

July 31, 1981

Rt 1 Box 41

Hostings, Ia

8/3

WILSON

Dr Kent,

I apparently made a mistake in my spring report. The "Acadian" Flycatchers* should be Alders. I confuse the names of these similar birds. I'm sorry.

The dropping water levels killed all the fish in Willow Slough June 1 or 2. All the water was gone June 10. The rains haven't reflooded it yet.

June + half of July were warm + drier than average. From July 15 to July 30 there were not two consecutive days without rain. July 27 Omaha recorded a record low maximum temperature of 63°F, and Barn Swallows were pursuing their prey below ~~to~~ the tops of the ~~grass~~ Bromegrass, since the insects wouldn't fly.

The censuses referred to in the report are simple transects around the Wilson farm. When such counts are done by a single observer, they tend to be extremely variable. This inter-count variation may obscure real changes, or make spurious changes appear. Most of the species I've summarized so far haven't changed much - counts go up + down, but without any pattern. The few species that seem to have changed somehow are mentioned in the report, + I include summaries of the counts (which you may feel free to file in the waste basket) to explain why I'm reporting what I am.

Hope you had a good trip!

- Barb Wilson.

Barbara Wilson
June, July 1981

other observers:
Ross Silcock
Howard Wilson

- | | # | date | Place |
|----------------------|----------|---|---|
| ✓ Great Blue Heron | 5 | June 25 | Riverton, w/Ross Silcock |
| " | 1 | July 27 | Wilson farm, NE Mills Co. |
| " | 3 | July 30 | " |
| Green Heron | resident | | Willow Slough |
| " | " | | Wilson farm, NE Mills Co. |
| ✓ Cattle Egret | 1 | June 24 | Howard Wilson saw one in his farm in N.E. Mills County. He commented on the gold diamond in the center of the white bird's breast + the long toes. The long toes really impressed him. The bird visited Howard's cattle herd, then followed the tractor all over the farm, running + trotting but never flying. Unfortunately, this tractor was spraying field edges for grasshoppers. The egret was not seen in the area again after it joined a neighbor's cowherd that afternoon. There is some question about its survival if it ate much flushed ^{flushed} by the tractor. |
| ✓ Cattle Egret | 1 | July 13 | Wilson farm, NE Mills County |
| Night Heron | 1 | June 25 | Flying over bluffs north of Waubonsia after sunset. w/Ross Silcock. The birds <u>must</u> be breeding there. Where? |
| ✓ Red-tailed Hawk | 2 | resident resident at Wilson farm, NE Mills County, probably nesting. ^{one} Flying immature appeared July 27, to the distress of the resident crows + Blue Jays. | |
| American Kestrel | | | - For the third year in a row, a pair hung around an abandoned farmstead in northeast Mills County, then became inconspicuous, then became several Kestrels in July. In other words, they probably bred at an undiscovered nest site there. 4 Kestrels there July 26. |
| ✓ Solitary Sandpiper | 1 | July 13 | Wilson farm, NE Mills Co. |
| ✓ Am. Woodcock | 1 | June 26 | Willow Slough. |

these true locations are about 2.5 miles apart

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Woodcock - I can see why people don't find woodcock. This bird's habitat was a mature flood-plain cottonwood forest with an understory of mulberry, Box elder, + poison ~~ivy~~ ivy, + a ground cover dominated by broad-leaved nettles + ticks.

Black-billed Cuckoo - nested on Wilson farm NE Mills County, fledging 2 young. ^{AS ~~was~~ issued, 'yellow-billed' nested here; they're the common ones.}

Great Horned Owl 1 June 19 Shenandoah, Ia. Caught in trap in chicken yard it was raiding, taken to Dan Var land at Iowa Western Community College at Clarinda. (He's a rehabilitator).

- ✓ Chuck-wills-widow 3+ June 25 North of Waubonsie in Bluffs. w/Ross Silcock ^{also whippoorwill}
- ✓ Willow Flycatcher resident Willow Slough
" " Wilson farm, NE Mills Co

It's the first time in 5 years the birds have remained at the farm. One pair.

