

Burns  
Jamaica, Iowa  
Feb. 13, 1977

Dr. N.S.Halmi  
Route #6  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear fellow "Birder":

The following is my "Field Report" for the period Dec. 1, 1976 through Feb. 13, 1977.

I mentioned to Woody Brown, when he was taking the field reports, that perhaps my observations should be recorded with "GeB", rather than "GB", to prevent confusion with Gladys Black's reports. But however you wish to distinguish the reports will be satisfactory with me. Just thought I would bring this to your attention, as I have not turned in any reports for quite sometime.

I go "Birding" every day in one or more of the following ways: Always from my yard (daily records are kept); from my car while driving to and from work from Jamaica to Coon Rapids and sometimes on to Templeton, Iowa (either 45 or 85 miles) Monday through Friday of each week (Guthrie & Carroll Counties); and then 8 hours at least in the field on either Saturday or Sunday of each week-end (Guthrie, Dallas, Greene Counties). Usually most of my observations are in Guthrie County in my Christmas Count area (I am sending you a map of the area I cover and also a town-ship area for a Raptor survey for Dean Roosa, and a map of a 25 mile route that I cover just for my own pleasure). I do not know if these will be of any value to you, and if not you may just discard them as they need not be returned to me. Of course several times during the year my wife Marilyn and I make trips to other various places in Iowa to go "Birding". I keep a monthly record of all observations showing the date and place observed (if unusual).

FIELD REPORTS: Dec. 1, 1976 through Feb. 13, 1977. - Gene Burns.

Weather: Throughout the period much colder than usual, until the middle part of February, when above normal weather held for several days. Very dry and not much snowfall. Very strong winds at various times.

General Trends: Certain usual species were either down in numbers or absent entirely during this period, but in general other species populations seemed to be about the same as last year.

- (1) Loons through Cormorants: Nothing to report.
- (2) Herons through Geese: One flock of about 30 Canada Geese observed in late December heading south in Carroll County.
- (3) Ducks: About 1200 Mallards on open water in Lake Panorama (Guthrie County) during most of December. After the lake froze over, then about 200 to 300 of them have wintered in a running creek just south of the Lake Panorama Dam.

- (4) Diurnal Raptors: Red-tailed Hawks observed regularly in all 4 Counties. Rough-legged Hawks observed in Guthrie, Dallas and Carroll Counties only. 1 in the dark phase near Dedham, Iowa in early December, and 3 in the dark phase in Dallas County of Feb. 5. Other observations were all in the light phase. The Rough-legged Hawk population seems to be down from last year. 1 Merlin observed just North of Dedham in early December. American Kestrels observed in all 4 Counties at a variety of places during each of the 3 months.
- (5) Grouse through Coots: 1 bevy of about 18 Bobwhite seen northeast of Jamaica in early December. Pheasants plentiful. 13 Wild Turkeys released south of Panora (Guthrie County) in early January but have not made any observations since their release.
- (6) Shorebirds: Common Snipe seen during December west of Bayard (Guthrie County) on several occasions and also observed in Springbrook State Park and at the north end of Bays Branch. January observations of this species in Springbrook State Park only. No sightings in February so far.
- (7) Gulls, Terns: Nothing to report.
- (8) Rock Doves through Woodpeckers: In addition to sightings of single Mourning Doves, 2 flocks of them were sighted on my Christmas Count, one with 32 birds north of Dawson, Iowa (Dallas County) and another flock of 35 birds just north of Springbrook State Park. Common Screech Owls, Great-horned Owls, Barred Owls, and Long-eared Owls about the same in number as a year ago. Short-eared Owl population down considerably in comparison. Belted Kingfishers observed all 3 months at Springbrook State Park, and the Lake Panorama dam area. Common Flicker population seems down. Red-bellied Woodpeckers on the other hand seems to have increased. Red-headed Woodpeckers down but still in goodly numbers in certain areas, especially in Springbrook State Park. Hairy Woodpeckers seem to have increased somewhat. Downy Woodpeckers about the same.
- (9) Flycatchers, Crows: Horned Lark population definitely down, undoubtedly due to the winter we have had.
- (10) Titmice through Wrens: Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Red-breasted Nuthatches about the same. (I have had one Red-breasted Nuthatch come to my feeding station on Nov. 23 and he is still coming many times daily for his "pecans".)
- (11) Thrushes through Shrikes: American Robins returned to Riverside Park near Coon Rapids on Feb. 11. One American Robin observed while I was on the Ames Christmas Count on Dec. 19 in Story County. 1 Eastern Bluebird observed on my Christmas Count on Jan. 2, just East of Jamaica. Golden-crowned Kinglets not as plentiful this year, but Ruby-crowned Kinglets seem to be holding about the same. Cedar Waxwings observed frequently in the Riverside Park area near Coon Rapids, and also quite regularly in my back yard at Jamaica. 20 at Coon Rapids and 16 at Jamaica. Loggerhead Shrikes in good numbers in all three months, and 4 Northern Shrikes have been observed. 1 at South end of Bays Branch, another between Bays Branch Jan. 16, and Lake Panorama Feb. 5. (Very possibly the same bird), 1 east of Jamaica Feb. 6, and one today Feb. 13, at the south end of McCords Pond west of Bayard. I have not made any observations of Northern Shrikes in this area heretofore.
- (12) Vireos, Warblers: Nothing to report.

