

Stick

Gilcock

RR2, Malvern, Iowa
51551
June 3, 1978

Dear Nick,

Presently well into this year's Fremont Co. Foray - so far it is going well. Will report best finds in summer report. Must mention the pair of Ospreys at Riverton - we found them today, and one was carrying something which we guessed was a stick. So far we haven't located a nest, but we're trying. Also found a Ruddy Duck nest at Forney Lake, along with 18 Coot and 4 Pied-billed Grebe nests.

Spring was tremendous both in numbers and species. For the first time in 3 years we actually had waves of warblers! Shorebirds also were excellent, but Snow Geese shot through very fast.

Here's the list:

- Eared Grebe: 12 in breeding plumage Forney Lake ~~5~~ ^{ru} May 20. Still present end of period. Nest search underway during Foray.
- Pied-billed Grebe: Nesting Forney Lake. At least 8 present.
- White Pelican: Last ones a group of 16 in Mills Co. May 13.
- Double-crested Cormorant: At least 25 at Forney Lake and Riverton (total) May 20. 113 at Riverton Apr 23.
- Graux Egret: One near Randolph May 4. (Fremont Co.)
- Snowy Egret: One near Randolph May 16.
- Black-crowned Night Heron: Four near Randolph Apr 30 and one May 16.
- Least Bittern: One Mills Co. May 13 and one Forney Lake May 20.
- American Bittern: Two near Randolph Apr 30 and two singing Forney Lake May 23.
- White-fronted Goose: c. 500 Riverton Apr 1.
- Snow Goose: First ~~large~~ seen ^{Mar} 18 (flock of 500). Peaked Mar 26 (750,000) and Apr 1 (600,000), with last large group Apr 13 (100). Three still present Forney Lake at end of period.
- Cinnamon Teal: One ^(?) near Randolph May 12 and 13. Also an apparent hybrid at Forney Lake May 20 (chestnut brown plumage, very splotchy, with a pale crescent at the base of the bill, a la Blue-winged Teal.)
- Canvasback: 150 Mar 26 and 200 Apr 1.
- Redhead: Five males and two females present at Forney Lake at end of period.
- Lesser Scaup: Six present Forney Lake end of period.
- Hooded Merganser: One female near Randolph Apr 30.
- Red-breasted Merganser: Flock of about 20 at Riverton Apr 1. Both sexes present.
- Ruddy Duck: 100 at Riverton Mar 26, and 8 present Forney Lake at end of period. Nest found June 2.
- Cooper's Hawk: Adult male (by size, rounded tail, and gray color) at Riverton Apr 1. Flew by about 20 yards away, slowly into wind.
- Broad-winged Hawk: ^{first seen} Apr 23, Waubonsie SP and one in Mills Co. May 13.
- Swainson's Hawk: Singles seen Fremont Co. Apr 15 and 20, and one in Mills Co. May 13 - very late.
- Merlin: One Fremont Co. Mar 19. Small falcon with gray upperparts and barred tail. No rusty.
- Wild Turkey: Becoming common in loess bluffs wooded areas. Flocks of up to 40 seen feeding in snow-covered fields early in spring. One flushed in Waubonsie SP Apr 1 and 3 heard Apr 23.
- American Coot: Some 200+ at Forney Lake end of period. On June 2 18 nests were found, all with eggs.
- Lesser Golden Plover: Peak 20, May 11.
- Black-bellied Plover: Singles seen May 14 and 20.
- Hudsonian Godwit: Present May 10-23; peak 12, May 14.
- Ruddy Turnstone: One seen near Randolph May 23.
- Wilson's Phalarope: Peak 75, May 11.
- Northern Phalarope: One present near Randolph May 9, two present May 10 and 11. Both in winter plumage, dark bill, scaly back. Bill much thinner than Red Phalarope's in same plumage (which I've seen in North Carolina.)

- Also 2 at Riverton Apr 23.

dr. pending

Sanderling: Peak 12, May 14.

White-rumped Sandpiper: Peak 1000+ Riverton May 20. Very common this spring.

Dunlin: Peak 15, May 23.

Stilt Sandpiper: Peak 21, May 9.

Forster's Tern: Singles seen May 13 ~~at~~ in Mills Co., and May 20 at Riverton.

The latter bird had dark primaries but white outer tail feathers, hence the identification as Forster's. I believe far too many Terns are called Common because of the dark primaries, which may also be seen in Forster's. The outer tail feathers must be looked at in dark-primaried birds. Roberts (Manual for Identification of Birds of Minnesota and surrounding states) states: "The first fall and winter plumage [of Forster's Tern] differs from ^{that of} adults in ~~winter~~ having ... darker primaries ..." This plumage is not lost until spring and ~~several~~ ^{many} spring Forster's Terns would show darker primaries. Russell (Birding 8: 347) states: "... the outer five primaries of Common Tern show up as a darker area on the wing, which becomes progressively more apparent as wear increasingly exposes the underlying dark tones." Hence a Common Tern in fresh first nuptial plumage could be mistaken for a Forster's first year bird which has not yet molted into first nuptial plumage, unless the color of the outer tail feathers is observed.

Black Tern: Peak 150 Forney Lake May 20.

Mockingbird: One seen May 20. Only my third record here in 3 years.

Loggerhead Shrike: Two nests found before end of period. Common this spring.

Magnolia Warbler: One flew into a window in Tabor May 16. (Adult male).

Blackburnian Warbler: One seen May 13 Mills Co.

Brown Creeper: One at Waubonsie SP Apr 22, a late date and interesting in that 3 nests were found in Pontenelle Forest in 1977.

Kentucky Warbler: Four seen Mills Co. May 13.

Mourning Warbler: Single males seen May 13 in Mills Co and May 20 at Riverton.

Bobolink: Five males singing on territory near Randolph May 27. Not present last year. *Are more common this spring, due to more wet pastures.*

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Abundant this year at Taylor Lake and Forney Lake and at many other smaller ponds.

Hope this is in time,
Regards,

Ran.

P.S. I will forward
documentation for

① Swainson's Hawk (probably not necessary for birds seen Jan 10-20 or thereabouts - regular migrants here).

② Merlin
③