

FIELD REPORTS

FALL 1980

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WEATHER AND HABITAT CONDITIONS

This fall was generally warm and dry. Except for a short-lived snow storm in October, the weather in late fall was mild and water areas remained open.

GENERAL TRENDS

The mild weather was associated with many late records including Common Loon, Lesser Golden Plover, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and several warblers. Waterfowl were notably late and dispersed throughout the season so that concentrations appeared to be down. Red-breasted Nuthatches heralded a widespread invasion of northern species. Increased numbers of Pine Siskins and Purple Finches were followed by many sightings of Snowy Owls, Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, and White-winged Crossbills. Only one Common Redpoll was noted. Hawks were reported in good numbers and there were several sightings of Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

G. Black
D. Bierman
T. Bray
M. Brewer
B. Clark
R. Cummins
J. Dinsmore
E. Folk
I. Getscher
J. Hansen
J. Hanson
R. Harms
D. Harr
R. Hellis
W. Jardine
T. Kent
I. Knopp
D. Koenig
R. Laubach
P. Martsching
F. Moore
L. Myers
D. Newhouse
M. Newton
P. Petersen
R. Phipps
J. Robinson
J. Schaefer
T. Shires
R. Silcock
T. Stone
R. Thornburg
J. Van Dyk
B. Wilson
H. Zalatel

A Brant shot at DeSoto NWR may provide the first tangible evidence of this species in Iowa. There are a number of old records dating into the last century, but none provides sufficient evidence for placing Brant on the Official List of Iowa Birds. Perhaps the most exciting bird of the year was a Curve-billed Thrasher which took up residence at a feeder near Solon in Johnson Co. Casual species documented during the period included Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Prairie Falcon, and Yellow Rail. ^{Sandhill Crane} Two accidental species will be referred to the Records Committee for evaluation.

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Common Loon: 1 on 28 Nov at L. Macbride (RHo) was late.

Eared Grebe: There were 4 reports, the first a very early bird in winter plumage: 11 Aug at Little Clear L. Pocahontas Co. (RC), 7 Sep at Willow S. (BWi), 14 Sep at Little Wall L. Hamilton Co. (HZ), and 25 Oct at Lizard L. Pocahontas Co. (RC).

Western Grebe: 1 at Big Spirit Lake on 15, 21 Oct (DH); 1 at Montezuma Poweshiek Co. on 22 Oct (DK); 1 at DeSoto NWR on 2, 29 Oct, 2 Nov (+JR. m.ob.). The 2 Oct date (EK fide JD) is early.

Pied-billed Grebe: Barb Wilson monitored grebe populations at Willow S. Mills Co. throughout the fall. Two active nests were present in Aug. Pied-billed counts started with 31 on 2 Aug, peaked at 212 on 9 Sep and dropped to 9 on 10 Nov just before the ice drove them south.

American White Pelican: Large flocks on 9 Sep were 570 in Ida

Co. (DBi) and 200 at Hamburg (IG). Willow S. populations varied from 89 on the early date of 1 Sep to 240 on 16-17 Sep to 17 on 15 Oct (BWi).

Double-crested Cormorant: Record early dates were 1 Sep at Willow S. (BWi) and 3 Sep at Coralville Res. (TK). A late date was 22 Nov at DeSoto NWR (TB, m.ob.). Peak numbers were 51 at Willow S. (BWi), 50 at Red Rock Res. (GB), 25 at Coralville Res. (TK) and 22 at DeSoto NWR (HZ).

Great Blue Heron: There were 17 nests at Rathbun L. compared to 34 a year ago (CS). Peak numbers were 200 at Red Rock Res. in Sep (GB) and 55 at Coralville Res. on 3 Sep (TK).

Little Blue Heron: There were reports from Rathbun Res. (CS, BR fide JD), Cone M. (RHo, TK), Sweet M. (RMy, FM, TSJr), and Union S. (TSJr, TSt, RHa), all in Aug except for 1 on 8 Sep at Colyn WMA (BR fide JD).

