

Aug 2, 1984

(1)

Dear Dr. Dinsmore

The summer has been interesting. June was wet, with flooding on the Missouri through the middle of June. Then things became very dry. By now the late-planted soybeans, which have shallow roots, are under stress, but ~~at~~ the other plants are doing well. There is abundant subsoil moisture - and we're ~~so~~ lucky it is now subsoil rather than on soil moisture.

Abundant water has led to abundant sightings of water-loving birds, and to some significant breeding records. - Herons, Least Tern.

Bluebirds seem to reflect the early spring weather. It was mild in late February, the birds came back, + winter settled in in March. Robin + Killdeer died, probably the sooner Bluebirds too.

Overall, the resilient birds are about normal.
Have fun editing the summer report.

- Barb Wilson

When the plovers + terns are done breeding at DPL in Council Bluffs, I'll write a little article on them.

Barbara L. Wilson
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Summer 1984
Iowa

DPL Settling Ponds are just
south of Council Bluffs,
Pottawatomie County (2)
Farm = Wilson Farm, NE
Mills County
DPS = Iowa Public Service

Herons - Ross Silcock says he's writing his report tonight.
If you don't hear from him, call! First breeding record of Cattle
Egret. First heronry on the Missouri in many years (decades?).
He's got great stuff.

Great Blue Heron	Aug. 1	68	} Omaha to Sioux City on the Missouri River Flood plain of the Missouri, Fremont County. All in 1 section, very close to Nebraska City. Seen with Babs Padelford
" " "	July 10	70	
Great Egret	July 10	66	
Little Blue Heron	July 10	82	

This concentration is 30 miles from the Folsom Lake heronry,
has different proportions of species, + is stable. These are
different birds from the Folsom Lake (Mills County) ones.

Cattle Egret July 11 80 Flooded fields, Mills County, in the
floodplain of the Missouri, near Bellevue, Nebr. No doubt part
of the Folsom Lake population

Gr. White Fronted Goose July 27 1 DPL Settling Ponds

Canada Goose June 29 4 farm

Carl Priebe (District Biologist for the ICC) says he's
seen free-flying canadases in Fremont County this spring +
summer, up to 16. Source a question

Snow Goose July 12 1 Farm

" " July 27 1 DPL Settling Ponds

Wood Duck July 26 Farm

♀ hatched 8 of 9 eggs in one of my boxes. This seems a
late date. (She had 2 eggs June 28)

Gadwall July 31 5 Fremont County, near heron's

Hooded Merganser June 15 1♀ DPS ash Lagoons, Sioux City

Common Merganser Aug 1 1 eclipse ♂ Missouri River North of Omaha

Bobwhite - Populations seemed low except in a few places.
Carl Priebe says they survived the winter well in areas with
good cover, but were wiped out elsewhere.

Piping Plover June 15 3 pairs - ~~1~~ DPS ash lagoons, Sioux City
2 pairs have 3 young each. The third pair was driving off a
Killdeer, + so must have young, but I didn't see them.

This represents a second location for the Piping
Plover in Iowa.

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Summer 1984
Iowa

Piping Plover

DPL Settling ponds

Summary: there were 6 nests by 4 pairs. 2 failed.

Nest 1: Birds present by late April, incubating by May 16.

Nest failed ~~by~~ in ^{late May} ~~early June~~ + ♀ disappeared. ♂ courted enthusiastically, + finally a replacement nest was built (Nest 4)

Nest 2: Adult on nest by May 25. It too failed in Early June, but was replaced ~~more~~ with less fuss. (Nest 5)

Nest 3: Adult incubating, eggs seen May 25. Hatched 4 young by June 8. These survived to fledge.

Nest 4: Incubation ^{seen early June} ~~June 13~~. Young probably hatched July 5. 3 hatched. One eventually disappeared.

Nest 5: Incubation by June 13. Hatched July 5 (♀ had eggs + a chick that wanted to wander, + seemed upset by this).

Probably 3 survived

Nest 6: Unlike the others, ~~it~~ this nest was in the north lagoon.

Adult [♀] seen incubating July 10 - July 19, and July 27 the ♀ gave alarm calls when I got near + was very upset.

No eggs; must have hatched a brood that froze when she gave alarm calls.

The ~~daily~~ sightings are included on another page.

L. Yellowlegs	July 10	3	Fremont County, near herons
Pectoral Sandpiper	July 10	1	" "
Stilt Sandpiper	July 10	15	" "
Upland Sandpiper	July 5	1	Mills County
Caspian Tern	June 29	1	DPL Settling Ponds
Forster's Tern	July 19	2	" " "
Least Tern			" " "

Seen with Bob Paddock

Summary: I believe this is the first nesting in Iowa since 1974.

Individuals + pairs were seen ~~in~~ from May 25 into early June, feeding + occasionally exchanging fish. ~~2~~

June 13 - 8+ adults. Not on nests, but in future colony.

Courtship

June 19 14+ terns. Maybe 8 on nests. Courtship, copulation

~~July 5 - 6~~ or Maximum of 16 adults seen (July 10)

~~June 25, 29: 5 or 6 on nests. at least~~

~~July 5 - 4+ terns, 10 nests~~

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Summer 1984
Iowa

Farm: Wilson Farm,
NE Mills County

(4)

Least Tern There were at least 9 nests finally, and maybe 10. I first saw chicks July 17, most still in the nest with an adult attending.

