

6-1986

## *Nebraska Bird Review* (June 1986) 54(2), WHOLE ISSUE

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"*Nebraska Bird Review* (June 1986) 54(2), WHOLE ISSUE" (1986). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 1238.  
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ISSN 0028-1816

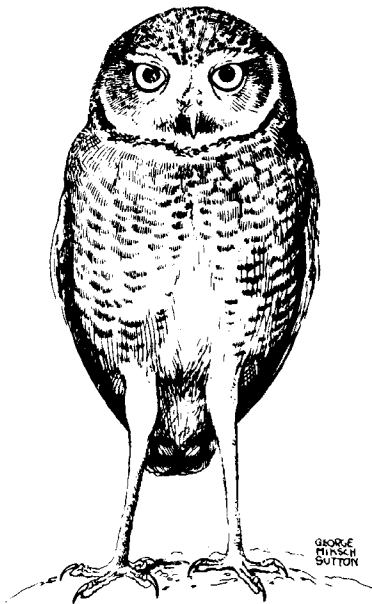
# The Nebraska Bird Review

*A Magazine of Ornithology of the Nebraska Region*

Volume 54

June 1986

Number 2



*Published by the*

**NEBRASKA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, INC.**

Founded 1899

## TABLE OF CONTENTS ON BACK COVER

Published quarterly in March, June, September, and December, by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Inc. as its official journal and sent to all members who are not in arrears for dues. Subscriptions (on a calendar year basis only) are \$10.00 per year in the United States, \$12.00 per year in Canada and Mexico, and \$12.50 per year in all other countries, payable in advance. Single copies are \$3.00 each, postpaid, in the United States; \$3.50 elsewhere.

Memberships (on a calendar year basis only): Students, \$3.00; Active \$7.00; Sustaining \$15.00; Family Active \$10.00; Family Sustaining \$20.00; Life \$100.00.

All dues and subscriptions should be remitted to the Treasurer, Mrs. Jack Shafer, R.R. 2, Box 61, Wood River, Nebraska 68883. Orders for back numbers of the Review should be sent to Dr. Neva Pruess, Librarian, Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, University of Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588.

All manuscripts for publication, and all changes of address, should be sent to the Editor, R. G. Cortelyou, 5109 Underwood Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska 68132.

Other officers are: President Gary Lingle, 2550 N. Diers Avenue, Suite H, Grand Island, Nebraska 68801; Vice-president, Thomas Labedz, 1241 Starview Lane, Lincoln, Nebraska 68512; and Secretary, Mrs. Ruth C. Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005.

## THE EIGHTY-FIFTH (1986) ANNUAL MEETING

The Tout Bird Club was host for the eighty-fifth Annual Meeting 17 and 18 May 1986, which was based at the University of Nebraska Research Center at North Platte. Seventy-six people attended the banquet, and that probably was the maximum attendance. There was a slide show Friday night, Saturday morning was for birding. In the afternoon Tom Hupf, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Grand Island, presented the slide show "Rainwater Basin Wetland Project" and led a discussion afterwards. The business meeting followed. It was announced that the Groove-billed Ani (*NBR* 53:78), reported by Maysel Kiser and others, was the best rare bird reported, and the Rufous Hummingbird (*NBR* 53:80), reported by Arthur V. Douglas, was the next best, out of a total of 10 birds reported. The 1987 Annual Meeting will be held 16 and 17 May 1987, in Valentine, as a joint meeting with the South Dakota society. The 1986 Fall Field Day will be held at Halsey 4 and 5 October. The following officers were elected: Gary Lingle, President; Thomas Labedz, Vice-president; Lona Shafer, Treasurer; Ruth Green, Secretary; Neva Pruess, Librarian; and R. G. Cortelyou, Editor. After the banquet that evening Greg Wingfield, Non-game Biologist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, spoke on "Pine Ridge Prairie Falcons and Other Raptors", illustrated with slides, and Wayne Mollhoff gave an update on the Breeding Bird Atlas project. Sunday morning was available for birding. After the noon lunch and bird tally there was a guided tour of Scout's Rest Ranch for those who could stay longer.

The rainy weather ended Friday night, and both Saturday and Sunday were sunny. At the tally Sunday noon a total of 145 species, and a hybrid, and the possibility that one of the silent Meadowlarks was an Eastern, were reported from Lincoln Co., and 2 others (marked P) were reported from Perkins Co. Three of the birds reported were so uncommon that they are not listed on the field card. Sunday afternoon, after the list was compiled, some die-hards went out and recorded a California Gull. The birds reported were: Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Green-backed Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Redhead, Lesser Scaup, Oldsquaw, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier (P); Sharp-shinned, Swainson's, Red-tailed, and Ferruginous (P) Hawks; American Kestrel, Chukar, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, American Coot, Piping Plover, Killdeer, American Avocet, Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Spotted and Upland Sandpipers, Long-billed Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling; Semipalmated, Least, White-rumped, Bairds, and Pectoral Sandpipers; Short-billed Dowitcher, Common Snipe, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, Franklin's, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, California, and Herring Gulls; Common, Forster's, Least, and Black Terns; Rock and Mourning Doves, Common Barn-Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned and Burrowing Owls, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher; Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker, Least Flycatcher, Eastern and Say's Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Horned Lark, Purple Martin; Tree, Northern Rough-winged, Bank, Cliff, and Barn Swallows; Blue Jay, Pinyon Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Rock and House Wrens, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Sprague's Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, European Starling; Bell's. Warbling, Philadelphia, and Red-eyed Vireos; Tennessee, Yellow, and Blackpoll Warblers; American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal; Rose-breasted, Rose-breasted x Black-headed, Black-headed, and Blue Grosbeaks; Lazuli and Indigo Buntings, Dickcissel, Rufous-sided Towhee; Chipping, Clay-colored, Vesper, and Lark Sparrows; Lark Bunting; Savannah, Grasshopper, Swamp, and White-crowned Sparrows; Boblink, Red-winged Blackbird, Meadowlark sp., Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard and Northern (mostly Baltimore, at least one Bullock's) Orioles, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

