

CEDAR RAPIDS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Rare or unusual species details

Ringed Turtle Dove: This individual came to a feeder in a suburban section of Cedar Rapids from December 11, 1980 until January 2, 1981. During this time, it was seen by many observers, who noted the obvious dove conformation, the overall sandy gray-white plumage of the upper parts together with the prominent black marking across the back of the neck, and the unstreaked whitish underparts. Fred Thompson took a few slides which recognizably identify the species; we can furnish a copy if you wish one. It seems probable that the bird was one which escaped from a local cage-bird shop, but we have not confirmed this. While the bird was coming in to this feeder, it apparently spent most of its time sitting by itself in a deciduous tree in the wood adjacent to the back yard where the feeder was located; occasionally it would then come in to drink water from a heated water feeder or to eat sunflower seeds or sunflower hearts at the feeder itself.

Short-billed Marsh-wren: Observed by Fred Thompson, Carol Bell and Andy Hasley. FT is particularly familiar with this species, having seen many at other seasons- particularly in local nesting areas. The bird was initially flushed from cover in a field of grass averaging about 24 inches in height and flew a short distance before landing again in the grass. It was observed from distances as close as 5 ft. with 7- and 8-power binoculars by the observers although it could not be seen completely while in the grass because of its ability to conceal itself in the grass when it landed. It was described as very small- shorter than a chickadee- with typical wren conformation, a small slim bill, thinly streaked brown and white crown, and brown back noticeably striped with white. The buffy flanks and underparts of the bird were particularly noticeable and stood out in flight as well as when the bird was on the ground. The tail was stubby and was held cocked while the bird was in view. The wren made some typical scolding noises several times. It was flushed about 10 times in the field; the overall time spent looking at (and for) it was approximately 15 minutes. To our knowledge, this is a first record for our area of this species at this season; FT was definitely aware of this as the bird was observed.

Field Sparrow: The four individuals were all seen in a small flock together. Initially, they were observed sitting in a small deciduous sapling at the edge of an open field. When flushed, they flew into other nearby trees. The four observers (L&TG, BN, BL) noted the all-pink bills and rusty caps of these sparrows. Other points noted were the light faces with reddish coloration and the clear unspotted breasts. At least three of the observers are experienced birders who have observed both Tree and Field Sparrows many times in the field.

While one Field Sparrow is rarely but occasionally found at this time in the Cedar Rapids area, the occurrence of four at one time is unusual. It may well be that these birds had not yet been driven south, due to the lack of snow.

White-winged Crossbill: The two individuals were initially observed by RoO and JaS feeding near the top of a tall (60-70 ft.) ornamental spruce near the center of the town of Marion. Subsequently six other birders

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