

HEARD ON THE BIRDLINE
FALL- September-November 2000

By Jim Fuller, Iowa City

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

Most years, fall migration and vagrant appearance is spread over a period of at least three months, and year 2000 has been no exception. There were four exceptional sightings; PYGMY NUTHATCH, SWALLOW-TAILED KITE, PARASITIC JAEGER, and WHOOPING CRANE.

Matt Kenne was strolling through Riverview Cemetery in Algona on 30 October, when an agitated bird call prompted him to a PYGMY NUTHATCH, potentially a second state record. During the latter half of September, at least three reports of SWALLOW-TAILED KITE were received from the Claybanks Forest area in Cerro Gordo County. Two days before Thanksgiving, Justin Rink of Macomb, IL was birding the Mississippi River below Lock & Dam 19 at Keokuk, when he discovered a juvenile PARASITIC JAEGER harassing gulls, and the bird remained at that location one more day. Strong west winds may have been responsible for displacing a family of three WHOOPING CRANES, which were observed at Prairie Rose SP near Harlan on 12 November.

Appanoose County birders contributed two rarity sightings in September, with a TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE at Centerville on the 24th 26th, and a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON at the Sedan Wetlands on the 30th. IBIS (Sp.) were reported from September at the Hawkeye WA in Johnson County on 3rd and 4th and Union Slough NWR on the 22nd-23rd. Two MISSISSIPPI KITES in southwest Des Moines, and a YELLOW RAIL at Doolittle Prairie in Story County were other September highlights.

An adult MEW GULL at Burlington on the 23rd headed up the list of extensive fall gull sightings. Two SABINE'S GULL reports were limited to early October with one at Pleasant Creek Recreation Area in Linn County on the 5th and another at Lake Manawa on the 10th. A BLACK-HEADED GULL returned to the north end of Spirit Lake on 7 October and was still being seen there through the middle of November. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL reports came from Red Rock Reservoir, where there was an adult on 10 October and a first year bird on 15 November. Another Red Rock gull was a first year CALIFORNIA GULL on 23 October. An adult GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL was at Lock & Dam #13 at Clinton for a week in late October and early November. GLAUCOUS GULLS, which were all first year birds, appeared earlier than usual in November with sightings at Lock & Dam #18 on the 10th, Red Rock Reservoir on the 16th, Lake Minnewashta in Dickinson County on the 19th, and Lock & Dam #19 on the 22nd.

A RED-THROATED LOON was at Red Rock on 20 October, and PACIFIC LOONS were found on a borrow pit west of Ft. Madison on 13-16 November, and at the Saylorville Reservoir on 19 November.

Waterfowl came into the state later than normal, and there were no scoters reported until 4 November when a WHITE-WINGED SCOTER was seen at Red Rock. At least two reports of all three SCOTER species were received during the rest of November. LONG-TAILED DUCKS were found at Lock & Dam #13 on 4 November and Diamond Lake in Poweshiek County on 20 November.

Encouraging were four RED CROSSBILL reports during November in Boone, Warren, Johnson, and Allamakee Counties. A BOHEMIAN WAXWING found at Spirit Lake on 11

November, and a PRARIE FALCON in Sioux County on 28 October were the only observations of those species. A BURROWING OWL in Lyon County was reportedly sighted on 22 October near a summer nest burrow site.

First sightings of the season included NORTHERN SHRIKE in Madison County on 9 October, and NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL at George Wyth SP in Black Hawk County on 7 November. More NORTHERN GOSHAWK sightings were reported this fall than the previous several years. The hawk watch at Hitchcock Nature Area in the loess hills of Pottawattamie County produced some interesting observations, including an amazing 38 MISSISSIPPI KITES, and significant numbers of PRAIRIE FALCON, NORTHERN GOSHAWK, and GOLDEN EAGLE.

Finally, "Bubba" the CAPE MAY WARBLER, which was pampered last winter in a Cedar Rapids backyard, returned for more on 3 November.