## 1985 NEBRASKA NESTING SURVEY

Compiled by Dr. Esther V. Bennett

Data on the 1985 nesting season in Nebraska were received from 28 observers and two agencies, reporting on 83 species from 39 counties. Counties in the tabulation are listed in a west to east order, with the northernmost of the approximately equal locations given first. Numbers represent Nest Record Cards, N represents nests for which no Nest Record Card was submitted, E represents eggs, F represents feeding, C represents copulating, CF represents carrying food, FCo represents feeding Cowbird, NM represents carrying nesting material, and Y represents young observed. GPC in the following paragraph represents Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and CLNWR is Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge..

Twenty-four species were reported on 193 North American Nest Report Cards and 59 species were reported without cards, for a total of 83 species. The counties, with column numbers on the tabulation shown in parentheses, and the contributors are: Banner (3) A. M. Kenitz; Box Butte (6) GPC, Doug Thomas; Buffalo (22) Ken Strom, Marie Strom; Cass (38) Ruth Green; Chase (14) GPC, Iola Pennington; Cherry (11) Jim Ducey, GPC; Cheyenne (7) GPC; Dawes (5) T. E. Bray, GPC, B. L. Wilson; Dawson (19) GPC; Deuel (10) T. E. Bray; Dodge (32) Emma Waterbury; Douglas (36) R. G. Cortelyou, Alice Rushton; Fillmore (29) GPC; Franklin (23) GPC; Frontier (16) GPC; Gage (35) T. E. Bray, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford; Garden (9) CLNWR, Rick Wright; Gosper (20) GPC; Hall (24) Vera Coons; Hamilton (26) Norris Alfred, T. E. Bray, Gloria Eckerson, Lee Morris, B. L. Wilson; Keith (12) GPC; Keya Paha (18) Jim Ducey; Kimball (4) GPC; Knox (25) Jim Ducey; Lancaster (34) Betsy Hancock, GPC, W. C. Garthright, Bill Mulder, W. T. White; Lincoln (15) Jim Ducey, GPC, Mrs. A. B. Gundlicks, B. L. Wilson; Pawnee (39) T. E. Bray; Perkins (13) GPC; Polk (27) Swede Lind; Red Willow (17) GPC; Rock (21) Jim Ducey; Saline (31) GPC; Sarpy (37) R. G. Cortelyou, Ruth Green, Babs Padelford, Alice Rushton, David Starr; Saunders (33) R. G. Cortelyou, Alice Rushton; Scotts Bluff (2) Ruth Green, GPC, A. M. Kenitz; Seward (30) W. C. Garthright; Sheridan (8) T. E. Bray, Jim Ducey; Sioux (1) David Hughson, Helen Hughson, GPC, Ruth Green, B. L. Wilson; York (28) GPC, Lee Morris.

Persons or agencies contributing over 15 Nest Cards are: W. C. Garthright (76) and Game and Parks Commission (86). For the Audubon Society of Lincoln Bill Garthright and many volunteers monitored and maintained nest boxes which had been initially placed on Salt Valley lakes by Resource Services Division of Game and Parks Commission. According to John Dinan, Game and Parks Commission surveys of the Missouri, Platte, and Niobrara rivers located 180 Least Tern nests and 88 Piping Plover nests. These were reported on Colonial Bird Register forms. G. A. Wingfield and John Dinan, Game and Parks Commission employees, provided valuable Nest Card information, as did J. A. Gubanyi, who is working on a Master's degree at UNL. His study is funded by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, UNL, and the National Wildlife Federation. His cards were included with those of Wingfield and Dinan.

The following 40 Nebraska species which were reported in 1985 were not reported in the 1984 Nesting Survey (NBR 53:46): Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Green-backed Heron, Canada Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Harrier, Black-necked Stilt, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Common Snipe, American Woodcock, Wilson's Phalarope, Burrowing Owl, Long-eared Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Say's Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Black-billed Magpie, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rock Wren, Gray Catbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Lark Bunting, Swamp Sparrow, McCown's Longspur, Bobolink, Western Meadowlark, House Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Twenty-nine species reported in the 1984 Survey were not reported in 1985: Western Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, Swainson's Hawk, Merlin, Wild Turkey, American Avocet, Forster's Tern, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Marsh Wren, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

Anyone who sees evidence of nesting, young, or adult birds carrying nesting material, food, or fecal sacs, can submit the information without the use of a special form, although it will be appreciated if the information is



require a separate card for each visit to the site.

