

FIELD REPORTS
WINTER 1980-1981

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WEATHER AND HABITAT CONDITIONS

By mid-December a moderate cold snap caused partial freezing of water areas but many waterfowl remained for CBC's. Temperatures remained above normal all winter with only a few light snows and no persistent snow cover. The temperatures climbed into the 50's and 60's in February resulting in early return of waterfowl and other species.

GENERAL TRENDS

The warm weather was associated with scattered wintering waterfowl, although fewer geese remained in s. w. Iowa than in recent years. Large numbers of Canvasbacks wintered on the Mississippi River in southern Iowa. Red-tailed Hawks and Kestrels wintered in above average numbers. The Snowy Owl invasion was quite evident. The lack of a recognizable Horned Lark migration was unusual and not entirely explained by the lack of snow cover to concentrate the birds. Longspurs may have wintered n. of Iowa as only one flock was seen (in n. w. Iowa in January). All species of winter finches were widely encountered but none occurred in massive numbers. A late January and February migration of Robins was noted.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

I will not repeat the unusual findings noted on the CBC. The more unusual regular species noted were Common Loon, Greater Scaup, Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Northern Oriole, and Vesper and Lincoln's Sparrows. Casual species noted included Ferruginous Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Glaucous Gull, Varied Thrush, and Pine Grosbeak. Accidental species included two widely separated Curve-billed Thrashers and a possible Hoary Redpoll.

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Common Loon: A loon at Coralville Res. on 12 Dec missed the record late date by one day (TSta).

Double-crested Cormorant: 2 wintered at Lock 14, Scott Co. (TK, TSh, PP).

Great Blue Heron: Late dates were 12 Dec at Coralville Res. (TSta) and Red Rock Res. (RT).

Whistling Swan: see CBC.

Greater White-fronted Goose: 18 were at Willow S., Mills Co. by 27 Feb. (BWi).

Snow Goose: 43 were late at Coralville Res. on 12 Dec (TSta). Small numbers wintered in s. w. Iowa (BWi).

Canada Goose: 200 wintered at Rathbun L. and 3 were at Cedar L., Linn Co., on 3 Jan (TK, CB). Late Feb migrants were noted from many areas (TK, RMy, PP, CSch, BWi) with the earliest on 20 Feb at Red Rock Res. (RT).

Wood Duck: 2 were seen in Cedar Falls in Jan (FM, RMy).

American Nigeon: Wintering birds were at Lock 14 on 2 Jan (TK)

and Fremont Co. on 13 Jan (RP). Four were early migrants at Little Wall L., Hamilton Co., on 23 Feb (JD).

Gadwall: 4 were at Cedar Falls on 8 Feb (FM, RMy); 1 at Willow S. on 18 Feb (BWi); and 6 at Little Wall L. on 23 Feb (JD).

Green-winged Teal: 1 in Fremont Co. on 13 Jan (RP); 1 at Cedar Falls on 8 Feb (FM, RMy); 2 at Willow S. on 20 Feb (BWi).

Mallard: 500-1000 overwintered at Rathbun Res. (TK, TSh, MN) and Lock 18, Des Moines Co. (PP) as well as small numbers at other localities. Early migrants were 150 at Willow S. on 18 Feb (BWi) and 5000 at Red Rock Res. on 20 Feb (RT).

American Black Duck: Up to 20 were at Lansing, Allamakee Co., on 10 Jan (DK) and 14 Feb (TK).

Common Pintail: One wintered at Cedar Falls (FM). Early migrants were at Willow S. on 18 Feb (BWi) and Little Wall L. on 23 Feb (JD).

Northern Shoveler: 2 were at L. Manawa, Pottawattamie Co., on 21 Feb (BWi).

Canvasback: 1500 were at Montrose, Lee Co., on 10 Jan (PP) and 50-200 below Burlington from 10 Jan to 17 Feb (PP).

Redhead: 2 at Willow S. on 27 Feb (BWi).

Ring-necked Duck: 20 at Willow S. on 20 Feb (BWi) and 7 at Waterloo on 7 Feb (RMy).

Greater Scaup: 2 late migrants were at L. Macbride on 20 Dec (+TK) and 1-2 were seen at Lock 14 on 2 Jan (+TK) and later dates (TSh, MN fide TK).

Oldsquaw: 1 was at Lock 14 on 2 Jan (TK).

Bufflehead: 1 was at Lock 14 on 2 Jan (TK).

✓
wintered

✓

✓

Hooded Merganser: 4 were at L. Manawa on 21 Feb (Bwi) and several at Little Wall L. on 14 Feb (RJ fide JD).

Common Merganser: 30 at Little Wall L. on 23 Feb were early migrants (JD).

