

middlewestern prairie region



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The cool, damp weather of late May extended into early June, but temperatures were above normal during the last half of the month. July temperatures were near normal with below average precipitation. Local drought conditions occurred in central Missouri.

In keeping with the inclement early June weather, numerous late passerine migrants were reported across the Region. More importantly, the cool, wet conditions presented unacceptable nesting conditions for many early breeding species. In Illinois, Kleen suggested that delayed nesting of early species may have placed a heavy burden on mid-summer foragers, as both early and late breeders were forced into competition for limited food supplies. The impact of this problem remains undetermined.

On the positive side, the moist early breeding season appeared to have a favorable impact on some wetland species. For example, bittern reports were up and Blue-winged Teal apparently prospered in northern Iowa. Unfortunately, Common Moor-

hen numbers did not improve significantly.

Pete Petersen, a contributor to *Field Notes* and *American Birds* since 1961 and Middle Western Regional Editor from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, died in July. An extremely active birder in Iowa and Illinois, Pete made numerous important contributions to our knowledge about the avifauna of both states. We will miss seeing the familiar "PP" designation that had become an indelible part of Middlewestern Prairie Region reports.

Abbreviations: H.B.S.P. (*Headlands Beach S.P., OH*), L. Cal. (*L. Calumet, Chicago*); R.E.D.A. (*Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO*), S.C.R. (*Squaw Creek N.W.R., MO*); Spfld. (*Springfield, IL*).

LOONS TO IRISES

A basic-plumaged Red-throated Loon spent most of June at Tampier Slough Preserve, Cook, IL (JM ph.). As usual, a small number of summer Com. Loons were scattered across the Region; the southernmost bird was seen at Marshall Dig W.M.A., MO, June 23 (TJ). Good numbers of Am. White

Pelicans were widespread, with counts exceeding 100 in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. Two wandered E to Indiana, where they were seen at Kingsbury FWA June 11 (Jcd) and in Steuben July 8 (*vide Haw*). Nesting Double-crested Cormorants were reported in Illinois and Iowa; the largest colony was at Baker's L., Cook, IL, where 61 nests were counted (*vide VK*).

One or two Am. Bitterns were reported in Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio and, as usual, the largest Least Bittern concentration was at S.C.R., where 45 were counted June 10 (JHi). The only reports of large heron colonies came from Illinois, where aerial surveys along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers estimated 32 active Great Blue Heron colonies with 7300+ nests and 13 Great Egret colonies containing nearly 400 nests (*vide VK*). Small numbers of Snowy Egrets were reported in every state, but nesting was reported only in St. Clair, IL, where 10–20 nests and young were observed July 8 (VK et al.). The latter site also contained 500–800 Little Blue Heron nests. An unexpected **Tricolored Heron** appeared in Hamilton, IN, June 8 (†Bjk et al., ph.), and another was in Lawrence, IL, June 17–21 (LH). The only nesting Cattle Egrets were reported in St. Clair, IL, where an estimated 100 nests were counted July 8 (VK et al.). There was both good and bad news for Black-crowned Night-Herons. The good news was that nesting Black-crowns were reported in Illinois, Iowa, and Kentucky, with probable nesting in Indiana. The bad news was that the major Black-crowned colony at L. Cal. declined by 50–60% (WM, JLa) and the Worley L., IL, colony contained no nests for the first time since record keeping began in 1962 (RBj).

WATERFOWL TO CRANES

In Iowa, semi-wild Trumpeter Swans produced broods of 6 near Ames and 5 near Webster City (BEh). Most surprising were the geese at Swan Lake N.W.R., MO, where a Greater White-fronted Goose was seen July 23, and two–six Snow Geese summered (BO). Two Snow Geese were also present at the Ayrshire strip mine, s.w. IN, June 9

(†ML). Reports of summer period Am. Black Ducks included singletons at Lorain, OH, June 18 (RH_a, SW) and Arcola, IL, July 26 (RCh). The Blue-winged Teal report was mixed. In Iowa, numerous Blue-winged broods appeared in the Great Lakes region (JD), and nesting occurred as far south as *Christian*, KY (MB), but this species did poorly in Ohio (LRO) and was almost impossible to find at L.Cal. (JLa). An adult N. Shoveler and seven juveniles were reported in *Christian*, KY, June 6 (MB).