Cards, instructions sheets, and Laboratory of Ornithology Nest Survey newsletters may be obtained from Dr. Esther V. Bennett, 1641 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

The Check column on the right-and side carries the first letter of the left-hand column as an aid in following the line across the pages.

Dawson	Gosper	Rock	Buffalo	Franklin	Hall	Knox	Hamilton	Polk	York	Fillmore	Seward	Saline	Dodge	Saunders	Lancaster	Gage	Douglas	Sarpy	Cass	Pawnee	Total	Check
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39		
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	Sioux		Scotts Bluff	Banner	Kimball	Dawes	Box Butte	Cheyenne	Sheridan	Garden	Deuel	Cherry	Keith	Perkins	Chase	Lincoln	Frontier	Red Willow	Keya Paha
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
N. Rough-w. Sw.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bank Swallow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Cliff Swallow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Barn Swallow	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Black-billed Magpie	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
American Crow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bl.-cap. Chickadee	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Red-br. Nuthatch	-	-	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CF, Y	
Rock Wren	CF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
House Wren	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Eastern Bluebird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
American Robin	-	-	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Gray Catbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Brown Thrasher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	N, Y	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
European Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	N, Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Red-eyed Vireo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ovenbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	
Common Yellowth.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Summer Tanager	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Northern Cardinal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Blue Grosbeak	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Lazuli Bunting	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Dickcissel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Rufous-s. Towhee	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Chipping Sparrow	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Lark Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	CF	-	-	CF	-	-	-	-	-	-	CF	
Lark Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Grasshopper Sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Swamp Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
McCown's Longspur	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bobolink	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Red-w. Blackbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
								N, E											
Western Meadowlark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	
Yellow-h. Blackbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Great-tail. Grackle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Common Grackle	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Orchard Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	N, Y	-	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	1, CE	-	-	-	
Northern Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
House Finch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	N, Y	-	-	-	-	
Pine Siskin	-	-	-	-	-	N, Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	
Nest Cards																			
Individuals	27	11	1	5	11	8	3	2	-	1	1	3	1	1	18	2	4	-	
Species	5	7	1	2	5	2	2	2	-	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	-	
No Nest Cards	2	5	-	-	-	17	-	9	4	-	9	-	-	4	1	-	-	5	
Total Species	7	12	1	2	5	19	2	11	4	1	10	1	1	5	4	1	1	5	

Dawson	Gosper	Rock	Buffalo	Franklin	Hall	Knox	Hamilton	Polk	York	Fillmore	Seward	Saline	Dodge	Saunders	Lancaster	Gage	Douglas	Sarpy	Cass	Pawnee	Total	Check
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39		
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## BOOK REVIEWS

Tales of a Low-rent Birder, Pete Dunne, 175 pp., 5½ x 8 3/4, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N. J., cloth, \$15.95.

Pete Dunne is Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory. These articles were written between 1977 and 1986 and appeared first in the *Peregrine Observer*. They range in length from 3 to 23 pages, and in topics from hawk shooting at Cape May in the old days to birding ('hawking') there currently, hawking in Alaska and elsewhere, birdathons, old (collectible) decoys, a sea-going birding trip, to fanciful excursions into the future. There is a foreword by Roger Tory Peterson, who is included in one of the birdathon stories, and black-and-white drawings by David Sibley. An interesting book, which can be read in snatches.

Migratory Bird Habitat on the Platte and North Platte Rivers in Nebraska, Paul J. Currier, Gary R. Lingle, John G. VanDerwalker, 184 pp., 6 x 9, The Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, 2550 N. Diers Avenue, Suite H, Grand Island, Nebraska 68801, indexed, paper, \$11.00 postpaid from the Trust.

This is a study of the factors bearing on the suitability of the habitat, and the changes in them since the area began to be settled. The emphasis is on Sandhill Cranes, since they are the most numerous and the most studied, but species endangered in various degrees (notably Whooping Cranes) are also discussed. The chapters are: Introduction, Land and Water Resources, Migratory Bird Use, Current Inventory of Migratory Bird Habitat, History of Development, Changes in Migratory Bird Habitat, Impact of Habitat Changes on Migratory Birds, Management Recommendations, Literature Cited, Migratory Bird Inventory and Response of Specific Habitat Changes, and Draft Sandhill Crane Suitability Model. Those interested in how the white man has changed the valley, how those changes have affected the birds using the valley, and suggestions as to how the damage can be lessened, will find a wealth of information here. The book is intended for the serious student, but is not too technical for others.

#### WHOOPING CRANE ROOST SITE CHARACTERISTICS ON THE PLATTE RIVER, BUFFALO COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) use of the Platte River in Nebraska has been a controversial topic, especially in the last decade. Pressures from water development interests seeking Platte River water conflict with the needs of wildlife and interests from the conservation community. Between spring 1942 and fall 1984 there were 13 confirmed Whooping Crane sightings on or near the Platte River (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1985). Lingle et al. (1984) described physical characteristics of a Platte River roost site used in 1983. This report describes the physical characteristics of the most recent known roost site on the Platte River.

#### METHODS

Observers were keeping watch over selected portions of the Platte River during the expected peak period of Whooping Crane migration through central Nebraska. Following a sighting of three Whooping Cranes roosting in the river, a bank to bank transect, positioned over the roost site and perpendicular to the river current, was measured at 3 m intervals. Width of sandbars and open water areas, height of sandbars above the water surface, depth of water, and distance from the roost site to woody vegetation were measured. A cross-section of the river was plotted from these measurements. Measurements were taken by personnel from the National Audubon Society, the Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within 5 hours after the Cranes departed. Stream discharge data were obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey in Ord, Nebraska.

