

Van Dyk

February 12, 1977

Dr. John Van Dyk  
736 E. 1st Street  
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

N.S. Halmi, M.D.  
Field Reports Editor  
R No. 6  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Dear Dr. Halmi:

I have very little to report from north-west Iowa, mostly because of little opportunity to bird this area extensively. The following information may be of interest to you:

- Rough-legged Hawk: exceptionally scarce, compared with other winters
- Saw-whet Owl: I observed one on January 19, 1977, right here in Sioux Center near the Dordt College campus. This is the first time I have seen it in Sioux County. Brown (Annotated List) lists it as a rare winter resident
- Snowy Owl: I placed an ad in a local paper, requesting that anyone sighting a Snowy Owl in north-west Iowa contact me. I received two confirmed reports:
  - December 15, a Snowy Owl, 5 miles west of Sioux Center, identified and confirmed by Mr. Newel, the conservation officer of Sioux and Lyon counties
  - January 26, one Snowy Owl in the Ellsworth, Minnesota area, just north of the Iowa border. To my knowledge, however, the bird has not been seen south of the border

Because of the lack of snow cover, it has been difficult to determine the relative abundance of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings this winter. Ordinarily these species are very common in north-west Iowa in winter. Other regular winter visitors, like Redpolls, seem scattered and few.

Birds seems strangely dispersed this winter. In January we drove to Winnipeg, Manitoba, and back, 550 miles (one way) through prime Snowy Owl country, but we failed to observe one single individual. For the Winnipeg CBC, birders had to scrounge around to find just one solitary Snowy Owl for their count. Meanwhile we hear about many of the owls coming through north-central Iowa and south. I mention, too, that on our drive to Winnipeg we saw just one Northern Shrike, in south-western Minnesota. I have not seen them in this area this winter.

Sincerely,  
*J. Van Dyk*  
John Van Dyk

- P.S. 1: In the December 1976 issue of I.B.L. my name was misspelled: not "James Van Dyk", but John Van Dyk
- P.S. 2: It is not clear to me how a report covering the period between December 1 and March 31 can be due on February 15. What happens to the report for the period Feb. 15 - March 31?

Reports from N will show this, no doubt