (30) AH, PS.

Upland Sandpiper
Early south 4/26 Lac Qui Parle TT, 5/9 Jackson MJC. Early north 5/3 Clay RO, PW, 5/11 Carlton LW, 5/23 Douglas GS.

Whimbrel
All reports: 5/17 **Dakota** (Lake Byllesby) PBu, DBS, 5/24 **Sherburne** (3) DJe, 5/25 Cook (21) MO, 5/31 St. Louis in two locations: Minnesota Point (4) and Stoney Point (13) mob.

Hudsonian Godwit
Early south 5/11 Rock (6) PS, 5/12 Jackson (4) PS, 5/13 **Houston** (1) PS. Early north 5/22 Otter Tail and Wilkin DN, 5/24 Marshall (8) mob. Peak counts 5/18 Big Stone (20) LE, 5/24 Lac Qui Parle (15) BL, 5/25 Roseau (23) mob. Total at least 125 birds in 25 counties.

Marbled Godwit
Early south 4/19 Big Stone DN, 4/25 Renville DBM, 4/26 Lac Qui Parle mob. Early north 4/13 Wilkin SDM, 4/15 Otter Tail SDM, 4/20 Clay RO, DW. Peak counts 4/26 Wilkin (20) BBe, 5/21 St. Louis (24) MEv. Nested in Clay EG, WM.

Ruddy Turnstone
Early south 5/15 Blue Earth RJ, 5/17 Carver WM, DBM and Dakota DBS, PBu. Early north 5/20 Cass SCM, 5/22 Otter Tail DN, 5/31 St. Louis mob. Peak counts 5/17 Carver (13) WM, DBM, 5/20 Scott (11) WM.

Red Knot
Reports up: 5/24 St. Louis (2) DN, **5/29** LeSueur (**12**) AH, 5/29–31 St. Louis (1–2) mob, 5/31 Polk (1) ABo, **5/31** LeSueur (same as 5/29?) DS.

Sanderling
Early south 5/17 Dakota TT, 5/18 Lac Qui Parle (12) PS, 5/23 **Benton** RJ. Early north 5/18 St. Louis TW, 5/31 Clearwater ABo. Peak 5/31 St. Louis (15) mob.

Semipalmated Sandpiper
Early south 4/26 Yellow Medicine DBM, 5/7 Rice TBo. Early north 5/6 Cass SCM, 5/20 Wadena PBi, 5/24 St. Louis DN. Apparently scarce; peak 5/18–25 Big Stone (8) LE.

Least Sandpiper
Early south 5/3 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/6 Blue Earth MF and Rice TBo. Early north 5/20 Wadena PBi, 5/24 Kanabec CM and St. Louis DN. Peak 5/31 Nicollet (350) DS.

White-rumped Sandpiper
Early south 5/5 Olmsted DA, BE, scattered reports on 5/10, peak 5/11 Rock (25) PS. All north reports: 5/22 Wilkin DN, 5/31 Clearwater ABo.

Baird's Sandpiper
Few reports. Early south 4/12 Jackson HT, 4/26 Lac Qui Parle TT and Stevens ABo. Early north 4/27 Aitkin WN, 5/20 Wadena PBi, 5/27 Pine AH, PH. Peak 5/18 Big Stone (11) LE.

Pectoral Sandpiper
Early south 4/5 Lac Qui Parle DN, 4/12 Jackson KE, 4/14 LeSueur RJ. Early north 4/30 Aitkin WN, 5/16 Kanabec CM, 5/20 Wadena PBi. Peak 4/26 Lac Qui Parle (48) TT.

Dunlin
Early south **4/16** McLeod RJ, 4/19 Hennepin SC, 5/12 Jackson PS. Early north 5/18 Roseau NJ, 5/20 Wadena PBi. Peak count of 50 on 5/21 Sherburne *fide* AH and 5/24 Anoka DZ.

Stilt Sandpiper
Early south 5/5 Olmsted (peak of 6) DA, BE, 5/11 Rock (4) PS, 5/13 Houston (2) PS. All north reports: 5/22 Wilkin DN, 5/31 Clearwater ABo.

Short-billed Dowitcher
Early south **4/26** Lac Qui Parle WM, 5/3 Houston DN, 5/5 Olmsted DA, BE. Early north 5/16 Kanabec CM, 5/17 Roseau NJ, 5/18 Clay PP. Peak 5/14 Winona (17) AH, PS.

Long-billed Dowitcher
Early south 4/27 Hennepin ABo, 5/5 Mower RRK and Olmsted DA, BE. No reports north. Peak 5/12 Jackson (14) PS.

Common Snipe
Early south 3/26 Hennepin SC, 3/30 Murray ND. Early north 4/13 St. Louis JN and Wadena PBi. Peak counts 4/12–19 Olmsted (max. 70) mob, 4/22 St. Louis (43) JN.

American Woodcock
Early south 3/22 Hennepin DN and Olm-

sted DA, BE, 3/26 Brown BBo. Early north 3/27 Todd JSK/SDu, 3/31 Becker BBe, 4/1 Aitkin WN and Kanabec CM.

Wilson's Phalarope
Early south 5/3 LeSueur PJ, 5/4 Sibley KE, 5/5 Olmsted DA, BE. Early north **4/19** Carlton SWe, 5/9 Aitkin WN, 5/17 Roseau NJ. Peak 5/18 Roseau (>100) NJ.

Red-necked Phalarope
Scarce again this spring. All reports: 5/17 Carver DBM and Winona HT, 5/18 Stearns OJ and Lac Qui Parle DT, 5/19 Kandiyohi RJF. Only north report 5/31 **Duluth** (1) mob.

Jaegers to Terns

Jaeger sp?
Unidentified jaeger 5/23 St. Louis DRa.

Franklin's Gull
Early south 4/13 Watonwan TEB, 4/15 Cottonwood ED, 4/17 Blue Earth MF. Early north 4/20 Kittson PS and Otter Tail SDM. Unusual report 5/31 Duluth (1) BY *et al.*

Little Gull
All reports: 5/15 on **Blue Earth/Faribault** county line (adult at Minnesota Lake) RJ, 5/19 **Big Stone** (immature on Louisburg Road, ***The Loon*** 69:227–228) LE, **5/30–6/2 Wright** (adult on Pelican Lake) ABo, mob.

Bonaparte's Gull
Early south 4/4 Watonwan RJ, 4/5 Dakota TT and Lac Qui Parle DN, PJ, 4/12 Jackson MBW. Early north 4/20 Todd JSK/SDu, 4/24 Crow Wing WB, 4/29 St. Louis TW. Peak count on 4/21 Wabasha (650) KB.

Ring-billed Gull
Reported from 31 south and 20 north counties. Peak 4/10 Dakota (16,000–17,000) KB.

Herring Gull
Reported from 18 south and 15 north counties. Early south 3/11 Renville KB. Early north 3/11 St. Louis NJ. Peak 3/29 Koochiching (1,200) PS.

Eastern Screech-Owls, 8 March 1997, St. Paul, Ramsey County. Photo by Julian Sellers.

Thayer's Gull
All reports: **3/27**–4/21 Dakota (3 immatures, 2 adults) KB, 4/15 McLeod (adult) KB, **5/15** on Blue Earth/Faribault line RJ.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL
Reported **3/25** (earliest date on record) Dakota (adult at Spring Lake) KB, **4/6 Isanti** (first-year bird in Athens Twp.) KB, 4/21 Dakota (Pine Bend, different adult) KB.

Glaucous Gull
Many south reports: **3/22** Goodhue BL, **3/27**–4/11 Dakota (3 immatures, 1 adult) KB, DBS, **3/29** Carver RJ, **3/30** Hennepin (max. 3) DC, PJ, 4/12 **Jackson** (two at Illinois Lake) KE *et al.*, 4/13 **Jackson** (one third-year at Round Lake) KB. Only north report 4/10 St. Louis TW.

Caspian Tern
Early south **4/21** Faribault RJ, 5/7 Hennepin WM, 5/15 Scott RH. Early north 5/5 Kanabec CM, 5/6 Cass SCM, 5/10 Aitkin WN. Peak 5/17 Dakota (40) TT.

Great Gray Owl, 24 March 1997, Afton, Washington County. Photo by Michael Tarachow.

Common Tern
Early south 4/25 Lac Qui Parle RH, 4/28 Cottonwood ED, 5/4 **Jackson** MJC. Early north 5/15 Aitkin WN, 5/16 Becker RJ, 5/18 St. Louis TW.

ARCTIC TERN
Reported 5/29 from Park Point, St. Louis Co. (second-summer) KE, DBe.

Forster's Tern
Early south 4/19 Big Stone PJ, Carver RJ, Hennepin SC, WM, and Lyon PJ. Early north 5/1 Becker BBe, 5/6 Crow Wing PP and Otter Tail GS.

Black Tern
Early south 5/7 Lac Qui Parle FE, 5/8 Kandiyohi RJF and Nicollet MF. Early north 5/15 Aitkin WN, 5/17 Cass CN. Peak 5/24 Marshall (600–800 at Agassiz NWR) mob.

Doves to Kingfishers

Rock Dove
Reported from 38 south and 20 north counties.

Mourning Dove
Reported from 36 south and 25 north counties.

Black-billed Cuckoo
Early south 5/21 Scott AH, PH, 5/24 Hennepin DBM, SWe, 5/26 Freeborn ABa. Only north report 5/30 Wadena ABo.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo
No reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl
Reported from only eight counties south and Todd in the north.

Great Horned Owl
Reported from 27 south and 7 north counties. Nested in Fillmore RJ, Hennepin SC.

Snowy Owl
Second largest documented invasion on record (***The Loon*** 69:114–124). Peak 3/6 western Minnesota (**20**) RG, RJ, SDM (***The Loon*** 69:153–155). Late south 4/3 Lincoln *fide* RgS, 4/4 Mower *fide* AH, **5/18** Mille Lacs (Long Siding) *fide* KE. Late north **5/22** Duluth *fide* KE, **5/27** Roseau *fide* PS.

Northern Hawk Owl
Second largest documented invasion on record (***The Loon*** 69:114–124). Many north reports, including 3/7 Marshall (near Holt) SKS. Late north **5/25–26** Roseau (Highway 310, relocated in June) mob, **5/26** Lake of the Woods (Hogsback-O'Brien Trail) CMa.

BURROWING OWL
Reported 5/31 **Duluth** (40th Avenue West/Erie Pier) PS *et al.* (***The Loon*** 69:168–169).

Barred Owl
Reported from 17 south and 8 north counties.

Great Gray Owl
Third largest irruption on record (***The Loon*** 69:114–124). Many south reports this spring: **Dakota**, **Hennepin**, **Rice**, **Scott**, **Sherburne**, **Wabasha**, **Washington**. Late south **4/2** Hennepin (Maple Grove) MSf, **4/4** Washington mob, **4/4–7** Hennepin (Westwood Hills) MOe, **4/12** Sherburne *fide* PS.

Long-eared Owl
All reports: 3/29 Rock WM, 3/30 Scott (3) *fide* AH, 4/15 Kandiyohi RJF, 5/30 Clearwater ABo, 5/31 St. Louis mob.

Short-eared Owl
All reports: **3/21** Hennepin (Hyland Park) LE, **3/22** Hennepin (airport) SC, 3/30 Big Stone (Malta Twp.) LE, 3/30 Wilkin SDM, late March Winona *fide* AH, 4/8 Olmsted RSi *et al.*, 4/11–17 Aitkin WN, 4/13 Otter Tail SDM, 4/16 St. Louis TW, 4/21 Blue Earth RJ, 4/27 Hennepin TT, 4/29 Duluth FN.

Boreal Owl
Largest irruption on record with many south reports (***The Loon*** 69:125–129). Reported through **3/22** at Springbrook Nature Center, Anoka Co. (***The Loon*** 69:111–113). Despite high mortality during the 1996–97 irruption, 44 Boreal Owls were detected by Bill Lane during standardized surveys this spring in northeast Minnesota (***The Loon*** 69:145–150).

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Only reports: 3/15 **Kandiyohi** RJF, 3/23 Lake DV, plus three different birds in St. Louis.

Common Nighthawk
Early south 5/7 Rice JL, 5/11 Hennepin ABo, 5/13 Mower RJe. Early north 5/1 Grant SDM, 5/10 Todd JSK/SDu.

Whip-poor-will
Early south 5/6 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/11 Hennepin SC, 5/14 Brown JSp. Early north 5/25 Cook OSL, 5/31 St. Louis AH, PH.

Chimney Swift
Early south 4/29 Hennepin SC, 5/3 Kandiyohi RJF and Olmsted DA, BE. Early north 5/1 Grant SDM, 5/4 Beltrami SCM. Peak 5/23 Battle Lake, Otter Tail Co. (400–500 roosting in one chimney) SDM.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Early south 5/6 Washington WL, 5/8 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/9 Houston EMF. Early north 5/10 Aitkin WN and Todd JSK/SDu.

Belted Kingfisher
Reported from 35 counties south. Early north 3/29 Todd JSK/SDu, 4/6 Cass SCM, 4/7 Morrison WB.

Woodpeckers to Flycatchers

Red-headed Woodpecker
Reported from 29 south and 10 north counties. Attempted nesting in Nicollet (evicted from cavity by starlings) LF.

Red-bellied Woodpecker
Reported from 29 south and 8 north

counties. Unusual report 5/23 Lake (Tettegouche State Park) DV.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Early south 3/30 Mower RSe, 4/1 Ramsey RH, 4/3 Dakota DBS. Early north **3/31** St. Louis JN, 4/5 Wadena PBi, 4/6 Beltrami SCM.

Downy Woodpecker
Reported from 29 south and 16 north counties.

Hairy Woodpecker
Reported from 29 south and 19 north counties.

Three-toed Woodpecker
No reports.

Black-backed Woodpecker
Only report: 5/31 St. Louis AH, PH, PS.

Northern Flicker
Reported from 38 south counties. Early north 3/30 Morrison MJ/DT and Wilkin SDM.

Pileated Woodpecker
Reported from 22 south and 19 north counties.

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Early south 5/10 Washington DN, 5/14 Mower (2) RJe, 5/15 Cottonwood ED. Early north 5/17 St. Louis ME and Aitkin WN, 5/18 Clearwater SDM.

Eastern Wood-Pewee
Early south 5/6 Fillmore NO, 5/9 Dodge THF, 5/10 Rice JL. Early north 5/18 Becker BBe, 5/24 Douglas SWa and Wadena PBi, 5/25 Beltrami DJo.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
All reports: 5/12 Fillmore NO, 5/22 Brown JSp, 5/23–25 Hennepin TT, 5/24 Dakota TT, 5/25–26 Fillmore NO, 5/27 Brown JSp. **Note:** Only those records of singing/calling *Empidonax* flycatchers (as indicated on the Seasonal Report forms) are included in this report.

Acadian Flycatcher
Only reports (both from Elm Creek Park Preserve, most likely the same bird): 5/24 Hennepin SC, 5/27 Hennepin OJ.

Alder Flycatcher
All reports south: 5/18 Hennepin (2) TT, 5/24 Hennepin SC, 5/25 Brown JSp, 5/26 Hennepin TT, 5/31 Brown JSp. Early north 5/15 Cass EP, 5/30 St. Louis (2) WM.

Willow Flycatcher
All reports: 5/8 Hennepin OJ, 5/15 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/18 Hennepin TT, 5/24 Hennepin PBu, 5/26 Dakota TT and Hennepin SC, 5/30 Dakota TT.