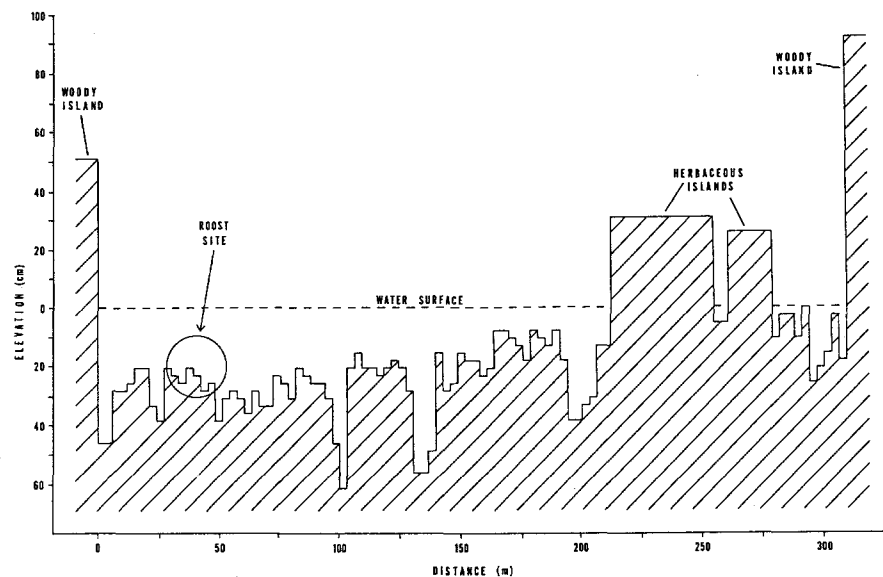
#### RESULTS

Details of the Whooping Crane sighting. At 0712 CDT on 21 October 1985, Marie Strom observed three adult-plumaged Whooping Cranes roosting on the Platte River. The site was on the National Audubon Society Lillian Annette Rowe Sanctuary (Sec. 17, T8N R14W Buffalo Co.). Although there was a cover of low clouds at the time of the sighting, the air was clear and calm, with good visibility. Strom, who had a pair of 7x35 binoculars, first observed the birds in the river channel at a distance of about 350 m east of her. One of the birds was flying toward her, very low over the water,

while the other two birds remained standing in the water. The first Crane made a wide circle toward the other two, gaining altitude as it flew. The other two Cranes leaned forward into the current, spread their wings, and departed west toward Strom. The three passed to the south of her, within 100 m, flying about 15 m above the surface of the water. They were last seen heading SSW. No vocalizations were heard.

**Riverine roost site characteristics.** The cross-section of the roost channel was plotted. Willows (*Salix* sp.) and cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) occurred on islands north and south of the roost channel and ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 m in height. The total unobstructed channel width was 311 m. Of this, 212 m, 68% of the total width, was a single water-filled channel in which the Cranes roosted, plus an additional 40 m of water-filled channel separated by low herbaceous islands less than 30 cm above the water surface. About 81% of the total unobstructed width was water-filled channel. The approximate site of the roost was 41 m from the nearest woody island and 137 m from the nearest herbaceous island. There was a 220° unobstructed view of 0.4 km from the roost site. Portions of this section had been mechanically cleared of woody vegetation over the past few years. The closest dwelling was 0.8 km from the site.

The roost was located on a shallowly submerged sandbar with a depth of 20-28 cm. Stream discharge ranged from 1890 to 1820 cfs on 20 and 21 October, respectively (U.S. Geological Survey, unpubl. data). These measurements were taken at the Kearney gauging station about 14 km upstream from the roost. Flows at the Grand Island gauging station were from 3300 to 3180 cfs on these same dates. (U.S. Geological Survey unpubl. data). This station is about 48 km downstream from the roost. Variation in discharge between the 2 gauging stations was probably the result of local precipitation patterns. This roost was within the area designated as Whooping Crane critical habitat (Federal Register 43(94);20938-20942.



Cross-section of the Whooping Crane roost channel on the Platte River

#### DISCUSSION

The roost site characteristics were very similar to those described by Lingle et al. (1984) and fit well within the parameters listed by Johnson and Temple (1980). The observed flows were higher than the 1700 cfs recommended by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (1983) for maintaining Whooping Crane migration habitat. We feel that although the observed conditions provided

usable roosting habitat on a managed site, higher flows would be necessary to provide optimum roosting habitat over a larger stretch of river where management is not conducted. The reason is that woody vegetation establishment on riverine islands results in aggradation of those sites, hence more water is needed to inundate them.

In 1983 the Platte River Whooping Crane Trust constructed a model which mapped optimum roost sites on the Platte River, based on a geographic database (Carrier et al. 1985). It is interesting to note that this site and the 1983 site fell within the area predicted by this model as the best roost site within their respective river segments. Also, two other confirmed Whooping Crane sightings (one in 1974 and one in 1980) were within 1 km of this recent roost, indicating a strong fidelity for this broad, open reach of river.

