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Middlewestern Prairie



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After mid-June, the Region experienced warm, dry conditions. However, residual moisture from heavy spring precipitation provided sufficient water to keep most wetlands hydrated and generate lush upland vegetation. In Illinois, Doug Stotz believed that it was a good breeding season, and in Iowa James Dinsmore suggested that both wetland and

grassland species did well. Most correspondents concurred with these assessments.

The breeding season's major downside occurred along the major river systems, where high water levels, especially in June, interfered with species that nest on or adjacent to the rivers. More positively, a spate of first nesting records was established and a surprisingly plump list of vagrants was recorded.

Abbreviations: Carl. L. (Carlyle L., IL), G.L.N.T.C. (Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Lake, IL), H.B.S.P. (Headlands Beach S.P., OH), L. Cal. (L. Calumet, Chicago);

R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO), S.C.R (Squaw Creek N.W.R., MO); Spfld (Springfield, IL).

LOONS THROUGH IBIS

For the 2nd time in seven years, a summer Pacific Loon appeared in Iowa. This bird occupied a sandpit s. of Iowa City 18 Jun–5 Jul (†MCD, †CE, †JLF, ph. THK). It was a good summer for Pied-billed Grebes, with an above-average number of nesting reports across the Region. Iowa's 2nd confirmed Red-necked Grebe nesting record was logged 4 Jul, when two nests were found at Cheever L. in Emmet (LAS). Peak nest counts for Double-crested Cormorants included 66 at L. Renwick, IL 28 Mar (AA) and 39 at Coralville Res., IA 26 Jun (MCD). Also noteworthy was a Double-crested nest at Clarence Cannon N.W.R., MO 20 Jul (SK).

Great Blue Herons received few comments, the largest reported colony consisted of 482 nests at Clear L. in Mason, IL (RBj). As expected, Great Egrets were reported nesting in Illinois and Kentucky; peak counts of non-breeders included 500 birds at Horseshoe L., IL 15 Jul (FH), 211 in Jackson, IA 5 Jul (JLF), and 120 at Ottawa N.W.R., OH 1 Jul (EP et al.) Nesting Snowy Egrets were reported at the Sikeston, MO rookery, where 50 nests were counted (JWi). The largest concentration of Snowy Egrets consisted of 110 birds at Horseshoe L., IL 15 Jul (FH). It was a most impressive breeding season for Little Blue Herons, with nesting reported in Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri. The largest colony was at the Sikeston, MO rookery, where 150 nests were counted (JWi), but this species nested as far n. as L. Cal., where two nests were found 14 Jul (WJM). Peak Little Blue counts included an impressive 1500 at a roost near

Lambert Field, St. Louis on 16 Jul (Jerry Farm) and 391 at Horseshoe L., IL 15 Jul (DKa). Adding flavor to the season was an ad. Tricolored Heron at L. Cal. 17 Jun (†WJM, JA). Breeding Cattle Egrets were reported only at L. Barkley, KY, where several hundred pairs nested (BPB) and in the colony behind the Sikeston, MO Pizza Hut, which yielded 100 nests (JWi). Black-crowned Night-Herons nested in Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio. The largest colony, among several Illinois breeding sites, was at L. Cal., where some 300+ birds (including fledglings) were noted (WJM). In Ohio, 9 nesting Black-crowns were reported along Mill Creek in *Hamilton* 9 Jun (Tom Uhlman).

WATERFOWL THROUGH CRANES

As has been the case in recent years, small numbers of nonbreeding Snow Geese summered in the Region. This summer one to 7 Snows were found in seven Iowa counties, and 5 more were reported in Illinois. The establishment of reintroduced Trumpeter Swans as a breeding species continued this summer, with a report of nine "wild" nests in Iowa (BE). Mute Swans, which are well established as breeders in the Chicago area, appear to be expanding. This summer, three broods were reported in c. Illinois (HDB, VK) and Kentucky's first apparent "natural" nesting occurred in *Muhlenberg*, where a pair with one cygnet were noted (BPB, PM, WR). A few "migrant" dabblers lingered to breed in the Region. The most noteworthy of these included a female Gadwall with 9 young at L. Cal. 15 Jul (†WJM, GW), several broods of Northern Shovelers at Union Slough N.W.R. and Maynard Reece W.M.A., IA (MCK), and a pair of Green-winged Teal with young in *Emmet*, IA 14 Jul (LAS). Five species of nonbreeding bay ducks were also reported. The most unusual of these was a female Greater Scaup at Pipe Creek W.M.A., OH 11 Jun (RHn, SA). A tardy male Bufflehead lingered at Spring Run W.M.A., IA until 16 Jun (LAS). Evidence of nesting Hooded Mergansers came from every state except Ohio, suggesting that this species had a better-than-average nesting season.

