

Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa 51540  
2 June 1985

Dear Tom,

This spring season has been odd. Not spectacularly odd, just quietly not-quite normal.

Spring began early + has been mild, with little rain. Farmers had corn planting essentially finished by mid-May + most are done with soybeans by now. It's been so dry that Mills County is in a "designated drought disaster area." Farmers are chuckling all the way to the ASCS office to sign up to cut their diverted acres for hay. You see, subsoil moisture is fine + we've had some nice rains that all soaked in. Not much rain, but plenty to get the crops off to a great start. Droughts like this we should have every year or two.

The winds have been strong from the south a lot. This has led to herbicide drift. It's also caused impressive dust storms. One ~~on~~ May 11 along the Nishnabotna lowered visibility below 100 yards + pushed dust into <sup>houses</sup> through closed doors + windows. My aunt Delia Wilson says she hasn't seen anything like it since the 30's. There was significant dust a few other days too, both before May 11 and after, including May 30.

People just comment on how interesting the dust is but don't seem worried. I think this is something to worry about.

Some areas flooded in S.W. Iowa last year aren't growing crops this year. Oh, a lot is planted + growing, but some was planted + the plants died. Cause unknown - dry soil? herbicide carryover? contamination from flood waters? other?

Plants leafed out + flowered early. We saw very few warblers, though the diversity of unidentifiable song suggests the warbler migration was on time + in good numbers. Another consequence is that I list only 1 "Empidonax sp." all spring - if they didn't sing I didn't see them. Many butterflies were early.

It seems that arrivals of species with variable migration times were early. Most others were on time, + a few were early.

Some winter migrants left quite promptly, but others, especially ~~Red Crossbill~~ Pine Siskin + Red crossbill, lingered. The former is known to have nested in Omaha this spring, + the latter one still coming to a feeder there.

Water level is low in Willow Slough. It may not go dry but Coots + Grebes can't nest right now.

There are lingering waterfowl birds of several species, + most of these are juveniles or in odd plumage, even winter plumage. Species include: White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, \*Ring-necked Duck, \*Red-breasted Merganser, Am. Wigeon, \*L. Scaup, \*Eared Grebe, \*Great Blue Heron, \*Franklin's Gull, \*Herring Gull.

\* = in poor plumage.

The form about arrival + departure dates of migrants is useful, but leaves inadequate room for comment. You probably like that. Why departure dates for Willow Flycatcher, Phoebe, + Martin?

Does not the request for all sightings of Eared Grebe (more common here) but not Horned Grebe (less common) ~~to~~ reveal an Eastern Iowa Bias?

Your "max. No./day by county" is peculiar. Why no dates ????. What's Lark Sparrow doing on the list? It's uncommon, but you can find as many in a county as you care to waste time looking for.

See additional comments under "Srike" and "Bluebird".

I did a big day May 16. My 116 will win no prizes, but it was fun, I supposed I'd hate to receive my reports, but I really have fun writing them.

Have a good summer.

- Bob Wilson

Season: Spring Year: 1985

Name and address (print or type) Barbara L. Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa

Other observers (name, city):

Carl Priebe, Sidney

Use first few lines to give weather and habitat conditions. Use line(s) below species data to give additional details, if needed. Mail to: T. H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City IA 52240 by 1 Mar, 1 Jun, 1 Aug, or 1 Dec.

use initials of obsv. on species line

| SPECIES                    | NO.                    | DATE             | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS   |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--|
| Pied-billed Grebe          | 1                      | May 8            | Willow Slough, Mills County first  |
| "                          | 23                     | Apr. 7           | " peak   |
| Eared Grebe                | 1                      | Apr. 14          | "  |
| "                          | 4                      | Apr. 20          | "  |
| "                          | 2                      | Apr. 22          | "  |
| "                          | 8                      | May 15           | "  |
| "                          | 2                      | May 16           | "  |
| "                          | 1                      | May 27           | "  |
| "                          | 1                      | May 29           | "  |
| "                          | 2                      | May 31           | dPL Settling Ponds - Council Bluffs  |
| Cattle Egret - no evidence |                        |                  | that this or any other species <sup>of heron</sup> is nesting  |
| White-fronted Goose        | 1                      | May 15-27        | Willow Slough with a few Snow Geese  |
| Canada Goose               | 7                      | May 29           | " Carl Priebe says Canadas, perhaps offspring of captive or transplanted stock, wandered S.W. Iowa last year + may have bred.  |
| Greater Scaup              | <del>15</del> 15 or 40 | Mar 6            | Willow Slough. There were about 40 Scaup at the Slough. The 15 I could identify were all Greater. Identified by long wing stripe when courting parties were in flight. |
| Red-breasted Merganser     | 21                     | Apr. 8           | Willow Slough  |
| "                          | 1-3                    | Apr. 26 - May 16 | dPL Settling Pond. all ♀ plumage   |
| Osprey                     | 1                      | Apr. 26          | flew away from our farm pond with a large Bull head in its talons. (Mills County)  |
| Accipiters -               | none                   |                  |  |