Red-headed Woodpecker. Census results show the birds present on farm in normal numbers in June, but, for the first time in 4 years, there is ~~no~~ no increase in July. See extra sheet, I have seen juveniles. ^{I have also collected 4 road killed adults in the past month.}

Tree Swallow June 25 Riverton, w/Ross Silcock
Crow

a neighbor is worried about a low population in S.W. Iowa. I don't see the problem, but my opinion may be biased as the species breeds on the farm + so may be less common than it seems to me.
Is there a problem?

Wood Thrush resident Willow Slough
Loggerhead Shrike present at several scattered locations in the county. Not abundant, but as

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common as to ~~ever~~ ever been.

One nest fledged 5 young.

Bell's Vireo resident at Willow Slough, though harder to find than usual.

Warbling Vireo. Censuses on the farm (see extra sheet) suggest a decline in this species. No obvious habitat change here explains it. The extreme variability of transect counts done by a single person make the results open to question, but Babs Padelford is disturbed by an apparent scarcity of the species in southeast ~~NE~~ Nebraska + at Site 11 near Omaha. Do other observers feel there is a problem?

Yellow Warbler resident Willow Slough
Redstart " " Numbers may be down.

House Sparrow - relatives have commented on the large number of House Sparrows. Census ~~results~~ results confirm it. It appears to be the result of excellent ^{early} nesting success.

~~For~~ ^{For} example, there was a flock of 40 juveniles June 4 on the farm. Hopefully, they'll die in the winter.

Bobolink June 4 ♂'s territorial at Willow Slough
" 8 " in Smartweed of dry lake
" 10 " lake

Brown-headed Cowbird 80, molting July 28 Wilson Farm, NE Mills Co. Cardinal. High cowbird numbers make one ask at whose expense the success has occurred. Cardinal numbers failed to increase in July this year. Small change, though.

Blue Grosbeak ♂♀ June 8 Willow Slough.

Dickcissel 1. abundant at Willow Slough

2. common - more so than usual - at the farm.

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High numbers of Dickcissels probably reflect localized, temporary changes in ~~the~~ habitats. The slough is dry + the birds are nesting all over it. All but one cultivated field on my census route are in soybeans (not corn) or oats, the preferred crops of Dickcissels. This will change next year. The birds remain common in the county as a whole, as well.

✓ Lark Sparrow nest with 4 nearly-fledged young in a soybean field July 9. Wilson farm, NE Mills Co. Also, 11 birds, mainly streaked juveniles, near there July 30. That's a lot of Lark Sparrows.

Also, parent + fledgling in Fremont County, June ~~24~~ 25.

Birds I missed the first time.

✓ Pied-billed Grebe - 7 nests at Iowa Power + Light Settling ponds in Pottawatomie County, south of Council Bluffs, in July.

Mallard - 3 adults there July 7

Blue-winged Teal - ♀ + 1 brood there July 7

✓ Wood Duck - 76 there July 7, including at least 3 ♀'s w/broods + 13 other young.

✓ Purple Martin - 206 July 20 Lake Manawa
All in one tree. They breed nearby.

Sedge Wren 1 July 24 Willow Slough. Sings.

Catbird abundant June "
common July "

especially common in willows south of the south dike, where catbird songs make it difficult to detect any other songs.

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Eastern Bluebirds 13 Known nesting attempts on farm + nearby in N.E. Mills County. At least 5 pairs, with at least 6 ♀'s as one was killed in June. 9 boxes are available to these birds + they've also used 2 fence posts.

Results:

Success: 4 broods, totalling 18 young

Failures: 5 clutches, all by predation. 3 clutches eaten by Snakes (~~one~~ and Fox Snake is the most common egg-eater on the farm). 1 ~~clutch~~ failed when a bird or mammal ate the ♀, leaving a pile of plucked feathers beside the box. Later a snake ate the eggs. Predator of the 5th is unknown.

Ungoing: 3 broods, totalling 8 young.

However, the hole of one box is being enlarged by a Red-headed Woodpecker, who may eat the young when it can reach them.

