

Winter 1979/80 Report

Weather for the period: The winter was unusually mild. Temperatures in both December and January were well above normal, while precipitation was well below normal. February saw a return of winter weather with normal temperatures. Coldest temperature of the winter: 15 below zero on January 31. Unlike most of Iowa, our corner of the state escaped most of the snows; as a result there was practically no snow cover for almost the entire period.

Note: The report begins with the second half of the checklist, as requested by Vernon Kleen.

Doves through Shrikes:

- Mourning Dove: small numbers lingered until December 20.
- - Common Flicker: common this winter. In normal winters only a few remain. This winter we observed them on nearly every birding trip.
- - Hairy Woodpecker: doing very well, both in towns and along the Big Sioux and Rock Rivers.
- - Horned Lark: their numbers were down sharply. They were practically absent in December and January, and only small flocks were observed occasionally in February.
- - American Crow: a flock of about 100 wintered in Sioux Center during the greater part of January.
- - Brown Creeper: exceptionally common throughout the entire period. They were daily to be seen in Sioux Center.
- - American Robin: a few individuals remained during the entire winter.
- - Golden-crowned Kinglet: like the Brown Creeper, exceptionally common this winter. We observed flocks of 3 to 12 individuals in various places throughout Sioux Co.
- Northern Shrike: none observed.

Meadowlarks through Buntings:

- - Western Meadowlark: in spite of the mild winter, we observed very few. Their numbers seem to be down. Is anyone else commenting on this species?
- - Red-winged Blackbird: some 40 individuals were still present along the Rock River in western Sioux Co. on December 20. Normally they have left by that time.

- - Common Grackle: a few individuals remained during the entire winter.
- Northern Cardinal: doing well. We see them on every birding trip. Especially along the rivers in western Sioux Co. they appear to be flourishing.
- Evening Grosbeak: none observed.
- Purple Finch: none observed.
- Common Redpoll: none observed.
- American Goldfinch: small flocks present throughout the period.
- - Red Crossbill: we observed one female in Sheldon (O'Brien Co.) on January 4.
- Northern Junco: present in usual numbers.
- American Tree Sparrow: present in usual numbers throughout the period.
- - Harris' Sparrow: small numbers remained throughout the period.
- - White-throated Sparrow: I observed a singing male on February 27.
- Song Sparrow: remained common until the end of December. Nearly absent since then.
- Lapland Longspur: none observed in December and January. Small flocks present in February.
- Snow Bunting: none observed this winter.

Geese through Hawks:

- - Geese: some Dordt College students reported seeing geese overhead (heading north!) on January 15.
- - Mallard: a flock of 200 wintered at Winterveld Park in Rock Valley (Sioux Co.).
- - American Wigeon: we observed a male in a creek near Sioux Center on December 1.
- - Red-tailed Hawk: common throughout the period.
- - Rough-legged Hawks: none observed since November.
- - American Kestrel: above normal numbers this winter. We see several on practically every birding trip.

Submitted by Dr. John Van Dyk
736 East 1st Street
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250
Sioux Co.

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