

Spring 1983 Report

Note: This will be my last field report for at least a year, perhaps two years. Later this summer my family and I will be moving to West Germany, where I will engage in research at the University of Tübingen. I have asked Gordon Brand to report for this area in my stead. He has agreed to do so. His summer report should reach you on time in early August.

Weather for the Period:

March came in like a lamb with temperatures reaching into the high 60's. We all expected an early spring. However, these expectations were dashed by the subsequent weather: cold, wet, with several major snowstorms, and below average temperatures. In short, the entire period can be characterized as follows: below normal temperatures, above normal precipitation. As late as April 14 a major storm delivered 3" of snow. Not before April 26 did the thermometer reach 70°. May was cool and wet during its first half. Below average temperatures prevailed during the entire period. Unexpectedly, no tornado or severe weather watches were posted during the period.

Species report:

- x ✓ - Pied-billed Grebe: first individuals appeared in Sioux Co. on March 11.
- American White Pelican: none reported.
- ✓ - Double-crested Cormorant: normal migration; expected numbers in flocks of two to 30 were present throughout March and April. Individuals were still present by May 21.
- Herons: scarce this spring, in spite of wet conditions.
 - ✓ - Cattle Egret: Daryl Vander Kooi (who is familiar with this species) reported two individuals six miles west of Rock Valley on April 26.
 - Green-backed Heron: present in Orange City on March 26.
 - Black-crowned Night Heron: observed in western Sioux Co. on April 30 and May 7.
- Geese: extended and slow migration. Late stragglers were remarkable. Near Sioux Center Gordon Brand observed a blue form of the Snow Goose on
 - ✓ April 26 and a perfectly wild White-fronted Goose on May 4.
- Ducks: on the whole, a fine migration. Expected species were present in expected numbers.
 - ✓ - Gordon Brand observed six Greater Scaups at the Sioux-preme lagoons near Sioux Center on March 29.
 - Lesser Scaups were still present at Sioux Center near the end of May and may be nesting.
- x ✓ - Osprey: Observed an individual at the Rock River in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- Bald Eagle: Gordon Brand observed an adult at Oak Grove State Park on March 13.

- Northern Harrier: the first ones arrived on March 9.
- ✓ - Sharp-shinned Hawk: several observed at various times during the period.
- x ✓ - Cooper's Hawk: a good spring for them. More observed in one period than we would normally expect. On April 30 I observed three different individuals in western Sioux Co.
- Broad-winged Hawk: excellent migrations with large numbers observed in late April and May; observed in Rock Valley area as late as May 21.
- Red-tailed Hawk: very common throughout period.
- American Kestrel: very common throughout period.
- x ✓ - Merlin: Gordon Brand observed one in Orange City on April 15.
- Gray Partridge: doing fine.
- Ring-necked Pheasant: doing fine.
- Northern Bobwhite: for some reason, their numbers are down, in spite of the exceptionally mild winter.
- Shorebirds: Not spectacular, in spite of wet season
 - ✓ - Killdeer: arrived on March 3.
- x ✓ - American Avocet: 10 individuals in beautiful breeding plumage were just west of Rock Valley on April 30. Another single individual was present at Sioux Center on May 3.
- Yellowlegs of both species were present throughout the period, beginning in mid-April.
- Upland Sandpiper: exceptionally common this spring. After a number of years of not seeing them they began to appear last year. This spring we observed three individuals near Maurice, Sioux Co., on May 21, and another one just west of Sioux Center on May 28. In mid-May I observed several in South Dakota just across the Iowa border.
- x ✓ - Franklin's Gull: a rather scattered and uneven migration; apparently not as plentiful as usual.
- ✓ - Bonaparte's Gull: observed one individual at Hawarden on April 30.
- Forster's Tern: present in goodly numbers, observed variously throughout the period.
- x ✓ - Common Nighthawk: Gordon Brand observed the first one on April 27 in Orange City.
- Whip-poor-will: Gordon Brand heard one calling in Orange City on May 24.
- Chimney Swift: arrived on time in third week of April.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird: observed one in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- x ✓ - Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: one was observed in Orange City on May 17, and another one near Rock Valley on May 21.
- Empidonax: excellent migration; lots of flycatchers literally everywhere.
- Eastern Phoebe: observed in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- Western Kingbird: they appear to be making a come-back in western Iowa this spring; several pairs observed and reported in western Sioux Co. since mid-May.