Unexpected lingering ducks included a Surf Scoter at Mosquito Creek Res., OH, June 8 (D&JH); a White-winged Scoter at LaSalle Nuclear Power Plant, IL, June 1 (CMc); Com. Goldeneyes at Chicago-Montrose June 9–July 24 (JPo, EW) and at Michigan City, IN, July 5–Aug. 16 (JCd, m.ob.); and a female Bufflehead at Harrier Marsh, IA, June 10–11 (*fide* JD). Nesting Hooded Mergansers were reported in Illinois (2 broods) and Iowa (3 broods). Most interesting were 2 undocumented reports of single Com. Mergansers at the Land Between the Lakes, KY, June 6 (MB), and a male at L. Renwick, IL, July 6 (DS).

Breeding Osprey reports included an unsuccessful effort at Bergman Slough, Cook, IL (CT, WS), and several June and July observations in s.w. Ohio (*fide* NK). The Region's Mississippi Kite population continues to flourish, with reports from every state except Ohio. Highlights included three birds at Lincoln S.P., IN, June 14 (AB); Iowa's 2nd recorded nesting at Ledges S.P. (*fide* JD); and a nest with young at L. Wappapello in *Wayne*, MO, July 3 (JFx). The Bald Eagle nest tally included 58 in Iowa (*fide* JD), 34 in Missouri (*fide* JW_i), 15 in Indiana (*fide* JCs), and seven in Illinois (*fide* VK). Northern Harriers nested in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri.

The annual spring Illinois Ring-necked Pheasant survey revealed a 46% decline since 1995 (*fide* VK). In Missouri, Greater

Prairie-Chicken counts were up slightly from last year's 50% decline (*fide* JW_i). Nesting King Rails were reported only at Goose Lake Prairie S.P., IL, where two adults and two young were seen July 6 (DS). Another King Rail was observed periodically between June 21 and July 10 at Waubonsie W.M.A., IA (MPr et al.). Once again, Com. Moorhens were uniformly scarce across the Region. Several pairs nested at L.Cal., but numbers were down compared to recent years (WM). The only other reported nestings occurred in n.e. Indiana, where four adults and seven downy young were seen at Pigeon River W.M.A. July 10 (Haw et al.) and in Shalersville, OH (*fide* LRo). The Sandhill Crane expansion continued this spring with nesting reported at about 7 sites in Illinois and 3 in Iowa. In addition, 20 Sandhills were counted at Pigeon River W.M.A., IN, July 10 (Haw et al.), where nesting was not observed.

SHOREBIRDS

Several correspondents noted that fall shorebirds arrived late this year, and at L. Cal., Landing deemed the fall shorebird numbers the lowest since 1978. An unusual midsummer Black-bellied Plover record

was logged at Union Slough N.W.R., IA, June 18 (NK). A Snowy Plover near Black Hawk L., IA, June 14–15 provided Iowa's first summer record (†PA, RA, †PE). Also in Iowa, Piping Plovers had their best year ever at the traditional Port Neal nesting site, where at least 20 young were fledged (BH). In addition, three pairs were noted at the *Pottawattamie*, IA, power plant ponds June 23–24 (JD). A fine post-breeding Killdeer concentration occurred at Morgan's Pond, *Christian*, KY, when 200 were counted July 27 (MB). Black-necked Stilt reports included at least two at Cape Girardeau, IL, July 21 (RM et al.); three with young in *New Madrid*, MO, July 16 (BJb, AS); and three in Stoddard, MO, July 16 (BJb, AS). American Avocets were reported in all 6 states; the peak count consisted of 14 at Lorain, OH, July 26 (RH_a, SW). Rarely seen in spring, two alternate-plumaged Red Knots were present on Montrose Beach, Chicago, June 1 (ph. JLa). Noteworthy fall migrant counts included 5000 Lesser Yellowlegs at L. Chautauqua, IL, July 28 (RCh et al.); 24 Solitary Sandpipers in Arcola, IL, July 19 (RCh); three Whimbrels in Cleveland July 39 (JPg); three Marbled Godwits in *Dickinson*, IA, June 21



