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Spring 1995 Report

Note: My work in the Dordt College Center for Educational Services frequently sends me out of the state, sometimes for periods of more than a week. Consequently, my report is sketchy and not as reliable as it could be. Especially my reports of first and late dates need to be interpreted flexibly: The birds may have arrived earlier or departed later than indicated. So my report presents "ballpark figures," not scientifically accurate information.

Weather for the period:

March: The beginning of March saw an arctic air mass in firm control. This slowed down the migration (clearly begun in late February), in fact, brought it to a virtual standstill. On March 2 the temperature dipped to -2. On March 7 and 8 we broke record lows: -8 and -14 respectively. The -14 on March 8 was only one degree off the lowest temperature all winter (-15 on January 4). On March 5 and 6 we received a total of 10 and a half inches of snow.

In the second week of March there was a complete turnabout: temperatures went up to 60's and into the 70's. The snow melted quickly and the migration resumed. During the final week of the month, however, the weather was very cool, wet, and cloudy, but not sufficiently adverse to slow down the migration appreciably.

April: In the first week of April we saw some record low temps. For example, on April 3 the thermometer showed 14 degrees! On April 9 and 10 a lingering ice storm (along with several inches of snow) made life miserable and hazardous for our migrants, especially birds like Tree Swallows, Eastern Phoebes, and Bluebirds. Low temperatures, snow and ice remained for about 4 days. The remainder of April was wet and cool. At the end of the third week in April both the Rock and Big Sioux Rivers created much flooding in western Sioux County. I was out of town for over a week at the end of April: upon my return I could hardly tell any progress in the leafing out of the trees.

May: Basically cool, cloudy, and wet. During the entire month precipitation was above normal, while temperatures steadily remained below normal. There was a good deal of flooding in low-lying areas.

Ununusual sighting: Mute Swan (see below)

Observations:

- American White Pelican: Flocks of 50+ individuals were overhead in Rock Valley on April 19. Another 75 or so were at Hawarden on April 21.
- ✓ - Double-crested Cormorant: On April 14 migrants were evident everywhere in Sioux County. There were at least 100 individuals at Hawarden on April 21.
- Great Blue Heron: Arrived on March 23.
- ✓ - Great Egret: Three were at Hawarden on April 14. About 10 were at Hawarden on April 21.
- Snow Goose: Lots of birds flying over in mid-March.
- ✓ - White-fronted Goose: A flock of 30 individuals was at Hawarden on March 16.
- Canada Goose: The migration began in late February. Some birds were on their nests by mid-March.
- ✓ - Mute Swan: A single individual was at the South Pits in Hawarden on March 17. The bird appeared quite shy. It was still present on April 6. The following week it was gone. On April 19 the bird was in the Rock Valley Cement lake at the northwest side of town. After the 19th I did not see it again.
- ✓ - Wood Duck: About a half dozen were on the ice at Winterfeld in Rock Valley on the early date of March 10.
- Green-winged Teal: Arrived on March 10. They were very plentiful this spring. On April 14 they could be seen on just about every pond in Sioux County! Many still present on most ponds on April 21.
- Blue-winged Teal: Arrived a bit early in Sioux Co. on March 23
- Northern Shoveler: The first migrants were a bit early on March 16.
- Gadwall: In Sioux County in normal numbers by mid-March.
- American Wigeon: Arrived on March 26.
- Canvasback: The usual numbers moved through in mid-March.
- Redhead: First observed on March 16.
- Lesser Scaup: The first migrant had arrived in late February, before the horrendous weather in early March.

- Common Goldeneye: Usual migration. Last one observed on March 17.
- Bufflehead: Usual migration. Last ones observed on April 6.
- Hooded Merganser: Three pairs were at Rock Valley on March 23.
- Common Merganser: Arrived already in late February. Last ones observed on April 6.
- Red-breasted Merganser: First observed in Sioux Co. on March 22.
 ✓ There were 16 individuals at Hawarden on April 22.
- Ruddy Duck: First observed in Sioux Co. on March 17.
- Turkey Vulture: First observed over Sioux Center on April 13.
 On April 21 there was a flock of seven in western Sioux Co.
- ✓ Bald Eagle: Plentiful this spring. On March 17 a flock of 8 was sailing over the lakes at Hawarden. Last one observed: an
 ✓ immature at Hawarden on April 14.
- Northern Harrier: First observed on March 17. Last one at Hawarden on April 14.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk: First migrant observed on March 5.
- Cooper's Hawk: An adult, appearing injured, was captured on the
 ✓ Dordt College campus on April 3. After a day in a cage, the bird was released and appeared in good shape, judging by the way it flew off and headed to the nearest evergreen. Another Cooper's Hawk was west of Sioux Center on April 14, and still another one over Sioux Center on April 19.
- Red-Tailed Hawk: The migration seemed normal.
- American Kestrel: Good migration, especially in the second half of March.
- ✓ Northern Bobwhite: To our amazement, one was in my yard on April 27.
- American Coot: Two wintered at Rock Valley. In March and April they became very common in almost every Sioux County pond.
- Killdeer: Once again arrived later than usual, on March 15.
- Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs: Both species arrived on April 14.
- ✓ Hudsonian Godwit. Several were in flooded fields in Western Sioux County on May 18.
- ✓ Bonaparte's Gull: Four were at Hawarden on April 14.

