

SILCOCK

RR2 Malvern
IOWA 51551
2 Dec 1980

Dear Tom,

Here is my fall report. This time of year is my worst: our best spots are taken over by hunters and it's our busiest time with harvest and preparing for winter. Most observations are those made around the farm.

Getting psyched up for Christmas counts. Probably make Shenandoah, DeSoto and Squaw Creek I hope. So far the waterfowl situation is slow. Apparently a few winter finches, at least a lot better than the past few winters. I hear there's a Curve-billed Thrasher near Iowa City that's very cooperative. Bob Myers told me about it. No. 2 for Iowa I guess, assuming the Spirit Lake "mud-ball" is accepted!

The remarks in the latest American Birds ^(The Changing Seasons) thought were well based, and I believe the gas situation will probably cause more attention to be paid to changes in local populations of the more common birds. As Bourne stated in his letter to the Editor, a sighting of a rare, out-of-range bird is of minimal scientific significance in itself, although I think that its possible indication of a subsequent population expansion, ~~it~~ shouldn't be ignored.

Here's my meager report:

Snow Goose: The buildup has been very late: the largest group was just ahead of the cold snap Dec 1, when about 250,000 were in a field feeding (estimated by size of field and area occupied by each bird). This is about 10 days later than the usual fall peak.

Mallard: As for Snow Goose, but no large groups seen as yet. Usually at this time large flocks seen flying about corn fields.

Dabbling ducks: About 2000 at feedlot in terraces with standing water from late August through September. Approximate breakdown:

Blue-winged Teal:	80%
Mallard:	15%
Gadwall:	3% (rather surprising this early)
Green-winged Teal:	2%

Assemblages like this are normal, however, in late summer in this area, usually Mallards & often Green-winged Teal.

Red-tailed Hawk: Rather common this fall. In wooded edge such as in the loess hills area near Glenwood, I counted 7 in a three-mile stretch Oct 25. Two were immatures, immatures being in good numbers this fall.

✓ Western Sandpiper: Again seen from late August through Sept with other peeps: it is regular in fall here (if a typical bird can be found for identification! I suspect that there are several that are too similar to Semipalmateds for confident separation).

✓ Stilt Sandpiper: Two on Aug 21 at hog settling ponds. These ponds are very good in fall for small shorebirds, but I didn't see any rarities. Usually 20-40 small shorebirds present each day in early September.

Black-throated Green Warbler: One male at Riverton Aug 29, rather early (and before hunting season opened!)

Regards, Ross

Ross

P.S. I just noticed Nick Healm's sighting of a Red-tailed Tropicbird at Central Park NY (Am Birds 34: 761), described as "the most bizarre report of the season". Paints are great, but this one cause problems! Ross