Unknown - 1

One pair has fledged 2 broods (8 young) + is trying for a 3rd (2 young). No other pair has more than 1 surviving brood.

As you can see, I'm out of report forms.

they've used 6 of the boxes

BL Wilson
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SPECIES Warbling Vireo

| | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| January | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| February | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| March | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| April | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| May | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 1.6 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 3.3 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | |
| range | | 0-5 | 0-8 | 4-6 | 1-6 | | |
| June | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 5.2 | 3.7 | 2.0 | 1.0 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| range | | 3-7 | 3-4 | 1-4 | 0-3 | | |
| July | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 2.3 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 0.4 | | |
| n | | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 | | |
| range | | 0-3 | 0-3 | 0-2 | 0-1 | | |
| August | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0 | | | |
| n | | 8 | 3 | 2 | | | |
| range | | 0-6 | 0-1 | 0 | | | |
| September | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0 | | | |
| n | | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| range | | 0-3 | 0-3 | 0 | | | |
| October | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| November | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |
| December | | | | | | | |
| Average | | | | | | | |
| n | | | | | | | |
| range | | | | | | | |

Note trend to lower numbers in June + July
During all 4 years.

BL Wilson
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SPECIES Red-headed Woodpecker

| | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|------|------|
| January | mean # of birds of this kind | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 2.2 | 3 | 0 | | |
| n | | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 | | |
| range | | 0 | 1-4 | 1-6 | 0 | | |
| February | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 2.7 | 3 | 0 | | |
| n | | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | |
| range | | 0 | 0-1 | 3 | 0 | | |
| March | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 0.3 | | |
| n | | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | | |
| range | | 0 | 1-4 | 2-7 | 0-1 | | |
| April | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 4.7 | 13.5 | 0 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | | |
| range | | 0 | 2-8 | 12-15 | 0 | | |
| May | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 12.4 | 9.7 | 8.0 | 10.0 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | |
| range | | 6-21 | 4-17 | 6-8/10 | 7-15 | | |
| June | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 13.7 | 8.3 | 11.2 | 8.4 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| range | | 6-19 | 5-13 | 9-14 | 5-12 | | |
| July | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 16.7 | 14.0 | 15.0 | 7.4 | | |
| n | | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 | | |
| range | | 12-21 | 11-22 | 13-17 | 5-11 | | |
| August | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 21.0 | 23.0 | 19.7 | 26.0 | | |
| n | | 6 | 8 | 3 | 2 | | |
| range | | 14-24 | 15-32 | 15-24 | 25-27 | | |
| September | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 10.5 | 18.4 | 12.2 | 7.0 | | |
| n | | 3 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | |
| range | | 1-31 | 10-24 | 6-17 | 3-15 | | |
| October | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0.1 | 1.6 | 4.0 | 1.0 | | |
| n | | 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | | |
| range | | 0-1 | 0-3 | 3-5 | 0-2 | | |
| November | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 1.6 | 5 | 0 | | |
| n | | 8 | 8 | 2 | 3 | | |
| range | | 0 | 0-3 | 5 | 0 | | |
| December | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 0 | 2.0 | 6 | 0 | | |
| n | | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | | |
| range | | 0 | 1-3 | 6 | 0 | | |

Note trend for populations to increase steadily from June → July → August, a trend violated, so far, in 1981. There are juveniles in July, so some adults have left or died or become uncountable.

In winter (1980-1981) two relatives made an effort to clear out some of the "unsightly" dead trees, & were more successful than usual.