Least Flycatcher
Early south 5/1 Cottonwood ED, 5/5 Hennepin TT and Fillmore NO. Only north report: 5/15 Cass EP.

Eastern Phoebe
Early south 3/27 Houston EMF and Rice TBo, 3/28 Freeborn ABa, 3/29 Anoka JH, Brown JSp and Dakota KB, TT. Early north **3/28** Todd JSK/SDu, 3/30 Kanabec BA, 3/31 Aitkin WN and Crow Wing PP. Nested in Stearns MJ/DT.

SAY'S PHOEBE
Only report: **4/27** Clay (Keene Twp., ***The Loon*** 69:226) CF.

Great Crested Flycatcher
Early south 5/6 Rice TBo, 5/10 Goodhue HH. Early north **4/28** (second earliest north) Beltrami SCM, 5/10 Becker BBe, 5/16 Kanabec CM.

Western Kingbird
Early south 5/10 Lac Qui Parle (3) BL, TT, 5/17 Murray ND. Early north 5/16 Clay RJ, 5/24 Traverse WM and Clay TBr. Unusual report of at least **21** birds in a single flock and a total of **26** on 5/25 Lake of the Woods (near Rocky Point) DBe, PS *et al.* Grand total 17 records of 49 individuals (20 records of 33 birds l.y.).

Eastern Kingbird
Early south 5/9 Waseca JSe, 5/10 Rice JL

and Lyon RgS. Early north 5/9 Douglas SWa, 5/10 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/15 Aitkin WN.

Larks to Ravens

Horned Lark
Reported throughout the state. Peak count 3/1 Becker (**4,728**) BBe.

Purple Martin
Early south 4/13 Cottonwood ED, 4/19 Kandiyohi RJF and Freeborn ABa. Early north 4/20 Aitkin WN, 4/21 Becker BBe, 4/25 Aitkin PJ.

Tree Swallow
Early south 3/21 Houston DN, 3/25 Houston EMF, 3/28 Hennepin SC. Early north 4/3 Aitkin CB, 4/13 Otter Tail SDM, 4/16 Morrison WB.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Early south 4/16 Washington TEB, 4/18 Anoka KB, 4/19 Hennepin RH. Early north 4/21 Otter Tail SDM, 4/25 St. Louis AE, 4/26 Aitkin WN.

Bank Swallow
Early south 4/27 Rice TBo, 4/28 Anoka TBr, 5/1 LeSueur RJ. Early north 5/8 Kanabec CM, 5/9 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/10 Clay RO/DWi.

Cliff Swallow
Early south 4/27 Anoka DN, 5/1 Washington WL, 5/3 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/3 Aitkin WN, 5/5 Pine DZ, 5/8 Kanabec CM.

Barn Swallow
Early south 4/11 Nicollet DS, 4/19 Hennepin and McLeod RJ. Early north 4/20 Otter Tail SDM, 4/26 St. Louis NJ, 4/29 Cass SCM.

Gray Jay
Reported throughout the period from the following seven counties: Aitkin, Cass, Clearwater, Itasca, Koochiching, Pine and St. Louis. Probable nesting in Cass EP.

Blue Jay
Reported throughout the state.

Black-billed Magpie
Reported throughout the period from the following nine counties: Aitkin, Becker, Clay, Kittson, Koochiching, Marshall, Pennington, Polk, and St. Louis.

American Crow
Reported throughout the state.

Common Raven
Reported throughout the normal range; plus 4/21 Stearns BBo, 5/14 Sherburne (2) RJ. Reported nesting 5/8 St. Louis (White Lake) JN.

Chickadees to Gnatcatchers

Black-capped Chickadee
Reported throughout the state.

Boreal Chickadee
Reported throughout the normal range.

Tufted Titmouse
All reports: (no dates, but seen almost daily) Houston EMF, 3/1 Fillmore NO, 3/1–5/15 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/10 Olmsted CH, 5/18 Nicollet SWe.

Red-breasted Nuthatch
Reported primarily in the north. Very scarce in the south.

White-breasted Nuthatch
Reported throughout the state.

Brown Creeper
Reported throughout the state. Mid-March reports from Lake Co. (DV) and Duluth (JN) probably referred to overwintering birds. Late south 5/16 Dakota TT and Washington DS, **5/21** Rice TBo.

ROCK WREN
Only report: 5/5–6 Hennepin (Minnesota River Valley NWR) TT, mob.

Carolina Wren.
No reports.

House Wren
Early south 5/3 Houston EMF, Fillmore RJ

and Anoka JH. Early north 5/5 Kanabec CM, 5/6 St. Louis ME, 5/9 Becker BK.

Winter Wren
Early south 3/27 Fillmore NO, 4/1 Rice TBo, 4/3 Brown JSp. Early north **4/1** Cook OSL, **4/2** Crow Wing PP, **4/4** Aitkin WN.

Sedge Wren
Early south 5/6 Hennepin SC and Rice TBo, 5/9 Waseca JSe. Early north **4/25** (second earliest north) Aitkin WN, 5/10 Kanabec CM, 5/16 Otter Tail TEB.

Marsh Wren
Early south **3/27** (most likely an overwintering bird) Hennepin DBS, DBM, 4/20 Carver DBM, 5/7 Hennepin TT, 5/9 Waseca JSe. Early north 5/10 Aitkin WN, 5/17 Becker TEB, 5/19 Marshall NJ.

Golden-crowned Kinglet
Early south 3/20 Brown JSp, 3/27 Scott RH, 3/28 Mower RJe. Early north **3/9** (earliest north date on record, but more likely an overwintering bird) Aitkin WN, 3/22 Aitkin SC, 3/28 Morrison WB. Late south 4/26 Anoka JH, 5/4 Jackson (2) MJC, **5/10** Olmsted CH.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Early south **3/3** (ties earliest date on record) Anoka TBr, 3/28 Brown JSp and Fillmore NO. Early north **3/28** Clay RO/DWi, 4/2 Aitkin WN and St. Louis TW. Late south 5/20 Scott WM, 5/21 Hennepin SC, 5/24 Anoka DZ.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Early south 4/27 Freeborn ABa and Houston EMF, 5/1 Washington TEB. Early north 5/15 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/19 Morrison WB, 5/20 Kanabec CM.

Bluebirds to Thrashers

Eastern Bluebird
Early south 3/7 Freeborn ABa, 3/8 Houston EMF, 3/9 Rice OR. Early north 3/22 Becker BBe and Kanabec BA, 3/23 Morrison MJ/DT and Otter Tail SDM.

Mountain Bluebird
All reports: 3/23 **Freeborn** (Myre Big Island State Park) ABa, 3/23 Mower DSm, 3/30 **Jackson** (male on east side of Heron Lake, along Co. Road 24) KB, **4/9 Jackson** (Hwy 71/Co. Road 4) CMa, 5/7–24 (nested with a female Eastern Bluebird behind Calgary Lutheran Church in Bemidji) Beltrami mob.

Townsend's Solitaire
All reports: 3/20 **Sibley** RJ, **4/13** Otter Tail (Maplewood State Park) *fide* SDM.

Veery
Early south 4/28 Ramsey RH, 5/10 Kandiyohi RJF, 5/12 Jackson PS. Early north 5/12 Kanabec CM, 5/14 Clay MRN, 5/17 Aitkin WN.

Gray-cheeked Thrush
Early south 5/5 Hennepin TT and Rice TBo, 5/6 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/19 Marshall NJ, 5/20 Otter Tail SDM, 5/21 Cass GS.

Swainson's Thrush
Early south 4/28 Ramsey RH, 5/1 Cottonwood ED and Washington TEB. Early north 4/29 Beltrami SCM, 5/6 Crow Wing PP and Kanabec CM. Late south 5/30 Dakota TT, 5/31 Hennepin SC, DZ.

Hermit Thrush
Early south **3/4** (possibly an overwintering bird) Anoka TBr, 3/29 Hennepin SWe/MBr, 4/1 Hennepin HT, 4/4 Brown JSp. Early north **3/29** Clay RO/DWi, 4/7 Morrison WB and St. Louis JN. Late south 5/10 Lyon RgS, 5/15–16 Hennepin SC, TT.

Wood Thrush
Early south 5/9 Rice TBo, 5/10 Rice JL, 5/14 Mower RRK. Early north 5/14 Aitkin CB, 5/16 Kanabec CM, 5/18 Aitkin CB. First county record 5/16 **Kandiyohi** RJF. Reported nesting 5/20 Scott (Murphy-Hanrahan Park) WM, EG.

American Robin
Reported throughout the state.

Bell's Vireo nest, 22 June 1997, Black Dog Lake Preserve, Dakota County. Photo by Jon Little.

Varied Thrush
All reports: 3/5–10 Becker BBe, overwintered through **4/6** Aitkin *fide* CB, overwintered through **4/7** Kanabec CM.

Gray Catbird
Early south 5/2 Hennepin TBr, 5/5 Anoka TBr, 5/6 Brown JSp. Early north 5/11 Kanabec CM, 5/13 Hubbard RSm, 5/17 Becker TEB.

Northern Mockingbird
All reports: 5/8 Murray (Moulton Township.) ND, 5/12 Dakota (2) CSm, *fide* AH, 5/23 Hennepin (near Rogers Township) TBr, 5/24 Olmsted BBr, 5/25 Cook *fide* KE, 5/31 St. Louis (Meadowlands) mob.

SAGE THRASHER
Only report: 5/1–4 (seventh state record) Anoka JHa, mob.

Brown Thrasher
Early south 4/6 Mower RRK, 4/8 Hennepin SC, 4/25 Brown RJ. Early north 4/29 Otter Tail SDM, 5/4 Kanabec CN, 5/6 St. Louis SS.

Pipits to Vireos

American Pipit
Early south (only report) 4/26 Yellow Medicine ABo. Early north 4/19 Wilkin DS, 5/9 Douglas SWa, 5/12 Lake GS. Late south **5/16** Hennepin TT, **5/21** Dakota TT. Late north 5/16 Wadena RJ, 5/18 St. Louis TW, 5/26 Marshall KE.

Bohemian Waxwing
All reports: 3/2 St. Louis (50) ME, 3/3 Morrison WB, 3/5 Beltrami (40) DJo, 3/9 Aitkin WN, 3/22 Beltrami (20) DJo, 3/23 Pennington JJo, 4/3 Beltrami (80) DJo.

Cedar Waxwing
Reported throughout the state.

Northern Shrike
Late south 3/23 Nicollet BBo, 3/30 Stearns MJ/DT, 4/10 Rice OR. Late north 3/30 Aitkin SC, WN, 4/1 Aitkin CB.

Loggerhead Shrike
Early south 3/11 Rice FKS, 3/18 LeSueur SWe, 3/20 Hennepin *fide* AH. All north reports: 3/31 Clay (1) RO, 5/9–18 Clay mob. Reported from the following counties: Blue Earth, Clay, Cottonwood, Dakota (nested — incubating on 4/28 TT), Freeborn, Hennepin, LeSueur, Lyon, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, and Scott. Total of at least 27 birds (minimum of 35 l.y.). Reported from only 12 counties, down from the five-year spring average of 20.

European Starling
Reported throughout the state.

Bell's Vireo
All reports: 5/15 Houston (2) DV, 5/18 Dakota TT, 5/19 Dakota SWe.

Solitary Vireo
Early south 5/3 Houston DN, 5/5 Rice TBo and Hennepin DZ. Early north 5/6 Kanabec CM, 5/10 Morrison MJ/DT and Crow Wing PP. Late south 5/26 Hennepin SC, 5/30 Hennepin KRv, 5/31 Brown JSp.

Yellow-throated Vireo
Early south 5/2 Hennepin WM, 5/10 Hennepin SC and Rice JL. Early north 5/16 Morrison WB, 5/17 Aitkin WN and Kanabec CM.

Warbling Vireo
Early south 5/9 Dakota TT and Goodhue RJ, 5/10 Rice JL. Early north 5/17 Aitkin WN, 5/18 St. Louis AE, 5/19 Becker TEB.

Philadelphia Vireo
Early south 5/10 Hennepin SC, 5/13 LeSueur MF, 5/15 Waseca RJ. Early north 5/23 Otter Tail SDM, 5/24 St. Louis TW and Wadena PBi. Late south 5/28 Hennepin TT, **5/31** Hennepin (2) SC, **5/31** Lyon RgS.

Red-eyed Vireo
Early south 5/12 Fillmore NO, 5/14 Winona AH, PS, 5/17 Carver WM. Early north 5/10 Morrison MJ/DT, 5/16 Carlton ESH, 5/21 Kanabec CM.

Warblers

Blue-winged Warbler
Early south 5/11 Houston EMF and Hennepin DZ, 5/15 Fillmore NO. Also reported 5/23+ Brown (Flandrau State Park) JSp, 5/31 Kandiyohi RJF. Only north reports: 5/27 **Pine** AH/PH, 5/29 **Becker** BBe. Peak count 5/24 Rice (**7**) JL.

Golden-winged Warbler
Early south 5/15 Scott RH and Hennepin SC, 5/16 Anoka JH. Early north 5/17 Aitkin WN, 5/20 (Brewster's hybrid) Kanabec CM, 5/22 Becker BBe and **Kittson** GS. Also reported 5/24 Agassiz NWR, Marshall Co. (1) MBW.

Tennessee Warbler
Early south 5/4 Washington DS, 5/5 Fillmore NO, 5/6 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/17 Aitkin WN and Kanabec CM. Late south 5/31 Hennepin (10) SC, 5/31 Mower RJe.

Orange-crowned Warbler
Early south 4/21 Faribault RJ and Anoka DJe, 4/23 Hennepin TT. Early north 4/28 Becker BBe and Clay DJo, 5/5 Kanabec CM. Late south **5/25** Hennepin (4) SC, **5/26** Jackson MJL, **5/26** Hennepin (2) SC. Late north 5/25 Clay WM, **5/31** (ties second latest north) St. Louis AH, PH, PS.

Nashville Warbler
Early south 5/5 Hennepin DBS, TT. Early north 5/7 Hubbard GS, 5/8 Morrison WB, 5/10 Aitkin WN and Becker BBe. High count on 5/14 Winona (**22**) AH, PS.

Northern Parula
Early south 5/10 Rice TBo, JL , 5/10 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/14 Beltrami SCM, 5/18 Clearwater SDM, 5/19 Becker BBe

and Morrison WB. Late south **5/26** Hennepin SC, **5/31** Hennepin DZ, **5/31** Kandiyohi RJF. Peaks on 5/14 Winona (**10**) AH, PS and 5/17 Dakota (**9**) BF.

Yellow Warbler
Early south 5/4 Hennepin SWi, 5/5 Hennepin DBS, 5/7 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/9 Douglas SWa, 5/10 Becker BBe, Clay RO/DWi and Wadena PBi. Unusual number (at least **28**) on 5/14 Winona AH, PS.

Chestnut-sided Warbler
Early south 5/8 Rice TBo, 5/9 Hennepin OJ, 5/11 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/17 Kanabec CM and Aitkin WN, 5/18 Wadena PBi.

Magnolia Warbler
Early south 5/8 Rice TBo and Hennepin SC, 5/10 Goodhue SWe. Early north 5/17 Aitkin CB and Kanabec CM, 5/18 Clay PP. Late south 5/29 Hennepin SC, 5/30 Mower RJe, 5/31 Mower RRK.

Cape May warbler
Early south 5/10 Goodhue SWe, 5/11 Dakota DBS, 5/14 Mower RJe. Early north 5/11 Kanabec CM, 5/12 St. Louis TW and Béltrami DJo. Late south **5/24** Anoka (3) DZ, **5/25** Hennepin TT, **5/25** Anoka RH.