Cattle Egret: Two reports: late Aug at Colyn WMA (JC fide JD), 30-31 Aug at Sweet M. (FM, TSJr, RMy).

Great Egret: Peak numbers were 60 at Red Rock Res. on 6 Sep (RMy), 40 at Rathbun L. on 17 Aug (CS) and 26 at Coralville ~~X~~ Res. on 3 Sep (TK).

Snowy Egret: Two reports: 22 Aug at Waterloo (TSJr) and 30 Aug at Sweet M. (+RMy, +FM, TSJr).

Yellow-crowned Night Heron: Two immatures were reported: 14 Aug at Union S. NWR (+RMy) and 17 Aug at DeSoto NWR (TB et al, "legs beyond tail").

Least Bittern: An amazing 12 were at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr, TSt, RHa). Other reports were 2 Sep in Winnabago Co.

(JRH, RB, GZ, DMu), 24 Sep at Goose L. Greene Co. (BC fide JD) and 18 Oct at Rush L. Palo Alto Co. (RC).

Whistling Swan: 180 were counted at Lock and Dam 9 on 16 Nov (TK, TSh, CB); 1 was at Boone in late Sep (DN).

Ross' Goose: 5 were seen at DeSoto NWR on 25 Nov (+RJ, BF). → On

Brant:

2 Nov a Black Brant was shot at DeSoto NWR (+MM, +RS).

Apparently the specimen has been saved for mounting (DKn fide JD). Hopefully the tangible evidence will be available for review by the Records Committee so that this species can be added to the official state list. There have been a number of reports of Brant for over 100 years but adequate descriptions or specimens are lacking.

Green-winged Teal: 200 at Forney L. on 12 Nov was a large flock (TB, SK, BP).

Cinnamon Teal: 2 males were at Big Creek L. Polk Co. on 7 Sep (+JR, +HZ, +PM). and one was shot at Zirble S. Cerro Gordo Co. (SS fide JRH).

Canvasback: 3000 were on the Mississippi above Keokuk on 24 Oct (TK) and 500 at Lock and Dam 9 on 16 Nov (TK, TSh, CB).

Ring-necked Duck: 1 was seen on the early date of 15 Aug near Council Bluffs (TB, SK, BP, MW).

Oldsquaw: A female was shot at Clear L. on 15 Nov (fide JRH).

Black Scoter: A female was well described including a drawing at Volga L. on 21 Nov (+JS).

Surf Scoter: 3 females were observed at Lizard L. on 5 Oct (+RC).

White-winged Scoter: 2 were killed at Rush L. Osceola Co. (DH).

VULTURES THROUGH TURKEY

Osprey: There were several unusually early dates: 23 Aug at Sweet M. (FM,RMy), 31 Aug in Greene Co. (HZ) and 1 Sep in Pocahontas Co. (RC).

Northern Goshawk: 1 was observed at Sunken Grove Pocahontas Co. on 6 Sep (+WJ).

Red-tailed Hawk: Concentrations of 43 (DBi), 30 (PP) and 29 (GB) were reported. Harlan's Hawks were reported on 29 Oct and 15 Nov at DeSoto NWR (TB, m. ob.).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 3 at Sweet M. on 4 Oct (RMy); 1 at Sweet M. on 12 Oct (FM,RMy); 1 at Davenport on 25 Oct (PP).

Broad-winged Hawk: A juvenile was seen near a nest at Ledges SP on 7 Aug (PB fide DN).

Swainson's Hawk: 2 were at Waucoma Fayette Co. on 3 Aug (JS); 3 were in Guthrie Co. on 20 Sep (RC) and 21 Sep (MN,CN,TK,TSh).

Golden Eagle: On 29 Nov 2 were in the usual location in Allamakee Co. (DK,JS) and 1 was in Pocahontas Co. (+WJ).

