

June 2, 1982

Barbara L. Wilson
Hastings, Ia.

Spring, 1982

Weather, etc.

It has been an extraordinary spring. March + April involved alternating ~~at~~ periods of unseasonable warmth + unseasonable cold. Most was within the usual variable limits of spring weather.

One inch of snow April 5 was followed by record cold Apr. 6, however.

May has been cold and wet. Wet as in the 4th wettest May on record. 9" of rain in Omaha, compared to a record of 11.29" in 1883. Bellevue (Offut air force base) got 13", and some places got more than 15". There were only 2 days between May 4 - May 17 without rain, officially. I started keeping track then - only 7 ~~days~~ ^{through} days from May 4 - May 31 lacked rain here at the farm. ~~Only~~ Only 2 of those days were ~~consecutive~~ consecutive. Only 25% of the corn had been planted ^{by May 30} in S.W. Iowa. Anyway, that's the official estimate. It may be high. Many farmers had no corn planted through May 31. Grounds been wet since May 10.

Any pheasant chicks hatched in May doubtless died. Chilling + wet kill them on the Oregon ~~east~~ east + our weather has been more appropriate for that area than here. Ducklings (like Wood Ducklings on uncle found dead) + other precocial chicks may suffer also. Cavity nesters like Bluebirds, Chickadees, + House Sparrows have not lost young to weather or starvation, however, + anything capable of eating earthworms is probably doing well.

Water levels are very high - Willow Slough is overflowing.

Bobwhite populations are low after the severe winter. I would expect pheasant populations to be down, but can't detect such a drop if it has occurred.

Trees leafed out at the normal time, so ^{migrant} warblers were visible as they foraged.

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Wilson farm is in NE. Mills County.

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	#	date	comments
✓ Eared Grebe		Apr. 18 - May 31	Willow Slough maybe still present
✓ "	6	May 31	"
✓ " peak	16	May 19	"
Pied-billed Grebe	2	May 20	IPL Settling Ponds - 2 nests destroyed by rising water
"	First 1	March 15	DeSoto NWR - according to Rick Sodja
"		May 31	present + singing at Willow Slough
✓ White Pelican	145	Apr. 15	Lake Manawa
	5	May 1	Riverton, with Ross Silcock
✓ "	65	May 26	Willow Slough
✓ Double-crested Cormorant	first 1	Apr. 3	Willow Slough
"	peak 31	Apr. 12	Lake Manawa
✓ "	immatures 7 last 3	May 19	Willow Slough
Great Blue Heron	few!	Apr. 4 - May 1	3 sightings, Maximum 3 birds, S.W. Iowa
✓ Green Heron	1	Apr. 17	farm
"	1	May 15	"
"	1	May 19	"
"	3	May 17	Willow Slough
✓ Little Blue Heron	1	May 19	Willow Slough
<p>↳ all dark Heron a little bigger than the cattle Egret flying with it. Wings uniformly dark. Green Heron would be smaller than Cattle Egret, smaller, more compact. Great Blue would be much larger, have 2-toned wings.</p>			
✓ Black-crowned Night Heron	first 8	Apr. 15 Apr. 30	Lake Manawa - seen by Andy Saunders Willow Slough
Canada Goose	last 60	Apr. 16	Willow Slough
White fronted Goose	✓ 400	March 22	Willow Slough
	50+	March 26	"
	7	March 27	"
	7	Apr. 4	"
	230	Apr. 7	"
	7	Apr. 16	"
	7	Apr. 30	"
	3	May 1	Riverton
	7	May 1	Forney's Lake
	2	May 8	Willow Slough
	2	May 15	Willow Slough
✓ Snow Goose	1	May 31	willow slough
✓ Godwall	6	May 31	" still present
✓ Am. Wigeon	2	"	" " "

Cattle Egret
 May 9 NE Mills Co.
 May 13
 May 19
 Willow Slough

numerous

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Farm = Wilson farm, NE Mills County

