

HEARD ON THE BIRDLINE
Spring 1998
March 15-June 15
By Jim Fuller, Iowa City

All sightings of rare birds reported to the Iowa Birdline are considered tentative until submitted and approved by the Records Committee of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union.

James Huntington discovered a LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE at Lake MacBride the evening of June 10, and it remained through the following day. The only accepted North American record for this species is from Attu Island, Alaska in June of 1994, a bird which Huntington also saw. This is a phenomenal record even though the origin of the bird remains to be determined.

Other remarkable sightings during the Spring were SPRAGUE'S PIPIT, NEOTROPIC CORMORANT, BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK, and GLOSSY IBIS. The PIPIT, for which there were no Iowa records prior to this year, was found by members of the North Iowa Bird Club at Union Hills W.A. in Cerro Gordo County on April 22. There are only two previous records in the state for NEOTROPIC CORMORANT, which was reported by Mark Proescholdt at Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County on May 4. A potential sixth state sighting for BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK occurred when Russ Reisz spotted an adult flying over Tomahawk Marsh in Sac County on April 10, but it was not until May 3 that the bird was relocated there, and subsequently it was seen almost daily for the next three weeks. The GLOSSY IBIS was found at Thorpe Park in Hancock County on May 27.

The latter half of March and early days of April saw numerous reports of TUNDRA and TRUMPETER SWANS, as well WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS, which were likely a residual from the late fall and winter CROSSBILL invasion. It is interesting that one bird was still at Algona on April 24, and another found Pam and Reid Allen's yard at West Des Moines to its liking from May 2-19.

The end of March was highlighted by a FERRUGINOUS HAWK in Ida County on the 29th, and FISH CROWS in Cerro Gordo and Louisa Counties. Then in April, several unusual waterfowl made their appearance with OLDSQUAWS at UNION SLOUGH NWR on the 4th, and at Lock & Dam #16 on the Mississippi River on the 18th and 19th. Mid-April saw reports of RED-NECKED GREBE at Ames on the 10th, Sweet Marsh in Bremer County on the 15th, and Little Wall Lake in Hamilton County on the 16th. CINNAMON TEAL likewise showed up on state waters about the same time, with sightings at Dunbar Slough in Greene County on the 13th, Waubonsie W.A. in Fremont County on the 14th, and Virgin Lake in Palo Alto County on the 18th.

The first report of an adult COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL came on April 19 from Grover's Lake on the Minnesota border, attracting attention from birders from our neighbor state to the north, and these birds continued to be seen sporadically there and at the Kettleson W.P.A. nearby in Dickinson County through June 7. Other rare GULL sightings included GLAUCOUS in Dickinson County on March 28, THAYER'S in Palo Alto County on April 19, and an immature BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE at Lake Rathbun on April 26th.

April also saw the only BEWICK'S WREN reported from Lee County on the 18th, and on the 19th Diane Porter was surprised to see an EVENING GROSBEAK at her feeder in Fairfield, while a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was at Brenton Slough in Polk County on the 26th. SMITH'S LONGSPURS were also sighted during April near Cone Marsh in Louisa County, and in Kossuth County.

May came in with reports on the 1st of BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE at the Plymouth County location where a nest was found last year, and a BLACK-NECKED STILT was at Mark Twain NWR in Louisa County. The PRAIRIE WARBLER returned to Lake MacBride State Park on the 4th, and was still singing there in mid-June, while another was at the Henry County W.A. on May 19. SNOWY EGRETS in Des Moines and Dickinson Counties were the only reports for that species. MISSISSIPPI KITES returned to Ledges State Park on May 17, and in Taylor County, two BARN OWLS returned to the Freemyer farm near Bedford on the 26th. Other May sightings of note included a male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER at Parker's Woods in Mason City on the 15th, PLEGADIS (IBIS) at Grover's Lake in Dickinson County on the 20th, and a RED-THROATED LOON at Pleasant Creek Recreation Area in Linn County on the 25th.

June eye-openers, both on the 13th were a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER at the Iowa Arboretum in Boone County, and a KING RAIL at Arrington Marsh in Polk County.