

6/5/80

BEA4

June 2, 1980

Dear Dr. Kent,

Thank you for your notes. I'm glad you found the report interesting. I was unsure as to what to include; please let me know if I send too much.

*good*

We first saw the Marbled Godwit sitting in a muddy pool in the center of a plowed field. After identifying it as a godwit, we decided his size, general coloration marked him as a tentative Marbled. Two more intrepid members of our group walked out in the field while two of us stayed on the road with our scopes. This bird must have been very tired or ill, because they approached quite near before getting any reaction at all from him. Finally he raised his wings and walked a few steps. We could all see the pale cinamon wing linings. As the birders got very close to him, he finally flushed, showing the brown tail--the same color as the back with no white or black. On May 10, we saw several godwits at the Settling Ponds. Some were obviously Hudsonians in good spring plumage. Two or three, however, were "different". They were brownish and looked quite "marbled". We had just about decided that someone would have to flush them when they flew revealing the black and white tail and almost willet-like wings. We were surprised to note that even when they were tilling up to feed, that dark tail with white was not noticeable. Babs Padelford reminded me that in this area we have never seen Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits in the same flock. The Marbled seem to go through earlier in the spring.

The dowitchers are another story! We have had considerable discussion on them here this spring. The large flock we saw at I-29(Pac.Jt) were certainly Long-billed. They were in good spring plumage with dark brick-red bellies and considerable barring. Also it is generally assumed that any Dowitcher we see here in spring will be Long-bl. Is this true? On May 10 at the Settling Pond, we did see one dowitcher with pale red underparts. Even when he lifted his wings we saw no barring, only a few dots. It was thought by several of us that this might have been a Short-bl but we did not hear the song, so I did not include it in my report. Am I correct in assuming that the two dowitchers do not migrate together? Are we more likely to see Short-bl in the fall? As you can see, we have more questions than answers on dowitchers.

I'm sorry you didn't find the Chuck-wills-widow. I'm afraid you may have been in the same place we go, as in checking the map, I find it is just over the Pottawattamie line into Mills county. My directions are notoriously bad, but: From I-29 take the Bellevue Ne exit. Turn left, crossing over the interstate and take the paved road along the bluffs (highway 275) south. Go approx. 1 (one) mile. The road where the CWW is found is called Wall Hollow by the local residents and Roger Sharpes Rd (after the Prof. of Ornith. at UNO who used to live there) by the birders. Unfortunately, neither of these names is marked on the road. On the right are two or three large silos and the road is marked Dead End. Off of highway 275, it is a left turn and the road is gravel. I know these are impossible directions, but I would be glad to show anyone the birds if they would call me. The CWW is a little more difficult to get there than Whip-poor-will. On our spring count, we arrived at the road at about 4:15 a.m. We played our tape and the Whip-poor-will answered immediately. We tried for CWW but he did not answer. We went farther up the road and picked up Barred and Screech Owls and were preparing to leave when the CWW started calling quite close to the road. This was about 5:00 a.m. It is just my personal observation that CWW do not respond well to tapes. Also I feel they do not start calling until later in the morning--usually between first light and true dawn. Warm, windless evenings and mornings are the best--in late May and early June. Wild Turkeys can also be heard on this road at dawn.

Gertrude Wood's address is: R.R. 2, Plattsmouth, Ne 68048. She has been birding for many years and her sightings are reliable.

I think your Big Day was terrific. Our spring count this year was a semi-Big Day. We could go anywhere in our Christmas Count circle. The total for all groups was 141. Like you, we had very few warblers. The big (and only) warbler wave this spring was on May 19.

One last comment, I really do know how to spell, I'm just a very bad typist.

Sincerely,

Tanya Bray