Black-throated Blue Warbler
All reports: 5/11 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/15–16 Hennepin TT, mob, 5/18 Goodhue BBa, 5/20 Hennepin HT, 5/24 St. Louis TW, 5/31 St. Louis (Sax Zim) SL, DSa.

Yellow-rumped Warbler
Early south **3/26** (ties second earliest record) Washington BL, 3/31 Dakota SWe, 4/1 Hennepin TT. Early north **4/1** (ties second earliest north) St. Louis DSa, **4/6** Aitkin CB, 4/10 St. Louis TW. Late south 5/26 Washington DS, 5/27 Anoka RH, 5/29 Houston EMF. Peak counts 4/30 Becker (**400**) BBe, 5/17 Dakota (**300**) BF.

Black-throated Green Warbler
Early south 5/3 Rice TBo, 5/4 Hennepin SC, 5/7 Washington TEB. Early north 5/10 Morrison MJ/DT, 5/11 Becker BBe and Carlton LW, 5/16 Beltrami DJo. Late south 5/30 Mower RJe, 5/31 Olmsted CH and Washington TEB.

Blackburnian Warbler
Early south 5/11 Hennepin SC, DZ, 5/13 Rice TBo. Early north 5/17 Aitkin WN, 5/18 Aitkin CB, 5/24 Beltrami SCM. Late south **5/31** Hennepin SC, DZ, **5/31** Mower RJe.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER
All documented reports: **4/27** **Rice** (Northfield, ***The Loon*** 69:229–230) PHi, 5/13–16 Hennepin (south Minneapolis) MMo, mob, 5/18 Hennepin (Old Cedar Avenue, ***The Loon*** 69:229) HT, 5/19 **Dakota** (Lebanon Hills) REv, 5/23–24 **Marshall** (Agassiz NWR) mob. An unprecedented five records in one season; two additional reports remain undocumented.

Pine Warbler
Early south 4/30 Dakota (2) TT, 5/3 Dakota DBS and Chisago RH. Early north 4/27 Aitkin WN, 5/1 Kanabec CM, 5/4 Beltrami DJo. Also reported **5/26 Big Stone** (Bonanza Grove — same location as the first county record last fall) LE.

PRAIRIE WARBLER
Only report: 5/18–21 Anoka SC, GP, mob.

Palm Warbler
Early south **4/7** (second earliest date on record) Washington DS, 4/27 Hennepin TT, 4/28 Mower RJe. Early north **4/23** Becker BBe, 4/30 Morrison WB, 5/3 Aitkin WN and Becker BK. Late south 5/24 Washington DS, 5/25 Anoka JH, **5/28** Hennepin SC. Peak count (**50**) on 5/9 Dakota DZ.

Bay-breasted Warbler
Early south 5/14 Winona AH, PS, 5/18 Hennepin HT, 5/19 Dakota SWe. Early north 5/17 Aitkin WN, 5/18 Aitkin CB and Wadena PBi. Late south 5/26 Waseca JSe, **5/29** Kandiyohi RJF, **5/31** Olmsted CH. High counts of **ten** on 5/24 Sherburne DJe and **eight** on the same date in Rice JL.

Blackpoll Warbler
Early south 5/10 Scott RJ and Hennepin SC, WM. Early north 5/10 Wadena PBi, 5/12 Clay RO/DWi. Late south 5/30 Hennepin KRv, 5/31 Hennepin SC, CH. Late north 5/27 St. Louis AE, 5/31 Lake DV. Peak 5/24 Marshall (15) PS, mob.

Cerulean Warbler
All reports: 5/16 Washington DS, 5/18 Nicollet and Scott DN, 5/21–24 Nicollet mob; 5/24 Freeborn ABa, Scott BF, Rice JL, and Anoka (2) DZ; 5/30 Wright (2) DZ. Twelve nesting territories reported at Murphy-Hanrahan Park (Dakota and Scott Co.) BF.

Black-and-white Warbler
Early south **4/11** Rice OR, 5/3 Kandiyohi RJFand Anoka SC. Early north 5/7 Hubbard GS, 5/8 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/9 Beltrami DJo. Peak number (**25**) on 5/17 Dakota BF.

American Redstart
Early south 5/9 Goodhue RJ and Anoka TBr, 5/10 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/10 Morrison MJ/DT, 5/13 Hubbard RSm, 5/14 Aitkin WN.

Prothonotary Warbler
Early south 5/9 Goodhue RJ and Olmsted CH, 5/13 Goodhue DZ. No north reports.

Worm-eating Warbler
Only documented report: **5/27–30** (latest date on record) Ramsey JWe, mob.

Ovenbird
Early south **4/25** (ties second earliest date) Mower RRK, 5/3 Houston DN and Anoka SC. Early north 5/10 Beltrami DJo, St. Louis TW and Todd JSK/SDu.

Northern Waterthrush
Early south 5/1 Fillmore NO, 5/2 Hennepin TT and McLeod RbS. Early north 5/5 Aitkin CB, 5/8 Kanabec CM, 5/9 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/10 Aitkin WN. Peak count of **40** on 5/14 Winona AH, PS.

Louisiana Waterthrush
Early south 4/23 Houston NO, 5/3 Houston DN, 5/22 Anoka TBr. No reports north. Total of sixteen birds reported from eight counties (ten birds from three counties last spring).

Kentucky Warbler
Only report: **5/31** Elm Creek Park, Hennepin Co. OJ.

Connecticut Warbler
Early south 5/9 Olmsted CH, 5/14 Winona AH, PS, 5/18 Hennepin DZ. Early north 5/20 Aitkin WN, 5/24 Beltrami SCM and Clearwater TBr. Still present in several southern counties on 5/31, including **Kandiyohi** RJF.

Mourning Warbler
Early south 5/16 Houston DV, 5/17 Fillmore NO, Freeborn GS and Scott RH. Early north 5/17 Douglas SWa, 5/19 Morrison WB, 5/20 Aitkin WN. Still present in several southern counties on 5/31.

Common Yellowthroat
Early south 5/5 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/7 Rice TBo, 5/9 Cottonwood ED and Fillmore NO. Early north 5/12 Clay RO, DWi, 5/17 Aitkin WN, 5/18 Kanabec BA and Wadena PBi.

Hooded Warbler
All reports: 5/18–31 Murphy-Hanrahan Park, Scott Co. (up to 4 territories) mob, 5/21–23 Old Cedar Avenue Bridge, Hennepin Co. (one male feeding on insects around a deer carcass) mob, 5/22 Washington (1) DS, 5/30 Cannon River Wilderness Park, Rice Co. TBo.

Wilson's Warbler
Early south 5/5 Henepin TT, 5/7 Ramsey RH and Rice TBo. Early north **5/7** Hubbard GS, 5/10 Becker BBe, 5/15 Beltrami DJo and Grant SDM. Still present in several southern counties on 5/31.

Canada Warbler
Early south 5/17 Freeborn GS, Scott RH, Steele CH and Washington DS. Early north **5/10** Becker BBe, 5/18 Aitkin WN and Wadena PBi. Still present in several

southern counties on 5/31.

Yellow-breasted Chat
No reports.

Tanagers to Snow Bunting

Summer Tanager
All reports: first-year males identified **5/14–25** Westwood Nature Center, Hennepin Co. mob, **5/28–29** Baxter, Crow Wing Co. PP. One was seen and heard calling **5/27** Camden State Park, Lyon Co. RgS.

Scarlet Tanager
Early south 5/11 Hennepin TT, 5/15 Olmsted DA, BE, 5/16 Anoka JH. Early north 5/18 Becker BBe, 5/21 Crow Wing PP and Kanabec CM, 5/23 Morrison RJ and Otter Tail GS. Peak numbers 5/25 Hennepin (**22**) TT.

WESTERN TANAGER
All documented reports: mid-May in Otter Tail (male photographed by Dave Erwin, near Battle Lake) DST, 5/14–19 **Sibley** (videotaped by Dolores Hagen, Henderson) *fide* AH, 5/14–15 Olmsted (near Rochester) CK, mob, 5/16 Olmsted (Byron) DA, BE, 5/19 Roseau (near Greenbush) JA.

Northern Cardinal
Reported from 28 south and 8 north counties.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Early south 5/2 Fillmore NO, 5/4 Mower RRK, 5/5 Houston EMF. Early north **5/2** Todd JSK/SDu, 5/7 Aitkin WN, 5/8 Morrison WB. Peak number 5/14 Mower (30 in one yard) RJe.

Blue Grosbeak
No documented reports.

LAZULI BUNTING
All reports: 5/25–26 **Lyon** (male at feeder near Lynd) RM, 5/28 Lyon (female at same feeder) RJ.

Indigo Bunting
Early south 5/5 Stearns MJ/DT, 5/6 Blue Earth MF. Early north **5/3** Beltrami SCM, 5/15 Kanabec BA, 5/17 Aitkin WN.

Dickcissel
All reports: 5/13 LeSueur MF, 5/21 **St. Louis** (Virginia) NJ, 5/27 Murray ND, 5/28 Lincoln RJ, 5/30 Jackson MJC, (no date) Brown BBo.

Eastern Towhee
Early south 4/20 Houston EMF, 4/23 Washington TEB, 4/27 Fillmore NO. Early north 5/5 Kanabec CM, 5/7 Hubbard GS. Peak numbers 5/18 Beltrami (20+) DJo.

Spotted Towhee
All reports: overwintered through mid-March at Assisi Heights Convent in Rochester, Olmsted Co. *fide* AH, 5/10 Lyon RbS, RgS, 5/14 **Otter Tail** SDM.

American Tree Sparrow
Late south 4/29 Nicollet LF, 5/1 Hennepin KR and Houston EMF. Late north 4/29 Lake DV and St. Louis TW, 5/4 Aitkin CB.

Chipping Sparrow
Overwintered through 3/29 Hennepin TT. Early south **3/21** Olmsted DA, BE, 4/1 Freeborn ABa and Mower RRK. Early north **4/6** Hubbard HJF, 4/15 Beltrami SCM, 4/18 Kanabec CM and Todd JSK/SDu. Peak number 5/10 Becker (106) BBe.

Clay-colored Sparrow
Early south 4/15 Stearns MJ/DT, 4/27 Cottonwood ED, 4/29 Fillmore NO. Early north 5/7 Cass GS and Kanabec CM, 5/8 Aitkin WN. Peak number 5/20 Lyon (24 in one yard) RgS.

Field Sparrow
Early south 4/2 Houston EMF, 4/5 Dakota PBu, TT and Hennepin OJ. All north reports: 5/10 Becker BBe, 5/27 Pine (nest with four eggs) AH, PH.

Vesper Sparrow
Early south 3/31 McLeod RJ, 4/2 Dakota *fide* AH. Early north **4/7** Morrison WB, 4/18 Wadena PBi, 4/20 Otter Tail SDM.

Peak number 5/10 Becker (27) BBe.

Lark Sparrow
Early south 4/26 Anoka JH and Goodhue BL, 5/3 Wabasha DN. All north reports: 5/10 Becker BBe, 5/17 Clay GN, 5/19 Kittson GS, 5/26 Roseau PS *et al.*

Lark Bunting
No reports.

Savannah Sparrow
Early south 4/5 Hennepin TT, 4/8 Brown JSp, 4/13 Washington DS. Early north **4/14** Kanabec CM, 4/20 Todd JSK/SDu, 4/24 Pennington DJo and St. Louis AE.

Grasshopper Sparrow
Early south 4/27 Rice JL, 5/15 Wabasha (10) PS, 5/17 Dakota PBu, DBS, TT. Early north 5/10 Clay RO, DWi, 5/17 Becker SL and Roseau NJ.

Henslow's Sparrow
All reports: 5/24 Blazing Star Prairie, Clay Co. TBr, 5/29 O. L. Kipp State Park, Winona Co. CS.

LeConte's Sparrow
Early south **4/4** (second earliest date south) Blue Earth MF, 5/14 Brown JSp, 5/18 Anoka JBe and Renville AH, PH, PS. Early north 4/30 Carlton LW, 5/16 Clay SL, 5/17 Aitkin WN. Late migrants **5/28 Lincoln** (4) RJ.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
All reports: **5/6** Lyon RgS, **5/17** Winona CS, 5/24 Aitkin WN. Breeding birds in northwestern Minnesota were late arriving on territory (MBW).

Fox Sparrow
Overwintered through 3/1 Houston EMF. Early south 3/13 Fillmore NO, 3/15 Freeborn ABa. Early north 3/27 Otter Tail SDM, 3/30 Aitkin WN, 4/1 Morrison WB and Todd JSK,SDu. Late south 4/28 Houston EMF, 5/4 Washington DS, **5/27** (latest date in the state, details requested) Watonwan DBr. Late north **5/12** Cook OSL, **5/13** Hubbard RSm.

Song Sparrow
Early north **3/21** Morrison WB, 3/30 Otter Tail SDM, 4/2 Aitkin CB and St.Louis JN, TW. Reported from 38 south counties beginning 3/1, but with a major movement into the region around 3/20.

Lincoln's Sparrow
Birds were two weeks later than usual, north and south, but left the south on time. Early south 4/17 Blue Earth MF, 4/26 Lyon RgS, 4/28 Freeborn ABa. Early north 5/6 Clay CN, Kanabec CM and Otter Tail SDM. Late south 5/24 Dakota TT and Hennepin PJ, 5/28 Brown JSp.

Swamp Sparrow
Early south 3/27 Rice RJ, 4/1 Hennepin TT, 4/6 Dakota DBS. Early north 4/18 Becker (5) BBe, 4/25 Carlton LW, 4/26 Aitkin WN.

White-throated Sparrow
Overwintered in Hennepin TT, Washington WL, and until 3/23 St. Louis *fide* KE. Other south sightings began 4/12 Lyon RgS, 4/14 Olmsted DA, BE. Early north 4/19 Aitkin WN, 4/20 Crow Wing PP. Peak number 4/30 Fillmore (75+) NO. Late south 5/25 Brown JSp, 5/29 Washington DS.

White-crowned Sparrow
Birds were two weeks late, south and north, then appeared everywhere quickly. Early south 5/2 Rice TBo and Washington DS, 5/3 in three more counties. One overwintered in St. Louis *fide* KE. Early north 5/3 Beltrami SCM, 5/5 Kanabec CM and Otter Tail SDM. Late south 5/22 Lac Qui Parle FE, **5/27** Brown JSp. Late north 5/24 Aitkin CB, Clearwater TBr and Marshall mob.

Harris' Sparrow
One overwintered at a feeder through 4/29 Winona GJ. Presumably overwintering birds: 3/1 Lyon RgS, 3/2 Anoka SC, 3/26 Hennepin *fide* AH. Early south 4/28 Mower RRK, 4/30 Houston EMF. Early north 5/6 Aitkin WN, 5/7 Mahnomen GS, 5/8 Hubbard HJF and Morrison WB.

Widespread this spring, showing up in 28 south and 17 north counties. Peak numbers 5/10–12 when PS found 112 in four southwestern counties. Late south 5/20 Hennepin PJ, TT, 5/21 Brown JSp and Scott WM. Late north 5/23 Wilkin GS, 5/25 Lake of the Woods PS, 5/26 St. Louis SL.

Dark-eyed Junco
Peak movement between 3/20 and 4/10, with largest numbers (1,000s) reported on 3/30 Big Stone LE. Late south 5/9 Hennepin TT, 5/14 Lyon RgS, 5/17 Washington WL. Reported from 20 counties north. The "Oregon" race reported 3/28 Dakota DBS, 3/28–31 Washington WL, 3/30 Mower RJe.

