

Woodward Brown is again out of the country for the month of February, so the editor has compiled the winter season report. Christmas Census data is not repeated and should be read for a complete picture of the winter season. Many of us are in the field much more prior to and during the count period than in January and February.

The weather varied greatly throughout the state. Much of Iowa, especially the northwest, was hit by a severe blizzard on January 10 and 11 (see General Notes). In eastern Iowa it was a mild winter with only two snowfalls over four inches, both of which melted rapidly and in effect were only about five or six inches instead of the official ten. The Snowy Owl invasion was strong with about sixty sightings. Winter finches were down with very few Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins or Common Redpolls and no crossbills. Snow Buntings were found in good numbers in mid-January at many locations.

Pelicans, Cormorants - A single White Pelican was present for two weeks in mid-November at the Princeton Wildlife Area, Scott Co. (DC). Several single migrant Double-crested Cormorants were seen in November: at Roman's Lake on Nov. 15 (HP), Lock 13 on Nov. 16 and at Mark Twain N. W. R. on Nov. 9 (PP). An immature seen on the Davenport Christmas Census lingered until Jan. 15 on the Mississippi off Bettendorf (PP).

Waterfowl - A single Mute Swan has been present near Le Claire on the Mississippi (PP). Many Canada Geese lingered through mid-December at refuges (GB, PP). Four Canadas overwintered at LeClaire (PP); eight were on the Cedar River Jan. 12 and three at Cedar Lake on Jan. 26 (LS); and a flock of 200 were seen in late January between Waterloo and Cedar Falls (Eleanor Corwin fide RH). Large flocks of Snow Geese returned to the Hamburg area by early February. Some had overwintered with Canadas (IG). The Mallards being fed in the Clinton - Davenport area were present in good numbers and were joined by a few Black Ducks (PP). Migrant Mallards were building up in early February at Hamburg (IG) and Burlington at the Lock 18 area (PP). A Black Duck was seen at the Des Moines Impounding Reservoir in mid-Dec. for the first record in years (WB) and three were at Cedar River and Cedar Lake on Jan. 1 and 5 (LS). An American Wigeon was found at Cedar Lake on Jan. 1 (LS). Canvasbacks and Redheads were seen at Montrose on Jan. 26 (RO) and a Redhead was seen at Cedar Lake on Jan. 5 (LS). A White-winged Scoter was seen Jan. 16 at Keokuk (RO) and several were present the first half of December at Lock 14 (EF).

Hawks - The only Goshawks reported were on the Christmas Censuses. January accipiter records included a Cooper's at Ankeny on the seventh (DM) and two Sharp-shinned were in Iowa City on the eighteenth (NH). Red-tailed Hawks were considered scarcer than normal at Ankeny (DM) and Davenport (PP). Two Red-shouldered reports came from the Waterloo area, Jan. 19, at Heery Woods, Clarksville and Jan. 25 at the Waterloo Green Belt (RH). Reports on Rough-legged in central Iowa varied with few seen at Des Moines (WB) and more than usual at Ankeny (DM). Two Golden Eagles were reported, an adult seen from fifty feet near Princeton on Jan. 15 (GM) and on Feb. 11 at Hamburg (IG). The Bald Eagle count along the Mississippi for Feb. 8 stands at 416 with virtually all reports received (EF). Marsh Hawks were down at Hamburg (IG), but about normal at Ankeny (DM). *A Merlin was at Decorah Jan. 5 (DK).*

Quail, Pheasants, Turkeys - Bobwhite were down at Shenandoah (BW) and especially so after the blizzard of Jan. 10 (MS), but considered abundant at Hamburg (IG). Pheasants were hard hit by the same storm in western Iowa (LW, MS), and were not seen at Iowa City in 1975 (NH), but were up at Hamburg (IG) and average to up at Essex (BW). Turkeys are reported to be over the state line near Hamburg (IG).

Gulls, Doves, Parrots - An Iceland Gull was seen near Davenport, the first record for Iowa (see General Notes). Two Glaucous Gulls were also present in the Davenport area from mid-Dec. through January, a first year and a second year bird (PP). Mourning Doves were abundant at Shenandoah (BW) and Hamburg (IG). A Monk Parakeet, probably the bird seen last winter, was seen several times in December and January in northeast Davenport (fide PP).

