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NOTES

GOSHAWKS. Four times this past winter I found a Goshawk within a square mile area along the Platte River, near Morse Bluff in northwest Saunders Co. On 3 January 1982 I observed a large buteo-sized hawk alight in a tree about 100-130 yards from me. There was a thin overcast, and the bird was directly east of me in the early morning light, but I could not note the accipiter silhouette. In general, observation conditions were not ideal. It was almost -15°, wind was calm, and humidity high, and both my glasses and my 10-power binoculars tended to steam up very quickly. To add to my problems, the bird took off as I approached and flew directly toward me, at which point the strap on my binoculars broke and tangled in an awkward way, and a Merlin burst out of the woods and flew over in almost the opposite direction. I could not note all the field marks but, as the first bird flew over me, the accipiter shape and flight pattern, the very lightly mottled, almost white underparts, the long barred tail, and the large size identified the bird to my satisfaction — my first Goshawk in 35 years of birding!

On 13 February I got another look. I found the bird, a large silhouette in a cottonwood in the early morning light on a cloudy day. This time it flew away to the west. I saw the accipiter shape as it perched, and the very light underparts, and as it flew away, the light blue-gray back and barred tail.

On 11 March I finally got the look I wanted. As I emerged from a wooded area I saw an erect, I thought crow-sized or smaller, bird perched in a tree on the far side of a pasture, about 150 yards away from me. Again it was cloudy, about mid-morning. As I cautiously approached, the bird seem very preoccupied and more and more field marks became apparent: light underparts (too light for Cooper's Hawk), a striking white eye line. I was able to approach within 50 feet. I could see the orange iris of the eyes and the details of the delicate mottling on the breast and belly. I took one more step, and the weeds exploded with half a dozen Pheasants. The first one which the hawk chased beat him to a large pile of bulldozed cedar trees and disappeared; then the hawk disappeared after a second Pheasant across the rather uneven terrain and I lost sight of it. There was no question about the identification, but even up close this third bird seemed considerably smaller than the first two. Perhaps the first two were females and the third a male.

On 3 April I saw one again. This time it was after some Wood Ducks, but my presence may have put it off, because it disappeared and the Wood Ducks settled on a pond.

I cover the same relatively small area each time I visit. There were 6 visits in November, and early December, 4 each in January and February, and 3 in March. The only other occasion when I have reason to believe I caught a glimpse of a Goshawk was on 10 March, the day before the third sighting described above.

Other interesting sightings in the same place: Great Blue Heron on 13 and 20 February and 10 March, and Townsend's Solitaire on 21 March.

— *T.A. Hoffman, S.J., Creighton University,
Omaha, Nebraska 68178*

RAINWATER BASIN NOTES. We have lots of water in our basins for the first time in three years, and we have had more geese than I've seen in years, and they stayed longer than usual - to 15 April, which is about two weeks longer than they usually remain in the area. We had four Snow Geese and one White-fronted Goose that stayed until 10 May. We haven't had an unusually large number of shorebirds but I have seen a pretty good variety lately. There are lots of Buff-breasted Sandpipers now, and I saw several Golden Plovers today (13 May 1982). I saw two Whimbrels and lots of Soras lately. I have seen very few warblers so far - too cold and wet, I guess.

— *Lee Morris, R. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Nebraska 68316*

WOODCOCK. An American Woodcock was discovered 15 March 1982 only half a block from a residence in the extreme eastern edge of Peru, on a path made by clearing brush in a slightly wooded area on a hillside. The path is 6 to 8 feet wide. About 6 PM the bird was seen

strutting in a small area of the path, with its wing lowered until they almost touched the ground and its head and neck extended forward, much as a Prairie Chicken does in its dance. At 30-second intervals he issued a raspy squawk, after a while he made a spiral upward flight until he was almost out of sight in the dusk, and then he made a rapid drop, as he did so there was a whistling sound caused by his rounded wings. When he reached the ground he resumed his strutting. The whole procedure continued until dark. Only once was a second Woodcock, thought to be the mate, seen in the area.