July 27: Only 1 adult is still on a nest; it has a new chick. The other chicks have walked west, to an area with some bit of shade, + parents one with them

July 28: Ross sees 2 ~~chicks~~ chicks + ~~1~~ 1 adult in the South lagoon. They had to fly to get there, + look capable of flight, but one also fluffy, partly down-covered.

(The colony was in the north lagoon, which is closed to the public).

Black Tern: occasional ~~individuals~~ individuals or small groups feed at DPL settling ponds.

Great Horned Owl July 11 1 Mills County.

This adult bird landed in an open molasses lick tank for cattle. The farmer (Henry Schnoor) lifted it out with a pitch fork. The bird was incapable of flight, as all of its feathers were stuck together. It got repeated baths at the raptor center in Leicesters, + was returned + released July 16, beautiful again but still with a faint scent of molasses.

C. Nighthawk June 4-18 2 Form.

We see Nighthawks only in migration. Never in summer. For several days, however, these fed over the farm.

Whip-poor-will - May-Aug 3 1 Form. For the first time in ~~the~~ 7 years I've lived here, a Whip-poor-will sang by our house all summer.

Western Kingbird: As part of the Piping Plover/Least Tern Search, I spent a lot of time driving the Missouri River flats from Omaha to Sioux City. In 260.7 miles on June 2, 14, 15, + 16, I saw 25 Eastern Kingbirds + 2 western Kingbirds. This is 0.096 Easterns/mile and 0.008 Westerns. (Pairs together were counted as one bird, as they are not independent events).

Eastern Bluebird - scarce, lowest # in my boxes since I've had over 30 boxes

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Summer 1984
Iowa

Farm = Wilson farm,
NE Mills County

(5)

Sedge Wren July 28 4 Weavin Prairie, Mills
County, Iowa. None seen ~~up~~ up through July 18.

Cedar Waxwing June 3^{and} 8-11 ~~at~~ farm. For the second year
in a row, Waxwings were on the farm in June.

Blue Grosbeak 13 JPL Settling Ponds

Dickcissel Populations one as good as ever at the farm +
on Weavin Prairie, the only places I census them.

House Sparrow - the dependence of House Sparrows on livestock
operations is shown by the following data. there were 3 hog
operations + 2 cow herds on my census route in 1977. In
1982 we began to phase out our hog operation, + finished about
mid winter. ⁽¹⁹⁸²⁻¹⁹⁸³⁾ The longest hog operation wound down over a year +
ended in fall of 1983. One cow herd also left in fall 1983.

Average # of House Sparrows on censuses on our farm

#	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
June	89	127	132	165	143	88	81
July	118	113	160	184	121	86	68

Addition sightings

Least Tern July 10

1 Fremont County

" " Aug 1
to Sioux City.

3 adults Missouri River, Omaha

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Summer 1984
Iowa

DPL: ~~South~~ Ash Lagoons at
the power plant just south of
Council Bluffs, Pottawatomie
County, Iowa

Piping Plover Sightings at DPL

Observer	date	sightings - south lagoon unless noted otherwise
BLW	April 26	4 5 adults
WRS, FM	Apr. 26	3 adults; 2 of them copulate
TB	May 3	6 adults.
BLW	May 8	2 adults
WRS, THX	May 16	1 adult on nest # 1
BJR	May 17	4 5 adults, probably with nests
BLW	May 17	2 adults, 1 on nest # 2 or 3
BJR	May 20	6 adults
TB, BP	May 24	1 adult
BLW, TB	May 25	Nest 1: ♂, ♀, 3 ⁺ eggs. Nest 2: adult on Nest 3: ♂, ♀, 2 ⁺ eggs
BLW, TB	May 28	Total 10 adults, including birds on each of the 3 nests
BLW	May 29	adults on nests 2+3
BLW	May 30	adults on nests 2 or 3 and 4
AS	June 5+6	" " " " " " total 4-6 adults
TB, BP	June 6	" " " " " " and 4. Total 6 adults
BLW	June 8	3 adults, 4 tiny chicks
BLW	June 13	adults on nests 4, 5. total 4 adults, 2 chicks. 1 adult in north lagoon
BLW	June 19	adults on nests 4+5. (eggs on nests 4). total 4 chicks
WRS, FM	June 21	5 adults, 4 chicks. adult on nest 4
LP, BP	June 22	9 plovers
BLW	June 25	adults on nests 4+5. Total 3 adults, 3 immatures
BLW	June 29	adults on nests 4+5. Total 5 adults, 4 immatures
LP, BP	July 1	9 plovers
LP, BP	July 4	6 adults
TB, BP	July 5	4 adults. 2 tiny young from nest 4
BLW	July 5	nest 4: adult, 3 chicks. Nest 5: Adult, 1 chick, eggs total 4 adults, 1 large immature, 4 chicks North lagoon: 2 adults, 2 large immature
BLW	July 10	Nest 4: 2 chicks, 1 adult. Nest 5: 4 immature. Total 6 adults North lagoon: 3 adult, 1 large immature. Nest 6: adult on
BLW	July 17	1 adult, 6 chicks. North lagoon: adult on nest 6
BLW	July 19	2 adults, 6 chicks " " " " " "
TB, BP	July 26	8 immatures

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Summer 1984
Iowa

Piping plovers

BLW	July 27	6 immatures	Nest 6: 7 genis alarm calls
WRS	July 28	1 adult, 4 young	

Observers

TB	Tonya Bray
FM	Francis Moore
BP	Babs Padelford
LP	Loren Padelford
BJR	BJ Rose
AS	Andy Saunders
WRS	W Ross Silcock
BLW	B Barbara L Wilson