

Van Dyke

Thomas H. Kent  
211 Richards St.  
Iowa City, Iowa 52246

## Fall 1996 Report

### Weather for the period:

August and September were cool. October warm and dry. First frost in first week of October. Cold weather -- down to 12 degrees -- arrived during final days of October. The first half of November was dry with normal temperatures. Second half much below normal temperatures along with several freezing rain and ice storms, making life miserable for both man and bird! The first major snowfall (4-5") occurred on November 23. During the last week of November temperatures stayed mostly below freezing and dropped to near record lows (-13 in Sheldon on November 25, -4 in Sioux Center on November 26). So by the end of November most of the water was already frozen, except for stretches of open water in the Big Sioux and the Rock Rivers and at Winterfeld Park in Rock Valley (where the pond is kept open artificially).

### Observations:

- Pied-billed Grebe: Appeared to peak during the first half of October. Six were still at Hawarden on November 1. One was at Hawarden and another one in the Big Sioux River on November 8.
- ✓ - American White Pelican: Eight were still at Hawarden on November 1.
- ✓ - Double-crested Cormorant: About a half dozen were still at Hawarden on November 8.
- ✓ - Great Blue Heron: The last one observed in the area was near George, Lyon Co., on November 20.
- ✓ - Great Egret: The last one was along the Rock River east of Doon (Lyon Co.) on October 23.
- ✓ - Northern Pintail: A drake was still at Rock Valley on November 29, when most of the water was already frozen.
- Gadwall: Peaked during the last week of October.

- American Wigeon: One was still at Rock Valley on November 29.
- Redhead: Peaked during the first week of November.
- Bald Eagle: Two immatures were at Hawarden on November 1.
- Ruddy Duck: Three very late individuals were at Winterfeld in Rock Valley on November 26, when most of the open water in Sioux County was already frozen. One of them was still there on November 29.
- Merlin: The only one I saw was an individual on a fence post eating a bird six miles northwest of Marcus (Cherokee Co.) on October 3.
- Broad-winged Hawk: During the last few years this species has become scarce in northwest Iowa. Though, judging by reports, the bird is obviously still plentiful, we do not see it as often as we used to.
- American Coot: Several were still at Rock Valley on November 29, when most of the water in Sioux County was already frozen.
- Killdeer: The last ones observed were three at Hawarden on November 1.
- American Avocet: Two were at Hawarden on September 27.
- Greater Yellowlegs: Two were late at Hawarden on November 8.
- Mourning Dove: One lingered in Sioux Center until November 24.
- Black-billed Cuckoo: On August 27 one in my yard provided a treat: In full view less than 20 yards away it devoured a very hairy caterpillar!
- Common Nighthawk: Excellent migration throughout September, with as many as 40 or 50 individuals overhead on several occasions. Last one observed in Sioux Center on the late date of October 2.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird: The last one was seen on October 2.



- Red-breasted Nuthatch: First one observed in Sioux Center on September 22. One was in my yard on September 29. The next one appeared at my feeders on October 27, soon to be joined by a second one on November 3. They (a male and female) stayed for the remainder of the period .
- Brown Creeper: Several were in Oak Grove Park on November 8.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Last one observed in Sioux Center on October 15.
- Swainson's Thrush: Several were in my yard August 27-29, and in western Sioux Co. on August 30.
- American Robin: Last one observed in Sioux Center on November 23.
- Brown Thrasher: A late individual was in Oak Grove Park on November 8.
- Wilson's Warbler: There were at least 20 of them at Rock Valley on August 27.
- Canada Warbler: They were exceptionally common this fall. Several reports were received of sightings in Sioux Center during the last week of August. On August 30 I counted at least four at the Big Sioux/Rock Access in western Sioux County.
- American Tree Sparrow: They were abundant in the last week of October and into November.
- Le Conte's Sparrow: I found three of them at Hendrickson Marsh east of Ames in Story County on October 4.
- Fox Sparrow: This bird was very much in evidence this fall. On two birding trips in western Sioux County (October 16 and 18) I counted at least a dozen individuals.
- White-throated Sparrow: They migrated in excellent numbers. Last ones were in my yard on November 5.

- Harris's Sparrow: Excellent numbers (flocks of over 50) in Sioux Co. during the last week of October. They commonly flock with American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. They remained plentiful on my feeders during the entire month of November.

- Dark-eyed Junco: First ones observed in Sioux Center on October 2.

- Snow Bunting: First observed in Sioux County (several miles northwest of Sioux Center) on November 26. The birds were mixed in with a flock of Horned Larks.

- Red-winged Blackbird: In spite of the very cold weather during the last part of November, small flocks of Redwings remained in Sioux County through the end of the period.

- Rusty Blackbird: Small numbers were scattered in Sioux County on November 8.

- Common Grackle: A few lingered for the remainder of the month, after the main flocks had departed by mid-November.

- Brown-headed Cowbird: A flock of 60+ individuals was at Sioux Center on October 30. A smaller flock, mixed with Grackles, was near Sioux Center on November 8.

- Purple Finch: The first ones were at my feeders on November 21.

- House Finch: Now a very abundant bird in Sioux Center. There were zillions of them at my feeders in November -- zillions? Well, that's a bit exaggerated. Frequently, however, the finches clearly outnumbered the House Sparrows at the feeders. They also appear to be as aggressive and pugnacious as the House Sparrows. House Sparrows: watch out!?

- Pine Siskin: The first ones arrived at my feeders on November 20.

John Van Dyk  
736 East 1st Street  
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250  
712-722-1572

December 1, 1996