Owls - A Barn Owl was seen near Hamburg (fide IG). Snowy Owls were sighted about sixty times, an early sighting was at Woolstock on Nov. 30 (RS). Gladys Black is compiling the sightings and hopefully an article and map detailing the invasion will appear in the June issue. Please report any sightings to Gladys. Long-eared Owls are scarcer than formerly at Davenport (PP) and absent from the usual Pleasantville areas (GB), but four wintered north of Iowa City (NH). Short-eared Owls were seen in average numbers at Davenport (PP), seen near Wheatland on Dec. 25 by the Wentworths (EC) and three in a pine grove near Pleasantville (GB). A Saw-whet Owl was seen at Red Rock Refuge (GB) and another at the Sac-Fox Park Area on Jan. 25 and 26 (LS).

Woodpeckers, Horned Larks - Red-headed Woodpeckers were generally considered back to normal numbers after last year's scarcity. Wintering sapsuckers were present at Shenandoah (BW), with single sightings at Alburnett on Jan. 12 (LS), Davenport (PP), and Waterloo on Jan. 10 (fide RH). Horned Larks were considered few at Oskaloosa (RJ, KL), but abundant at Shenandoah (BW, MS), Marble Rock (PK) and Pleasantville (GB) and erratic at Des Moines (WB).

Crows, Nuthatches - Crows were considered down. White-breasted Nuthatches are up at Oskaloosa (RJ, KL). Red-breasted Nuthatches were present at localities all across the state (HD, GB, PP, WB, LS) except absent at Hamburg (IG).

Wrens, Mockingbirds, Robins - Carolina Wrens wintered at Hamburg (IG), Shenandoah (BW), Cedar Rapids (LS) and Pleasantville (GB). A Mockingbird was seen Dec. 28 at Westfield and found dead after the blizzard on Jan. 12 (LF). Wintering Robins were mentioned at Riverton (MS), Shenandoah (BW), Waterloo (RH) and Davenport (PP).

Waxwings, Shrikes - Cedar Waxwings were numerous at Iowa City (NH), Newton (HD), Shenandoah (BW), and Davenport (PP), but none at Hamburg (IG). The only Northern Shrike reported was seen at Big Marsh in December (RH). Two Loggerhead Shrikes were seen in the Oskaloosa area (RJ, KL), four seen in one day in the Pleasantville area by Rick McGrough (fide GB), and one banded Jan. 26 (DM).

Warblers, Meadowlarks, Blackbirds - A late Palm Warbler was seen Nov. 17 (RH). Meadowlarks were up at Oskaloosa (RJ, KL) and abundant at Shenandoah (MS, BW) where the blizzard killed many (BW). A Rusty Blackbird came regularly to the Peasley's feeder in Des Moines (WB).

Finches - Purple Finches and American Goldfinches were the only Finch species seen in good numbers and even these were down at Hamburg (IG), and Iowa City (NH). Common Redpolls were seen at Big Marsh in December (RH) but not until Feb. 8 at Pleasantville (GB) and, Feb. 18, at Davenport (PP). A Towhee was seen on Jan. 23 at Waterloo (fide RH) and another wintered at Davenport (Mary Rose fide PP). Tree Sparrows were down at Shenandoah after the blizzard (BW). Harris' Sparrows were abundant at Shenandoah (BW) and up at Des Moines (WB).

Observers - Gladys Black, Pleasantville; Woodward Brown, Des Moines; Dave Coon, Albany, Ill.; Esther Copp, Wheatland; Herb Dorow, Newton; Larry Farmer, Westfield; Elton Elton Fawks, East Moline, Ill.; Ione Getscher, Hamburg; Nicholas Halmi, Iowa City; Russell Hays, Waterloo; Robert Jesson, Oskaloosa; Ann Johnson, Indianola; Pearl Knoop, Marble Rock; Keith Layton, Oskaloosa; Gary Mensinger, Camanche; Dean Mosman, Ankeny; Roy Ollivier, Mt. Pleasant; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids; Marie Spears, Shenandoah; Robin Steiner, Woolstock; Loraine Wallace, Spirit Lake and Betty Walter, Essex. Send spring reports to Woodward Brown, 432 Tonawanda Dr., Des Moines, 50312 by May 20.