Breeding Ospreys strengthened their foothold in the Region, with nesting reported in every state except Kentucky. Mississippi Kites followed a similar pattern. Nesting was reported at traditional sites in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa; expansion into w. Missouri also occurred, as attested by a nest found near Joplin (Chet and Karen Lang). Single extralimital nonbreeding Mississippi Kites were seen in *Ohio*, KY 13 Jul (DR) and near Kansas City, MO (SMc). A most surprising



This alternated-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper was present at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois 10-13 June and was enjoyed by many. Photograph by David B. Johnson.

find was a **Swallow-tailed Kite**, discovered at the Central Kentucky W.M.A., *Madison*, KY 31 Jul (†MBm, CLe). This bird, which provided that state's 2nd record since 1900, reportedly kettled upward and departed northward. Bald Eagles experienced another good breeding season, with reports of nesting success from every state except Kentucky. The Region's only reported Northern Harrier nesting occurred in *Muhlenberg*, KY, where several pairs were observed (MM et al.). An astonishingly early Merlin at Conneaut Harbor, OH 27 Jul (KMe), preceded that state's earliest fall record by almost a month.

King Rail reports were up this summer, with one in *Adair*, MO 6 Jun (SK), a single at Killdeer Plains W.M.A., OH 8-9 Jun (Troy Shiveley et al.), a pair and 5 young in *McHenry*, IL 15 Jul (BS), and one at Clarence Cannon N.W.R., MO 20 & 22 Jul (SK, JM, CM). Nesting Virginia Rails were observed at L. Cal., where young were found 15 Jul (WJM). Summer Virginia Rail reports also came from nine other Illinois and three Iowa locations, suggesting a good breeding season for this species. Soras were even more widely distributed; the most impressive single report consisted of four nests, each containing 11-12 eggs, at Streets L., *McHenry*, IL 4 Jun (BS). Once again, multiple Common Moorhens were reported in all six states, suggesting that

their population is flourishing once again. The summer expansion of Sandhill Cranes in the Region continued, with reports from every state except Kentucky. Two ads. and 2 young were reported in *Williams*, OH 30 Jun and 7 Jul (Jeff Grabmeier et al.), suggesting the possibility of nesting in the nw. corner of the state. Sandhills also nested at 10 n. Illinois locations.

SHOREBIRDS

Reports of early southbound plovers included a Black-bellied in *Union*, KY 31 Jul (BPB), an American Golden-Plover in *Dickinson*, IA 30 Jun (LAS), and a Semipalmated at Clinton L., IL 4 Jul (RTC). The nesting efforts of Iowa's Piping Plovers were unimpressive, with only three pairs at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds 14-15 Jun (JJD) and a nest with four eggs at Port Neal, which was ultimately abandoned (BFH). The only migrant Piping Plover was an ad. that tarried on the Indiana lakefront at Miller Beach 20, 21, & 23 Jul (JMc, MT, BG et al.). Except for the absence of breeding reports, it was a typical summer for Black-necked Stilts. A vagrant stilt was in *Fayette*, KY 3-4 Jun (JWm), two pairs were at Clinton L., IL 4 Jul (†RTC, HPa), and singles were at five locations in Missouri (TG, BB). American Avocets were scarce, with one to 9 birds reported in each of the four n. states. Willets