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✓ Lesser Scaup	♂♀	May 31	Willow Slough, still present
✓ Oldsquaw	1	March 22	" " see documentation
Hooded Merganser	1	Mar. 30	Lake Manawa
" "	2	Apr. 9	" "
Red-breasted Merganser	18	Apr. 9	" "
✓ Turkey Vulture first	2	Mar. 29	N.W. Mills County
✓ Red-tailed Hawk		Mar. 13	Willow Slough
"	a distinctive very pale bird	Mar 25	"
"	(Krieger's, I suspect), at	Mar 27	"
"	the the NE part of the slough.	Apr. 10	"
✓ Swainson's Hawk	1	May 8.	South Central Pottawatomie County
	normal light phase adult.		
Marsh Hawk	2	Mar. 23	Willow Slough
	1	" 24	"
	1	" 25	"

Restrel	# of birds seen	/ 4 days of trips to Omaha (70 miles round trip)	# of trips
"	birds	dates	
"	3	March 9-12	4
"	✓ 15	March 15-18	4
"	3	March 29-April 1	4
"	7	Apr. 5-9 (no trip)	4
	2	Apr. 12-15	4
	0	Apr. 19-22	4
	0	Apr. 26-29	4
	0	May 3-6	4

before March, ~~3~~ 3 birds/4 trips was high number

no trip ~~on~~ Apr 7

usually birds counted while only going to town, # of birds/35 miles

Bald Eagle - 2
 immatures March
 13 at Willow
 Slough

✓ Bobwhite low all spring Farm
 May counts averaged 0.3 birds/count. The previous ~~count~~ low was 1.0 birds/count. I don't hear them much. Probably decreased due to weather.

✓ Turkey March 26 Farm
 fresh turkey feathers. Neighbors (Tom Axtell, Albert Pontow) report hearing gobbles. No local releases by individuals; these must be turkeys from the Glenwood release, expanding their range.

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spring 1982

	#	date		
Killdeer	4	March 13	farm	first seen
Woodcock	1	Apr. 16	"	
Ring-billed Gull	9	March 18	Lake Manawa	
	4	Apr. 1	" "	
	230	Apr. 9	" "	
	1	Apr. 12	" "	
✓ Babs Padelford reports seeing few of them, with a peak of (amazingly) about 230 at Lake Manawa Apr. 9.				
✓ Franklin's Gull	1	Mar. 22	Willow Slough	
	1	Apr. 1	Lake Manawa	
	1	Apr. 3	Willow Slough	
✓	11	Apr. 30	farm	
Black Tern		May 11	Willow Slough	first seen
✓ Caspian Tern	1	May 20	IPL Settling Ponds	
C. Nighthawk		May 27	Council Bluffs	first seen
✓ Chimney Swift		Apr. 15	" "	" "
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		None		
E. Kingbird	1	May 3	NE Mills County	first seen
✓ W. Kingbird	1	May 3	Fremont County - seen by Ross Silcock	
Great Crested Flycatcher		May 8	farm	first seen
E. Phoebe	1	Mar. 28	Mills County. Seen by Sandy + Jim Kovanda	

✓ I checked under 18 bridges in Anderson Township, Mills County, and found 10 this-year phoebe nests, 9 of them with eggs.

✓ (8 with eggs May 8). The last was the work of an incompetent bird, who was making 4 very broad ~~nests~~ nests on 4 braces under one bridge. All the really suitable bridges (low, with braces in the center, with woods on the creek) had phoebes.

There is concern that low, old, wooden bridges are being replaced by new concrete ones to the detriment of phoebes. If this is occurring, it's a very slow process; the Dept. of Transportation has very little money compared to the cost of updating old, weak bridges.