The same area of the path was always used, and the time of the starting of the dance varied only when cloudy skies caused the dance to start earlier. The bird flew from the bottom lands of the Missouri River up a ravine. The bird seemed to be very tame and was not alarmed by the viewers' flashlights. Sometimes this chubby bird can be seen feeding around a small pond and even in the mud of a mud puddle in the bottom lands.

— *Ida May Heywood, Peru, Nebraska 68421*

HORNED OWL, AND OTHER YORK COUNTY ITEMS. I saw my first Prairie Falcon 10 November 1981. We have lots of Eastern Bluebirds in the Platte Valley north of Hordville. I also saw a Northern Shrike a few days ago (written 17 November). On 24 October, while I was traveling past a pasture, I noticed a large bird beside a light pole. I stopped to investigate and found it to be a Great Horned Owl, clutching a partly-eaten Pheasant rooster. The Owl showed slight burn marks on one wing, and it was obvious that it had been electrocuted. Its talons were still set on the rear of the Pheasant, whose head and part of the breast had been eaten. The power line is REA and has two wires. These usually pose no danger to hawks and owls because there is considerable distance between the wires. However, the added length of the Pheasant hanging from the Owl's talons, with the Owl's wings extended evidently allowed contact with both wires. I held the Owl up for a picture and its talons were set so tight that the weight of the Pheasant didn't dislodge it.

— *Lee Morris, Rt. 1, Box 14, Benedict, Nebraska 68316*

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD. On 5 October 1981 we observed a hummingbird sitting on the back step of our house. It appeared to be a male Broad-tailed. Apparently it was very cold (temperature was 45°, and it was windy) or very tired, because we observed it as closely as three feet. It would fly up to the pink cannas nearby, feed briefly, and then return to the step.

— *Jeanne Dueker, Star Rte 2, 61-A, Chadron, Nebraska 69337*

CROWS AT HOLDREGE. Holdrege had an unusual number of Common Crows roosting in and near the town early this (1982) year, much more than residents can remember seeing in the past. Estimates of the number of birds range up to 100,000. No reason for the concentration is apparent. Their numbers dropped with the good weather at the end of February, but a snow storm early in March brought them back in about the original numbers.

BIRD-BANDING. During 1981 I banded 55 species for a total of 1,976 birds. Purple Finches (373) and Pine Siskins (357) accounted for 730 of this number. With the exception of about 5 of each which were banded in my yard, all of these were banded at the home of Melba Wigg, in western Sarpy Co. One of the Purple Finches banded on 28 February was recovered on 20 April at Yorktown, Saskatchewan, Canada, which is about 1,000 miles almost due north of this part of Nebraska.

Another long-distance recovery for me this year was a Common Grackle, banded 11 May 1979 and recovered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in May of 1981.

— *Ruth C. Green, 506 W 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005*

On 16 June 1981 I netted and banded an immature male Blue Grosbeak at Chet Ager Nature Center, Lincoln. No other Blue Grosbeaks were seen in the area from then until 7 August, when I netted the same bird again. The only other one I have ever seen there was a mature male banded 18 May 1977.

— *Mabel B. Ott, 2718 South 33rd St., Lincoln, Nebraska 68506*

Jane Dunlap, Norfolk, banded a Blackpoll Warbler with an active brood patch. This was on 29 July. A Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco she banded in March 1979 was recovered in Ogden, Utah in March 1981.

BULLSNAKES. On 4 July 1981 we observed a 4-foot bullsnake at the base of a pine in which Wrens had nested in a box made from a hollow log. We believe the snake ate the little Wrens as only an hour before we had seen the male and female feeding them and could hear their calls. This wasn't our first experience with bullsnakes in our nest boxes. In May 1980 we observed three bullsnakes (two of them in less than one hour) in a week's time trying to go in a Red-breasted Nuthatch's nest, 15 feet up in a pine. Unfortunately, after we returned from being gone for the day, we discovered the nestbox was quiet and a very full bullsnake asleep by the house. We wondered why the snakes all chose the same box, when three or four others also contained nests.

—*Jeanne Dueker, Star Rte 2, 61-A, Chadron, Nebraska 69337*