SA Readers of this journal are no doubt all too familiar with the expansion of gull numbers, especially Ring-billed Gulls, over recent decades. This summer, the Middlewestern Prairie Region may have experienced the first step in a further expansion of the Ring-billed Gull population. In Des Plaines, Cook, IL, Ring-billeds established a nesting colony atop the flat roof of a building. Although the nests were not visible, on 1 Jul some 500 ads. flushed from the rooftop and about 120 recently fledged young were seen around the building and at a nearby retention pond. Several dead juvs. were also found adjacent to the building. Subsequent observations revealed many birds too young to fly (AA, DJ, CN). Clearly, if this new nesting concept catches on with the Ring-billed Gull population in general, *Larus delawarensis* may ultimately earn the name "Urban Gull."

appeared in good numbers this summer, with peak counts of 40 at Michigan City Harbor, IN 30 Jul (BG) and an impressive inland tally of 28 at Saylorville Res., IA 2 Jul (SR, *vide* SJD). More Upland Sandpipers than normal were reported: observations came from 12 Iowa counties, eight Illinois locations, four Indiana sites, and two Ohio counties. In addition, Uplands were deemed plentiful in w. Missouri (JWi). It was a good summer for Whimbrel: 6 were reported along the Indiana lakefront, 3 were seen on the Ohio lakefront, including a lingering bird at Medusa Marsh 22–30 Jul (JHd, BW), and a single was at G.L.N.T.C. 30 Jul (AA, CN). A remarkably early Hudsonian Godwit appeared in Fremont, IA 19 Jul (JLF) to provide that state's first Jul record and the earliest fall migrant ever recorded in the Region.

Interesting reports of the smaller shorebirds included a late spring Sanderling in Union, KY 2 Jun (BPB), a count of 210 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Sheldon Marsh W.M.A., OH 30 Jul (VF), a late White-rumped Sandpiper at Mississinewa Res., IN 14 Jun (Haw, SSc), 2 extremely tardy Pectoral Sandpipers in Sangamon, IL 14 Jun (HDB), a record-early Stilt Sandpiper at Grand Kankakee Marsh, IN 4 Jul (KJB), 339 Short-billed Dowitchers at Sheldon Marsh, OH 22 Jul (JHa, BW), and 2 rather early Long-billed Dowitchers at Port Neal, IA 21 Jul (BFH). In the rare shorebird category, an alternate-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper at G.L.N.T.C. 10–12 Jun (SH, CF, ph., m. ob.) provided a season highlight for

many observers. Encouragingly, migrant Wilson's Phalaropes were reported in every state except Kentucky, with juvs. observed at Maynard Reece W.M.A., IA 1 Jul (LAS) and nesting suspected at Eagle Lake W.M.A., IA (WF). In contrast, Red-necked Phalaropes were scarce; the only reports involved 2 at Secret L., IA 19 Jul (JLF) and one at L. Chau. 27 Jul (RTC).

GULLS THROUGH TERNS

Laughing Gulls were less widespread than normal, with reports from only three states: four in Illinois, three in Ohio, and one in Iowa.

As expected, small numbers of Caspian Terns were reported in most states; however, breeding was not reported. Peak counts included 47 at Michigan City Harbor, IN 28 Jul (JKC et al.) and 25 at G.L.N.T.C. 14 Jun (KAM, UG). In Jun, the small Common Tern colony at G.L.N.T.C. had 20 active nests; however, they were subsequently destroyed by predators (DD). This species also nested at the two established colonies on the Ohio lakefront (*vide* RHn). Perhaps the season's single most remarkable report consisted of an ad. Arctic Tern that arrived at the G.L.N.T.C. Common Tern colony 16 Jun, then settled in and remained through the period (†SC, AA, CF, ph., m. ob.). As most previous Arctic Tern occurrences in the Region have been all too brief, this lingering bird provided an unprecedented opportunity for birders in the Region. Interestingly, on 16 Jun the bird was observed attempting to copulate with a Common Tern (SC). Although breeding was not reported, the expected small groups of Forster's Terns appeared across the Region; the peak tally was 30 at Hallett's Quarry, IA 2 Jun (WO). Least Terns were quite active in the Region this summer. High water in the lower Ohio R. inhibited nesting at many traditional sites along the river (BPB). As a result, many of the birds that normally nest on the major rivers apparently dispersed inland, providing increased nesting at nonriparian locations and a host of extralimital occurrences. Eighty Least Terns and 57 nests—both record highs—were counted at the Gibson, IN, colony 22 Jun; unfortunately, severe predation reduced the number of fledglings to 2–5 (JSC). At the Iowa MidAmerican Energy Ponds, where Least Terns regularly nest, seven nests were observed, which is the highest number since 1991 (JJD). Reports of out-of-range nonbreeders included 3 at R.E.D.A. 2–17 Jun (DB, et al.), 2 in Alexander, IL 9 Jun (KAM), a single in Saline, MO 13 Jun (JL, JWi), one at G.L.N.T.C. 27 Jun (SH), an ad. at Spfld. 5 Jul (HDB), 15 at Swan Lake N.W.R., MO 11 Jul (SK), and 3 at Horseshoe L., IL 21 Jun (KAM, CLi). Most encouragingly, a total