Lapland Longspur
Late south 5/3 Lac Qui Parle PJ, **5/13** Spring Lake Park, Dakota Co. DZ, **5/17** (second latest date south) Vermillion Twp., Dakota Co. (41–44) PBu, DBS, TT. Late north 5/12 Lake GS, 5/16 Becker SL, 5/18 St. Louis TW.

Smith's Longspur
No reports.

Chestnut-collared Longspur
Early north 4/25 Clay RO, DWi.

Snow Bunting
Late south 3/26 Rice JL, 3/30 Carver DBM, 4/11 Hennepin TT. Late north 4/10 St. Louis JN, TW, 4/16 Aitkin CB, 5/17 Douglas SWa.

Blackbirds

Bobolink
Early south 5/6 Carver RH and Fillmore NO, 5/9 Olmsted DA, BE. Early north 5/10 Aitkin WN, Becker BBe and Todd JSK/SDu.

Red-winged Blackbird
Reported from 40 counties south. Early north **3/4** (second earliest date north) St. Louis JN, **3/8** Aitkin WN, 3/21 Crow Wing PP.

Eastern Meadowlark
Early south 3/10 Olmsted DA, BE, 3/15 Freeborn ABa, 3/18 Houston EMF. Early north 3/27 Aitkin WN and Morrison WB, 3/30 Carlton LW and Kanabec CM. Reported from 24 counties south.

Western Meadowlark
Early south 3/8 Murray ND, 3/10 Blue Earth MF and Jackson MJC. Early north 3/26 Todd JSK/SDu, 3/27 Clay CN and Norman BK. Reported from 32 counties south. Numbers were down in the southern and southwestern parts of the state (KB, RJ).

Yellow-headed Blackbird
Early south 3/29 Hennepin OJ, 4/5 Waseca JZ, 4/10 Murray ND. Early north 4/25 Otter Tail KKW, 4/26 Aitkin WN, Douglas SWa and Wadena PBi.

Rusty Blackbird
Early south 3/8 Blue Earth BBo, 3/23 Dakota TT, 3/27 Brown JSp and Olmsted DA, BE. Early north **3/6** St. Louis JN, 3/9 Clay RO, DWi, 4/1 Crow Wing CB. Late south 4/26 Lac Qui Parle TBr, 4/29 Fillmore NO, 5/2 Hennepin TT. Late north 4/20 Aitkin CB and Wilkin SDM, 4/21 St. Louis TW, 4/28 Kanabec CM.

Brewer's Blackbird
Early south 3/21 Rice (20) OR, 3/22 Freeborn ABa, 3/29 Steele DBS. Early north 4/3 Carlton LW, 4/8 St. Louis JN, 4/13 Wadena PBi.

Common Grackle
Reported from 42 counties south, including an overwintering individual in Hennepin. Early north 3/8 Aitkin WN, 3/22 St. Louis JN, 3/25 Mille Lacs ABo.

Brown-headed Cowbird
Early south 3/16 Lac Qui Parle FE, 3/21 Dakota KB, 3/26 Rock ND. Early north **4/2** Becker BBe, **4/4** Aitkin WN and St. Louis SL, 4/19 Becker BK.

Orchard Oriole
Early south 5/8 Lyon RgS, 5/10 Lincoln

PS, 5/13 Goodhue DZ. Present in seventeen counties south (more than usual) but only four north locations. All north reports: 5/17 Todd JSK/SDu, 5/20–29 Becker BBe, 5/23 Otter Tail TBr, 5/30 Morrison RJ.

Baltimore Oriole
Early south **4/10** (earliest date in state) Cottonwood ED, **4/21** Mower RRK (second earliest date south), 5/6 Hennepin SC. Early north 5/7 Aitkin WN, 5/9 Kanabec CM, 5/10 Becker BBe. Peak numbers 5/19 Becker (**75**) BBe.

Finches to Weaver Finches

Pine Grosbeak
All reports: 3/1 Beltrami SCM, 3/2 Aitkin WN and Beltrami (2) DJo, 3/23 St. Louis (2) NJ, 3/29 St. Louis SL.

Purple Finch
Reported from 18 counties north. Unusually large numbers were present throughout the season in Beltrami DJo and Lake DV. Late south 5/3 Brown JSp and Olmsted DA, BE, 5/6 Fillmore NO, 5/7 Houston EMF.

House Finch
Reported from 32 south and 21 north counties.

Red Crossbill
All south reports: 3/28 Scott (12) WM, 4/12 Jackson (2) KE. North reports from Aitkin, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Cook, Itasca, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Morrison, Roseau, St. Louis and Wadena counties, evenly spread throughout the spring season.

White-winged Crossbill
Reported from Aitkin, Itasca, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Morrison, and St. Louis counties through early May, then 5/21–25 Cook OSL, 5/25 Roseau (6–8) MBW.

Common Redpoll
All reports: "late March" St. Louis *fide* KE, 3/30 Lake of the Woods PS and Washington DS, 4/26 St. Louis ME, 5/10 Becker (2) BBe.

Hoary Redpoll
No reports.

Pine Siskin
Reported from 7 south and 18 north counties. Large numbers were found in St. Louis (AE), but siskins were scarce in the southern part of the state (mob).

American Goldfinch
Reported from 36 south and 22 north counties.

Evening Grosbeak
Reported from 13 north counties.

House Sparrow
Reported from 36 south and 18 north counties.

Corrections to The Season:

Delete Lesser Black-backed Gull in Lake of the Woods County on 25 March 1996 (***The Loon*** 68:201).

Change location of Blue Grosbeak on 26–31 July 1996 from Cottonwood to Brown County (***The Loon*** 69:25).

Change number of Pacific Loons in Crow Wing County on 25 October 1996 from two to one (***The Loon*** 69:66).

Change location of Snowy Egret on 10 September 1996 from Washington to Ramsey County (***The Loon*** 69:67).

Change date of Oldsquaw in Fall 1996 report from 11/22 to 11/17 (***The Loon*** 69:69).

Seasonal Report Observers

BA	Betty Ammerman
DA	Diane M. Anderson
JA	Jared P. Anez
BBa	Bruce Baer
KB	Karl Bardon
SB	Sue Barton
ABa	Al Batt
JBe	Joe Beck
TEB	Tom & Elizabeth Bell
BBe	Betsy A. Beneke
DBe	David R. Benson
PBi	Paul J. Binek
JBl	Jo Blanich
TBo	Tom F. Boevers
BBo	Brad Bolduan
ABo	Al Bolduc
JBo	Jerry Bonkoski
TBr	Terry P. Brashear
RB	Richard G. Brasket
MBr	Mary Brown
WB	William L. Brown
BBr	Bill Bruins
DBr	Diane Brudelie
PBu	Paul Budde
CB	Cindy Butler
MB	Mike Butterfield
DC	Dave Cahlander
SC	Steve Carlson
MJC	Mary Jo Christopherson
DaC	David Cohen
JDa	Jeff Dains
TD	Tim Dawson
LD	Lowell Deede
ND	Nelvina DeKam
ED	Ed Duerksen
KD	Kirby Durling
SDu	Sue Durrant
KE	Kim R. Eckert
FE	Fred A. Eckhardt
DEd	Dudley L. Edmondson
BE	Bob Ekblad
LE	Lane Ellwanger
AEr	Arland Erickson
RE	Ron A. Erpelding
DEv	David Evans
ME	Molly Evans
REv	Roger Everhart
AE	Audrey L. Evers
BF	Bruce A. Fall
THF	Tom & Helen Ferry
LF	Lawrence W. Filter
HJF	Herbert & Jeanette Fisher
TF	Troy C. Flicek
EMF	Eugene L. & Marilynn H. Ford
CF	Cole Foster
RJF	Randy & Jean Frederickson
MF	Merrill J. Frydendall
CMG	Clare & Maurita Geerts
EG	Esther Gesick
RG	Ray A. Glassel
CG	Charlie Greenman
KG	Karol Gresser
JHa	Jay E. Hamernick
CH	Clifford Hansen
JnH	Jen Hathaway
KH	Katie V. Haws
KHe	Kathy Heidel
MH	Mike Hendrickson
AnH	Ann Hertzel
AH	Anthony Hertzel
PH	Paul Hertzel
JHe	Joel Hessen
PHi	Peter Hill
RH	Robert E. Holtz
HH	Harlan Hostager
JH	James L. Howitz
BH	Bill Huser
NJ	Nancy A. Jackson
RJ	Robert B. Janssen
PJ	Paul Jantscher
DJe	Douglas Jenness
RJe	Robert Jessen
ALJ	Andrea & Lowell Johnson
DJo	Douglas P. Johnson
GJ	Gretchen Johnson
KJ	Karen Johnson
MJ/DT	Murdoch Johnson & Dianne Tuff
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson
PJo	Paul Johnson
JJ	Jeanie Joppru
BK	Byron R. Kinkade
SKi	Steve Kittelson
BKl	Bob Kloubec
RRK	Ron & Rose Kneeskern
GK	Gene Knight
RK	Rich Kostecke
JSK	John & Susan Kroll
CK	Chuck A. Krulas
SK	Scott Krych
MKu	Margaret Kuchenreuther
DK	Dennis R. Kuecherer
PKL	Pat & Ken Lafond
JLa	Jacob Langeslag
CL	Carla Larson
FL	Fred Lesher
SL	Sue Levy
BL	Bill Litkey
JL	Jon Little
WL	William H. Longley
OSL	Orvis & Sandy Lunke

CMa	Craig R. Mandel
WM	William Marengo
DBM	Dennis & Barbara Martin
MM	Marcus G. Martin
RMa	Ron Martin
SLM	Suzanne & Lyle Mathews
CMy	Chuck Mayer
SM	Spencer Meeks
GMe	Gretchen Mehmel
SMh	Scott A. Mehus
CM	Craig Menze
SMr	Sam Merrill
RM	Robert Meyer
SDM	Steve & Diane Millard
DM	Darryl S. Moen
MMo	Marsha Moreen
SCM	Steve & Carol Mortensen
BMu	Bonnie Mulligan
DN	David F. Neitzel
BN	Bill Nelson
WN	Warren Nelson
JN	Jeff R. Newman
FN	Frank Nicoletti
GN	Gary E. Nielsen
CN	Connie M. Norheim
MRN	Michael R. North
DNo	Dan Norton
MO	Mark Ochs
RO	Robert O'Connor
CO	Connie L. Osbeck
GO	Gary Otnes
NO	Nancy Overcott
PPa	Patricia Pagel
EP	Ethan Perry
PP	Pam Perry
DMP	Daphne & Meyers Peterson
GP	Greg Pietila
JPo	Jim Pomplun
JRa	Jim Rataczak
DRa	Dan Rau
KR	Kim W. Risen
KRv	Kathryn Rivers
TR	Tim Roth
OR	Orwin A. Rustad
DSa	Deb Savageau
MSc	Melinda Schaefbauer
ESH	Eileen Schantz-Hansen
JSc	John Schladweiler
BS	Bruce Schmidt
SS	Steven Schon
RRS	Rick & Robyn Schroeder
RbS	Robert Schroeder
RgS	Roger Schroeder
CS	Carol A. Schumacher
BSe	Blaine Seeliger
JS/MN	Jean Segerstrom & Mark Newstrom
JSe	Julian P. Sellers
DSh	Doug Shepard
RSi	Ron Silverman
GS	Gary Simonson
BSi	Beth Siverhus
US	Ulf Skyllberg
DSm	Dick Smaby
RSm	Rolf C. Smeby
CSm	Cindy Smith
DBS	Drew & Becky Smith
KS	Kiki Sonon
TS/JB	Thom Soule & Janet Boe
DS	Dave P. Sovereign
JSp	Jack Sprenger
PSp	Paul Springer
CSp	Carol A. Spurbeck
MSf	Mike Steffes
SKS	Shelley & Keith Steva
BSt	Bill Stjern
FKS	Forest & Kirsten Strnad
SSt	Steve Stucker
PSu	Paul Sullivan
KSu	Karen Sussman
PS	Peder Svingen
WS	Wally Swanson
BT	Bill Tefft
JT	Jo Theye
DST	Dan & Sandy Thimgan
DT	David W. Thurston
HT	Howard C. Towle
TT	Tom Tustison
DV	Dan Versaw
MV	Mary Ellen Vetter
SWa	Stuart Wagenius
JW	Jesse T. Wallace
DW	Don Wanschura
JoW	Jo Ward
JMW	John & Marlene Weber
LW	Larry A. Weber
JWe	Jason Weckstein
SWe	Steve Weston
KKW	Kristine & Kyle Wicklund
BW	Ben Wieland
TW	Terry P. Wiens
DWi	Dennis D. Wiesenborn
JJW	Jim & Jude Williams
SW/MS	Steve Wilson & Mary Shedd
GW	Gerald E. Winkelman
SWi	Sylvia Winkelman
PW	Paul Wise
BY	Ben Yokel
JZ	James E. Zimmerman
DZ	Dave C. Zumeta
mob	many observers
MBW	Minnesota Birding Weekends
MCBS	Minnesota County Biological Survey
MDNR	Minnesota DNR
NRRI	Natural Resources Research Institute

Recent Changes to the AOU Checklist

Anthony Hertzel

The Forty-first Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-List of North American Birds (sixth edition) was published in the July 1997 issue of *The Auk*. Several taxonomic changes, including splits of species, reordering of families, and reordering of species, as well as new English and scientific names were listed.

The list of changes mentioned in the supplement is incomplete. The intention of the supplement was, in part, to provide information about upcoming changes in the seventh edition and to summarize other decisions made by the Committee since 1983. A more complete explanation of the Committee's decisions is expected with the seventh edition.

Only those changes affecting species currently on the Minnesota state list, along with a few selected species "splits", are mentioned in this article. ***The Loon*** will adopt these changes with the Spring 1998 issue (Volume 70).

Name Changes

English names that previously ended in " s' " now have an additional "s" placed after the apostrophe. For the Minnesota list, the following species are affected:

Ross's Goose
Ross's Gull
Lewis's Woodpecker
Harris's Sparrow

Scientific names of the following species were changed. New scientific names are given in parentheses:

American Golden-Plover *(Pluvialis dominica)*
Burrowing Owl *(Athene cunicularia)*
Olive-sided Flycatcher *(Contopus cooperi)*
Tufted Titmouse *(Baeolophus bicolor).*

Families or species moved or reordered

Waterfowl have been reordered, but the exact sequence will not be published until the seventh edition.

The New World vultures *(Cathartidae)* have been moved from *Falconiformes* (diurnal raptors) to *Ciconiiformes* (herons, ibis, and storks). They now follow the storks and precede the flamingoes. This places Turkey Vulture after the ibises on the Minnesota list.

Spruce Grouse is moved into the genus *Falcipennis* and the family is reordered on the Minnesota list as follows.

Ruffed Grouse *(Bonasa umbellus)*
Spruce Grouse *(Falcipennis canadensis)*
Willow Ptarmigan *(Lagopus lagopus)*
Rock Ptarmigan *(Lagopus mutus)*
Greater Prairie-Chicken *(Tympanuchus cupido)*
Sharp-tailed Grouse *(Tympanuchus phasianellus)*

The New World Quail have been moved into the new family *Odontoporidae.*

Skuas now precede the jaegers in the sequence of *Laridae.*

The North American chickadees and titmice are divided within the genus *Parus* into two families, *Poecile* and *Baeolophus,* and reordered. The new sequence on the Minnesota list is as follows:

Black-capped Chickadee *(Poecile atricapillus)*
Boreal Chickadee *(Poecile hudsonicus)*
Tufted Titmouse *(Baeolophus bicolor)*

Shrikes, vireos and corvids have been moved and — in that sequence — now precede the larks.

