

5/30/81

Van Dyke
JV

Spring 1980 Report

Note: I will be out of the state for the remainder of the month; hence I am mailing the spring report a few days early. As last time, the report again begins with the second half of the checklist. How long do you want us to continue this practice?

Weather for the Period: March was generally colder than normal. Water continued to be frozen until the middle of the month. About 2" of snow fell as late as March 29. Another 4" fell on April 3, but did not remain on the ground for long. Beginning April 6 the weather turned warm and dry. In mid-April temperatures were up in the 90's. No significant rain fell until May 16. Because of the warm and dry April weather trees were fully leafed out by late April, ahead of normal. A short-lived cold snap on May 7 and 8 dropped the temperature to 28 degrees F., and killed leaves of Sumac, Walnut, and Mulberry. No severe weather occurred in the area until Memorial Day, May 26.

Doves through Woodpeckers:

- ✓ - Mourning Dove: first migrants arrived on March 24. Since then they have come in goodly numbers and are exceptionally plentiful this year.
- Cuckoos: both Black-billed and Yellow-billed were present along the Rock River in western Sioux Co. by May 24. On May 24 I observed a pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos mating.
- Screech Owl: strong winds on May 25 blew some adventurous fledgling owls, still unable to fly, to the ground. I was apprised by phone of one victim, and personally helped place another baby owl back into the trees whence it had come.
- ✓ - Common Nighthawk: the first migrants arrived on May 21; they have been quite scarce as yet.
- Chimney Swift: arrived right on time, on April 24.
- Belted Kingfisher: none observed thus far -- a bit unusual.
- ✓ - Red-headed Woodpecker: observed the first migrants on April 5. They are now present in fine numbers. No problem whatever.

Flycatchers through Warblers:

- the Empidonax migration seemed unimpressive. Numbers were somewhat down, compared to good migrations of recent years.
- ✓ - Eastern Phoebe: present in normal numbers. It has been doing well in western Sioux Co.
- ✓ - Cliff Swallow: none observed thus far, which is unusual.
- ✓ - Purple Martin: arrived ahead of schedule, on April 5. According to a newspaper report they were present even earlier in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on April 4. Fortunately for them the weather warmed up soon after their arrival. They are present in Sioux Center in splendid numbers.

- ✓ - Red-breasted Nuthatch: several were present in Sioux Center in the first week of March.
- Robin: the first waves of migrants arrived on March 15.
- Wood Thrush: normally they sing at this time of the year in the woods along the Rock and Sioux Rivers in western Sioux Co., but thus far I have not heard any.
- ✓ - Hermit Thrush: observed one individual in the Sioux-Rock Access area in western Sioux Co. on April 5.
- ✓ - Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrush: migrating through Sioux Co. in more normal numbers this year, compared to the spectacular migration last spring.
- ✓ - Eastern Bluebird: only one individual observed, a female, on April 27 in Sioux Center.
- ✓ - Golden-crowned Kinglet: still present in Sioux Center on April 2.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet: migrated through this area in fine numbers.
- Vireos: very few observed. The leafiness of the trees probably has something to do with this. Nevertheless, the number of singing Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, for example, definitely seems down. Will need to be checked further this summer.
- Warblers: an unimpressive migration. Again, the early leafing out of the trees probably interfered with observation. Here in north-west Iowa the following transient warblers are abundant: Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler; the following are common: Black-and-White Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll, Northern Waterthrush; all other warblers are uncommon to rare. Yellow Warblers and Redstarts are common breeders. They are present in normal numbers.
- ✓ - In earlier reports I have indicated that the Blackburnian Warbler, though uncommon, is regular in north-west Iowa (contra Brown's Annotated List, which suggests that it is rare here). I now want to make a similar claim for the Wilson's Warbler. Brown's Annotated List reports it as irregular and uncommon in the west. It has proven to be quite regular in Sioux Co., however, both in spring and fall. This spring the species was definitely abundant.
- ✓ - Black-throated Green Warbler: observed one individual in our yard here in Sioux Center on April 30. It is quite rare in north-west Iowa.

Meadowlark through Sparrows:

- ✓ - Western Meadowlark: although I reported this species as unusually scarce during the greater part of the winter, their numbers have now substantially increased so that I would now judge them to be present in normal numbers.
- ✓ - Dickcissel: arrived shortly after mid-May, and are present in good (and normal) numbers. Need not be blue-listed in north-west Iowa.

- ✓ - Grasshopper Sparrow: quite plentiful now after their arrival on May 15. Need not be blue-listed in north-west Iowa.
- ✓ - Vesper Sparrow: arrived in mid-May and now present in plentiful numbers. It is a very common bird in Sioux and Lyon Cos.
- ✓ - Lark Sparrow: observed a pair in upper Oak Grove Park, western Sioux Co., on May 24, apparently preparing to breed.
- Dark-eyed Junco: began to sing on March 14, and stayed with us until the second week of April.
- Tree Sparrow: left us in the second week of April.
- ✓ - Clay-colored Sparrow: migrated through this area in normal numbers. It is fairly common in this area in late April and early May.

Grebes through Mergansers:

- ✓ - Eared Grebe: observed about a dozen or so on Pahoja Lake in Lyon Co. on May 15.
- White Pelican: some flocks were seen in April. Not as good a migration as last year.
- ✓ - Double-crested Cormorant: compared to last year, their numbers were sharply down.
- Herons: disturbingly scarce this spring. Some Great Blue Herons were migrating in early April. However, they were not to be seen in their usual haunts in this area since then. Is the spring drought waving them on to more watery places in the north and north-east? Four Green Herons were present in western Lyon Co. on May 20.
- Geese: normal numbers (of all three species) overhead in March.
- Ducks: a normal migration. The following species were observed: Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Pintail, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck.
- Pintail: their numbers seemed down.
- Canvasback: only three observed.
- ✓ - Lesser Scaup: a pair still present in Lyon Co. (Pahoja Lake) on May 15.
- ✓ - Common Merganser: exceptionally common during the latter half of March, present on practically every lake, pond, and puddle.
- ✓ - Red-breasted Merganser: about 20 or so were present on Pahoja Lake, Lyon Co., on April 5.
- ✓ - Hooded Merganser: two pair were present among Ring-necked Ducks on a small pond in extreme western Sioux Co. on March 25.

Hawks through Terns:

- Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks: none observed.
- Red-tailed Hawk: good migration.

- Broad-winged Hawk: so-so migration, not nearly as good as last year.
- Northern Harrier: their numbers, too, seemed reduced.
- American Kestrel: excellent numbers present in March.
- ✓ - Bob-white: good news! They're finally coming back, after many years of virtual absence. One can now hear them call in many of the areas in western Sioux Co. where they were formerly quite common. Undoubtedly the mild winter helped them along.
- Shorebirds: their numbers were down, mostly because the dry conditions eliminated a good deal of habitat.
- ✓ - Long-billed Dowitcher: one individual was present in extreme western Lyon Co. on May 10.
- ✓ - Hudsonian Godwit: two individuals were present in extreme western Lyon Co. on May 10.
- other shorebirds observed: Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper (only one individual, Lyon Co., May 20), Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope. Nothing unusual about these to report.
- Black Tern: common in May. No other terns observed.

Submitted by

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