- Franklin's Gull: Not observed until April 21, when they were numerous between Hawarden and Akron.
- Mourning Dove: The first migrants arrived on March 23.
- Common Nighthawk: Arrived a bit late on May 20.
- Chimney Swift: Arrived somewhat late on May 1.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird: First observed in Sioux Center on May 11.
- ✓ - Eastern Phoebe: Arrived on April 6. One was in my yard just before the April ice storm (April 7), and another the day after the snow and ice melted (April 14). I hope it was the same individual.
- Other Empidonax: They were abundant (sometimes three or four in my yard at once) during the last two weeks of May.
- ✓ - Tree Swallow: Present on April 6.
- ✓ - Barn Swallow: Arrived on April 14.
- ✓ - Purple Martin: Arrived in Sioux Center on April 13. Cold weather in late April and early May may have affected them.
- Brown Creeper: Migrants arrived in Sioux Center on April 8.
- ✓ - Sedge Wren: Several males were singing in grassy areas just west of Lake Pahoja in Lyon County on May 18. They probably nest in this area.
- ✓ - Golden-crowned Kinglet: Migrants were in Sioux Center on March 24 and were observable for the next few weeks.
- ✓ - Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Arrived in late March. Last one observed in Sioux Center on May 23.
- ✓ - Veery: Quite common this year. Several were in my yard on May 13 and again on May 21.
- ✓ - Gray-cheeked Thrush: Good migration. The birds were common everywhere from May 8 to nearly the end of the month.
- ✓ - Swainson's Thrush: Very good migration. They were very common in Sioux County, beginning May 5.
- ✓ - Hermit Thrush: In Orange City and Sioux Center on April 11. Several were in my yard during the week of April 11 and April 20.
- American Robin: By mid-March migrants were everywhere.
- Eastern Bluebird: Arrived on March 17.

- ✓ - Brown Thrasher: Arrived on April 15.
- Loggerhead Shrike: First one observed in western Sioux Co. on April 21.
- Vireos and Warblers: A better-than average migration. especially in terms of numbers of individuals (not necessarily numbers of species. There were no unusual observations. There were some good days when warblers were bunched up, especially on May 10 and 11.
- ✓ - Scarlet Tanager: One made a brief visit in Sioux Center on May 9.
- ✓ - Northern Cardinal: Several pairs were in Sioux Center throughout the period.
- Dickcissel: Arrived on May 11.
- Vesper Sparrow: Arrived on April 14.
- ✓ - Fox Sparrow: The first migrants were at Rock Valley on March 17. They were quite conspicuous this spring. They could be seen in my yard every day from April 3 through April 13. Last ones observed on April 21.
- ✓ - American Tree Sparrow: Very active in large flocks throughout most of March. Last one observed on April 21.
- ✓ - Harris' Sparrow: They lingered to well into May. They were still present on May 19.
- ✓ - Dark-eyed Junco: Several of the "Oregon" race were in Sioux Center in the first week of March. Last Junco observed on April 27.
- ✓ - White-throated Sparrow. First observed in Sioux Center on April 15.
- Red-winged Blackbird: By mid-March these birds were on their territories.
- Rusty Blackbird: Usual migration in mid-March.
- Common Grackle: By mid-March Grackles were setting up their territories.
- ✓ - Orchard Oriole: Like last year, they visited blooming apple trees in Sioux Center beginning on May 17.
- ✓ - Purple Finch: A female was on my feeders on April 12 and 13.
- ✓ - House Finch: Nesting in many different places in Sioux Center.

✓ - Pine Siskin: Small numbers were at our feeders throughout March and early April. Last ones observed on April 10.

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