Cliff Swallow and Cave Swallow are moved back into their old genus, *Petrochelidon,* which follows Barn Swallow. Cliff Swallow becomes *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* and Cave Swallow becomes *Petrochelidon fulva.*

The family containing European Starling *(Sturnidae)* is moved and now follows the mockingbirds and thrashers *(Mimidae).*

The subfamilies of the *Muscicapidae* and the *Emberizidae* are returned to their former rank as families.

Both Golden-crowned Kinglet and Ruby-crowned Kinglet are moved from the family *Muscicapidae* and are placed in the family *Regulidae.*

The wood-warblers become the family *Parulidae* and the tanagers become the family *Thraupidae.*

Northern Cardinal through Dickcissel become the family *Cardinalidae* and are placed after the *Emberizidae,* which will now include only Green-tailed Towhee through Snow Bunting on the Minnesota list.

The blackbirds and orioles become the family *Icteridae.*

The tanagers have been reorganized, but the exact sequence will not be published until the seventh edition.

The *Zonotrichia* sparrows have been reordered. The new sequence is:

White-throated Sparrow
Harris's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Golden-crowned Sparrow

The *Quiscalus* blackbirds have been reordered. The new sequence on the Minnesota state list is:

Common Grackle
Great-tailed Grackle

Splits

Marbled Murrelet is spilt into two species: Long-billed Murrelet *(Brachyramphus perdix)* and Marbled Murrelet *(Brachyramphus marmoratus).* An identification article was recently published in *Birding* 29:460–475.

Solitary Vireo is split into three species. These are Blue-headed Vireo *(Vireo solitarius),* Cassin's Vireo *(Vireo cassinii)* and Plumbeous Vireo *(Vireo plumbeus).* Blue-headed Vireo is found in the northeastern U.S. and Canada, including Minnesota. Cassin's Vireo is found on the Pacific coast and Plumbeous Vireo is found in the south central Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin. An identification article on these vireos was published in the December 1996 issue of *Birding* 28:458–471.

For additional information, including changes to species not found in Minnesota, consult *The Auk* 114:542–552 or *Birding* 29:486–490.

Thanks to Bruce Fall and Peder Svingen who contributed significantly to this article.

8461 Pleasant View Drive, Mounds View MN 55112.

BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Redpolls

Kim R. Eckert

There is a redpoll at my feeder right now. It's a Hoary Redpoll... I think!

Paragraph one is a short one, perhaps, but it already illustrates Rule Number One in redpoll identification. Don't say: "I see a Hoary Redpoll," or "There's a Hoary Redpoll." Instead, it's almost always a better idea to say something like: "I think I see a Hoary," or "That one sort of looks like a Hoary," or "The redpoll on the left looked pale enough to be a Hoary, but it just flew away." (The last statement is probably your best choice — wait until the suspected Hoary flies, so you can then either not have to deal with it or call it a Hoary after it's gone without fear of contradiction from someone else.)

Separation of Hoary Redpolls from Commons is certainly one of the most challenging ID problems faced by Minnesota birders, at least in the northern half of the state where Hoarys can be expected in small numbers most winters among the Commons. On the average, I would venture to say that Hoarys make up one to two percent of the redpoll population here. However, there have been several times when I've scanned through a couple hundred redpolls or more without detecting a single Hoary, and, conversely, I have sometimes seen an "obvious" Hoary Redpoll with only a few Commons around. Years ago, I once studied a group of eight redpolls in the Sax-Zim bog near Duluth, and all eight looked entirely like typical Hoarys!

While there are many redpolls that look dark enough to be safely called Commons, there are an awful lot of marginally pale redpolls out there which I feel defy any confident identification. It certainly rivals the problem faced when one tries to distinguish a paler Thayer's Gull from a darker Iceland Gull. Both problems could be remedied if the scientists would face reality and start lumping, but, given the current fad of splitting almost everything in sight, this prospect seems unlikely. In fact, there is even talk of splitting the two redpolls into four or more separate species!

So, how does one proceed when trying to add Hoary Redpoll to one's list? After you master Rule Number One, my suggestion is to follow Rule Number Two: Wait. That is, just keep looking at redpolls and simply wait until the inevitable day when you see a redpoll so pale and "frosty" overall that there is no question it's a Hoary. It will probably look larger than the Common Redpolls with it; Its upperparts will appear more pale gray overall rather than brown; the streaks on its sides will be narrower, shorter and fewer in number (or perhaps essentially absent altogether) than on a Common; both its rump and under tail coverts will be devoid of any visible streaks; its bill will have a noticeably shorter and stubbier shape; and, if a male, its breast will have only a faint blush of pink.

If, however, you lack the patience for Rule Two and want to plunge forward with all those "in-between" redpolls, one way to start is to find a copy of the December 1995 issue of *Birding* magazine and read "Identifying Common and Hoary Redpolls in Winter" by Dave Czaplak (*Birding* 27:447–457). But please read the article and study the photos carefully, and don't expect them to answer all your redpoll ID questions. If anything, they should raise more questions than they answer — at least they did in my case.

To begin with, the first page of the article includes a highlighted paragraph with the following caveat: "Separation of Hoary and Common redpolls in the field is notoriously difficult, but it can be attempted under ideal conditions and at very close range. Identification is complicated by overlap... between the palest Commons and the darkest (female and immature) Hoarys." Therefore, be prepared to leave as unidentified all those marginally pale individuals you encounter — most will simply have to be called redpolls, period. And, as with all difficult identifications, identifying redpolls is a matter of using a combination of as many field marks as possible; when a difficult ID is based on only one or two marks to the exclusion of others, a misidentification often results.

The text of the article continues with additional warnings about the difficulties involved. Words like "variation", "overlap", "indistinguishable", "inseparable", and "bewildering" are used when discussing the plumages of Hoary and Common redpolls. "Not every individual will be field identifiable to race, or even to species," the reader is reminded. A full-page chart appears to neatly organize the differences between Hoarys and Commons, but like the main text it is liberally sprinkled with qualifiers: e.g., "pattern probably overlapping," "measurements overlap completely," "lots of overlap with Common," "feature is not particularly evident," "feature may be faint," "paleness of the head varies," "feature does not hold for all individuals," etc. And these patterns, measurements, features and extents of paleness are allegedly the diagnostic differences between the two redpolls!

Common Redpoll (left) and Hoary Redpoll (right front), 10 December 1997, Lake County. Photo by Anthony Hertzel.

In spite of all this variability, the chart attempts to list Hoary Redpoll characteristics in order of their usefulness in the identification process:

1) unstreaked, or narrowly streaked, under tail coverts (which can be hard to determine when fluffed up);

2) usually unstreaked rump (but some have Common-like streaks);

3) usually whitish or grayish ground color on back (but some are browner like the Common), with contrastingly whiter lower back;

4) little or no streaking on sides (streaks usually, but not always, narrower and shorter than on Common);

5) adult male with only a faint pink wash on breast, paler and usually (but not always) less extensive than on male Common;

6) paler *hornemanni* subspecies larger overall, especially the head (but size of *exilipes* Hoary subspecies overlaps Common);

7) usually (but not always) shorter and "stubbier" bill profile;

8) often thicker wing bars and whiter patch on folded secondaries;

9) head often (but not always) paler, washed with buff and contrasts more with back color.

Obviously, however, redpoll identification is not a simple nine-step process. For one thing, I would rank points 5 (pink breast on males fainter; the extent of the color remains unreliable) and 7 (stubbier bill) higher in the usefulness scale. No, these features are not present on all Hoary Redpolls, but when present on a redpoll in question they are strongly indicative it's a Hoary. And I would consider the whiter lower back feature in point 3 and all of points 8 (whiter wing markings) and 9 (paler, buffier head) to be so dubious that they should have been left off the chart entirely.

To illustrate how difficult all this is, several photos by the author are included in the article, but they often contradict — rather than support — the points made in the chart. A photo of a male Hoary shows its pink extending lower on its underparts than on a male Common in another photo, contrary to point 5. The head size of a *hornemanni* Hoary in one photo clearly looks small to me, not large (see point 6), and the photo with the largest-headed redpoll of them all is of a Common. The same Hoary appears in two photos: in the first photo its underparts streaks look much less distinct than in the other photo, and in this latter photo the streaks on this Hoary are just as thick as on a Common in another photo (see point 4). One photo of a redpoll with a whiter lower back (see point 3) is of a Common, not a Hoary. And the Common Redpoll in this same photo and some Commons in other photos all show thick white wing bars and bold white markings in the secondaries, contrary to point 8.

By now, it should be evident you're not necessarily missing any Great Redpoll Revelations if you don't have this *Birding* article at hand. You may do just as well by sticking with Rules Number One and Two, as explained earlier. Beyond these, about the only other thoughts I have on the subject are as follows:

• A redpoll always looks paler when perched overhead (when you're mostly observing its whitish underparts) than it does when on the ground (when its darker upperparts are more visible). Many times I have found myself looking up in a tree at a potential Hoary which turned into a Common after it flew down to the ground.

• When redpolls are perched overhead, however, this is the time to closely study their under tail coverts for the presence or absence of streaking. But be cautious in your examinations: it's often difficult to distinguish between an actual streak and a shadow or crease in the coverts, and fluffed-up covert feathers may conceal or diminish a Common's streaking, potentially leading to a misidentification.

• When looking for Hoary Redpolls, the colder the day the better, at least when trying to study rump patterns. Why? On colder days redpolls tend to fluff themselves up more, droop their wings, and thus reveal their rumps.

• Generally, pink-breasted adult male redpolls tend to look paler overall than females (and immatures). Therefore, don't necessarily jump to conclusions if a paler redpoll appears among some darker ones, especially if it's a male.

• There may be a difference in call notes and songs, although more study on this is needed. It is possible the Hoary's call notes are higher-pitched than a Common's and not as rapid, and its song may also be higher-pitched, slower and more musical.

• And there seems to be a tendency for Hoary Redpolls to prefer more open habitats: i.e., weedy fields and marshes, smaller stands of alders and tamaracks, etc. Certainly Commons are also found in such areas, and I have seen Hoarys in the woods, but if I wanted to look for a Hoary I would head for the wide open spaces.

By the way, as I started writing this article there actually was a redpoll at my feeder at the time. And there it is again... and it really is a Hoary! I think. Sort of. Never mind — it just flew.

8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.

BOOK REVIEWS

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD, VOL. 3: Hoatzin to Auks. J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, and J. Sargatal, editors. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain, 1996, 821 pp. $175.

These and future volumes are available from specialty bookstores or from the publisher: Lynx Edicions, Passeig de Gracia, 12, 08007 Barcelona, Spain. For more information, inquiries may be sent via email (lynx@hbw.com), or see the publisher's world wide web home page at (http://www.hbw.com).

This is the third volume in a series that is projected to total 12 volumes upon completion. The latest volume of the series exhibits the same exceptionally high quality in content and materials as the two previous volumes. These are books that one is awed to examine and proud to own. The information content is incomparable to any existing publication, and the artistic illustrative materials — plates and photographs — also represent the pinnacle of excellence.

In this volume, 30 families are treated, encompassing the orders Opisthocomiformes (Hoatzin), Gruiformes (cranes, rails, etc.), and Charadriiformes (sandpipers, plovers, gulls, terns, etc.). Thirty-four authors have contributed to this volume; many of these have worldwide reputations as professional research ornithologists. It is hardly surprising, then, that the quality of the volume far exceeds anything else in the field.

The style of this volume follows that of the previous two, with detailed family-level summaries followed by detailed (but necessarily somewhat brief) species accounts, which include range maps and plates depicting the species, sexes (if dichromatic), and often subspecies as well. The photographs accompanying the family summaries (many pages of highly detailed text, richly illustrated) are artistic and of great utility in illustrating salient points brought out in the text. One can learn a great deal just through reading the photo captions. More details on style and general content can be found in my review of the first two volumes (***The Loon*** 67:103–105). In this volume there are 384 photographs, 60 plates, and 577 distribution maps. It is a large, amazingly information-packed volume, with physical dimensions of 12.5 x 10 inches, and a weight of about nine pounds.

The reference section (citations from the text) is a whopping 83 pages long, and must, by my estimation, include more than 9,000 references. This level of scholarship is unsurpassed in my experience. In the accounts of species with which I am familiar, I find the material and citations to be quite up to date. The only problem one might have in delving further into a particular species or family is that citations are not given in the usual scientific fashion (a space conservation measure). For example, it is interesting to learn that recent genetic work has shown that Cox's Sandpiper, a bird until recently considered a species based on specimens taken in Australia, is just a hybrid. But it is not apparent where (or if) this work is published.

One aspect of these volumes that has emerged since they have begun to appear is that one can now, essentially for the first time, make ready comparisons among all extant, closely related species.

Heretofore, this was really only possible in museums with good collections and libraries. This is invaluable for questions of diversity, among-species plumage variation, and biogeography, as well as for behavior (e.g., migration). For example, consider that there are six woodcock species in the world (genus *Scolopax*), and that their geographic center of diversity occurs among the islands and mainland of southeast Asia (pp. 489–490). Judging by plumage (plate 40), our single North American species has no very close relative in the genus. The succinct presentation of this sort of information for the birds of the world has not appeared before.

The price of this volume may seem high in comparison with other bird books. But, frankly, works of this quality are rare, and in my view these volumes are a good value. With this volume, for example, one obtains a distillation of the expertise of 34 authors, coupled with photographs chosen from a very wide assortment, and plates of top notch quality. If you haven't had the occasion to examine this or previous volumes, treat yourself. But set aside hours for the task, because all are completely absorbing. **Kevin Winker, University of Alaska Museum, 907 Yukon Drive, Fairbanks, AK 99775.**

THE MINDS OF BIRDS, by Alexander F. Skutch, Texas A&M University Press, 1996, paperback, $19.95).

It may be time to retire the "a" word — anthropomorphism — when discussing wild animals. For decades, biologists and others have turned their minds from the possibility that animals share characteristics with humans. A rare few, such as Konrad Lorenz, have suggested that observing animals shows us how much *we* are like *them*.

Now along comes no less an authority than Alexander Skutch, who has studied avian species for six decades, to reveal astonishing similarities between avians and humans.

In this short (165 pages) book, Skutch (with illustrator Dana Gardner) uses his own and others' observations to discuss the social life, emotions, aesthetic sense, intelligence, play, "apparently stupid behavior" and other aspects of bird life.

Did you know that some birds sing lullabies to their incubating eggs? Here's a description by Skutch: "While waiting for hours in a blind before a flycatcher's nest, I have often heard a subdued song that I have not heard at other times of the year." A number of other flycatcher species seem gripped by strong emotion as their eggs hatch and fledglings fly for the first time.

Do birds play? As the argument rages on about where gratuitous behavior fits in the scheme of natural selection, Skutch tells us of birds "repeatedly shooting rapids, riding an ice floe or the jet from a garden hose."

These kinds of activities are not necessary to a bird's survival or reproduction and occur in unpredictable, spontaneous situations. "Often," Skutch notes, "it appears to be started by an inventive individual who detects an occasion for enjoyment and is joined by companions."

Readers of this fascinating book almost certainly will begin to look at bird behavior in a whole new light. Birds are more intelligent, more resourceful and more family oriented than is commonly believed. The questions isn't really "How smart are they?" but "Do they have the intelligence to deal with the world as they find it?"