VULTURES THROUGH TURKEY

Bald Eagle: Peak numbers were 342 (280 ad., 62 imm.) from Keokuk to Belleview on 10 Jan (PP) and 50 at Riverton WA on 26 Dec (RMy). Additional Riverton counts were 47 on 7 Jan and 40 on 17 Jan (RP).

Northern Goshawk: A Goshawk was well seen and described at Red Rock Res. on 6 Feb (+RT).

Cooper's Hawk: 1 was seen in Winneshiek Co. on 16 Feb (DK).

Red-tailed Hawk: Winter counts exceeded averages of the last three years in Story and Boone Cos. (JD).

Rough-legged Hawk: This species was noted by many observers.

Ferruginous Hawk: A bird with features of this species was seen at Riverton WA (+RMy). This is a species designated for review by the Records Committee.

Golden Eagle: Wintering birds were located in Allamakee Co. on 24 Jan (an adult, DK) and 14 Feb (an immature, +TK).

Peregrine Falcon: see CBC. Another was reported but not documented. This species must be documented to be accepted for the Field Reports. Winter records are especially unusual.

Merlin: Details were given for 1 seen on 20 Feb in Fremont Co. (+RP, MS, BWA).

American Kestrel: Counts were more than twice the last three years' average in Story and Boone Cos. (JD).

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He did not get bent look

seems doubtful

good detail

Wild Turkey: Reports were from Sioux Co. in n. w. Iowa (DHa and Ledges SP (HZ)).

CRANES THROUGH TERNS

✓ Sandhill Crane: Last year's wintering Sandhill Crane seemed most unusual. This year there were two reports: two on 17 Dec near Ocheyedan, Osceola Co. (RSp fide DHa) and one from 20 Dec to 7 Jan at Riverton WA (RP, m.ob.).

American Coot: 1 was at Cedar L. on 3 Jan (TK, CB). An early migrant was at Swan L., Johnson Co. on 28 Feb (TK).

Glaucous Gull: One first year bird was at Lock 14 on 21 Dec (+TK, TSh) and two apparently second year birds were at Lock 15 on 2-16 Jan (+TK, +PP).

Herring Gull: 8 were at Cedar L. on 3 Jan (TK, CB).

Ring-billed Gull: 20 were early at L. Manawa on 24 Feb and 300 were there the next day (BWi).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

✓ Snowy Owl: I received 7 reports: 2 from Spirit L. (DHa) and one each from Rathbun Res. (CSco, TK, MN, TSh), Red Rock Res. (DMos), Polk Co. (DMos), Waterloo (RMy, FM), and Shenandoah (fide RP). Dave Newhouse provided a list and map of 35 reports from across the state including 8 that were killed or caught.

Long-eared Owl: Reports were from Muscatine, Johnson, Bremer, Polk and Mills Cos.

Short-eared Owl: Reports were from Osceola, Johnson, Bremer, Boone and Story Cos.

Saw-whet Owl: Locations of single birds were as follows: 6 Dec

at Weise S. (TK, m.ob.), 3 Jan at Ledges SP (HZ), 10 Jan at Hartman Nature Center (RMy), 18 Jan at Iowa City and Coralville Res. (TSta).

Common Flicker: An orange-shafted hybrid died in Lyon Co. and was sent to Iowa State University (DHa).

Red-headed Woodpecker: many wintered.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH STARLING

Eastern Phoebe: see CBC.

✓ Horned Lark: The usual Feb migration was practically non-existent. Only a few birds were seen at any one time (BWi, HZ, FM, TK).

Tufted Titmouse: Only one was noted all winter in Mills Co. (BWi).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Up to 10 wintered in Ames (HZ). There were five other reports.

Winter Wren: Four reports: Emmet Co. (DHen), Polk Co. (DMos), Black Hawk Co. (RMy, FM), and Iowa City (TSta).

Northern Mockingbird: 1 was near Pleasantville, Marion Co. all winter (RT).

Brown Thrasher: Singles were at Shenandoah on 20 Dec (RP) and Davenport on 14 Jan (PP).

X X Curve-billed Thrasher: The Solon bird remained into the winter and, amazingly, a second bird was discovered at Rathbun Res. (+CS~~o~~ +TK, see separate article by Newlon).

American Robin: Many Robins were present this winter. Numbers increased in late Jan and Feb suggesting an early northward movement. The largest number reported was 100 near Cedar

Falls on 8 Feb (FM, RMy).

Varied Thrush: Waterloo again had its Varied Thrush for the third straight winter. A male was discovered in early Dec and was still present on 3 Jan (+RMy, +FM, +TK).

Eastern Bluebird: The only report was from Mills Co. on 23-24 Feb (BWi).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Wintering birds were noted in Ames (JD), Waterloo (FM, RMy), and Sioux Co. (JV).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Details were provided for one seen at Cedar Falls on 1 Jan (RMy, JSb).

