

April 5, '75

Dear Vern:

It was nice to see my report of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Am. Birds — and sure glad that another was seen at almost the same time by a number of experienced people in Illinois.

The winter was largely dull and characterized by negatives. No snow until the day before the CBC (then it brought out into the open a number of partridges which might otherwise have continued to skulk in the fields). Then a mild January, but one snowstorm or sleestorm after another in February, March and into April, so that much habitat has become inaccessible, and coverage was perforce sketchy because of the often impassable roads. The Corps of Engineers lived up to its dumb-dumb reputation: they decided to fix the floodgates of the Corabelle Dam on the coldest day of the winter. They froze ~~them~~ open, the gauge didn't function, and the whole reservoir was accidentally drained, presumably killing most of the fish. How the diving ducks etc. will like it we don't know: until a few days ago, everything was frozen. Maybe the unusually numerous gulls (Ring-billed, esp. last night) at 80 from just above the dam) were attracted by all the dead fish in the water (now very high again because of the snowmelt). Also probably more Bald Eagle sightings, for the same reason. Gladys Black sent the Colonel in charge a sarcastic letter of condolences.

A Great Blue Heron on the CBC (Dec. 21) was the first in the 24-year history of the Count. Several Sharp-shinned Hawk sightings! CBC, a couple of immatures under our window Jan. 18 etc. as mentioned, Bald Eagles reported in the paper March 18. I saw two adults next day, and stumbled on a imm. Golden Eagle.



I was a bit surprised to learn that Fred Kent had only seen one in x decades here, and Woody Brown also only one in Des Moines all these years. So, enclosed is the documentation. This was not our year for inuptile owls: many Snowy Owls in Central Iowa (fide Gladys Black), but none here, and no Short-eared. But we had at least 4 Long-eared Owls roosting NW of Iowa City in a conifer thicket from Dec. 21 well into Febr., seen by a score of people. Red-breasted Nuthatches were very hard to find, but wintering Winter Wrens were apparently rather easy to find, on the CBC and after. Many flocks of Cedar Waxwings all winter. And then the string of negatives again: no Evening Grosbeats, Purple Finches only sporadic, no Com. Redpolls, very few Pine Siskins, no crossbills of either kind, Capland Longspurs, atypically, on the CBC only, and few Snow Buntings (peak: 7 on the CBC).

I was out east at the time they had Ross' gull at Newburyport, and made a detour to catch it. No luck: the tide went out when a sleetstorm reduced visibility hopelessly. I missed some of our loniest weather by going to a meeting in L.A. and driving >1100 miles to pick up S. Calif. species (also, not the Condor) which put my AOU list over 500. Since I returned, the migration finally got off the ground, and there is some excitement: Franklin's gulls, rare in E. Iowa, seem to be all over the place in small numbers, and today I saw a Red-shouldered Hawk, which was common until 1965 or so and since has virtually vanished from the local scene.

Sincerely
Nick Galvin