Two Red Knots (flanking a Dunlin) on Montrose Beach, Chicago, Illinois, on June 1, 1997. Knots are scarce in spring in the upper Midwest. Photograph/Jim Landing

(PA, RA); 500 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Lake Chautauqua N.W.R., IL, July 28 (RCh et al.), 500+ Stilt Sandpipers at Lake Chautauqua N.W.R., IL, July 28 (KR et al.); and 550 Short-billed Dowitchers at Metzger Marsh, OH, July 13 (RHa, SW). Early fall arrivals included a Baird's Sandpiper in Pottawattamie, IA, July 6 (AJ) and a Dunlin at Saylorville Res., IA, July 8 (BEn). Summer Com. Snipe were reported at the Ayrshire strip mine, IN, June 27 (†JCb), and Goose Lake Prairie S.P., IL, July 6 (DS) & 12 (CMc et al.). The peak Wilson's Phalarope count consisted of three seen July 28 at Lake Chautauqua N.W.R., IL (KR et al.).

GULLS TO DOVES

Four Laughing Gulls were logged in the 3 Great Lakes states; the only inland sighting consisted of a 2nd-summer bird near Black Hawk L., IA, June 16 & 18 (†RT, †PE, †BH). For the 3rd time in 4 years, **Black-headed Gulls** have appeared in Iowa. This summer an adult was seen several times in the interval June 20–July 16 (ET, †MPR, LS, JD). An estimated 10,000–12,000 Ring-billed Gulls nested in the L. Cal. colony (JLa), several thousand nested on the steel mill landfills on the Indiana lakefront (KB), and 1460 nests were present in Waukegon, IL (EW). The unbridled expansion of this species was checked this summer when a large number of juveniles died, apparently of starvation, near L. Cal. (WM). An undeter-

SA Over the past few years, several Eurasian Collared-Dove reports have come from Illinois, including sightings of single Eurasian Collared-Doves or Ringed Turtle-Doves in Chicago July 3 (EW) and in Urbana in June and July of 1997 (RCh et al.). At a glance these reports appear to be in concert with the nationwide Eurasian Collared-Dove expansion; however, the situation in Illinois is considerably more complicated. A very large, and expanding, mixed flock of Eurasian Collared-Doves /Ringed Turtle-Doves has been present in Joliet, Illinois, for more than 20 years (*vide* DJ), and contains upward of 250 individuals (CA). Some specimens from the site show clear evidence of hybridism. The presence of the Joliet population casts a cloud of doubt on the origin of any Eurasian Collared-Doves seen in northern Illinois and adjacent states.

mined number of Herring Gulls also nested at L. Cal. (WM) and along the Indiana lakefront, but the most remarkable nesting occurred at the Fort Wayne sewage treatment plant where, for the 3rd consecutive year, an adult was observed on the nest July 6 (Haw). Indiana's first summer Glaucous Gull record was logged June 22 when a first-year bird was seen at Beverly Shores (BG). Most intriguing was the appearance of a juv. Great Black-backed Gull at Headland Beach S.P., OH, July 8 (LRO, EB, RHn), raising the possibility of nesting on L. Erie. Also quite remarkable was the discovery of a **Sabine's Gull**, believed to be in first-alternate plumage, at Kettleson W.M.A., IA, July 8 (†LS), which provided one of the Region's very few summer records.

Indiana's first nesting **Caspian Terns** were discovered June 24 when a colony of 137 adults, plus more than 64 eggs and 20 chicks, were counted on the LTV Steel landfill in Lake (KB). Common Terns nested at Waukegon, IL, where 27 birds and 10 nests were observed June 6; unfortunately the site was abandoned by late June (EW, DD). Following the late May **Arctic Tern** sighting at Waukegon Beach, IL, a different bird, one possessing a dark carpal bar, appeared June 14 and was last seen June 17 (†DJ, †JO, ph.). In early June, 125 Forster's Terns and at least 3 nests were seen at Grover's L., IA (NB), providing the summer's only nesting report. It was a fine year for Least Terns, with successful nesting in 3 states. An Illinois survey along the Mississippi R. (Cairo to Grand Tower) produced 169 nests in 4 island colonies (*vide* VK). The Least Tern colony in Gibson, IN, yielded a record 39 nests and 35 fledglings (*vide* JCs), and the Port Neal, IA, colony had 7 nests and 14 young (BH). An extralimital ad. **Least Tern** appeared at Lorain, OH, June 18 (†RHa, SW, TL, PL).