Prairie Falcon: 1 was seen at DeSoto NWR including a view of the black axillaries (+LP,BP).

Peregrine Falcon: There were three documented reports: 19 Sep at Waterloo (+RMy), 21 Sep at Dunbar S. Greene Co. (+MN,+TK) and 21 Sep at Diamond L. Poweshiek Co. (+MN,+TK). Two other sightings were undocumented.

Merlin: 21 Sep at Dunbar S. (+MN,+TK); 3 Oct in Cherokee Co. (+DBi).

Gray Partridge: 10 on 15 Nov 2 miles sw of Waterloo were the first for that location (FM,RMy).

Wild Turkey: 3 adults and 8 young were at Ledges SP on 6 Sep (HZ).

CRANES THROUGH TERNS

Sandhill Crane: 3 were at DeSoto NWR on 22 Nov (AS fide TB).

Yellow Rail: 1 was caught by a dog, photographed and released at Big M. Butler Co. (JLH,CP). Another undocumented report was received.

American Avocet: 4 were at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa).

Lesser Golden Plover: Unusually large fall flocks of 200 in Bremer Co. on 12 Oct (FM,RMy) and 60 in Sioux Co. on 4 Oct (JV) were seen. Two at Coralville Res. on 22 Nov were a record late date (+TK,RMy,RM,RHa,JS).

Black-bellied Plover: 1-7 were seen at widely scattered locations in Oct.

Hudsonian Godwit: Two were reported at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa).

Marbled Godwit: Two were reported (no detail given) at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa).

Lesser Yellowlegs: 1 at Cone M. on 24 Oct (TK) is the second latest recorded date.

Willet: 1 at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa).

Northern Phalarope: 1 at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa); and 4 at Willow S. on 16, 17 Aug (BWi).

American Woodcock: 1 seen in Dickinson Co. on 9 Oct (DH) was unusual.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Juveniles were studied and photographed

at Corallville Res. on 1-2 Sep (+MN,+TK). Another was seen at Dunbar S. on 21 Sep (MN,TK).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Adults in alternate plumage were studied at Coralville Res. on 3 Aug and 1 Sep (MN) and 9 juveniles were at Diamond L. Poweshick Co. on 21 Sep (+TK,MN).

Sanderling: 1 on 8 Aug at Red Rock Res. (TK); 3 on 20 Sep at Rock Creek L. (MN,CN,TSh,TK); 4 at Red Rock Res. on 27 Sep (DK); 1 at Montezuma on 30 Sep (DK).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 1 on 12 Jul at Coralville Res. (MN) is the second earliest record.

Western Sandpiper: A record number of 40 was reported from Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr). One was at Cone M. on 2 Aug (+TK), 1-2 were at Coralville Res. on 17, 31 Aug (TK), and several in Fremont Co. from late Aug through Sep (RSi).

Baird's Sandpiper: 2-4 were at Union S. NWR on 2, 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa).

Stilt Sandpiper: 40 at Union S. NWR on 10 Aug (TSJr,TSt,RHa); 2 in Fremont Co. on 21 Aug (RSi); 4 at Cherokee on 26 Sep (DBi); 1 at Little Wall L. Hamilton Co. on 5 Oct (HZ). The last date was the second latest on record.

Herring Gull: An immature at Bettendorf on 6 Sep was early (PP).

Ring-billed Gull: 1 at L. Macbride on 27 Sep was the first date and 420 on 9 Nov was the peak for this regular fall concentration (TK).

Franklin's Gull: Late dates were 6 at Lakin S. Guthrie Co. on 27 Oct (DN) and 20 near Council Bluffs on 12 Nov (TB,SK,BP).

Bonaparte's Gull: 40-60 were at Red Rock Res. 31 Oct to 16 Nov

(RT,GB); up to 10 were at L. Macbride from 19 Oct to a record late date of 27 Nov (TK); 1 was at Big Creek S.P. on 26 Oct (HZ).

Black Tern: 7 Sep at Willow S. (BWi) was a record late date.