of 17 Black Tern nests was found at three locations in McHenry and Lake Counties in ne Illinois (BS). Two Black Tern nests were also reported in Dickinson, IA (LAS).

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

In addition to numerous birds at established sites across the Region, European Collared-Doves appeared at new locations in Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky. Iowa's first Collared-Dove nest, which contained 2 young, was recorded 17 Jul in Kossuth (HPe, THK, ph.). In the Chicago area, some 22 Monk Parakeets nests were reported at five locations (AA, DSt, WJM). Reports of nesting Short-eared Owls increased this summer, with an ad. and young at Prairie Ridge W.M.A., IL 8 Jun (LH, SSi) and an ad. and 2 young in Seneca, OH 5 Jun (TBa). Although the count of 9 Chuck-will's-widows in Hamilton, IL 18 May (LSy), constitutes one of the better tallies reported in recent years, it pales compared to the 141 male Whip-poor-wills logged in Sand Ridge State Forest, IL 26 Jun (RBj). At least eight Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nests were found in e. Ohio (TL, LRo) and two in Iowa (KH, *vide* JV, DKO). Elsewhere, an impressive 5 sapsuckers remained in Jo Daviess, IL in Jun (DW).

An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Swan Lake N.W.R., MO (HL) 19 Jul was remarkably early. Following a decade-long search, Indiana's first Alder Flycatcher breeding was confirmed 8 Jun at Pigeon River W.M.A. (ne. Indiana), when two nests were found; one nest failed and the other yielded 3 young (LAC, DGo). An impressive count of 20 Willow Flycatchers was recorded in Spring Creek Valley Forest Preserve, Cook, IL 20 Jun (AA et al.); this site also produced 3 Least Flycatchers on that date (AA et al.). Western Kingbirds occupied their usual range in Iowa and Missouri, and nesting was confirmed at three locations in Illinois (HDB, KAM, DKa). The 2nd Illinois Scissor-tailed Flycatcher breeding record occurred in sw Union, where a nest was observed 9 May–15 Jul (SB, m. ob.). An out-of-range Scissor-tailed was seen at Fort Campbell, KY 30 Jun (DM). Bell's Vireo reports surged in Ohio, where birds were located at five sites (two is more typical) in four sw. counties (m. ob.).

SWALLOWS THROUGH FINCHES

The largest swallow concentrations were comprised of Bank Swallows, with 2000 at Coralville Res., IA 27 Jul (THK) and 1500 at Forney L., IA 5 Jul (BKP, LJP). Observers in both Illinois and Indiana noted an expansion of Cliff Swallows this summer. A pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches with young was observed in Hocking, OH 4 Jun and in Wolf, KY 1 Jul

(FR); both sites have become established nesting areas for this species. More unexpected was a single Red-breasted Nuthatch at Illinois Beach S.P. 14 Jul (VK, et al.). Lightning really does strike twice at the same place. At Illinois Beach S.P., site of last year's Red-cockaded Woodpecker visit, a **Brown-headed Nuthatch** was discovered 11 Jul and remained through the summer season (BS, †WS, ph., m. ob.). This bird was photographed and if accepted will become the first confirmed Illinois record. In Indiana Don Gorney's unrelenting search for Brown Creepers yielded a hefty 51 birds this summer. The only successful Bewick's Wren nesting occurred in *Adams*, IL, where a pair and two young were observed 20 Jun (KAM). An unmated Bewick's Wren spent early Jun in *Warren*, KY but failed to attract a mate (BPB, MH et al.). It was apparently a fine season for Sedge Wrens as breeders, or probable breeders, were reported in all six states. A very tardy Gray-cheeked Thrush was seen in *McHenry*, IL 14 Jun (KAM).