The answer is a resounding "yes", and in areas such as homing and migration, their mental powers are vastly superior to our own.

One final thought from the author of *The Minds of Birds:* "When we contemplate all the capabilities of birds — their recognition of individuals, their memory, their skill in nest construction, the elaborate care that many take of their young... and feats of navigation... we must applaud them as among the most wonderful pieces of organized matter that nature has produced." **Val Cunningham, 1416 Frankson Ave., St. Paul MN 55108.**

The 1997 MOU 300 Club and 200 County Club

Anthony Hertzel and Ann Hertzel

Though 1997 produced only a few unusual species in the state, there were still enough Casuals and Accidentals — as well as those hard-to-find Regulars — that most everyone reporting their totals had improved their numbers over last year.

Two Arctic Terns in Duluth, a Rock Wren in Bloomington and a Sage Thrasher in Anoka County were certainly welcome additions to many a Minnesota birder's list. A Worm-eating Warbler on the University of St. Paul Campus stayed for several days in early May, and many people saw the Black-legged Kittiwake in the Grand Marais harbor in November.

Other species that likely lengthened a few lists included a Barrow's Goldeneye returning to Scott County for yet another winter, plus numerous Yellow-throated Warblers and a singing Baird's Sparrow in Clay County.

Here are the 1997 MOU 300 Club and the 1997 MOU 200 County Club lists.

8461 Pleasant View Dr., Mounds View MN 55112.

The 1997 MOU 300 Club

395 Raymond Glassel
394
393 Robert B. Janssen
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390 Kim Eckert
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386 Dick Ruhme
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379 Don Bolduc
378 Jo Blanich
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370 Anthony Hertzel
369 Warren Nelson
368 Karol Gresser
367 Ann McKenzie
- Jon Peterson
366 Al Bolduc
- Liz Campbell

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364 Peder Svingen
363 Steve Millard
362
361 Jerry Gresser
- Oscar Johnson
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356 Don Kienholz
355 Dennis Martin
- Mike Mulligan
- Gloria Wachtler
- Richard Wachtler
354
353
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351 Barbara Martin
- Jim Williams
350 Bob Ekblad
349
348 Anne Marie Plunkett
347 Elaine McKenzie
346
345
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343
342
341 Jerry Bonkoski
340 Bruce Baer
- Mike Hendrickson

- Douglas Johnson
339 William Marengo
- Tom Tustison
338 Alice Hennessey
337
336
335 Ruth Andberg
- J.S. Futcher
- Jay Hamernick
334 Bill George
- Dick Rengstorf
333 Peter Neubeck
332 Tammy Field
- Jerry Pruett
331 Phyllis Basford
330
329
328 Dave Cahlander
- Bill Penning
327 Howard Towle
326 David Benson
- Charles Krulas
- Connie Osbeck
- Forest Strnad
325 Dave Cahlander
- Ken LaFond
324
323
322
321
320 Mark Citsay
- Kathy Heidel

319 James Eikenberry
- Roger Field
- Ron Silverman
318
317 Rick Hoyme
Ed Jacobs
- Amy Proffit
316 Jude Hughes-Wms.
315
314 Ken Oulman
- Jeff Stehpenson
313 Lane Ellwanger
- Kirk Jeffrey
- Steve Roman
312
311
310 Scott Foster
309 Tom Bell
308 Scott Mehus
307 Mary McGrath
306
305 Diane Anderson
- Tom Soulen
304 Burnett Hojnacki
303 Edith Grace Quam
302 Robert Holtz
- Warren Woessner
301 Ronald Erpelding
- Michael Steffes
300 Larry Galau

— All numbers as of 31 December 1997

The 1997 MOU 200 County Club

Aitkin 299
275 Warren Nelson
269 Jo Blanich
248 Raymond Glassel
239 Robert B. Janssen
229 Ken LaFond

Anoka 311
291 Ken LaFond
268 Raymond Glassel
257 Steve Carlson
254 Karl Bardon
251 Robert B. Janssen
236 Ruth Andberg
236 Dick Rengstorf

Becker 281
253 Betsy Beneke
231 Raymond Glassel
227 Robert B. Janssen
209 Ken LaFond

Beltrami 278
236 Doug Johnson
228 Raymond Glassel
225 Ken LaFond
215 Al Bolduc
215 Robert B. Janssen

Benton 252
225 Ken LaFond
222 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen

Big Stone 272
229 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen
209 Lane Ellwanger
203 Ken LaFond

Blue Earth 278
233 Raymond Glassel
220 Robert B. Janssen
214 John Frentz
202 Ken LaFond

Brown 265
239 Raymond Glassel
223 Robert B. Janssen
201 Ken LaFond

Carlton 257
233 Ken LaFond
214 Raymond Glassel
210 Robert B. Janssen

Carver 276
255 Kathy Heidel
250 Raymond Glassel
250 Dennis Martin
236 Robert B. Janssen
232 Mike Mulligan
214 William Marengo
212 Jim Williams
204 Ken LaFond
200 Al Bolduc

Cass 275
223 Raymond Glassel
212 Ken LaFond
211 Robert B. Janssen

Chippewa 255
222 Raymond Glassel
216 Robert B. Janssen
211 Al Bolduc
207 Ken LaFond

Chisago 268
248 Raymond Glassel
229 Robert B. Janssen
228 Ken LaFond
215 Dick Rengstorf

Clay 302
234 Raymond Glassel
229 Robert O'Connor
223 Robert B. Janssen
215 Ken LaFond
205 Betsy Beneke

Clearwater 273
252 Al Bolduc
224 Raymond Glassel
217 Ken LaFond
214 Robert B. Janssen

Cook 305
250 Kim Eckert
231 Raymond Glassel
230 Robert B. Janssen
226 Peder Svingen
211 Mike Hendrickson
207 Ken LaFond
206 Jim Williams

Cottonwood 274
231 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen
214 Jerry Bonkoski
203 Ken LaFond

Crow Wing 281
251 Jo Blanich
236 Warren Nelson
231 Raymond Glassel
227 Ken LaFond
223 Robert B. Janssen
203 Pam Perry

Dakota 309
285 Raymond Glassel
277 Tom Tustison
268 Robert B. Janssen
261 Karol Gresser
249 Al Bolduc
247 Bruce Baer
241 Dick Rengstorf
230 Anne Marie Plunkett
226 Ken LaFond
224 Karl Bardon
223 Jon Peterson
221 Ann McKenzie
218 Dick Ruhme
206 Steve Weston
204 Elaine McKenzie
202 Reggie Carlson

Dodge 252
230 Raymond Glassel
229 Anne Marie Plunkett
216 Robert B. Janssen
210 Jerry Bonkoski
201 Bob Ekblad
200 Ken LaFond

Douglas 247
226 Ken LaFond
223 Raymond Glassel
218 Robert B. Janssen

Faribault 251
223 Raymond Glassel
219 Robert B. Janssen
201 Ken LaFond

Fillmore 263
243 Anne Marie Plunkett
224 Raymond Glassel
211 Robert B. Janssen
205 Ken LaFond

Freeborn 271
254 Scott Mehus
241 Raymond Glassel
225 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond
202 Anne Marie Plunkett

Goodhue 297
268 Raymond Glassel
254 Robert B. Janssen
231 Anne Marie Plunkett
219 Al Bolduc
208 Karl Bardon
201 Dick Rengstorf
200 Ken LaFond

Grant 264
226 Raymond Glassel
221 Robert B. Janssen
219 Kim Eckert
208 Steve Millard
202 Ken LaFond

Hennepin 340
313 Oscar Johnson
312 Raymond Glassel
310 Robert B. Janssen
309 Steve Carlson
291 Al Bolduc
277 Tom Tustison
262 Karol Gresser
252 Karl Bardon
252 Dennis Martin
252 Dick Ruhme
247 Dick Rengstorf
245 Kathy Heidel
245 Warren Woessner
242 James Eikenberry
235 Ed Jacobs
235 Amy Proffit
235 Tom Soulen
234 Howard Towle
233 William Marengo
230 Ken LaFond
229 Gary Simonson
228 Jim Williams
227 Peder Svingen
223 Lane Ellwanger
219 Ruth Andberg
209 Deanne Endrizzi
203 Elaine McKenzie
201 Reggie Carlson

Houston 270
233 Raymond Glassel
225 Anne Marie Plunkett
221 Robert B. Janssen
213 Jon Peterson
210 Ken LaFond
208 Ann McKenzie

Hubbard 264
225 Raymond Glassel
212 Ken LaFond
212 Robert B. Janssen

Isanti 259
232 Ken LaFond
229 Raymond Glassel
216 Robert B. Janssen

Itasca 260
211 Ken LaFond
210 Al Bolduc
210 Raymond Glassel
204 Robert B. Janssen

Jackson 278
229 Raymond Glassel
226 Robert B. Janssen
200 Ken LaFond

Kanabec 246
228 Raymond Glassel
227 Ken LaFond
214 Craig Menze
211 Robert B. Janssen

Kandiyohi 275
253 Randy Frederickson
242 Ronald Erpelding
234 Raymond Glassel
225 Jean Frederickson
222 Robert B. Janssen
212 Ken LaFond

Kittson 269
226 Karl Bardon
224 Peder Svingen
221 Raymond Glassel
215 Robert B. Janssen
213 Ken LaFond

Koochiching 245
229 Ken LaFond
208 Raymond Glassel
202 Robert B. Janssen

Lac Qui Parle 306
246 Robert B. Janssen
241 Raymond Glassel
238 Fred Eckhardt
230 Al Bolduc
213 Ken LaFond
205 William Marengo

Lake 285
240 Dan Versaw
233 Steve Wilson
224 Raymond Glassel
222 Mary Shedd
213 Robert B. Janssen
213 Ken LaFond
205 Mike Hendrickson

Lake of the Woods 267
233 Peder Svingen
218 Raymond Glassel
214 Robert B. Janssen
205 Ken LaFond

Le Sueur 269
252 Raymond Glassel
231 Robert B. Janssen
215 Wally Swanson
210 Peder Svingen
205 Ken LaFond

Lincoln 253
221 Raymond Glassel
217 Robert B. Janssen
201 Ken LaFond

Lyon 284
230 Raymond Glassel
230 Robert B. Janssen
200 Ken LaFond

Mahnomen 252
218 Raymond Glassel
218 Robert B. Janssen
203 Ken LaFond

Marshall 302
234 Raymond Glassel
229 Kim Eckert
228 Karl Bardon
226 Robert B. Janssen
222 Peder Svingen
209 Ken LaFond

Martin 271
223 Raymond Glassel
214 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

McLeod 262
232 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen
203 Ken LaFond

Meeker 254
226 Raymond Glassel
221 Dan Floren
221 Robert B. Janssen
214 Ken LaFond

Mille Lacs 272
234 Ken LaFond
230 Raymond Glassel
221 Robert B. Janssen

Morrison 267
231 Raymond Glassel
226 Ken LaFond
222 Robert B. Janssen

Mower 272
253 Ron Kneeskern
252 Rose Kneeskern
239 John Morrison
234 Dick Smaby
226 Raymond Glassel
217 Anne Marie Plunkett
216 Robert B. Janssen
201 Ken LaFond

Murray 264
232 Nelvina DeKam
225 Raymond Glassel
213 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Nicollet 273
247 Raymond Glassel
238 John Frentz
235 Robert B. Janssen
206 Ken LaFond

Nobles 248
221 Raymond Glassel
215 Robert B. Janssen
207 Nelvina DeKam
201 Ken LaFond

Norman 251
218 Raymond Glassel
215 Robert B. Janssen
204 Ken LaFond

Olmsted 292
283 Anne Marie Plunkett
275 Bob Ekblad
274 Jerry Bonkoski
261 Jerry Pruett
258 Charles Krulas
251 Jeff Stephenson
246 Ron Silverman
244 Diane Anderson
241 Raymond Glassel
232 Robert B. Janssen
206 Jon Peterson
205 Ken LaFond
203 Ann McKenzie

Otter Tail 306
277 Steve Millard
232 Raymond Glassel
230 Robert B. Janssen
226 Ken LaFond

Pennington 264
221 Raymond Glassel
214 Robert B. Janssen
200 Ken LaFond

Pine 270
236 Raymond Glassel
236 Ken LaFond
222 Robert B. Janssen
206 Betsy Beneke

Pipestone 264
220 Raymond Glassel
212 Robert B. Janssen
209 Nelvina DeKam
204 Ken LaFond

Polk 283
237 Peder Svingen
233 Robert B. Janssen
232 Raymond Glassel
231 Al Bolduc
213 Ken LaFond

Pope 252
225 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Ramsey 301
274 Raymond Glassel
259 Liz Campbell
256 Karl Bardon
255 Robert B. Janssen
246 Tom Soulen
234 Dick Rengstorf
231 Ken LaFond
231 Elaine McKenzie
228 Robert Holtz
211 Al Bolduc
207 Frank Berdan
206 Ann McKenzie

Red Lake 236
214 Raymond Glassel
212 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Redwood 249
230 Raymond Glassel
226 Robert B. Janssen
201 Ken LaFond

Renville 258
236 Raymond Glassel
228 Robert B. Janssen
210 Ken LaFond

Rice 291
265 Orwin Rustad
264 Tom Boevers
261 Forest Strnad
259 Raymond Glassel
236 Jon Little
234 Robert B. Janssen
212 Anne Marie Plunkett
209 Wally Swanson
205 Ken LaFond
220 Jacob Langeslag

Rock 264
245 Kim Eckert
225 Raymond Glassel
215 Nelvina DeKam
213 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Roseau 294
266 Peder Svingen
244 Karl Bardon
231 Raymond Glassel
224 Robert B. Janssen
212 Ken LaFond

Saint Louis 356
320 Kim Eckert
301 Mike Hendrickson
286 Dave Benson
285 Burnett Hojnacki
283 Robert B. Janssen
282 Peder Svingen
280 Raymond Glassel
278 Doug Johnson
271 Bill Penning
258 Terry Wiens
255 Don Kienholz
255 Ken LaFond
251 Dennis Martin
247 Dick Ruhme
245 William Marengo
241 Al Bolduc
238 Steven Schon
225 Jim Williams
224 Bob Ekblad
222 Steve Wilson
218 Scott Mehus
218 Anne Marie Plunkett
216 Ann McKenzie
214 Karl Bardon
214 Gloria Wachtler
214 Richard Wachtler
212 Craig Menze
212 Jon Peterson
211 Rick Hoyme
210 Dan Versaw
209 Oscar Johnson
209 Jerry Bonkoski
203 Sue Levy
200 Lane Ellwanger

Scott 279
263 Raymond Glassel
242 Robert B. Janssen
232 Kathy Heidel
227 Karol Gresser
211 Al Bolduc
208 Ken LaFond
204 Jerry Bonkoski

Sherburne 285
247 Raymond Glassel
241 Jay Hamernick
241 Robert B. Janssen
238 Ken LaFond

Sibley 254
247 Raymond Glassel
233 Robert B. Janssen
200 Ken LaFond
200 Dick Rengstorf

Stearns 293
274 Nestor M. Hiemenz
241 Kim Eckert
237 Raymond Glassel
229 Robert B. Janssen
229 Ken LaFond

Steele 259
242 Raymond Glassel
218 Robert B. Janssen
210 Anne Marie Plunkett
200 Ken LaFond

