

June 1, '75

Dear Vern:

The spring migration in the Iowa City area, although not spectacular, had interesting points of interest.

A Horned Grebe in summer plumage Apr. 25-27 was unusual — we mostly see them in November, and then not very often. The same is true for

the Double-crested Cormorant seen April 20 (Fred

Kent saw 2 more on April 15). Black-crowned night herons were more often observed than in an average year; first on April 13, then up to 6 at a time repeatedly later in April. The cold weather delayed the duck migration. When they came through, they were present briefly in spectacular numbers; for example, literally tens of thousands of Pintail were over the Reservoir on the morning of April 5. A Com.

Goldeneye around as late as May 17 seems to have set a new record for the state. Our pine duck, however, was a ♂ Surf Scoter first seen early in May by Mike Newlon in a small slough S of town, and subsequently by just about every birder in the area until the 3rd of week in May. The Red-shouldered Hawk, formerly a fairly common breeding bird in the area, has vanished from the scene around 1966. Therefore I was glad to see one N of the Reservoir on April 5, and to hear that Mike Newlon and a group with him had spotted one S of it earlier. This has been, however, ~~seen~~ no more than a flash in the pan — all the hawks seen in April were gone by May, including Red-tailed, Marsh and Am. Kestrel. Only single Broad-winged came through. I saw 2 Ospreys from the living room on April 19-20, and a third (?) S of the Reservoir April 27. Sempalm-ated Plovers were unusually common — scores on May 16 and 17 on mudflats W of the Reservoir, and a flock of some 100 flying over them on May 24. Some 25 White-rumped Sandpipers were in the same location May 17. A Ruddy Turnstone on May 17 at Cone Marsh some 20 miles S of here was unusual, as was the sighting of 2 Mottled Godwits, one next to the turnstone, one earlier in a meadow W of town (April 19). Perhaps because of



the fishkill which presumably followed ~~the~~ the accidental  
draining (of Corps of Engineers!) of the Reservoir in January,  
gulls were unusually numerous in April. We usually  
see about 20 Ring-billed gulls, but this year they  
numbered between 100 and 200. More noteworthy was  
the widespread occurrence of Franklin's gulls during  
April - in most years they migrate well to the W  
of us. The only Yellow-billed Cuckoo I have seen thus  
far was one lying by the side of our house with a  
broken neck. It might be interesting to look into  
(if this hasn't been done yet) the status of "Trail's  
Flycatcher" in this area: one would expect to hear  
Willow Flycatchers, but of the 3 Empidonaxes that  
were not least that I both saw and heard last  
May and this year all were Alder; with unquestionable  
fe-bee-o songs. Bank Swallows have been remarkably  
scarce all spring. E. Bluebirds continue to be few:  
a couple back in ~~the~~ February, 1 on May 10, 2 on May  
24 is the total. Bell's Vireo, of concern to Woody Brown  
in Des Moines but a regular breeder in our vicinity  
in the past, is now worrying us too. We heard one in  
Cone Marsh on May 10, but none around Iowa City  
all spring. Two Philadelphia Vireos (May 9 and 17) were  
however better than par. The warblers trickled through  
(only on May 12, a Monday, were the trees really alive).  
Golden-winged were unusually numerous, along with  
the Blue-winged (which have been seen and heard  
in numbers belying their "rare" status for the last  
3 years). Yellow-headed Blackbirds seem to be establish-  
ing nesting populations in the area: they have been  
present for weeks in appropriate habitat both  
just S of Iowa City and in Cone Marsh, where none  
have been known to nest before. For the second  
year in a row, a singing Henslow's Sparrow was  
observed (this time by many from up to 25 feet) in  
the same field NW of Iowa City.

Sincerely

Nick Hales

Rec. 6/4/75  
HP