As part of Audubon's management of this area for Cranes and other migratory birds, most of this section of the river channel was mechanically cleared of encroaching vegetation in 1982. Additional clearing of this area was begun in 1985. The southern half of the channel adjacent to this roost site was mechanically cleared by waterfowl hunters in 1984 and 1985. The repeated observations of Whooping Cranes in this area emphasizes the importance of the Platte River in providing migration habitat as well as the need to maintain adequate instream flows in the river for this endangered species,

#### Comparison of riverine Whooping Crane roost characteristics

Characteristic	Johnson and Temple (1980)	Lingle et al. (1984)	This site
1 Channel width	155 to 365+ m	350 m	311 m
2 Flow	Slow, 1-4 mph	Not measured	Not measured
3 Water depth	5-30 cm	10-13 cm	Less than 30 cm
4 Vegetation	Unvegetated	Unvegetated	Unvegetated
5 Substrate	Fine, usually sand	Fine sand	Fine sand
6 Horizontal visibility	Unobstructed view from bank to bank and at least 200 m upstream and downstream	Unobstructed view from bank to bank, of 220° upstream and downstream view 300-350 m.	Unobstructed view of 220° within 350 m of roost
7 Overhead visibility	Open	Open	Open
8 Proximity to feeding site	4.8 km for Platte River valley sites	1-2.8 km.	Undetermined
9 Isolation	Usually 0.4 km from human developments	0.2-0.8 km with wooded visual barrier	0.8 km with wooded visual barrier
10 Sandbar characteristics near roost	1-2° slope, less than 30 cm topographic relief, no banks over a few cm.	Closest sandbar was 26 m with 1-2° slope, less than 5 cm relief, no high banks.	Closest sandbar was 137 m with 1-2° slope, less than 30 cm relief, no high banks.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Marie Strom for alerting us to the presence of these birds and Wally Johnson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for help in taking the cross-section measurements.

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#### MOTTLED DUCK IN NEBRASKA

The two major U.S. populations of Mottled Duck occur in Florida and along the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Texas, with local breeding inland to "southeast Colorado, western Kansas, Oklahoma (rarely), and northeast Texas" (A.O.U. *Checklist of North American Birds*, Sixth Edition, 1983). Palmer (*Handbook of North American Birds*, Vol. 2, 1976) notes that Mottled Duck bred in 1963 at Cheyenne Bottoms, Kansas, and that some individuals occur inland beyond the usual breeding range during the post-breeding period. Presumably these inland records pertain to birds from the Texas-Louisiana population, as the Florida birds are generally considered non-migratory. Thus the occurrence of Mottled Duck in Nebraska is a possibility, especially in the fall.

There is one Nebraska record, of a female which was winged by William Lemburg while he was hunting along the Loup River in Howard Co. 5 October 1968 (*NBR* 48:88). Mr. Lemburg kept this hen in captivity for some time, raising several broods by mating her with a drake Mottled Duck obtained from Texas.

Mr. Lemburg kindly sent us a color slide of the female, from which we had color prints made. These prints show the head, bill, and wing characters clearly enough for diagnostic identification of the bird as a female Mottled Duck in Definitive Alternate plumage (see Palmer, 1976). This plumage is generally worn from late summer through winter. The photograph was taken in winter.

Key features shown in the photograph are: the bill is "muted orange-yellow with dark olive spots or blotches on upper mandible, concentrated at the middle"; "innermost secondaries are blackish-brown, comparatively pointed, and very narrowly edged whitish buff to pale tan"; speculum essentially as in male, "cobalt-ultramarine or ultramarine-violet, the white band at trailing edge often reduced or absent" (descriptive phrases from Palmer, 1976).

Comment is in order regarding the amount of white bordering the speculum in this species. Bellrose (*Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*, 1976) shows (plate 8) the speculum of Mottled Duck with a noticeable white bar at the rear of the speculum. Some authors have suggested (see Palmer, 1976) that the white bar is not as prominent in Mottled Duck populations in Florida, and this character has been used to separate the Florida birds and the Texas-Louisiana birds as different subspecies (see A.O.U. *Checklist of North American Birds*, 5th Edition, 1957). However, Phillips examined a very large series of Mottled Duck specimens and concluded that because individual variations within the two populations were greater than between them, the Florida and Texas-Louisiana populations should not be considered taxonomically distinct (J. C. Phillips, *Natural History of the Ducks*, Vol. 2, 1923). The Nebraska bird shows very little, if any, white on the trailing edge of the speculum, with just a pale edging visible on the tips of the secondaries. The possibility that the minimal amount of white in the speculum of the Nebraska bird might indicate it was from non-migratory Florida stock and therefore most likely an escaped bird can be ruled out, as individual variation in the Texas-Louisiana population would be sufficient to account for this feature.

The major identification concern with the Nebraska Mottled Duck (except for possible hybrids, see below) is conclusive separation from American Black Duck. The differences are largely in degree, although one difference which

is dependable is the amount of black bordering the speculum. American Black Duck has "greater secondary coverts bordering speculum (ie anterior edge of speculum,) with black ends, forming a bar or stripe; ... the secondaries of the speculum with broad black ends, ..." (Palmer, 1976). The color photograph of the Nebraska bird shows no observable black either anteriorly or posteriorly bordering the speculum. Of course, a Mottled Duck showing any black in the speculum borders would pose a more difficult identification problem (see plate 8 in Bellrose, 1976). The absence of black in the Nebraska bird's speculum also rules out the possibility that the Nebraska bird was a hybrid of Mottled Duck and American Black Duck. Such hybrids are rare (Palmer, 1976), as one would expect from a study of the ranges of the two species, seeming especially unlikely in the Great Plains.

