

Black

Iowa

Aug 15, 1973  
Pleasantville Ia

Dear Vernon:- I think I'm too late but probably nothing in my report worth printing anyway.

Certainly the pic of 3 strapping big Red-tails is not that unusual. However I'm sending 'em anyway as I'm very fond and very proud of our Red-tails. May their tribe increase!!

Dean Rassa is now at IBSU Ames working on his doctorate, is past pres of Ia OU, taught High School Biology 10+ years. Mbr. of AOU + Wilson's. And he loves the Hawks more than I do!

The Nutcracker pic reproduced beautifully in Amer. Birds. I have ordered a copy for Herb Drow, my wildlife photographer. He has spent many long hours at my bidding

Sincerely,  
Gladys Black

Perhaps I ranted too long about Red Rock + Corp of Engineers but we are faced with worse! Taylorville dam is now nearing completion above Des Moines - which means another 50,000 acres of Island flooded during each wet year. But that's not all. Taylorville will flood 324 acres of our most beautiful State Park Ledges State Park, the part where the sandstone ledges are located + the best of the magnificent woodland. This is our oldest and best beloved park. We have fought it + fought it but once the Corps of Engineers get started it's like a runaway steam roller. Nobody can stop it!!

Gladys Black  
Pleasantville Iowa

## Red Rock Reservoir and Pleasantville area

This year 1973 has been horrendous, an extremely wet year. The Reservoir backed up 30 miles reaching 778 ft by early May, altho it had been high since March, eventually covering 60,000 acres of prime Iowa farm land. (Permanent pool is 725 ft and 9900 Acres) The Corps of Engineers had assured the landowners that such a flood would occur only once in 25 or even 100 years. But this makes 2 years out of 5 flooded as 1969 reached 769 ft and stayed there till late August. This year it will be mid Sept. before permanent pool level is reached - barring further heavy rains. The once beautiful valley is now a hellscape of logs, debris, and dying trees. And of course the wheat fields in the Red Rock Refuge cannot be planted - grazing for the waterfowl. Last fall 1972, the wheat was planted but flooded before it ever germinated due to the mechanical failure of a part in that new dam. (The Lake first filled in 1969) It took 2 weeks to get the mechanical part!! Planned obsolescence??

As you can well imagine farmers who were paid "easement" on the basis of 1 flood in 25 years are heart sick and furious with 70 to 80 acres of farms under water 2 years out of 5. And land values have increased 100% since the easements were paid.

The loss of wildlife habitat has been colossal too with many reports of mallards beheaded on their nests by mowers in hay fields. All the Refuge nesters were of course forced to the uplands.

Bill Creswell & I observed an unbelievable one for Ripley - a Mallard Duck incubating eggs in a Red-tailed Hawk nest high up in an oak tree. Bent states (Life Histories) that Mallards nest in tree cratches in Washington but not in nests of other birds!

Vultures in the 3 Summer Roosts of the Red Rock area totaled 110+ (Red Rock Bluff, Elk Rock Bluff, + Kinney Bluff)

The Great Blue Herons deserted the Red Rock Refuge rookery this year since most of the nests are under water. However 50 pairs nested in the Lake Rathbun area (a Corps of Engineer's Recreational Lake in southern Iowa, first filled in 1970)

Little Blue Herons rare here but 6 i. + 2 a. present since July!

Only 1 yellow-crowned Heron seen twice

No Black-crowned Herons at all.

The one cheerful note is the census of breeding Red-tailed Hawks with 13 pairs counted. Of nests located 60% were successful.

One pair reared 2 robust big youngsters in an old Heron nest in the tip-top of a huge Sycamore tree with 30 ft. deep water below. This was the second year this pair nested in an old Heron nest.

Another pair reared 3 young, also in a big Oak tree, standing in 10 ft deep flood water. Dean Poosa who has been studying Ia. Red-tails for 10 years, banded my young Red tails, told me that 3 is not uncommon. However it's the first time I'd seen 3 reared successfully in 15 years. (I'm the first to admit I'm no Hawk authority.)

Breeding Sparrow Hawks were at an all time low here this summer.

The mud flats of the upper reaches of Red Rock Reservoir attracted every species of Plover and Sandpiper on the Da checklist and many remained throughout the summer even a few Amer. Golden Plovers. Only 2 Upland Plovers were seen. They are all gone from the farms nearby where they nested for years.

The rarities were all seen i.e. Piping plover, Whimbrel, Western + Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Marbled godwit + Avocets.