

Vandyk

## Winter Report

### Weather for the period:

December: seasonal with average temperatures and precipitation

January: temperatures much below normal (by about 12 degrees!). Coldest day of the winter: -26 on January 9. Several arctic cold waves hit the area. Precipitation much above normal (about 30" instead of the usual 6 or 7"). A major blizzard strikes on January 22, accompanied by an 18" snowfall.

February: little additional snowfall. Below normal temperatures for the first half of the month (record lows on February 6), then seasonal and above average in the latter half. Most of the snowcover is gone by the end of the month. Some flooding occurred in last half of month.

- Canada Goose: about 8 individuals wintered at Wintersveld Park in Rock Valley (Sioux Co.). A part of the lake in this park is kept open artificially.
- White-fronted Goose: one individual wintered along with the Canada Geese in Rock Valley.
- Mallard: about 300 individuals wintered in Rock Valley.
- Wood Duck: at least one male wintered in Rock Valley.
- Red-tailed Hawk: we observed a "Kridler's Hawk" in Oak Grove State Park on December 28.
- Rough-legged Hawk: once again, extremely scarce in north-west Iowa this winter.
- Bald Eagle: Ken Hollinga of Wichita, Kansas, observed two individuals, an adult and an immature, in Oak Grove Park on December 26. Another adult was seen in Doon (Sioux Co.) in week before Christmas. According to newspaper reports, still another individual was shot to death in Alton (Sioux Co.) in the same week.
- Prairie Falcon:
  - (1) On December 26 Ken Hollinga of Wichita, Kansas, observed one individual about 1½ miles south of Sioux Center. I birded with Ken a few days later, and found him to be a competent and reliable observer.
  - (2) On February 6 my son and I found a Prairie Falcon some 3 miles south-west of Sioux Center. We discovered the bird resting on an abandoned schoolhouse, and could approach him quite closely. The bird then flew and made a circle around us, allowing us to see the black wingpits clearly. Both of us have seen Prairie Falcons before in Nevada and California (we have also had occasion to observe Peregrine Falcons and the Gyrfalcon, though not in Iowa, so we are somewhat familiar with falcons). Documentation attached.
- American Kestrel: quite common in north-west Iowa throughout the period.

- Gallinaceous birds: it's difficult to judge at this point how the Bob-white, Pheasant, and Gray Partridge fared through the harsh and snowy January month. Pheasants seem to have done well, but Bob-white may have suffered decline.
- Common Snipe: one individual was present on December 25 in Sioux Center by a farm pond fed by a spring.
- Mourning Dove: wintered in Sioux Co. until the middle of January.
- Great Horned Owl: On December 29 we found an individual of the arctic race. Our first thought was "What is a Snowy Owl doing in a clump of evergreens?" The bird was as white and flecked as a Snowy Owl. We observed the bird closely. The illustration of the subarctic form on page 173 of the new Peterson's guide depicts the facial features and color very accurately.
- Short-eared Owl: we observed one individual at the edge of Oak Grove Park on February 13.
- Common Flicker: many wintered in this area.
- Red-headed Woodpecker: unusually large numbers wintered in Oak Grove Park. On February 12, for example, I counted at least six individuals along the Big Sioux River in Oak Grove.
- Hairy Woodpecker: continues to do well in Sioux Co.
- Robin: a few wintered along the Sioux and Rock Rivers.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet: exceptionally scarce this winter.
- Northern Shrike: one individual observed 4 miles south of Rock Valley on February 27.
- Western Meadowlark: virtually absent this winter.
- Red-winged Blackbird: a few wintered in Sioux Co. until the middle of January.
- Common Grackle: a few wintered until the middle of January.
- Northern Cardinal: quite abundant in December along Sioux and Rock Rivers, but scarce in January and February. But the effects of the winter on this species may be somewhat difficult to judge at this point.
- Evening Grosbeak: none observed.
- Purple Finch: very few observed during the period.
- Common Redpoll: quite common from the middle of January through remainder of the period.
- White-winged Crossbill: two males observed at Rock Valley on December 28.
- Harris' Sparrow: a few wintered until mid-January.
- Lapland Longspur & Snow Bunting: large numbers present both in separate and in mixed flocks or mixed with Horned Larks.

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