CUCKOOS TO VIREOS

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were unusually numerous in Ohio, where more than 50 were tallied by that state's correspondents. Greater Roadrunners are still present in s.w. Missouri, as evidenced by the sighting of one near Branson in July (KJ). Barn Owl nestings were recorded at Cypress Creek N.W.R., IL, where a breeding pair was seen July 15 (KMc); in Union, IL, June 16 and July 11 (DKa); in Taylor, IA, where a pair was seen at the nest (BEh, JFu); in Chillicothe, MO, where a nest with three young was found June 2 (JCu); in Cedar, MO, where a nest with 4–5 young was seen July 23 (DR); and in a Pemiscot, MO, cotton

gin, where two were discovered July 16 (BJb, AS). A Short-eared Owl, seen several times near Kellerton, IA, in June, may have been nesting (PMe, m.ob.). Common Nighthawk numbers were deemed up in Evanston, IL (EW), but down in Iowa (DT, JV) and Ohio (LRO). In Sand Ridge S.F., an impressive 148 Whip-poor-will territories were located in June and July (RBj). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nests were found in Ashtabula, OH, June 8 (D&JH) & 15 (TL); and in n.w. Indiana, a very late sapsucker was still in Oak Ridge Prairie Park, Lake, June 7 (JBo et al.).

Following a late spring migration, tardy Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were recorded in the St. Louis area June 6 (BR), in Kossuth, IA, June 8 (MK), and in Indiana Dunes S.P. June 13 (DP). Western Kingbirds successfully nested in East St. Louis, IL, where 2 pairs fledged at least 2 young (DKa, KM et al.), and at Kingsbury FWA, IN, where one fledgling was seen July 20 (G&LB). Several correspondents suggested that E. Kingbird numbers were down this summer. The season's only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher made a brief appearance in Boone, IA, July 12 (SL). Iowa's Black-billed Magpies successfully nested. On June 25 three fledglings were seen with the adults n. of Sioux City (†BH), to provide that state's first breeding record in 59 years. Fish Crow reports were restricted to traditional sites in s. Illinois and Indiana. Surprisingly, following last spring's dearth of Red-breasted Nuthatches, a male on territory was found in Sand Ridge S.F., IL, July 4 (DBo, BD), and n.w. Indiana's first summer record was logged at Beverly Shores July 20 (PG). It was a good summer for Brown Creepers. A pair nested in Pecatonica, Winnebago, IL, where three fledglings were found June 7 (DW). In addition, five were reported in Indiana and two in Iowa, and Brown Creepers were reportedly doing well in Ohio's river valleys (LRO). The season's only Bewick's Wren was heard in Logan, KY, July 3 (MB). Sedge Wrens were numerous in Illinois and Iowa, but none was reported in Ohio. A Golden-crowned Kinglet was found in Hinckley, OH, July 15 (RHa). A nest box trail in Jefferson City, MO, yielded 99 E. Bluebird nests, from which 88 birds fledged (JLu), and another trail near Springfield had 56 nests and 88 fledglings (KJ). A Veery nest found near Stone City provided Iowa's first nesting record since 1977 (CE). A Gray-cheeked Thrush at Sioux Center, IA, June 2 was quite late (†JV), but even more surprising was another Gray-cheeked that was banded at Crane Naval Base, IN, June 22.