Season: Spring Year: 1985

Name and address (print or type) Barbara L Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa

Other observers (name, city):

Rick Wright - Omaha  
Tanya Bray - Omaha  
Francis Moore  
Ross Silcock - Tabor

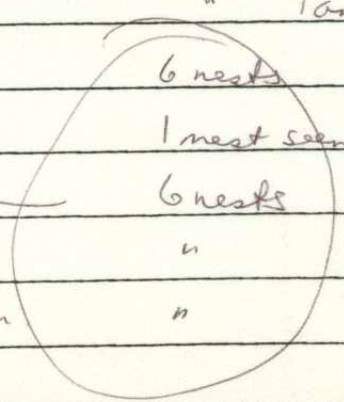
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| SPECIES                  | NO. | DATE                | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS                        |
|--------------------------|-----|---------------------|---|
| Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk | 1   | Mar. 2              | DPL Settling Ponds  |
| "                        | 1   | Mar 27              | Wilson farm, NE Mills County                                |
| kestrel                  | 1 ♀ | May 30              | carried off a Peep from the DPL                             |
|                          |     |                     | Settling Ponds, Council Bluffs.                             |
| Bobwhite                 | -   | #'s in Mills County | definitely low, but they may breed well in the dry weather. |
| Sandhill Crane           | 1   | Mar 2               | DPL Settling Ponds  |
|                          |     |                     | See documentation   |
| Piping Plover            |     |                     | You asked for all sightings, remember                       |
| "                        | 3   | Apr. 14             | DPL Settling Ponds - Rick Wright                            |
| "                        | 4   | Apr. 15             | "   |
| "                        | 4-5 | Apr. 18             | " Rick Wright   |
| "                        | 5   | Apr. 26             | " Francis Moore   |
| "                        | 3   | Apr. 29             | "   |
| "                        | 3-4 | May 10              | " 2 nests   |
| "                        | 3   | May 13              | " "   |
| "                        | 4   | May 16              | " "   |
| "                        | 2   | May 18              | " " Tanya Bray, Ross Silcock                                |
| "                        | 7   | May 24              | " 6 nests   |
| "                        | 2   | May 26              | " 1 nest seen Tanya + Ross                                  |
| "                        | 11  | May 28              | " 6 nests   |
| "                        | 9   | May 30              | " "   |
| "                        | 8   | May 31              | " "   |

Doc

Important



Season: Spring Year: 85

Name and address Barbara L Wilson  
 (print or type) Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings Iowa

Other observers (name, city):  
John Wilson, Hastings  
Don DeLong, Council Bluffs

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| SPECIES         | NO.          | DATE    | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS  |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|---|
| Killdeer        |              | May 10  | Wilson farm, NE Mills County. My husband was impressed when an adult raised its wings + charged the tractor as he planted. He couldn't stop then, but it is possible some of the young survived being "planted" as two young were seen in the area later.   |
| Am. Avocet      | 1            | May 15  | willow Slough   |
| Willet          | 6            | May 21  | "   |
| Marbled Godwit  | 4            | May 16  | Forney's Lake, Fremont County.<br>See documentation   |
| Ruddy Turnstone | 2            | May 24  | willow Slough   |
| "               | 4            | May 24  | JPL Settling Pond   |
| Sanderling      | 1            | May 16  | "   |
| L-b Dowitcher   | 10           | May 16  | willow Slough<br>"dark cinnamon, no white on belly"   |
| Am. Woodcock    | 1            | Apr. 21 | Willow Slough - "singing" ♂ at night  |
| "               | 3 ♀, 8 young | Apr. 26 | Near Lake Manawa - seen by Don DeLong. Don was mushrooming in river-bottom woods belonging to the park. <del>then</del> Three separate times, he flushed up a woodcock that flew a short distance very slowly, with tail spread. In each case he was able to locate the young - 3 in one brood, <del>two</del> 2 in the next, and 3 in the third. |
| Herring Gull    | 1            | May 24  | JPL Settling Pond. <del>Young</del> Young - 3rd year? 2nd?  |
| Caspian Tern    | 18           | May 16  | " Largest number I've ever seen together  |
| Common Tern     | 1            | May 28  | " Breeding plumage. Dark primaries. Bill orange with a black tip - orange than the reddish feet.  |

Season: Spring Year: 85  
 Other observers (name, city):

Name and address (print or type) Barbara L Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa

