

# Tropical bird found near Volga



Jonathan Ellis, [jonellis@argusleader.com](mailto:jonellis@argusleader.com) 3:13 p.m. CST November 18, 2015



*(Photo: Roger Dietrich of Yankton)*

If they know what's good for them, some birds that were near Volga last weekend are heading south right now.

The birds in question are Great Kiskadees. Over the weekend, some of the state's top ornithologists were dumbfounded when they spotted a Great Kiskadee near Volga. It was the first confirmed sighting in South Dakota.

"It's very surprising," said Chris Anderson, a member of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union and president of the Sioux Falls Bird Club. "It's not something that was on the radar for this weekend or something that we would expect to see in South Dakota."

Great Kiskadees are tropical birds abundant in Mexico and South and Central America. They are typically only reliably found in the United States in the extreme southern tip of Texas, said K.C. Jensen, an ornithologist and wildlife management professor at South Dakota State University.

With winter weather approaching South Dakota, the tropical birds would be wise to head back to their natural habitat.



A Great Kiskadee was spotted near Volga on Nov. 15, 2015. It was the first confirmed sighting of the bird in South Dakota. Typically they are in tropical climates. (Photo: Kelly Preheim of Armour)

“They probably should get the heck out of here,” Jensen said. “I’m thinking their chances at this point aren’t really good.”

Birds can cover a lot of ground, but Great Kiskadees aren’t migratory and typically stay where they’re at. They eat insects, and while there were still some insects around last weekend, winter will take care of that.

“The chances are these birds are going to try to stick it out where they are,” Jensen said.

Jensen was hosting the fall meeting for the South Dakota Ornithologists’ Union in Brookings over the weekend, so many of the state’s top birding experts saw the Great Kiskadee. Landowners in the area reported that the birds had been around for three or four months. Landowners also reported that there were at least three Great Kiskadees in the area.

The only other sighting of that species in South Dakota came on June 13, 1994 in Moody County, but the sighting was not confirmed, Jensen said.

The birds have a yellow breast, black and white striped heads and brownish backs and wings. They make a loud, distinctive call that sounds like “Kiskadee,” Jensen said.

It’s unclear how the birds would have ended up in South Dakota.

“It’s hard to tell,” Jensen said. “Sometimes – we call them vagrants – they show up in strange places. Often times they can be associated with a weather anomaly.”

The birders last weekend also spotted a Common Redpoll, a bird that typically resides in the boreal forests of Canada. Common Redpolls have been seen in South Dakota before, but it’s the first time anywhere that a bird checklist included both a Great Kiskadee and a Common Redpoll.