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First Banding of an American Woodcock in South Dakota

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The first recorded banding of an American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) in South Dakota occurred on 19 April 1984 at Oakwood Lakes State Park, Brookings County, S.D. During the course of a field trip with the South Dakota State University ornithology class, several species of sparrows were being herded from a wild plum (*Prunus americanus*) thicket into mist nets that had been erected nearby. As the roundup commenced an American Woodcock flushed and was captured in a mist net.

The bird was identified as a male woodcock in breeding condition, due to its large cloacal protuberance. It was then banded with a standard USFWS leg band (No. 142346902), weighed, measured, and released.

The author returned to the area 9 times between 20 April and 1 June 1984, and during each visit observed woodcock. Three trips were made during evening hours and each time woodcock were either observed or heard in courtship flight. Although male woodcock are known to engage in courtship activities during spring migration (Sheldon 1967), these observations give some indication of the probability that birds were nesting in the area. Even though no nests were located during these visits, there are several records of woodcock nesting in eastern South Dakota. A woodcock nest near the Big Sioux River in southern Brookings county, was found by McPhillips (1980). Collignon (1978) also observed nesting birds in the eastern part of the state. Day-old woodcock chicks were found at Oakwood Lakes State Park on 28 April 1972 (Gates 1972), and Bent (1927) extended the breeding range of the woodcock into southeastern South Dakota from an 1884 nesting record near Vermillion (Cooke 1912).

The South Dakota distribution and abundance of woodcock is described as being rare spring and fall transients, and rare to irregular summer residents, mostly in the eastern part of the state (Whitney et al. 1978). As evidenced by some recent recorded sightings (Whitney et al. 1978, Harris 1980), and several personal sightings of woodcock in each of the past five years, woodcock may be present and nesting in considerably larger numbers in eastern South Dakota than is generally realized.

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(Inland)