B.L. Wilson
Summer 1981

SPECIES House Sparrow

| | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|-----------|---------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|
| January | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 196 3 | 257 | 176 | 167 | | |
| n | | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | | |
| range | | 140-262 | 201-348 | 163-188 | 145-203 | | |
| February | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 128 | 129 | 196 | 140 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | |
| range | | 146-235 | 124-247 | 196 | 140 | | |
| March | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 128 | 138 | 140 | 174 | | |
| n | | 7 | 4 | 3 | 4 | | |
| range | | 110-176 | 122-147 | 123-152 | 147-196 | | |
| April | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 94 | 159 | 140 | 125 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | | |
| range | | 81-103 | 130-183 | 120-174 | 125 | | |
| May | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 91 | 129 | 116 | 128 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | |
| range | | 77-104 | 118-157 | 113-120 | 96-156 | | |
| June | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 89 | 127 | 132 | 165 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| range | | 78-98 | 94-169 | 116-151 | 150-194 | | |
| July | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 118 | 113 | 160 | 184 | | |
| n | | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 | | |
| range | | 106-131 | 102-136 | 145-175 | 121-244 | | |
| August | | | | | | | |
| Average # | 96 | 147 | 111 | 154 | | | |
| n | 5 | 8 | 3 | 2 | | | |
| range | 31-103 | 114-189 | 95-125 | 143-165 | | | |
| September | | | | | | | |
| Average # | 66 | 168 | 103 | 121 | | | |
| n | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| range | 36-92 | 92-215 | 68-127 | 113-138 | | | |
| October | | | | | | | |
| Average | 106 | 88 | 122 | 179 | | | |
| n | 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | | | |
| range | 78-135 | 52-115 | 71-153 | 117-235 | | | |
| November | | | | | | | |
| Average | 108 | 156 | 176 | 171 | | | |
| n | 8 | 8 | 2 | 3 | | | |
| range | 77-144 | 136-187 | 165-188 | 148-186 | | | |
| December | | | | | | | |
| Average | 153 | | 217 | 161 | | | |
| n | 4 | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| range | 107-179 | | 217 | 161 | | | |

high numbers.
flocks of young birds even in June

* first few counts not comparable to others

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Summer 1981

SPECIES Cardinal

| | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|-----------|------|-------|--------------------|------|-------|------|------|
| January | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 3.8 | 8.5 | 3.7 | 5.3 | | |
| n | | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | | |
| range | | 2-7 | 6-13 | 2-5 | 4-6 | | |
| February | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 11.0 | 6.0 | 1.0 | 7.0 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | |
| range | | 5-22 | 2-12 | 1 | 7 | | |
| March | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 12.8 | 10.8 | 11.0 | 12.0 | | |
| n | | 7 | 4 | 3 | 4 | | |
| range | | 6-17 | 5-16 | 9-13 | 11-14 | | |
| April | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 11.5 | 13 11.3 | 10.8 | 9.0 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | | |
| range | | 7-15 | 10-13 | 8-14 | 9 | | |
| May | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 12.6 | 8.0 | 6.5 | 7.0 | | |
| n | | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | |
| range | | 8-19 | 6-9 | 6-7 | 6-8 | | |
| June | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 10.3 | 10.7 | 7.8 | 7.8 | | |
| n | | 6 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| range | | 6-12 | 8-13 | 7-8 | 4-11 | | |
| July | | | | | | | |
| Average | | 13.6 | 9.2 | 9.0 | 6.2 | | |
| n | | 7 | 5 | 2 | 5 | | |
| range | | 12-16 | 6-11 | 7-11 | 5-7 | | |
| August | | | | | | | |
| Average | 7.7 | 8.7 | 9.3 | 6.0 | | | |
| n | 6 | 8 | 3 | 2 | | | |
| range | 4-11 | 6-11 | 9-10 | 5-7 | | | |
| September | | | | | | | |
| Average | 1.9 | 3.6 | 4.2 | 4.7 | | | |
| n | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| range | 0-6 | 2-6 | 3-8 | 1-9 | | | |
| October | | | | | | | |
| Average | 3.0 | 5.8 | 1.0 | 8.4 | | | |
| n | 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | | | |
| range | 1-6 | 2-12 | 0-2 | 6-12 | | | |
| November | | | | | | | |
| Average | 3.0 | 2.4 | 4.5 | 4.3 | | | |
| n | 8 | 8 | 2 | 3 | | | |
| range | 1-5 | 0-5 | 2-7 | 2-8 | | | |
| December | | | | | | | |
| Average | 4.8 | 4.2 | 5.0 | 4.0 | | | |
| n | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| range | 3-7 | 1-8 | 5 | 4 | | | |

July 1981 is low but perhaps not too much so,