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: The last date in NE Mills Co. was 30 Sep (BWi).

Snowy Owl: This is obviously an invasion year: reports from 7 areas, the first on 14 Oct (m.ob).

Saw-whet Owl: 1 at Hartman's Nature Center Waterloo on 23 Nov (RMy).

Whip-poor-will: 1 at Montezuma on 24 Sep (DK).

Common Nighthawk: 140 were near Cherokee on 28 Aug (DBi).

Chimney Swift: 50 on 5 Oct at Cherokee (DBi).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Two late dates: 20 Nov at Ledges S.P. (DN) and 1 Oct at Marble Rock (PK). Rufous Hummingbirds are reported in eastern United States in late fall. They have not been seen yet in Iowa, but late hummingbirds should be observed carefully with this possibility in mind.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH STARLING

Western Kingbird: 1 was at Union S. NWR on Aug (TSJr, TSt, RHa).

Eastern Phoebe: 18 at Waterloo on 5 Oct was a large number (FM).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Identified on 17, 31 Aug near Pocahontas based on "yellow wash throat" (RC).

Cliff Swallow: 600 at Cherokee on 20 Aug were migration peak (DBi).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 1-8 were reported by most observers. The

early dates for this heavy migration year were 30 Aug at Davenport (PP) and 12 Sep at Union S. NWR (BC). Early Aug dates have been noted in prior invasion years (PP fide TK).

Winter Wren: Reports from 8 areas beginning on 28 Sep at Ledges S.P. (HZ) with a peak number of 8 at Dudgeon L. (TSJr.)

Northern Mockingbird: 1-2 seen from Oct to 7 Nov near Pleasantville (GB,RT).

Gray Catbird: Late dates included 28 Nov at Volga L. (RMy,FM,JS,TSJr,TSt) and 25 Oct at Pleasantville (RT).

Brown Thrasher: Late dates included 1 Nov at Shenandoah (RP) and 26 Oct at Ledges S.P. (HZ).

Curve-billed Thrasher: This most unusual bird of the year was reported by Ruby Berridge at her feeder near Solon Johnson Co. and substantiated on 18 Nov (+MN,+TK) and on following days (+PP,+RMy,+FM,+JS). See separate note.

Swainson's Thrush: 2 were seen in Des Moines on 31 Aug (RL).

Veery: 3 were seen on 1 Sep at Ames (JR).

Eastern Bluebird: Two very large flocks were observed: 253 at Cherokee on 3 Oct (DBi) and 150 at Red Rock Res. (JDo fide GB).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 on 1 Nov at Coralville Res. was late (TK).

Northern Shrike: Two reports: 18 Oct at Waterloo (TSJr) and 19 Oct at Cherokee (+MB).

VIREOS THROUGH WARBLERS

White-eyed Vireo: 1 was at Montezuma on 7 Sep (DK).

Philadelphia Vireo: 2 at Springbrook S.P. on 21 Sep (FM).

2nd record for Iowa, first verified.

Tennessee Warbler: 1 on 9 Aug at Meyer L. Winneshiek Co. was early (JS).

Orange-crowned Warbler: 2 on 18 Oct in Jones Co. were late (PP, banded).

Nashville Warbler: 1 on 18 Oct at Waterloo (FM, RMy, TSJr).

Pine Warbler: 1 at Manti Woods Fremont Co. on 27 Sep (RP).

Northern Waterthrush: 1 on 11 Aug at Little Creek L. was early (RC).

Mourning Warbler: 1 on 4 Oct at Des Moines was late (RL, banded).

Wilson's Warbler: 1 on 2 Nov at Coralville Res. was late (+TK, CB).

Canada Warbler: 1 on 9 Aug at Meyer L. Winneshiek Co. was early (JS).

MEADOWLARKS THROUGH BUNTINGS

Yellow-headed Blackbird: 7 were at Sweet M. on 23 Aug (FM, RMy).

