

ELLISON ORR

WAUKON, IOWA

April 5th, 1934.

Mr. O.P. Allert,
McGregor, Ia.

My Dear Sir:

Upon looking up my notes I find that I was in error as to the date, when I wrote you that "last June" I saw duck hawks about the high precipice about one mile above Waukon Junction on the Mississippi.

We were down there from May 16th to 19th, '33, inclusive, and on the morning of the 17th, on our way up Harper's Channel, saw the birds about the cliff as above, and again towards evening on our way back. We did not pass the place again during our stay.

Without looking it up I wrote June I suppose because we usually go down every year once or twice during that month.

We were down on the river again July 11th to 18th when we saw these birds about the same cliff on the 14th, the only time that we passed it.

We were also down from Oct. 16th to 22d and although we passed the cliff several times did not see them.

Mr. L.J. Barthell of Lansing, Ia., who has worked much with Government parties on surveys of land purchased for the Mississippi River Wild Life Preserve, and who was for a time a deputy game warden, tells me that a pair of duck hawks during the last (1933) and previous summers, frequented some cliffs about two miles above Lansing and that he believes that they nested there. He says that the local people call them "cliff eagles".

He also tells me that a number of times in recent years he has seen bald eagles about some cliffs near Lynxville on the Wisconsin side of the river, perhaps ten or twelve miles below Lansing. He said there could be no mistake as he distinctly saw the white heads and tails as they circled and while perched on trees. He thinks that they also nest there.

Formerly I used to see eagles along the river quite frequently during their spring migrations. Once I remember seeing five at one time. Jim Hancock said that they fed on the worthless fish thrown out on the shore when they "made a haul" with the seine.

The turkey buzzard also certainly nests along the Mississippi as we see them soaring over the bluffs and flood plains during the entire summer. Two of their nests have been found in small caves in the cliffs along the Upper Iowa River in the north-west part of Allamakee county.

I asked Mr. Barthell, from his knowledge, to give me an estimate of the number of pairs of ducks nesting along the river in front of Allamakee county, and he after some thought, said "a thousand".

I asked him if he did not mean the number of young ducks raised and he replied, "no", his "estimate was of the number of nesting pairs." He said that a large per cent of the nests and the very young ducks were destroyed by crows, minks, coons and water snakes.

A Mr. Worth who lives at Waukon Junction told me about two mallards nesting along a slough back of his barn. One day noticing one of the setting birds "making a great noise", he went down and "found a big water snake coiled up on the nest." He killed the snake but the nest was abandoned.

Mr. Barthell says that mallards and wood ducks nest on the river in about equal numbers, and of the blue-winged teal, a few scattering pairs. Few of the mallards hatched survive the first week of the open season, and in spite of the closed season on wood duck, a heavy toll is taken of them.

The cold fact is that the duck hunter, with his automatic or pump gun, almost without exception is a heartless game hog. Last fall a young fellow that I knew, who had already been down twice before, boastingly showed me eight mallards that he had got that morning. He had spied them on a small pond surrounded by reeds and trash - had sneaked up and opened fire on them with his automatic, on the water and as they "got up", and killed every one.

If you find anything in this or the former letter which you care to use you are very welcome to do so.

If not too much trouble to secure it I would appreciate a copy of Iowa Bird Life.

Very respectfully yours,

Ellison Orr