- (13) Blackbirds, Tanagers: Red-winged Blackbirds observed all 3 months. Rusty Blackbirds observed in early December. Common Grackles in December and January. Today 14 Brewers Blackbirds were observed east of Jamaica. Brown-headed Cowbirds December only.
- (14) Finches, Sparrows: Cardinals have increased in population, especially east of Jamaica. Purple Finches in goodly numbers at Panora and in Riverside Park east of Coon Rapids. No Evening Grosbeaks or Pine ~~Siskings~~ Siskins observed this year. Both populations down. American Goldfinch population definitely up. Northern Juncos about the same. Tree Sparrows in goodly numbers again this year. Harris' Sparrow definitely have increased in this area. (8 at my feeding station all winter). Song Sparrows about the same. Lapland Longspur population decidedly down and possibly the same reason as given for the Horned Larks. Snow Buntings observed prior to the Dec-Feb season but none observed since Dec. 1.

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(EXTRA COMMENT: As I stated before, the American Robins came back to the Riverside Park area at the east edge of Coon Rapids on Friday Feb. 11. I usually go to this park and timbered area each noon to eat my lunch. But during the noon hour Thursday, Feb. 10th, I got so interested in the Purple Finches, Cedar Waxwings, Hairy Woodpeckers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, plus a couple of "Unidents", all right in real close to where I had just parked, that when I got out of the car, I absently mindedly locked my keys in the car. But I still had my trusty binoculars, and luckily my lunch bucket was still in my hand. So while I quickly ate my lunch and one-handedly observed my friends with my "binocks", I knew I would not have any time to walk the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile or so back into my favored timber area. I walked back to work just in time to be on duty at my required time (my binoculars under my coat, and my lunch bucket under the hood of my car at the Park). My walk back to my office required me to walk through main street of Coon Rapids. I did not care to be questioned by any well-meaning friend or foe, of just what in hell I was doing with a pair of binoculars and a lunch bucket on the main street of Coon Rapids during the noon hour.

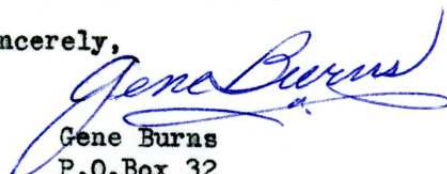
To sum this up, I definitely feel that the American Robins came back to the Riverside Park Area on Thursday, Feb. 10th, but I did not have time to check this out as a fact, as it is quite a long walk from the park to my office. Ha! Ha! for whatever it is worth).

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If this report is not of the type you would like, please feel free to let me know just how you would like to have it done, in order that it will be easier for you to glean your desired information from it.

Best regards and good birding,

Sincerely,

  
Gene Burns  
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