Rose Daugherty, Lenox  
Tanya Bray, Omaha

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| SPECIES  | NO.   | DATE   | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS  |
|--|---|--------|---|
| Least Tern   | 1   | May 16 | JPL Sattling Pond   |
| "  | 3   | May 24 | "   |
| "  | 5   | May 28 | " } Courting, + <del>sitting</del> sitting on future nest sites. They're going to nest! |
| "  | 8   | May 30 | "   |
| "  | 3   | May 31 | "   |
| " also   | 1   | May 24 | Willow slough - migrant   |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo   |   | May 18 | Lenox, Taylor County - Rose Daugherty   |
| Finds her first of the season, + considers it early  |   |        |   |
| Screach-Owl  | } Omaha people of Raptor Rehabilitation Team are getting a lot of                 |        |   |
| Great Horned Owl   | } young birds (some from Iowa) + consider the Screach-Owls especially to be early |        |   |
| Acadian Flycatcher   | 2   | June 1 | Cold Springs State Park, Cass County  |
| Breeding Bird Atlas pays off! Tanya + I find a pair <u>with a nest</u> in the woods at the park. We heard an odd song. Tanya said it was the first part of an Acadian Flycatcher song. A rising "see!". We found the calling bird - clearly an empidonax. Eye ring obvious. 2 wing bars. Shades of color hard to see in the shade + overcast. The bird hopped onto its nest! The nest was obvious now, but we <del>didn't</del> hadn't noticed it before. Nest hung down from a horizontal fork in a tree. Some of the material was loose + hung down below the nest. Nest type eliminates Willow + Alder (and Yellowbellied, impossible anyway). Call + habitat (cool, moist, shaded forest) wrong for Least. Obviously, I was surprised to find this breeding here. Tanya said <del>there's</del> there's a record of Acadian Flycatcher feeding fledglings in Fontenelle Forest. Oh, on our second visit to the nest, both adults were present. |   |        |   |

Season: Spring Year: 1985

Name and address (print or type) Barbara L Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa 51540

Other observers (name, city):  
John Robinson

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| SPECIES                | NO.                      | DATE                   | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS  |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Sedge Wren             | 1                        | May 16                 | Manti Park, Fremont County  |
| "                      | 1                        | May 30                 | Willow Slough   |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | None                     |                        |   |
| E. Bluebird.           | I have about 60          |                        | <del>the</del> Bluebird boxes up. 6 have pairs of bluebirds, and 23 young bluebirds have probably fledged. Now, about <del>4</del> "max. No./day by county: I've seen 1 <sup>0-</sup> when not checking boxes in Mills County and up to 5 adults when checking boxes. When I banded young at Pony Creek Res <sup>er</sup> voir I banded 10 young and saw 4 adults on 3 nests + a 5 <sup>th</sup> away from a known nest. Total 15 bluebirds is the "max. #/day by County". And what if anything does it mean. <small>Thought I have few pairs of bluebirds this year, I am happy to see that perhaps 5 broods have already fledged. Good <del>success</del> success so far.</small> |
| Swarson's thrush       | 1                        |                        | only one all spring   |
| L. Shrike              | "max. No./day by County" |                        | is 2 in Mills County, but I know of 4 <del>sites of</del> <del>repe</del> locations with repeated sightings (ie, nest sites - in one case I have even found the nest). 4 such sites is more than I've seen before.  |
| Worm-eating Warbler    | 2                        | May 19                 | @ Pine Lake north of Marshalltown. LOU<br>Field Trip. ID of song by John Robinson.  |
| Dickcissels            | - lots present           |                        | in southwest Iowa, and that is normal   |
| Tree Sparrow           |                          | April 9                | farm, NE Mills County last I <del>see</del> see   |
| Savannah Sparrow       | 1                        | May 14                 | east of Red Oak, Montgomery County.<br>One fresh, rather flat road kill. I'm surprised to see it - seems late, as I have not known it as a summer resident here.  |
| Fox Sparrow            | total 10                 | March 31 -<br>April 11 | farm, NE Mills County - seems like a lot  |

Season: Spring Year: 1985

Name and address (print or type) Barbara L Wilson  
Rt 1 Box 41  
Hastings, Iowa 51540

Other observers (name, city):  
Judy Steinboeck, Council Bluffs

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| SPECIES                | NO. | DATE     | LOCATION - COMMENT - OTHER OBSERVERS  |
|------------------------|-----|----------|---|
| Harris Sparrow         | 3   | May 16   | Farm, NE Mills County. These were the last I saw but perhaps not the last present. The Harris Sparrows had become silent (as they are on the breeding grounds) a week or more before May 16. After then, I never saw another except in my traps (for banding), then I left for the IOU meeting. |
| Dark-eyed Junco        |     | April 16 | Farm, Mills County last I see   |
| Red Cross bill         |     | April 14 | Judy Steinboeck had them at her feeder at least to this date, in Council Bluffs   |
| Am. Goldfinch          |     |          | quite a lot, at the feeder in early Spring and then in the weeds. Flock of 12 at the farm for a few days in May.  |
| House Sparrows         |     |          | I trapped 2 fledglings + an adult male in one of my traps May 24. Seems early.  |
| White-throated Sparrow |     |          | I saw + heard very few this Spring.   |
| Brown-headed Cowbird   |     |          | Thanks to a <del>fat</del> faulty faulty lid on a bluebird box, I found a Cowbird egg in a wren box 2 miles S. of Strahan, Mills County, on May 23.   |
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↑  
 winter resident on farm