Stevens 254
224 Raymond Glassel
216 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Swift 259
229 Raymond Glassel
220 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Todd 265
243 Ken LaFond
227 Raymond Glassel
217 Robert B. Janssen
214 John Kroll

Traverse 255
230 Raymond Glassel
220 Robert B. Janssen
202 Ken LaFond

Wabasha 283
254 Raymond Glassel
238 Robert B. Janssen
229 Anne Marie Plunkett
213 Ken LaFond
203 Al Bolduc

Wadena 260
216 Raymond Glassel
211 Robert B. Janssen
209 Ken LaFond

Waseca 252
238 Raymond Glassel
220 Robert B. Janssen
200 Ken LaFond

Washington 305
281 Raymond Glassel
258 Robert B. Janssen
254 Dick Rengstorf
233 Liz Campbell
232 Tom Bell
230 Ken LaFond
217 Bill Penning
202 Al Bolduc
200 Gloria Wachtler
200 Richard Wachtler

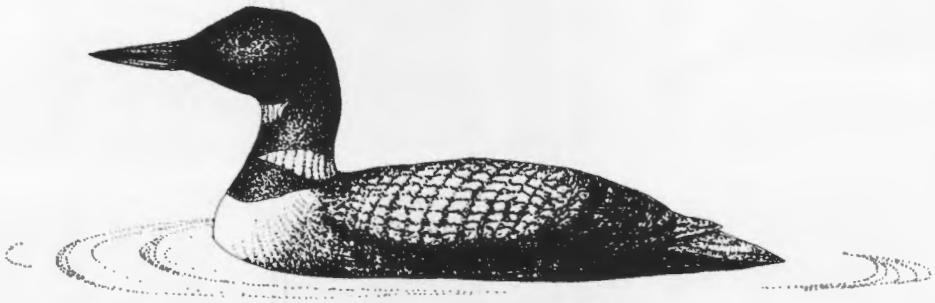
Watonwan 244
224 Raymond Glassel
222 Robert B. Janssen
203 Ken LaFond

Wilkin 266
227 Raymond Glassel
223 Robert B. Janssen
215 Steve Millard
203 Ken LaFond
202 Karl Bardon

Winona 292
253 Raymond Glassel
248 Anne Marie Plunkett
239 Scott Mehus
230 Robert B. Janssen
203 Charles Krulas
202 Ken LaFond

Wright 271
252 Raymond Glassel
237 Robert B. Janssen
226 Ken LaFond
206 Al Bolduc
200 Ella-May Dahlberg

Yellow Medicine 267
235 Raymond Glassel
221 Robert B. Janssen
203 Ken LaFond



NOTES OF INTEREST

A BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN GRAND MARAIS — Although our Minnesota Birding Weekends trip on 1–2 November 1997 along the North Shore of Lake Superior was relatively uneventful for the most part on Saturday the 1st, the birding became decidedly more interesting on Sunday, 2 November. Among the first birds we saw that morning in the Grand Marais harbor was a female or immature Harlequin Duck, which cooperatively swam around at close range with a group of Buffleheads.

Black-legged Kittiwake, 8 November 1997, Grand Marais. Photo by Steve Roman.

After everyone had a good look at the Harlequin, we walked up behind the power plant on the west side of the harbor to scan the lake itself and the breakwaters. As I looked over the gulls standing on the west breakwater, a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake flew into view, and I called everyone's attention to it. For the next few minutes we had excellent views of the kittiwake as it flew back and forth in front of us over the lake, and its diagnostic markings of a black bar across the nape, the black "zig-zag" extending from the outer primaries to the wing coverts on the upper wing surface, and black tip on the slightly notched tail were all clearly visible. (A complete description of the kittiwake is unnecessary here, given the excellent photo on the cover of this issue of ***The Loon***.)

After the kittiwake disappeared from view, we then returned to the inner harbor by the fishing shacks where a first-winter Iceland Gull suddenly flew in, but it was only seen by part of the group before it was lost from sight. Late that morning we left Grand Marais to return to Duluth, having seen two casual gull species and a rare-regular Harlequin Duck at the same place within a short period of time. Before we left, the kittiwake was relocated in the east side of the harbor near the former Coast

Guard station, and it subsequently was seen and photographed in Grand Marais by several observers through 17 November.

Interestingly enough, Mike Tarachow also observed a Black-legged Kittiwake as it flew southwest past Two Harbors in Lake County on 27 November. Two Harbors is about 85 miles southwest of Grand Marais, and it is only natural to speculate if this was the same individual which had last been seen in Grand Marais ten days earlier. **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**

ODDLY COLORED HUMMINGBIRD IN ST. LOUIS COUNTY — My wife Ann and I were puttering in the front yard on 9 June 1997 at approximately 3 P.M. when we noticed a dozen or so hummingbirds swarming around the top of a flowering tree in the neighbor's yard. I do not know what type of tree this is but is has clusters of yellowish-white flowers measuring less than a centimeter on a vertical shaft of ten centimeters.

With binoculars we identified the birds as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Suddenly Ann noticed that one of the birds was yellow. I begged for the binoculars and noted that the bird was the exact shape and size as the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that were with it. Its bill, however, seemed perhaps a bit longer, measuring about half the body length, though perhaps this was an artifact of observation rather than an actual difference. The bill was curved downward slightly too. The head, back, wings and tail were a bright lemon yellow. The neck, belly and undertail were white. No green, black or other color typical of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was noted anywhere on the bird. No gorget was observed. It had only the peculiar yellow on its dorsal side. We could not tell if the yellow was due to specific pigmentation in the bird's feathers or was produced by a birefringent structure. Otherwise, the bird looked and behaved exactly as the other hummingbirds.

We were about 40 feet from the base of the tree and the birds were about ten feet up. The day was sunny. The direction we were looking was east, the sun was at about 50 degrees elevation in the southwest. The birefringent coloration of the other hummingbirds was typical green on the back with black at the dorsal distal tail feathers and ruby-red throat, white belly, greenish flanks. The male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds showed their customary slightly forked tails. Interestingly the yellow hummingbird had a similarly shaped tail.

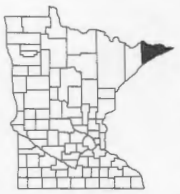
We watched the bird for about 15 minutes as it fed on the flowers and darted around with the other hummingbirds. It hovered still in the air exactly as the other hummingbirds were doing and was definitely not a warbler, goldfinch or other songbird. **Paul Sanford, 3645 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55804.**

Editor's Note: The above record was sent to noted North American hummingbird authority Nancy Newfield of Metairie, Louisiana. Her comments included the following:

"I'll start by saying I have never seen or heard of a hummer [of any species] that matches this description.

Your correspondent seems to know Ruby-throated Hummingbirds very well. I can only guess that he and his wife observed a bird that exhibited xanthochroism, an abnormal absence of the normal melanin with a retention of the yellow carotenoid pigments. From the description of the bird's plain white underparts, I would surmise that it was a female, except that the description of the shape of the tail matched that of an adult male. If the bird were an adult male, the gorget area should have been yellow. I cannot account for the bird having a longer bill or for the bill's curvature except to say that if the bird was defective in one way, perhaps there were several genetic defects."

AN UNIDENTIFIED DUCK IN GRAND MARAIS — All birders routinely see birds which they are unable to identify, especially when observing something at too great a distance, or in poor light, or when it is only glimpsed for a second or two. However, on 29 November 1996, I had excellent views of a diving duck in the Grand Marais harbor in Cook County that I was (and still am) unable to identify with any certainty. This duck was observed for about a half hour as it swam and dove at distances of about 30–50 yards away, there was a high overcast at the time so that light conditions were good, and the water surface was calm with no waves to interfere with the observation. Both 10x42 Bausch & Lomb Elite binoculars and a 20X Kowa TSN–4 spotting scope were used, and no field guides or other references were used or available at the time (various references were consulted after I returned home, but none were especially helpful). Molly and Ken Hoffman were called later about the duck, and they also observed it the next day, but they were never able to get satisfactory views to shed any light on its identity.



Following is a description of the bird as written in the field during the observation:

"Overall size same as adjacent goldeneyes and smaller than Mallards. Round head shape similar to Redhead. Eye brown, same shade as plumage. Bill and feet dark gray. Tip of bill darker; bill shape "normal", not like goldeneye or merganser. Inside of mouth pinkish orange. Nostril half way out on bill. Base of bill at face vertical, not curved as on eider. Overall plumage solid dark brown, about like American Black Duck — a bit paler along sides with some darker smudges. No barring/spotting as on female Mallard or eider. Did not spread wings while diving; unlike scoter/eider/Oldsquaw. Wings plain, unmarked? — flapped twice when preening, no white visible on primaries. Too dark overall for female Redhead or scaup, and face not paler at base of bill. Crown subtly darker than face (except median of crown paler?), suggesting Black Scoter."

In summary, this was a diving duck with generally uniform dark brown plumage overall and no visible markings of any apparent consequence on its head, bill, body or wings. Because of the lack of any pale or whitish areas on its face, it did not seem this could be a juvenile or female scoter of any species. I considered the possibility of it being a juvenile scaup, which is generally dark overall and lacks the adult female's white patch on the face at the base of the bill. However, this bird's dark iris and dark gray bill would seem to preclude either species of scaup.

In addition, its overall Common Goldeneye-size should be too large for Lesser Scaup *(Aythya affinis),* and its apparent lack of white on the primaries would preclude a Greater *(A. marila).* (Note, however, the primaries were only briefly visible as the bird flapped while preening, and a complete view of the wings spread in flight was never obtained.) Juvenile Tufted Duck *(A. fuligula)* — something I have no experience with — was also considered, but Madge and Burn's Waterfowl guide (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1988) suggests that bird would be precluded by its smaller overall size, a more "peaked" head profile, its paler coloration on the flanks and lores, and white on its primaries.

Unless this were a hybrid or a melanistic individual of some kind, my best judgment is this duck was a juvenile Black Scoter *(Melanitta nigra),* possibly a male. I had always assumed that juvenile Black Scoters of both sexes would look like adult females — i.e., with a diagnostic and contrasting paler area on the cheeks and throat. I had never seen a Black Scoter which lacked this paler cheek patch (unless, of course, it was an adult male), but various references suggest that juvenile/immature males of all three scoter species may be darker on the face than young females. In Madge and Burn on page 109, for example, note the illustrations of the immature male Black Scoter with only obscured pale areas on the face and of the immature

male White-winged Scoter with a completely dark face.

If this were indeed a Black Scoter, it was in a plumage I had never seen before and which is not clearly illustrated or discussed in any reference I know of. And if it was not a Black Scoter, I would certainly welcome comments from readers as to what it might have been. **Kim Eckert, 8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**

CLARK'S GREBE NEST AT LAKE OSAKIS, TODD COUNTY — On 1 July 1997, I surveyed the large Western Grebe colony at Lake Osakis, Todd/Douglas Co. by canoe. I counted a minimum of 219 Western Grebe nests with eggs, and was lucky to also discover one adult Clark's Grebe sitting on a nest with three eggs. This individual was observed with binoculars at close range and in direct comparison to numerous Western Grebes.

It showed all the classic field marks of this species. The dark cap was entirely above the eye, leaving the eye surrounded by white feathering. The lores were also white, and I noticed that the bottom edge of the cap had an "S-curve" shape, unlike the straight edge shown on typical Western Grebe caps (as previously described by Eckert in ***The Loon*** 61:99–108). The bill was bright orange-yellow, noticeably brighter than all the Western Grebes present, and it lacked the dark edges shown by most Western Grebes' bills except for a dark line on the basal half of the upper edge of the upper mandible. The mantle was noticeably paler than the Western Grebes, with considerable whitish mottling on the flanks adjacent to the water line, and noticeable contrast between the pale gray mantle and the darker gray color of the hindneck stripe. There was a "four-toned" effect (as previously described by Svingen in ***The Loon*** 63:194–96) caused by the dark grayish-black cap and nape (the darkest part of the bird), the paler medium-gray hindneck stripe, the even paler gray mantle, and the whitish flanks.

Although this bird's neck looked whiter than the Western Grebes when viewed from the side, I was not convinced that the hindneck stripe looked narrower than the Westerns when viewed from the back, but I never got an adequate look at the bird when it was swimming away from me. Interestingly, this individual was noticeably larger than all the Western Grebes near it, especially in bill size, which further heightened the bird's brighter bill color.

I observed the Clark's Grebe returning to its nest after being flushed on three different occasions over a period of about two hours, and I always saw the same Clark's Grebe at the same location, by itself. No other Clark's Grebes were seen with this individual, and no other grebe was seen which appeared to be its mate, although I observed a second Clark's Grebe on the outskirts of the colony in company with a Western Grebe, at least several hundred yards from the Clark's Grebe nest location. The second Clark's Grebe and the accompanying Western Grebe maintained close contact as though a mated pair for the duration of my 15 minute observation. This second Clark's Grebe was noticeably smaller in relation to the adjacent Western Grebe, and showed all the same diagnostic field marks as the first Clark's Grebe in comparison to the adjacent Western Grebe: dark cap entirely above the eye, brighter orange-yellow bill color, and paler mantle and flanks, although it did not show as much contrast between the hindneck and mantle as did the first Clark's Grebe, and I was not able to approach this individual as closely. Although intermediate type Western/Clark's Grebes have been reported and photographed from this location previously (***The Loon*** 61:99–108), these records are currently considered unacceptable, and there are no other acceptable records from Lake Osakis, even though it is probably Minnesota's largest Western Grebe colony, with as many as 300–400 pairs reported by Nestor Hiemenz in 1984 and 1987.

Clark's Grebe is currently casual in the state, although it has now been seen in 8/10 years, and no doubt will be regular on the upcoming checklist. There are only two previous breeding records: although published as a "possible" breeding record, the Minnesota Lake, Faribault Co. observations in 1994 (***The Loon*** 66:208) could be considered positive breeding (downy young unable to fly seen away from nest), while the 1991 observations of young at Lake Traverse, Traverse County could have hatched across the state line, and so is considered only probable breeding (***The Loon*** 63:220–224). **Karl Bardon, 1430 – 100th Ave. NW #212, Coon Rapids, MN 55433.**

SAY'S PHOEBE IN CLAY COUNTY — On 27 April 1997, I found a Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) in Clay County. The precise location where I saw the bird was 2.1 miles south of Clay Co. Rd. 34 on Clay Co. Rd. 27. There are large and open grassy fields in this area, and there was a pond of water nearby. The bird was sitting on a low fence wire and I watched it as it suddenly pounced to the ground, where it stayed for just a short period of time; it then flew back to sit on the wire (in a manner similar to a bluebird or shrike). I did not see the bird wag its tail. It made no vocalizations. It only stayed in the area for about one and a half minutes. After that, it flew off over a grassy field and out of view.

It was about the same size as an Eastern Phoebe, perhaps a bit larger, and it had the same general shape. The bird's coloration however, did not resemble that of an Eastern Phoebe. The bird's upperparts and wings were dark grayish like an Eastern Phoebe, but there were brownish tones to this color, unlike an Eastern Phoebe. I think this color enveloped the bird's head, and extended a short distance down its breast, but it was slightly paler underneath. This color then faded into a rust color at about the breast/belly line, then this rust color became more intense in the lower belly and vent area, which was rust-orange. The colors on the bird were not striking; rather, they were flat and muted. Apart from the contrast between the rust-orange lower belly and vent area and the dark gray-brown upperparts at that point, no other strong contrasts were observed. The bird had no wing bars and no eye ring. The bird's eye was dark.