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Spring, 1982

	#	date		
Least Flycatcher		May 8	Farm	first seen - or heard
✓ numerous, or at least vocal, this year		May 28	"	last heard
✓ Alder Flycatcher	1	May 28	"	song heard
Eastern Pewee	1	May 13	"	first heard
✓ Olive-sided Flycatcher	1	May 15	"	
✓ "	1	May 31	"	

Horned Lark - from about Feb. 20 + on (maybe as early as Feb. 15) all the larks I saw on the trip to + from Omaha were singles + pairs, except one group of three in March. Does this mark the beginning of territoriality?

✓ Tree Swallow		Apr. 13	I. P. L. Settling ponds.	First.
"			Seen by Babs Padelford	
✓ Rough-winged Swallow		Apr. 13	IPL Settling Ponds.	First.
"			Seen by Babs Padelford.	
✓ "	2	Apr. 13	W. Mills County	
✓ Barn Swallow		Apr. 17	S. W. Iowa	First

low numbers in May on my bird censuses. Averaged 15.7, compared to a previous low of 22.3. May reflect slow migration, or a tendency to stay hidden + feed late in the day - its been cold. I feel it really does reflect a slow return this spring.

Blue Jays migrated ^{while} ~~while~~ I was busy, or were inconspicuous about it. A little movement noticed Apr. 12, 22, 30 on the farm.

Tufted Titmouse	none	Oct 1981 - May 1982	Farm	
Gray Catbird		May 8	Farm	first seen
Brown Thrasher		Apr. 15	S. W. Iowa	first seen by Babs Padel-
Hermit Thrush		"	" " " " " "	ford
✓ Swainson's Thrush		Apr. 18	farm	first seen
"		May 23	farm	last seen

Wood Thrush singing Willow Slough will probably breed

F. Bluebirds 31 boxes up. 15 nests. 3 have fledged a total of 16 young. 7 have failed, all due to predation (usually by Fox Snake). 5 one in progress now.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	Apr. 30	Willow Slough	
Golden-crown Kinglet	none			

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Spring, 1982

Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1 Apr. 16 farm
" 1 Apr. 18 "
" 1 May 15 "

✓ Northern Shrike 1 March 23 Willow Slough.

Bill moderately long but hard to tell. Backlighted in mid morning. Mask outlined above with white before the eye.

An article by Lawrence G. Balch in Birding 11: 9-11

Says conspicuous white in the lores is a characteristic of Northern Shrike. If so, this probably was. Wish I'd seen it in better conditions.

Loggerhead Shrikes - several locations of repeated sightings (ie, nesting pairs). Numbers seem stable to higher this year, probably higher.

Cedar Waxwing May 16-29 small groups on farm

Starling May 26 NE Mills County juveniles seen

Belted Vireo Willow Slough - ^{resident} present again

Warbling Vireo May 3 Council Bluffs first seen

Black+White Warbler May 5 Lake Manawa. Seen by U.N.O.

ornithology class with Dr. Roger Sharpe

✓ Orange-crowned Warbler Apr. 15 S.W. Iowa - seen by Babs Padelford

Nashville Warbler May 8 farm

✓ Northern Parula Apr. 15 SW Iowa or Bellevue, Nebr.
seen by Babs Padelford

" 1 May 15 farm.

✓ Yellow Warbler May 1 Riverton, with Ross Silcock. First.

Magnolia Warbler 1 May 11 farm

" 2 May 15 "

Yellow-rumped Warbler Apr. 15 Lake Manawa. Seen by Andy Saunders

" May 15 farm

Black-throated Green Warbler 1 May 10 "

" 1 May 15 "

Blackburnian Warbler 1 May 11 " beautiful ♂!

