

April 1, 1974

Dear Vern:



I just got back from Nebraska, where the sandhill cranes were putting on one of the greatest shows on earth. Wow!

The winter season was not much to crow about. The one thing that stood out, as part of a pattern throughout the state (and probably beyond) was the abundance of Short-eared Owls. We had a group of 10 W of Iowa City all December, also seen on the CBC. They were most spectacular on Dec. 20, PM, when they flew all around the car, sat on fences and chased one of the few Rough-legged Hawks out of their "territory". Some Bald Eagles strayed from the Mississippi (they seldom make it up this far ~~the~~ along the Iowa River): one was soaring over the river on Jan. 2, and two were perched in dead trees at the far ~~or~~ (west) end of the Coralville Reservoir March 28, rather late, considering how early the water north of thawed. Marsh Hawks were few all winter, but two were engaged in nuptial antics Feb. 24 near the reservoir. Am. Kestrels have been more numerous than in past years: you can hardly drive for 1 hour without seeing a couple on electric wires or hovering. Early migrants among the ducks were N. Golden (March 9) and Canvasbacks (March 9). Equally early was an Am. Woodcock which I first heard near our house on March 8: it is now performing its nuptial flight just off our lot on a peninsula (this is the ~~the~~ third year in a row we have had them in this vicinity). An interesting phenomenon was the complete disappearance of Red-headed Woodpeckers after their abundance in summer: 2 on the CBC vs. 47 last year tells the story. Unlike last year, there were no ~~at~~ Red-bearded nut-

hatches in this area. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet desperately clinging to a crevice in the wall of a dorm on a cold, chilly PM (Dec. 20) was an unusual lingerer. The winter finches were generally few, but almost all showed up eventually. The only Evening Grosbeak seen was at our feeder Dec. 9, for about 3 seconds. Purple Finches are rather common, and are still around. Com. Redpolls showed up first in early Febr.; on Febr. 24 I saw a large flock (100+) west of here on a snowy road. Pine Siskins mingled with goldfinches at the neighbors feeder Jan. 28 - March 20. Red Crossbills were seen on the CBC and on Febr. 17, in the country with sparrows. White-winged Crossbills were first seen Dec. 27, and 3 frequented the same feeder in town most of Febr. and into early March. The only Lapland Longspurs I heard about were the 3 I saw mingled with Horned Larks on Jan. 8. Snow Buntings appeared early (a small group of 15 on Nov. 22) and then only once more, on the CBC day.

I have been stretching business trips into birding ventures (Washington → Norfolk, Omaha → Grand Island, April 11: Galveston → Houston and environs, with Victor Emanuel).

I hope things are more exciting in Illinois.

Sincerely,

Nick Halimi

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