



Drawing of Hudsonian Godwit, one of the birds that have been seen at Mermet Lake, by Denis Kania.

still water make them look like gaping mouths. A V-formation of seven Double-crested Cormorants passes overhead.

I don't drive far on the road before a junco flies to a tree. A Tufted Titmouse scolds me when I pull down the lane to the lake. A Golden-crowned Kinglet feeds with two Carolina Chickadees.

Where the road enters the woods, a Winter Wren gives a faint rattling call, and a Carolina Wren shouts his "tea-kettles." A Yellow-rumped Warbler flashes its butter-colored rear as it forages among the treetops.

Over 75 American Coots scatter when I park in the second boat landing and picnic grounds, still on the east side of the lake. A Fish Crow calls its nasal "caw." Ruddy Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, more grebes, and scaups swim in view.

Mallards and Green-winged Teal dabble in a borrow pit at the southeast corner of the lake. A male Eastern Bluebird perches on top of a young tree. Hundreds of coots mill around at the end of the lake where the road turns at the Nature Preserve. A Red-headed Woodpecker flies over, displaying its black and white pattern.

Early May 1996. Copper irises (*Iris fulva*) bloom around the "puddle" in the corner beside the preserve's parking area. A Pileated Woodpecker flies across the lake. I stop when I see a Great Blue Heron wrestling an eel. It shakes its catch back and forth, the eel wrapping

around the heron's bill. The heron drops the eel, retrieves it, carries it to a mound of dirt, and stabs it. I miss the swallowing when I pull over to let another car pass.

No herons wade along the dikes extending back into the duck-hunting areas on the west side of the lake (I call the second one "Heron Lane" because I often see several herons and egrets there). A male Red-breasted Merganser swims among a loose raft of scaup near the third boat landing in the northwest corner of the lake. An Eastern Towhee gives one "wheet." A Belted Kingfisher perches at the top of a snag.

One last stop on a pull-off yields six Ring-necked Ducks, a Goldeneye, and a Redhead. Three Tree Swallows swoop after insects, and western chorus frogs add their "preet" calls to the singing morning.

March 8, 1997. As I begin my year of birding at Mermet Lake, clouds and a determined north wind kept the temperatures hovering at freezing.

Along the east side of the lake I watch an American Kestrel hovering, a Hairy Woodpecker chipping away on the remains of a trunk, and a flock of White-throated Sparrows feeding. I hear a White-breasted Nuthatch, Common Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, and Barred Owl.

The dikes back into the hunting areas were flooded. Four American Widgeons finally decide to land. An American Goldfinch gives "su-wee" calls as it flies, and a Turkey Vulture soars.

April 5, 1997. Northern Rough-winged Swallows join the growing number of Tree Swallows. A Barn Swallow claims a perch low to the water and vigorously defends it. New cattail leaves grow among the dead ones. A Red-tailed Hawk flies from a tree, and Field Sparrows sing.

A Brown Thrasher flies to branch above the brambles and watches two fishermen pull their boat from the water. Three Great Egrets feed in the soupy duckweed, and Blue-winged Teal dabble in the deeper sections. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher gives "beeez" calls from a willow tree. I watch a muskrat and look up at just the right time to see an adult Bald Eagle fly around the edge of the lake, land in a snag, and eat a fish.

Three Bonaparte's Gulls split and fly in different directions. A Green Heron flies in the woods.

May 3, 1997. Baby Wood Ducks follow the hen into the cattails as I begin my birding loop. An Osprey circles the lake. A Least Bittern gives deep laugh-sounding calls. This species nests here every summer unless high water hampers the cattail growth. According to fellow birder Judy DeNeal, this is the spot to hear rails at night in early May.

A Yellow Warbler sings at practically each stop I make. I add Prothonotary Warbler, Warbling Vireo,