Chestnut-sided Warbler 1 May 13 "

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	#	Date	
✓ Blackpoll Warbler	2	Apr. 22, 23	Emerson, Iowa - according to Ed Greenwood, who saw them.
Louisiana Water Thrush		May 1	Waubesaide Park. Resident again
Yellowthroat		May 1	Riverton, with Ross Silcock. First
Wilson's Warbler	1	May 11	Willow Slough
"	3	May 17	Farm
Redstart		May 8	Willow Slough. Resident again
Baboblink		May 11	Farm first seen
Orchard Oriole		May 5	Lake Manawa. Seen by U. N. O. ornithology class with Dr. Sharpe.
N. Oriole.		May 8	Farm first seen
Rusty Blackbird		March 22	Farm " "
" "		Apr. 12	" last seen
✓ Brewer's Blackbird	2	March 26	" dark -eyed ♀ accompanied by a ♂. No rusties present.
Brown-headed Cowbird		March 13	Farm. first notice
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		May 1	Riverton, with Ross Silcock first seen
✓ Blue Grosbeak	1	May 8	NE Mills County
Indigo Bunting		May 11	Willow Slough. first seen.
Dickcissel	1	May 4	Farm " "
✓ Pine Siskin	1	May 15	NE Mills County. Documented Also, birds were seen through April 27 at U. N. O.'s campus in Omaha. Song, carried nest material, but no nest found. Last year's nest was found March 14 + deserted w/ mid April. No eggs
Goldfinch			numerous + conspicuous this spring. NE Mills County
Savannah Sparrow		April 17	Farm
"		May 1	Riverton - seen by Ross Silcock
✓ Grasshopper Sparrow		Apr. 24	Farm first heard
Vesper Sparrow		Apr. 3	" " " + seen
Lark Sparrow		Apr. 30	" first seen
Juncos		Apr. 17	" last seen
Tree Sparrow		Apr. 12	" " "

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- ✓ Chipping Sparrow April 17 farm first heard
 - ✓ Field Sparrow April 4 " first seen
 - ✓ Harris Sparrow May 13 " last seen
- wintened on farm, as usual.

White-crowned Sparrow May 5-13 farm
White throated Sparrow Apr. 16 - May 1 farm
Fox Sparrow 4 Apr. 3 Willow Slough
" 2 Apr. 4 " "
" 1 Apr. 16 " "
Lincoln Sparrow Apr. 16 - May 13 farm
Swamp Sparrow 1 Apr. 17 farm
" 1 May 1 S. W. Lowe
" 1 May 19 farm

out of place

- ✓ Long-billed Dowitcher 3 May 1 Riverton, with Ross Silcock
Marks on breast w/ front of wings wider than long. Rich cinnamon
color extends to or onto under tail coverts.
- ✓ Dunlin Apr. 13 Lake Manawa - Dr. Sharpe + class

People cited

Ross Silcock Malvern, La.

Babs Padelford, Bellevue, Nebr.

Andy Saunders, Naturalist at Fontenelle Forest, Bellevue, Nebr.

Ed Greenwood, Emerson, La.

~~Rick~~ Rick Sodja, DeSoto Bend NWR

Dr. Roger Sharpe, University of Nebraska at Omaha (U.N.O.)
+ his ornithology class

Tom Axtell, Silver City, La.

Albert Pontow, Hastings, La.

IPL settling ponds = Iowa Power + light settling ponds south of
Council Bluffs.

June 9, 1982

Mr. Kent,

The Alder Flycatcher sang "fee-bee-ur"; the last syllable ~~is~~ slurring down + very short. I have tracked the song to Empidonax Flycatchers before, but didn't this year since I was doing a census. I hear this each year in late May, only a few birds.

I have no description of the April 18 Swainson's Thrush, so we'd better drop it. Without a description I don't know if it could have been a Hermit Thrush whose red tail I didn't see, + which didn't jerk its tail. Sorry.

The next Swainson's Thrush I saw — or perhaps the first one — was May 9.

An incredible number of Bluebirds are nesting around here! Really great to see so many.

It will be good to know what dates birds are expected on. I just expect most brown thrushes to be Swainson's, + don't easily recognize when they're early + late. I should go through my old notes + find out.

Have a good summer.

— Barb Wilson.