Northern Shrike: Reports were from Cherokee (+DB), Polk Co. (DMos, RMoo fide HZ), Sioux Co. (JV), and Coralville Res. (MN fide TK).

VIREOS THROUGH WARBLERS

Black-and-white Warbler: Documentations were received for one seen at Ames on 19 Feb (+RN, +MO). Because of the rarity of this sighting, it will be referred to the Records Committee.

MEADOWLARKS THROUGH BUNTINGS

Yellow-headed Blackbird: 1 was reported at a Waterloo feeder on 14 Feb (fide RMy).

Northern Oriole: 1 was found at fairport, Muscatine Co. on 14 Feb (+CR).

Rusty Blackbird: Wintering flocks were noted from Mills Co. (BWi) and Coralville Res. (TK).

Evening Grosbeak: There were reports from all areas of the state.

Purple Finch: Wintering birds were reported by most observers.

Pine Grosbeak: One was in Ames on 7-11, 23 Dec (+HZ, +MD) and again on 28 Feb (+SD, +JD). Another was at Mark Sand Prairie, Black Hawk Co. on 27 Dec (+FM, +MM). A third frequented a feeder at the home of Jim and Dorothy Maish in State Center and was photographed by Carl Kurtz on 2 Feb (+CK).

Hoary Redpoll: The injured Redpoll with a white rump seen on the Waterloo CBC proved to be a difficult identification problem (+RMy, TK, CB). On close inspection there were a few streaks on the upper rump and debatable other features of a Hoary Redpoll including overall light color, decreased streaking on the underparts and pushed-in bill. The documentations will be referred to the Records Committee for evaluation.

Common Redpoll: Redpolls were present in small numbers at Cherokee (DBi), Waterloo (FM, RMy), Montezuma (DK), Decorah (DK), Shenandoah (RP) and Sioux Center (JV).

Pine Siskin: These were reported from many areas of the state, mostly in small numbers, but 160 were banded at Davenport (PP).

Red Crossbill: Reports were from Waterloo (RMy, FM), Ames (HZ), and Montezuma (DK).

White-winged Crossbill: These were more numerous than Red Crossbills: up to 15 at Davenport from 6 Dec to 14 Feb (PP, TK), 6 at Waterloo on 1 Jan (RMy), 1 at Shenandoah from 21 Dec to Feb (+RP, +MS), 1 at Seymour in Feb (CScC), and 1 at Ames from 19 Jan to 24 Feb (HZ), and several in Iowa City in Jan and Feb (TSh, RHo fide TK).

Vesper Sparrow: Details were given for one seen near Cedar Falls

I thought
it was
most
likely
a
Common R.

on 14 Feb (RMy, FM, RHa).

Harris' Sparrow: Wintering birds were noted in Story, Polk, Marion, Sioux and Fremont Cos. (m.Ob.).

White-throated Sparrow: 6 wintered at Davenport (PP); 1 was singing at Waterloo on 27 Dec (FM); 1 was at Iowa City on 13 Feb (TSta).

Lincoln's Sparrow: 1 was at a feeder in Mills Co. from 28 Dec to 24 Feb (BWi).

Swamp Sparrow: 1 at Waterloo on 31 Jan was considered unusual (FM).

Lapland Longspur: The only report was a flock of 400 near Sioux Center on 2 Jan (JV).

Snow Bunting: Several flocks were seen in Dickinson Co. in early Feb (DHa) and 1 was at Rathbun Res. on 31 Jan (TK, TSh, MN).

+ = documented

CONTRIBUTORS

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COMMENTS

According to my records, all except five of the 175 species listed on the IOU Field Checklist were seen in Iowa in 1980. Of these five, Mute Swan and Whimbrel are clearly not regular species. Carolina Wrens, which were greatly reduced over the last few years, were absent in 1980. They should gradually return as they have cycled in the past. Bewick's Wren has disappeared from the state over a much longer period of time. Does anyone know of any remaining strongholds? If so, let me know. The status of the rare and elusive Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Iowa is not known. Seventeen species not on the Field Checklist which were adequately documented in 1980 included Ross' Goose, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Prairie Falcon, Sandhill Crane, Yellow Rail, Glaucous Gull, Burrowing Owl, Say's Phoebe, Curve-billed Thrasher, Varied Thrush, Mountain bluebird, Yellow-throated Warbler, Western Tanager, Pine Grosbeak, and Lark Bunting. Thus the Iowa list for 1980 is 287, four less than 1979. However, three additional species are still pending review by the records committee (Brant, Ferruginous Hawk, Hoary Redpoll). If I have missed any species, please report them to me along with

appropriate documentation.

The quality of field reports continues to improve. In the next year I hope we can continue progress on reporting methods and species to concentrate on. We will discuss these issues at the spring meeting. Hope to see you there.