Other possibilities to consider are hybridization between Mallard and American Black Duck and between Mallard and Mottled Duck. Johnsgard (*Waterfowl of North America*, 1975) states that "female hybrids between mallards and black ducks most resemble mottled ducks, but usually show some white on the greater secondary coverts, especially on the outer web ...". We believe that the absence of white in the greater secondary coverts and on the tail feathers, as well as the unmarked throat and greenish, mottled bill of the Nebraska bird rules out the possibility of hybrids involving Mallard, while the absence of black in the speculum borders rules out American Black Duck hybrids.

We submitted the color photograph to Paul A. Johnsgard of the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Department of Life Sciences, who confirmed our identification (pers. comm.). Dr. Johnsgard also commented that he could "see no sign of hybrid origin" in the bird's plumage. We would like to thank Dr. Johnsgard for his contribution to this note.

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#### NOTES

MORE 1985 CHRISTMAS COUNT DATA. This data for the Lincoln count is now available: 5:10 AM to 5:15 PM. AM and PM clear. Temp. 31° to 45° F. Wind NW 10-30 mph. Snow cover 0 to 18 in. Fresh water frozen. Wild food crop poor. Thirty-five observers, 19-30 in 11-13 parties, 5-16 at feeders. Total party-hours 73 (48 on foot, 25 by car) plus 18 hours at feeders, 3.5 owling; total party-miles 320 (54 on foot, 266 by car) plus 87 miles owling. The Red-tailed Hawk, White-crowned Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak counts were marked as higher than usual, while the Bob-white, and Tree, Song, White-throated and Harris' Sparrow, and Junco, Red-winged Blackbird and blackbird sp, counts were marked as low.

CORRECTION TO 1980 MIGRATION REPORTS. In the reports covering the first half of 1980 (*NBR* 48:73) and the last half of 1980 (*NBR* 49:17) I mistakenly reported Chukar, but the species I observed was in reality the Gray Partridge. I apologize for any inconvenience caused by my mistaken report.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68620

SILVER-HAIRED BAT. At about 8:30 PM on 4 May 1986 two adult female Silver-haired Bats (*Lasiorycteris noctivagans*) were discovered in Fontenelle Forest, on south Stream Trail, near Gifford Road. This is bottom-land forest, cottonwoods and some sycamores, by a 30 ft. wide stream. The Bats' dorsal pelage was distinctively marked with silver, and they had naked wings and ears. The identification was confirmed by Dr. Ken Geluso, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This is the first record of these bats from the Forest, and the earliest record in the northern Great Plains. The bats were released after they were identified, since there is no collecting in the Forest.

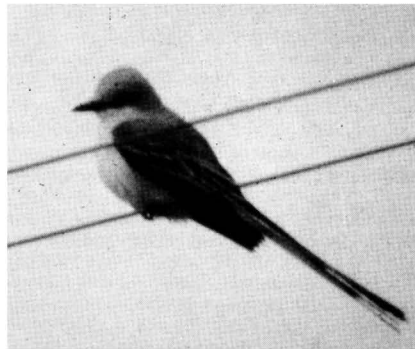
--- Gail La Rosa Roebuck, Curator/Naturalist, Fontenelle Forest Nature Center  
1111 Bellevue Blvd., North, Bellevue, Neb. 68005

RECORDS NEEDED. During a search for substantiating evidence for the occurrence of certain species in Nebraska, we found that as yet there is no Nebraska specimen available for Cattle Egret, nor is there a published photograph. The first published record for Cattle Egret in Nebraska was

near Holstein, Adams Co., 11 September 1965 (Bernice Welch, *NBR* 34:76). No substantiating identification details were given for this important sighting, however. The first documented record was from York Co. 29 May 1969, reported by Lee Morris (*NBR* 37:47). Several Cattle Egret appeared in Nebraska in 1971 (*NBR* 39:62), and the species has occurred every year since, in varying numbers. However, it was not until 1982 that nesting occurred, with a pair at Valentine NWR (Esther Bennett, *NBR* 51:26). The numbers at this same location have increased each year, until in 1984 there were more than 22 birds at the colony, with at least 6 nests located (Jim Ducey, *NBR* 52:76). It appears that this species will continue to increase in numbers in the Plains States, and nesting should become more commonplace.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is casual in Nebraska (Bray et al, MS, 1985), usually as a summer visitor, and has nested at least 6 times in the state (Ducey, MS, 1985), most recently in Clay Co. (*NBR* 33:14). Prior nestings were in Adams, Gage, Lancaster, Logan, and Platte counties (*NBR* 13:1, 27:19, 13:1, 13:50, and 28:56 respectively).

There is no known specimen taken in Nebraska, nor is there a published photograph to document the occurrence of this species in the state. We publish here a photograph, taken by B. J. Rose, of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher seen between Lewellen and Oshkosh, in Garden Co., 14 October 1981.