First Iceland Gull for Iowa - During the Davenport Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 1974, 9:30 A.M., an adult Iceland Gull was seen at Lock No. 14, Pleasant Valley, Iowa by Ernest Sadler and Mark Henderson. This description is copied from the documentation form: "Small, white gull. Shape seemed more streamlined, not as heavy looking or bulky as other gulls. Plumage gave an all white appearance from below with no markings or variations in color. Back appearance - some variation in shade, very light gray with a lighter appearance from tip of wings along the back of wings. No marking on bill, yellow and small, feet pink." The bird was in the company of hundreds of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls providing direct size comparison. It was seen at a distance of 30 yards with 7x35 power binoculars. The light was good, the weather high overcast and the observers are familiar with Glaucous Gulls. Prior to this observation a bird answering this description was seen on December 1, 1974, at Campbell's Island, East Moline, Illinois, away from the Mississippi channel, by Elton Fawks. This site is about two miles downstream from Lock No. 14. Fawks and Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Frink observed the same bird Fawks had seen on December 2 on December 21 at Lock No. 14 from the Illinois shore. At least two immature Glaucous Gulls were present in the area of Lock No. 14 in late December and early January. Fawks saw the Iceland four times in January and three times in February. On January 28, 1975, the author saw an entirely white gull noticeably smaller than Ring-billed Gulls standing with it at Lock No. 14 at a range of 150 yards with a 20x scope. The last Iceland observation was by Fawks on February 18. PETER C. PETERSEN, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport.

*View
connected
gallery
for
Iowa
Winter
Report
Cats*

*add
57 wintered
along the Des Moines
at the wetland
(EC)*

*add
A flock of 15 Turkey
Vultures was seen
at Lake Red Rock on
Jan. 27 (CB)*

*add - and one at
Credit Island on
Feb. 27 (PP)*

*add
McGregor (DA)
Decorah (CA)*

*Darwin
Koenig, Dec 26*

Ja.
Wigg

Melba W. Wigg
1633 South 99th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68124

Vernon M. Kleen
2311 Huntington Road
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Dear Mr. Kleen,

Enclosed is the winter report for Council Bluffs, Iowa , DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding area.

It has been a long winter here and slim pickings in birding circles. Temperatures have been below normal and we have had unusually heavy snow cover from mid-December until mid- March. During the week of March 16th there was a warming trend and the snow melted. Lakes finally started to open up (at least two or three weeks later than usual). Then, the week of March 23rd two more snow storms and 4 inches of fresh snow. Needless to say, waterfowl migration was at least 10 days to two weeks late. We have seen some larger concentrations of some waterfowl species in the area due to our unusual spring.

There have been no reports of winter finches in this area except a few sightings of purple finches and only one pine siskin has been reported.

Sincerely,

Melba Wigg

Double-crested cormorant (6) March 21 DeSoto Bend Refuge MW

White-fronted goose Sightings in this area becoming more common and in larger numbers.
(700) counted in one flock at DeSoto the last week in March. EL

(200+) March 29 Pacific Junction TK, RG

Snow Geese First arrival of several hundred on the DeSoto Refuge March 16; at least ten days later than usual.

March 17 approximately 700 were sitting in the slush on top of the ice at the refuge because there was still very little open water. There has been a gradual increase in number and by the last week in March 100,000 to 150,000 were estimated to be on the refuge.

Redbreasted Merganser Considered a rare migrant in area
(200+) counting just males - Lake Manawa on March 29. MW
(50+) March 29 Pacific Junction RG
Sightings also reported at DeSoto Refuge.

Turkey Vulture March 3 - Missouri Valley, Iowa
A very early migrant, usually not reported in the area before the end of March. JG

Bald Eagle Fantastic! (72) counted on the DeSoto Refuge March 29. 31 adults and 41 immatures. Most likely they are remaining in the area because of the late waterfowl migration. EL

March 18th was foggy - the next day was sunny and warm. I was enjoying the Texas sun that week, but observers in Council Bluffs reported that the skies were filled with geese moving north on the 19th. Thousands of ducks had moved into the area by the 20th and many hundreds of ring-billed gulls were seen at Lake Manawa near Council Bluffs. Spring migration was finally here.

Snowy Owl The first two weeks in December the reports started coming in of snowy owl sightings.
(12) reported in the Missouri Valley and DeSoto Refuge area on December 10. EL
(2) sighted near Glenwood, Iowa Dec. 14
No more sightings have been reported since that date. TK

Blue winged Teal A very late individual was spotted on the DeSoto Refuge the week of December 16. TK

Short-eared Owl

December 8 several owls were seen flying over the fields near the DeSoto Refuge. EL

Purple Finch

Few sightings this winter and only small numbers (2 - 5) appearing at residential feeders. JG CS

Pine Siskin

(1) The only sighting of this species was on December 14 near Glenwood, Iowa - the day of our Christmas count. The lone siskin was feeding with a large flock of goldfinches in a field of sunflowers. TK

Field Sparrow

(1) has spent the winter in Council Bluffs; seen regularly with a small flock of Tree sparrows that come to a feeding station. Studied at leisure and all field marks clearly seen. Still appearing at the time of this report. CS

Observers:

Ruth Green RG
Janet Greer JG
Teta Kain TK
Ed Loth EL
Caroline Stuart CS
Melba Wigg MW