When I watched the bird fly from a wire to the ground, I noticed no striking colors in the wings or tail. The bird had no unusual dimensions. Because the colors were flat and muted, there was very little color contrast noted, and the bird had normal dimensions for a song bird. Overall, it appeared quite unremarkable and nondescript. **Cole Foster, 1124 – 27th Avenue S., Apt. #16, Moorhead, MN 56560.**

MORE SABINE'S GULLS AT THE WATERVILLE FISH HATCHERY IN LESUEUR COUNTY — On Friday, 27 September 1996, I went to the Waterville fish hatchery to look for shorebirds. It was a drizzly, windy day but they were draining one of the large ponds and there were many gulls around. Two caught my eye, for they were much smaller than even the Franklin's Gulls that were nearby.

The birds were completely dark above except for the area I would call the forehead, which was white. The rest of the upperparts were darker than the gray of the Franklin's Gulls. The bill was completely dark. After looking at them through my scope, I noticed that the feathers on the back and wings actually had white tips, giving the birds a scaly look. At the time the only identification "guide" I had was Kim Eckert's *A Birder's Guide to Minnesota*. His book says that immature Bonaparte's Gulls can look this way, so I waited for them to fly so I could see the wing pattern. When they did I was dumbfounded, here was the unmistakable pattern of the Sabine's Gull again in Waterville!

The classic M or W pattern of black, white, and gray was very clear. The fork of the tail was not as prominent but it was clearly not rounded like most gulls. The behavior of these birds was also very different, when I first observed them they acted more like phalaropes spinning in the water. Later as they foraged on drier ground they seemed more like pigeons. The last time I know they were seen was 3 October, eight days after they were first seen. Three years ago when Sabine's Gulls were at the fish hatchery, they left on the 27th of September this year they were first seen on that date. **Wally Swanson, 128 S. Buchanon, Waterville, MN 56096.**

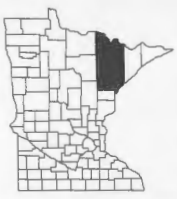
SUMMER FUN IN MARSHALL COUNTY — In the first installment of this series, I extolled the virtues of exploring Koochiching County (***The Loon*** 67:115) by doing a "Big Day" during the breeding season. On 15 June 1997 during a Marshall County Big Day, I recorded 120 species in just 12 hours of birding, and encountered several unexpected species on territory in Linsell Township. This township forms the northeast corner of the county and includes portions of Thief Lake WMA. The habitat here includes spruce-tamarack bog, mixed coniferous forest, and mixed deciduous forest. Most interesting were the three Golden-winged Warblers found singing on territory in Sections 27, 28, and 36 of T158N, R39W. Janssen (*Birds in Minnesota,* 1987) cites no summer records in Marshall County and there have been very few reports at any season. However, during a Marshall County Breeding Bird Survey in June 1997, Shelley Steva (pers. com.) located two additional singing Golden-wingeds in Section 16 of T157N, R42W, Whiteford Township!

Other species found in Linsell Township during my Big Day on 15 June included Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, at least ten species of warblers — including Mourning Warbler — Scarlet Tanager, and several Indigo Buntings. I also explored the Old Pembina Trail which traverses grasslands, oak-savannah and disturbed prairie north of Old Mill State Park. Mountain Bluebirds nested along this trail in the early 1990s and the habitat looks excellent for Lark Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, or even a Loggerhead Shrike. Although none of these species were found on the 15th, I did spot a Grasshopper Sparrow carrying nesting material in Section 2 of T156N, R46W. Unexpected species in underexplored areas — I'm definitely looking forward to another June Big Day in northern Minnesota! **Peder Svingen, 2602 East 4th Street, Duluth, MN 55812.**

LITTLE GULL ALONG THE LOUISBURG ROAD IN BIG STONE COUNTY — On 19 May 1997, I discovered a Little Gull loafing with a group of about 25 Bonaparte's Gulls, on the Big Stone County side of the Louisburg Road, near the boat launch to Marsh Lake. Several Ring-billed Gulls and numerous Black Terns were also resting here. Several times, the Little Gull would fly when the Bonaparte's would rise and fly around. Then all would land again, either in the same spot or nearby. The Little Gull was observed from 11:00 A.M. to 12:45 P.M., in various positions and activities — flying, standing, sitting, walking around, picking at things on the road and in the grass bordering the road, sleeping, and preening. Once or twice a Bonarparte's pecked at it when it came too close to the Bonaparte's private space; otherwise, it stayed with the Bonaparte's and carried on peacefully with them. In size the Little Gull was plainly smaller than the Bonaparte's. This, and the extent of black on the head, were what caused it to stick out. The wing pattern and leg color were also in contrast to the immature Bonaparte's. All Bonaparte's present were immatures.

Description: Head black with slight, white splotching here and there. Forehead white. Chin black, like rest of head. Eyes dark. Bill short, thin, sharply pointed, and black. Back of neck, sides of neck, breast and underparts white. Tail white with black subterminal band, widest in the middle, narrowing at outer sides. Tail not forked. Rump white. Back and leading edge of wing to the wrist were gray. Base color of wing gray with a dark brown carpal bar stretched across the inner half of the wing, from the tertials to the leading edge of the wrist. From the wrist to the first five or six outer primaries, along the leading edge of the primary coverts and down to the tips of these primaries, it was dark brown like the carpal bar, with the outer webs of the first five or six primaries dark brown or black. The tips of these primaries were black but the inner webs were white. This pattern formed a striking "M" pattern when the bird was in flight. Slight dusky subterminal line across the upper secondaries. Trailing edge of wing white, or secondary tips through inner primary tips white, creating a white edge. Inner webs of inner primaries white. Inner coverts in carpal bar fringed whitish, or pale gray. The overall effect of this upperwing pattern was striking in its complexity and distinctness. Beautifully succinct contrast between the pale gray of back, leading edge of secondary coverts to wrist, and rest of wing below the dark brown carpal bar, then on to the dark brown primary coverts and blackish primaries. The white trailing edge of the upper wing formed a sort of oblong triangle. Underwing light dusky gray overall, darker on leading edge of primary coverts and on outer primaries. White terminal line along trailing edge of underwing. Some light gray extended onto the upper breast sides; otherwise, underparts entirely white. The feet and short legs were orange-red. **Lane Ellwanger, 2906 W. 87 1/2 St., Bloomington, MN 55431.**

ALBINO AMERICAN ROBIN — Our first sighting was 23 April 1997. It was on our evening walk and we recognized the bird as a robin from 100 yards away. As we approached, it hopped up on a birch branch about 20 feet from us. We pointed it out to a passerby, then called the birding hotline when we got home.



April 24–26: Carried a camera on our walks but no further sightings. We thought she was just passing through.

April 27: Saw her fly across the road ahead of us. After running 1 1/2 miles home for the camera, we got some photographs. After observing her for a while, we watched her fly to a small, nearby pine tree. I notified the property owners that they had something very special and to please watch out for her. After she flew from the tree, I noticed an empty nest.

Partial albino American Robin, 28 April, Duluth, St. Louis County. Photo by Barb Johnson.

April 28–29: Saw her on our evening walks but too many people around to take pictures.

April 30: Took first pictures of her on the nest, which could be seen from the sidewalk. We were careful not to call attention to her.

May 1: Observed her on the nest again.

May 2: While she was away, we observed four eggs in the nest. A normal male was observed in close proximity. We talked to some neighbors and they informed us that she had nested in this same area the previous year. This was a quite a surprise because we have walked the same route for ten years and had not noticed her before.

May 3–6: Walked by without stopping. She was always on the nest. Weather was exceptionally cold with some snow flurries.

May 8: We checked the nest and she was gone and the nest was empty. No signs of shells. We feared she had met the fate that Kim Eckert had told us of: that most albinistic birds don't have the ability to hide well and fall prey to predators.

May 9: Great news, she lives. She and her mate are still in the same area. We certainly hope they try again with better success.

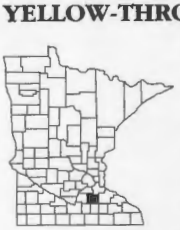
May 10–present: We observed her nearly everyday. We pledged not to bother her and to just observe as we pass by. She was carrying nesting materials on the 13th, and had chosen a much better location this time. She has enriched both our lives and we wish her much success. **Barb and Chuck Johnson, 150 Farley Lane, Duluth, MN 55803.**

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER IN HENNEPIN COUNTY— I saw a Yellow-throated Warbler at Old Cedar Bridge around 1:30 P.M. on 18 May 1997. I had been birding the trail west of the parking lot for about two hours and had seen 18 species of warblers including numerous Wilson's, Parulas, Blackpolls, Golden-wingeds and Nashvilles — all of which were singing at times. I also saw four vireo species. It was pretty clear that a major migrant movement had occurred overnight. I decided to check the trail east of the parking lot, hoping to find a Cape May (one of the species I had not seen for the weekend).

About 100 yards along the trail near some blooming plums, I came upon a nice group of birds that included a Bay-breasted Warbler, a Chestnut-sided Warbler and a Philadelphia Vireo. As I was standing watching the plums, a Yellow-throated Warbler flew into a tree just above them on a branch with very little foliage. It was probably 25 feet away and 15 feet high. I was immediately struck by the intensity of the yellow on its throat, which contrasted sharply with its white breast and belly. It had dark markings on its side, especially on the flanks, but not nearly as bold as shown in the National Geographic field guide. When it turned sideways, I could see by its bill that it was a warbler and from its face pattern that it was likely a Yellow-throated. I was also struck by its bold, white wingbars, the first of which was broader than the second (posterior) one.

I was able to observe the bird for about 30 seconds before it moved along. I checked the area again for about an hour without refinding it (or the other birds that were with it). **Howard Towle, 7915 Western Ave., Golden Valley, MN 55427.**

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER IN RICE COUNTY — On 27 April 1997, I found a Yellow-throated Warbler on the campus of Carleton College in Northfield, Rice County. Specifically, the bird was in an area of thickets and deciduous trees along the Cannon River, behind Laird Stadium. It was in the company of Yellow-rumped Warblers. I got excellent looks at the warbler, which was feeding at eye level and in full sunlight. Its foraging behavior, the way it would creep along branches and even perch briefly on the trunks of small trees, distinguished it from the other warblers. The behavior was consistent with Yellow-throated Warblers I've observed in the southeastern United States.



Here are the field marks on which I made the identification. The bird was the size

of a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Its body shape and bill shape were typical of a *Dendroica* warbler. The upperparts (crown, back, wings, rump and tail) were a uniform slate gray. The wings were a little darker and had two conspicuous white wing bars. The bird's facial area was black, with a prominent white supercilium, white auricular patch, and white crescent under the eye. The throat was brilliant yellow, and this color extended down to the upper breast. The lower breast, belly, and undertail coverts were white. There were prominent black streaks on the sides and flanks. The bird had no tail spots.

Basically, it was a picture-perfect Yellow-throated Warbler in breeding plumage. Unfortunately, the bird could not be subsequently relocated (as is often the case with migrating warblers). I am submitting these details with the awareness that the bird would represent a first record for Rice County, and with the complete certainty that it was, indeed, a Yellow-throated Warbler. **Peter Hill, 300 N. College St., Northfield, MN 55057.**

PACIFIC LOONS IN CROW WING AND RAMSEY COUNTIES — During the fall of 1996, I observed single Pacific Loons (*Gavia pacifica*) at Garrison, Mille Lacs Lake, Crow Wing County on 25 October, and at White Bear Lake, Ramsey County on 7 November. Both birds were observed under good conditions, with late afternoon sun behind or to the right of the observer, and calm or only light wind on the lakes.

The Mille Lacs Lake bird was noted in general comparison to several Common Loons which were swimming nearby, but this bird tended to swim off when the other loons got too close, so no direct comparison could be made.

The bill appeared thinner, more pointed, and nearly half the size of the adjacent Common Loons; the bill was usually held level. The neck on this bird was thinner than the Common Loons, and the head was consistently held higher, accentuating the thinness of the neck. The dark feathering on the hind neck extended from the upper breast to the head with no breaks or partial collar effect as in a Common Loon. There was a strong suggestion of a chin strip but this was hard to tell from a strong shadow underneath the chin. The lores were dark, and the eye was not visible within the dark feathering on the head. The upper part of the hind neck and nape was noticeably paler than the back and lower hind neck; this was especially noticeable when the bird was facing away, since the pale area on the upper hind neck extended down into the lower hind neck in a wedge shape on the back of the head, leaving an area of darker feathering between the white foreneck and the paler hind neck. Very faint scalloped shaped feather edgings were visible on the mantle.

The White Bear Lake bird was similar to the one observed at Mille Lacs Lake, but with several noteworthy differences. When the bird was facing me in good light, there was clearly no chin strap present. Also, the scalloped shaped feather edges were much more visible on the back, marking this bird as a juvenile, and indicating this to be a different individual than the previous reports from this county (previous record at White Bear Lake in 1994, and at Lake Vadnais in 1986).

I was substantially closer to the White Bear Lake bird than to the Mille Lacs Lake bird, and the characteristic graceful, arching posture to the hind neck was very obvious on this bird. I was impressed with the small bill, round head, and thin neck, giving it the appearance of a very small loon, although no other loons were present for comparison. The hind neck was paler than the back, there was a straight, dark line extending up the neck between the white foreneck and the gray hind neck, and the dark feathering on the lores and forecrown was darker than the hind neck and entirely encompassed the eye.

Pacific Loon, 25 October 1996, Lake Mille Lacs, Crow Wing County. Sketch by Karl Bardon.

I also specifically noted the diving posture on the White Bear Lake bird. It was diving repeatedly, and always craned its neck upward and slightly back as it kind of jumped into the water. According to Terry Walsh (*Birding* 20:19) this is a fairly distinctive characteristic. In my opinion, it is at least suggestive, especially when used with other features.

The described features of these two birds clearly differentiates them from Common and Red-throated Loons. Although I am familiar with these latter two species, I have not seen Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*), and differentiation between Arctic and Pacific Loon is much more difficult. However, because of recent identification literature, especially *Birding* 29:106–115, I think observers should at least attempt to look for the distinguishing features between these two species, as was done in Duluth on 21 October 1996 (***The Loon*** 68:244–245), since Arctic Loon could conceivably stray to the Midwest (the nominate form, *G. a. arctica*, could occur as a stray to the East Coast, and the Siberian race, *G. a. viridigularis*, has occurred three times in California).

There was no reason to suspect Arctic Loon in the 1996 observations. The distinctive white flank patch of Arctic Loon (present in all plumages) was not present on either bird. Arctic Loons apparently always lack distinct chin straps, so the apparent presence of a chin strap on the Mille Lacs Lake bird is further support for Pacific Loon over Arctic Loon. Although the White Bear Lake bird clearly did not have a chin strap, this bird was a juvenile, and in this plumage Pacific Loons apparently do not always show a chin strap. Further differences between Arctic and Pacific Loons can be found in the literature already mentioned.

Pacific Loon will undoubtedly become regular on the next Minnesota checklist, since it has occurred in nine of the last ten years (no observations reported in 1992), but it will probably always be casual inland from Lake Superior. Of the approximately 37 occurrences of this species since the first state record in 1969, 23 have been from Lake Superior, and 14 have been from inland locations. **Karl Bardon, 1430 – 100th Ave. NW #212, Coon Rapids, MN 55433.**

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Compiled by Anthony Hertzel and Ann Hertzel

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In This Issue

Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we: publish a magazine, ***The Loon***, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding;* conduct field trips; encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The MOU wishes to point out that any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of ***The Loon*** welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest" and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any stardard format on any 3 ½ inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird-sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".