The Golden-winged Warbler is casual in Nebraska (Bray et al, MS, 1985), but its occurrences in the state have rarely been documented. There is no specimen taken in Nebraska, and we have found no published or unpublished photograph of a Nebraska Golden-winged Warbler. The best available documentation that we are aware of for this species' occurrence in the state is a description of a Golden-winged Warbler seen by one of us (BP) in Bellevue 16 May 1985. This description is given here verbatim: "The buzzy three-note (one high, two lower-pitched) song drew my attention to the bird. I saw the Golden-winged Warbler in heavy deciduous vegetation about 8 feet above the ground. It was small, chickadee-sized, with a very small, thin-pointed beak, gold on top of the head, gold patches on wings, black patch through eye, black throat and whitish on belly. Length of observation: about one minute. It remained singing in the woods for about half an hour."

We strongly suggest that if anyone has a recognizable photograph or recording of Golden-winged Warbler in Nebraska, please forward it to the Records Committee of NOU for duplication and retention in files.

If anyone finds a dead or dying Cattle Egret, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, or Golden-winged Warbler in Nebraska, please freeze it, record date, location, and collector, and send it to a permanent, well-curated collection for safe keeping.

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**MEXICAN DUCK IN NEBRASKA.** The Mexican Duck is now considered a subspecies of Mallard (A.O.U. *Checklist of North American Birds*, Sixth Edition, 1983). There are two published records for the Mexican Duck in Nebraska.

The first was one shot by H. B. Conover in Cherry Co., 17 October 1921 (A. C. Bent, U.S. Nat Mus., 126:50). In order to verify that this specimen was still available, we wrote to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and found that the specimen is indeed #973 in the Conover collection there. However, this female-plumaged bird is now considered to be most likely a hybrid of Mallard and Black Duck (David Willard, pers. comm.).

The second record for Nebraska was of one shot by Karl Menzel in Rock Co. 19 October 1969 (*NBR* 38:89-90). The adult male specimen was identified by Paul Johnsgard as a Mexican Duck. Menzel, however, suggested that the bird might have been an escapee, as he knew of game farms in Nebraska where

Mexican Ducks had been raised. There was no mention that this specimen was preserved.

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DIXON COUNTY. On 6 July 1985 Sue Mabens, of Dixon, saw a Scarlet Tanager 3.5 miles north of Newcastle, and that afternoon she saw an immature Bald Eagle, flying alone over the Missouri, north of Newcastle.

--- Elzene Lundgren, Box 7, Dixon, Neb. 68732

COOPER'S HAWK NESTS. *Free Flight* (Raptor Recovery Center, Lincoln) 1:3 has an article by R. Linderholm and J. Wright about Cooper's Hawk nesting sites in southwest Nebraska. Since 1980 they have located five Cooper's Hawk nesting sites in a five by eight mile area by Strunk Reservoir.

RED KNOTS. In May, 1974, when I was a novice birder, my mother-in-law, Elsie Bray, and I were walking along Leber's Point at Branched Oak Lake in Lancaster Co. Suddenly a thunder shower occurred and we ran for a picnic shelter. As we were waiting for the rain to end a flock of shore birds came around the point. The first ones were easy -- Ruddy Turnstones in bright summer plumage. The next six were also large and rather colorful, but not as easy to identify. As they huddled in the lee of the point we looked at them through binoculars, then checked the field guide, another look at the birds, check another mark in the book. The rain continued and the birds sat quietly, allowing us to positively identify them as Red Knots! What I didn't realize at the time was that I would not see Red Knots again in Nebraska to this day.

--- Tanya Bray, 9708 Grover, Omaha, Nebraska 68124

(Condensed from *A Bird's Eye View*. XII, 6. Another Red Knot was reported from Branched Oak Lake 11 August 1974, *NBR* 43:28 and 38.)

BURROWING OWLS. On 11 August 1985 I spotted a Burrowing Owl. I stopped to get a better look, and realized there was a second one on top of the closest power pole. This was the first time I had seen more than one



at a time. As I reached for my binoculars I caught a little movement on the other side of the road. To my delight, I saw three Burrowing Owl chicks standing on the edge of the road. The two adults were equidistantly spaced on either side of the burrow. I checked the chicks' progress over the next few weeks, discovering that there was a fourth I hadn't seen the first time, and last saw them around the middle of September.

As you can see, the burrow is at the bottom of a ditch. It went underneath a concrete irrigation ditch. The farmer regularly disced the weeds in the ditch, but each time he did (and fouled up the entrance) the Owls quickly dug out their home, and

continued raising their chicks. As well as I could tell from the pellets cast around the entrance the Owls were eating and feeding nothing but grasshoppers. The farmer didn't deserve their help on his crop. As best I can determine the chicks survived, but there were no Owls around when I passed their burrow in the middle of October. I found out that some one had filled the burrow with wide-mouth beer bottles, which I didn't disturb. The one thing I found most interesting about the chicks was that they always were standing in a row by the edge of the road when I drove toward the nest. I watched their body language closely, to assure the longest, closest look at them. The photo shows what I always saw when I started getting too close - one closest to the burrow generally in a crouch, the next one in an intermediate position, the next one just a little more erect, and the last one staring straight



at me. I got only three chicks in the photo because one had already moved. Once we backed up too fast and I saw the head bobbing that they do when alarmed.

