

RATHBUN CHRISTMAS COUNT - DEC. 19, 1998

Species requiring brief details justifying identification, submitted by Bill Heusinkveld. All notes are summarized on this page.

1. Bonaparte's Gull - This flock was seen by several parties during the morning. One was Gene Armstrong who circled the lake to pick up all of the water birds. Another was Bill and Marj Heusinkveld who saw it at about 500 feet with binoculars. They were smaller than the Ring Bill Gulls and had the dark mark behind the ear. In flight they definitely showed the white leading edge of the wing primaries.
2. Yellow Rumped Warbler - There was only one seen. The Heusinkvelds and Darlene Ayres and Nelson Hoskins were walking through a pine grove and playing a tape of a Screech Owl call. The call flushed the bird. Both Nelson Hoskins and Marj Heusinkveld saw it at a distance of about 100 feet with binoculars before it flew. They saw the yellow on the rump and side.
3. Blue Wing Teal - There were three seen on the lake near the dam by Kay Malmberg and party. She said that she saw the white crescent on the head in front of the eye and had no doubt about the identification. Normally they have all gone south by the time of the Christmas count, but this was a very abnormal year with all the lakes in Iowa still open and the unseasonable warm spell for such a long time before the count. The many Robins seen during the count shows what an unusual year it was.
4. Black Bellied Plover - This was seen by Gene and Eloise Armstrong when they circled the lake. It is another indication of the unusually late winter. Gene said he would send a documentation, but has not done so at this time.

Also seen during the immediate time frame:

1. 5 Trumpeter Swans and a Red Breasted Merganser were seen by Tom Johnson at Rathbul Lake on the following day, Dec. 20.