A record-late Tennessee Warbler was observed at Michigan City Harbor 25 Jun (DP). Magnolia Warblers were reported from an impressive 23 sites in *Lake*, OH (JP). Some interesting warblers were discovered in s-cen. Indiana. Five singing Black-throated Greens were found in Hoosier National Forest 8–23 Jun (LSt, BM) and 2 male Blackburnians were found at different *Monroe* locations 8 & 18–19 Jun (†LSt, ph.). A record-early Bay-breasted Warbler was seen near Iowa City 29 Jul (JLF). The Region's only Swainson's Warbler reports came from Missouri, where this species was recorded in *Oregon*, *Taney*, and *New Madrid* (JWi). The presence of a male Mourning Warbler in Lowden-Miller S.F. 7 Jul (DSt) suggests the possibility of breeding at that site.

A Clay-colored Sparrow mist-netted in *Hancock*, IA 1 Jun may have been a late migrant; however, this location is only one county away from the 1999 nesting site. Another Clay-colored remained at Oak Openings Park, OH through 10 Jun without evidence of nesting (m. ob.). A major cause for optimism came from Fort Campbell, KY, where researchers discovered small numbers of **Bachman's Sparrows** at that installation (Daniel Moss, *vide* BPB). This constitutes the Region's first summer report of this species, outside Missouri, in more than a decade. Some 25 Lark Sparrows were counted at the Savannah Army Depot, IL in Jun (DW), and an out-of-range bird appeared at Grand Kankakee Marsh, IN 28 Jul (JKC et al.). Several mind-boggling Grasshopper Sparrow counts attest to the abundance of this species during this breeding season. The peak tally was 269 in the Savannah Army Depot, IL in Jun (DW), but

other excellent counts included 63 in Urbana, IL 17 Jun (RTC) and 38 at the Hawthorne Mine, *Greene* and *Sullivan*, IN 25 Jul (LSt). Henslow's Sparrows were also reported in good numbers but were not quite as plentiful as last summer. Illinois's first confirmed **White-throated Sparrow** nesting was logged in Chicago, where a pair and one or more fledglings were observed 30–31 Jul (†CW, KW, DSt). Also quite extraordinary were an ad. White-crowned Sparrow in Chicago's Olive Park 31 Jul (DSt) and a Harris's Sparrow in *Sioux*, IA 16 Jun (KH, *vide* JV). The latter provided Iowa's 3rd summer record.

The season's peak Blue Grosbeak counts included 9 at the Hawthorn Mine, IN 25 Jul (LSt) and 7 in Belknap, IL 5 Jun (VK). There was no information about nesting success of the East St. Louis Painted Buntings, but at least one bird lingered in the area into early Aug (DKa, KAM, m. ob.). Within their normal range, a pair of Painted Buntings visited a Springfield, MO feeder throughout the period (Mike Skinner), and 3 others were reported in sw. Missouri. Although Dickcissels were plentiful, most correspondents believed that their numbers were lower than last year. Bobolinks also had a good season, with counts exceeding 50 birds recorded in three states; the peak tally consisted of a flock of 141 females, molting males, and imms. at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, IL 21 Jul (RTC). A pair of Yellow-headed Blackbirds was at Mallard Club Marsh W.M.A., OH 4 Jun (RHn, SW), but there was no confirmation of nesting at last year's sites. Most unexpected was a lone Pine Siskin in *Dent*, MO 18 Jul (Loretta McClure). Two Eurasian Tree Sparrow nests, found in Burlington, IA 24 Jun (PL), constituted that state's 3rd and 4th nesting records.

CORRIGENDUM

The 29 Oct 2000 Indiana Little Gull was at Hurshtown Res. (*Allen*), not Salamonie Res. as reported in *N. A. B.* 55: 60.

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