--- Doug G. Thomas, 1035 Mississippi Avenue, Alliance, Neb. 69301

LATE REPORT OF COMMON RAVEN. On 16 December 1971 I saw a Common Raven 1 mile S of Wakefield, perched on a telephone pole by the road, about 75 feet away. I saw it for 20-30 seconds, on a bright, sunny day. I was familiar with the species because of 3 years in the northwest. It wasn't until recently that I realized that the sighting was so unusual, but I did record it in my notes.

--- Wayne J. Mollhoff, 736 S. Third, Albion, Neb. 68620

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES. One winter we saw from our kitchen window a one-legged Black-capped Chickadee. He flew down and grabbed a sunflower seed, but he couldn't perch, hold the seed, and peck it open to get the kernel out to eat. He then backed up into the crotch of two limbs to keep his balance so he could hold the seed with his one foot to peck it open. He stayed several weeks.

Another time, in the fall, we netted a Chickadee that had been almost totally scalped by a predator, but had managed to free himself and survive, while the strips of skin on his head managed to adhere and heal down.

We have banded over 50,000 birds in our 22 years of banding. In the early 1970's we began banding in Fontenelle Forest, and we have banded hundreds of Chickadees there, as well as many other birds. In the spring of 1986 Ruth Green netted some of the birds we had banded there. On 1 March she netted a Chickadee we had banded 6 March 1981 and one we had banded 16 February 1980. On 16 March she netted two we banded 6 March 1981 and one we had banded 9 March 1978. When a bird is banded in the spring it is considered an AHY (after-hatching-year) bird at least one year old. So here we have three birds banded in 1981 which were at least 6 years old when renetted, one banded in 1980 which was at least 7 years old, and one banded in 1978 which was at least 9 years old.

--- Hazel and Fitzhugh Diggs, RR 1, Box 64, Hamburg, Iowa 51640

WAYNE COUNTY. Our farm is 8 miles N and 1 W of Wayne. On 25 and 26 October 1985 I saw a Le Conte's Sparrow near there in a wet pasture with very many marsh plants, and some small trees. On 29 November I saw 10-20 Common Redpolls, in a weedy pasture that had not been grazed for two years. On 20 December 1985 I was looking for some Snow Buntings I had seen earlier that day, and I saw 17 Redpolls in a weedy fence row, near the first site.

--- Mike Ericson, RR 2, Wayne, Neb. 68787

THE PEREGRINE AND THE PINTAIL. On 3 March 1985, while traveling between two of our farms, I noticed a hawk perched in the center of a small pond, close to the road, in a corn stubble field. This small pond had been frequented by many ducks the preceeding days, but none were visible this morning. As I stopped my pickup for a better look with my binoculars I could see that the hawk was struggling desperately to fly, but seemed to be held down by something in the water. With the glasses it was easy to see that it was a Peregrine Falcon trying to lift a Pintail that appeared to be dead. The weight of the large duck was more than the hawk could manage and all it could do was to slide the duck slowly along in the water. After several attempts to get the duck out of the water the hawk seemed to give up on moving the bird, but stayed perched on it while watching me. Although the hawk was no more than 100 feet from the road it showed no inclination to leave the prey. It was the closest sighting I've ever had of a Peregrine Falcon, and I was reluctant to leave, but I thought I should call Norris Alfred, as I knew he would want to see this. A short time later we arrived back at the scene, but the hawk and the duck had vanished. I wondered how the duck had disappeared, as I knew the hawk couldn't lift it out of the water to carry it away. After considerable searching and wandering I found the duck along the edge of the pond, out of the water. It wasn't dead, after



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Eighty-fifth (1986) Annual Meeting	30
1985 Nebraska Nesting Survey	31
Book Reviews	36
Whooping Crane Roost Site Characteristics on the Platte River, Buffalo County, Nebraska	36
Mottled Duck in Nebraska	39
Notes	40

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all, but was unable to fly. I don't know why the hawk would leave a sure meal, but I never saw it again.

--- Lee Morris, Rt. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Neb. 68316

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK. Ed Brogie, Mike Erickson, and I saw a Red-shouldered Hawk at Gavins Point Dam, Cedar Co., 11 January 1986. According to Willis Hall of Yankton, S. D., the bird had been seen off and on for several days prior to this sighting. The bird was observed both at rest and in flight, and exhibited the reddish wing linings and barred underparts. The whitish wing barrings and narrow tail bands were also seen closely. The bird was on the north side of the downstream side, which is still on the Nebraska side of the old channel.

--- Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, Neb. 68729

HAWK CONCENTRATION. On 3 October 1985 my father and I were sowing wheat on a field which had a lot of straw on it. The straw provided cover for field mice, and going over the field with a springtooth would flush out a mouse once in a while. Having a hawk pounce on a mouse is not unusual, but then 2 or 3 hawks would dive. When I looked up there were 10 hawks directly above, about 10 in the distance to the south, and 10 to the north. One group would catch a few mice, then another 8-10 hawks would take their place, and so on. I counted 50 hawks in this group. This was a beautiful sunny, warm day with no wind. The hawks were gliding effortlessly on the thermals as they worked their way in a diagonal line to the southeast. They were in no hurry, but at the same time it was as if they were in a cafeteria line, the way they flew over the field catching a couple of mice as they went. I'm guessing that the group were Swainson's; they looked as if they wore a tan hood over their head and neck, and had black wing tips.

--- Leon Marquart, RR 2, Box 4, Byron, Neb. 68325