Blue Grosbeak: 1-2 were seen in Mills and Pottawattamie Cos. on 15, 17 Aug, 2 Sep (TB, BWi, m.ob).

Evening Grosbeak: The earliest dates were 17 Oct at Marble Rock (PK) and 31 Oct at Pleasantville (GB). Flocks of up to 25 were noted from 8 locations in Nov.

Purple Finch: Several reporters mentioned increased numbers.

Common Redpoll: The only report was 1 at Heery Woods S.P. (FM, RMy).

Pine Siskin: Reports from many areas.

Red Crossbill: 12-40 were at Waterloo on 26, 29 Oct (FM, RMy).

White-winged Crossbill: 1-2 were at Waterloo on 28-29 Oct

(FM,RMy), and 1 was at Davenport on 2 Nov (PP).

Rufous-sided Towhee: One of eastern race was late in Black Hawk Co. on 15 Nov

Grasshopper Sparrow: 1 was reported from Willow S. on 5 Nov (BWi).

LeConte's Sparrow: 6 at Dunbar S. on 21 Sep (TK,MN,CN,TSh); 1 at Waterloo on 5 Oct (FM); 1 at DeSoto NWR on 12 Oct (JR); 1 in Mills Co. on 15 Oct (BWi,TB,EP,SK).

Northern Junco: The first appeared in Mills Co. on 30 Sep (BWi).

Field Sparrow: 2 were at Lock and Dam 9 on 16 Nov (TK,TSh,CB).

White-throated Sparrow: 1 was late at Clear L. on 21 Nov (Mrs JH).

Lapland Longspur: 100 were at Little Wall L. Hamilton Co. on 11 Nov (HZ).

+ = documented

CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Bartelt (DN); Carl Bendorf (TK); Richard Bowman (JLH); Don Bray (TB); Bill Clark (JD); Jack Coffey (JD); Jerry Dowell (GB); Russell Hays (TSJr,FM,RMy); Erwin Klaas (JD); Dean Knauer (JLH,JD); James Kovanda (TB); Sandra Kovanda (TB); Dean Mueller (JLH); Carol Newlon (MN,TK); Carl Priebe (JLH); Bill Rybarczyk (JD); Andy Saunders (TB); Steve Schulte (JLH); Tom Stone (TSJr); Melba Wigg (TB); Guy Zenner (JLH);

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COMMENTS

I received a number of late reports for the summer season, apparently due to confusion about reporting dates. Dates and guidelines for field reports are now permanently installed inside the cover to obviate future confusion. Fall reports were excellent including much detail on early and late dates and peak numbers as well as documentations of unusual sightings.

Vernon Kleen has announced his retirement after ten years as Regional Editor of the Middlewestern Prairie Region for American Birds. Some may not be aware that all of our original field reports are forwarded to the Regional Editor who selects the most significant findings for the seasonal summaries published in American Birds. Mr. Kleen has promoted the concept of immediate note taking in the field to document unusual sightings and placing more emphasis on study of passerines. His review of our reports has provided useful feedback for improving our field observations.

During the past year many new and old reporters have contributed to continued improvement in the coverage of our state and helping better define the species to report. The efforts of Doug Harr, Dave Newhouse and Jim Hansen in providing input from Iowa Conservation Commission personnel is much appreciated. Areas where coverage is particularly extensive include SW Iowa, areas of NW Iowa, Ames, Waterloo and Iowa City.

I feel that the major accomplishment for the year has been the definition of species that should always be documented (Iowa Bird Life 50:73) and the setting up of a new Records Committee for the impartial review of unusual sightings. During 1981 we will define a list of species that should always be reported and a list of unusual dates and numbers for other species. The research on dates and numbers is well underway by Jim Dinsmore, Darwin Koenig, Pete Petersen, Dean Roosa and myself and will be published in book form. I would like to thank all those who have contributed ideas for the field reports and encourage others to do so.

CONTRIBUTORS

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