The latter bird had an injured tarsus, but appeared in good health otherwise (†PB et al.). Early June Swainson's Thrushes were reported in every state except Kentucky; perhaps the most remarkable of these was an individual seen June 9 in St. Louis, MO (BR). As expected, the only Hermit Thrush reports came from e. Ohio, where a maximum of eight was counted in Mohican S.F. June 27 (LY). A tardy northbound Blue-headed Vireo was seen in Oak Ridge Prairie Park, IN, June 7 (JBo et al.), and a mid summer bird was observed in *Winneshiek*, IA, July 18 (DCa). Nine additional Blue-headed were reported from e. Ohio breeding areas; the peak count was of four in Hinckley June 28 (RH_a, SW).

WARBLERS TO FINCHES

The season was characterized by many late spring migrants. Noteworthy among many tardy warblers were Tennessees in Kent, OH, June 25 (LRo) and Chicago June 19 (JLa). A Nashville, found in Hinkley, OH, June 28 (RH_a, SW) was not far from last season's nesting site. A territorial male Chestnut-sided Warbler, in Rudolf Bennett W.M.A., MO, was well n. of this species' normal range, and a male at Hannibal Waterman W.M.A., O'Brien, IA, June 19 may well have been nesting (DKo). The three territorial male Magnolia Warblers observed in Shades S.P. suggest that Indiana's isolated summer population is becoming firmly established. A June 27 trip to Ohio's Mohican S.F. yielded a bevy of warblers rarely seen during the Midwestern summer: Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green (LY). The latter species, however, appears to be establishing a summer foothold in the Region. A remarkable eight Black-throated Greens (seven males, one female) were found in Lowden-Miller S.F., IL, July 8 (DS), and singing males were detected July 4 in the Indiana Dunes (SB) and in Evanston, IL (EW). After detecting the presence of summer **Blackburnian Warblers** in Indiana Dunes S.P. for 3 consecutive years, local birders observed a female constructing a nest June 28 (SB, JcD, CF, JWh, KB). This is Indiana's first nesting record. A Worm-eating Warbler observed feeding a young cowbird in Shimek S.F. July 5 (CE), was noteworthy. Breeding season Swainson's Warblers were reported in the 2 s. states, with one or two in *Calloway*, KY, June 4 (MB) and 2 pairs along the Current R., *Shannon*, MO, May 31 (PMc). A very late Wilson's Warbler was seen in Indiana Dunes S.P. June 15 (SM).

A Summer Tanager nest and three Blue Grosbeaks were found in Oak Openings, OH, this summer (TK). An impressive 42 Indigo Buntings were counted in *Monroe* and *St. Clair*, IL, June 22 (KMc). Southwestern Missouri's small Painted Bunting population remained intact, with two females, a male, and three fledglings in Henning S.F., *Taney* (KJ, no date given), and a singleton in Roaring River S.P. June 27 (RF). The Region's peak Dickcissel counts included 100+ in *Piatt*, IL, June 22 (RCh) and 46 in *Putnam*, OH, June 27 (TK). Three territorial male Clay-colored Sparrows were reported in Rockton, IL, in June and July (DW). Bachman's Sparrows continue to hang on in s.e. Missouri; this summer's only report consisted of a singing male in Ozark June 1 (†PMc et al.). Despite a discouraging spring assessment, several fine Vesper Sparrow counts were logged: 45 in *Champaign* and *Piatt*, IL, June 5 (RCh), and 17 in *Fulton*, OH, June 28 (TK). It was another fine nesting season for Henslow's Sparrow, with reports from every state. Tardy spring sparrow migrants included a Lincoln's in Chicago June 8 (JL) and several White-throateds. In addition, a late summer White-throated was seen in Chicago July 22 (EW). In Iowa, Great-tailed Grackles continued their range expansion with a first nesting record for *Sac* June 18 (JD). Following last summer's invasion, the only Red Crossbill reports consisted of a pair at a Sand Ridge S.F. feeder June 2 (RBj), and three birds in *O'Brien*, IA, July 23 (DKo).

RARITIES COMMITTEE UPDATE

Two changes come from the Iowa Records Committee: The Anhinga reported Sept. 17, 1996, in *Washington*, IA (AFN 51:62), was rejected, and a California Gull seen at Spirit L. Sept. 6, 1996 (†JBa, AJ), was accepted.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 965.