- ✓ - Vermilion Flycatcher: an incredible find. See enclosed documentation. I asked Gordon Brand to provide a separate documentation (enclosed). Also enclosed two blown-up photographs taken by my brother Jan Van Dyk, and a slide photograph by Gordon Brand (please return slide to Gordon: see address on documentation).
- Purple Martin: arrived somewhat late on April 14.
- White-breasted Nuthatch: in spite of the report that they were doing fine, published in the latest issue of IBL, their numbers are unquestionably sharply down in north-west Iowa, as compared to last year.
- Brown Creeper: many observed throughout period until April 24.
- Marsh Wren: one individual was present in Sioux Center on May 19.
- ✓ - Winter Wren: unusually common this spring. They were observed in Maurice on April 16, in Orange City for several days following April 15, and in Sioux Center on April 19.
- ✓ - Golden-crowned Kinglet: last ones observed in Sioux Center on April 30.
- Eastern Bluebird: improved numbers this season. At least 4 pairs nesting in western Sioux Co., and many observed in various spots throughout period.
- Gray-cheeked & Swainson's Thrush: excellent migration, with large numbers moving through throughout the month of May.
- Hermit Thrush: outstanding migration! They were all over Sioux Center in mid-April. In sharp contrast to previous years, they were as common and plentiful as the Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes in May. I have never seen them as plentiful as this year.
- Wood Thrush: heard the first ones sing in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- ✗ - Northern Mockingbird: observed this rather rare bird at Sioux Center on May 6. Two days later it was observed and reported in a garden at the south end of Sioux Center.

Note: in early May we observed for several days an albino thrush, pale white throughout except for the dusky primaries. Also an albino blackbird of some kind was reported at that time by several observers in Sioux Center.

- ✓ - Water Pipit: one observed in western Sioux Co. on May 7.
- Loggerhead Shrike: one observed in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- Vireos and Warblers: fine migration, with large numbers of individuals. The late leafing out of trees aided observation. All regular species were observed. Some special comments:
 - Bay-breasted Warbler: Gordon Brand observed what he thought was an unusually high number.
 - Ovenbird: present in unusually large numbers.
 - ✓ - Mourning Warbler: throughout the second half of May. On May 31 a male, still partly in winter plumage (incomplete eyering, hood not fully formed) was singing in our yard.
 - Canada Warbler: one individual, somewhat unusual, reported in Sioux Center by Mrs. Tina Van Dyke (no relation).

- Blue Grosbeak: one individual reported near Maurice on May 19.
- ✓ - Dickcissel: first one arrived in Orange City on the early date of May 8.
- American Tree Sparrow: lingered in our area until April 23.
- Clay-colored Sparrow: as usual, migrated through in goodly numbers. It is a common migrant in this area.
- Fox Sparrow: an exceptionally fine migration, beginning in mid-April. Like the Hermit Thrushes, they were all over Sioux Center and Orange City, many of them singing. Nothing short of spectacular, compared to other years.
- Swamp Sparrow: number of migrants was up sharply from previous years.
- White-crowned Sparrow: their numbers, too, were up, compared to other years.
- ✓ - Dark-eyed Junco: lingered until April 30. Individuals of the "Oregon" race were observed by Gordon Brand in Orange City and by Dan Reinking in Maurice.
- Bobolink: very plentiful in western Sioux Co. since mid-May.
- Rusty Blackbird: good migration in second and third week of March.
- Orchard Oriole: several observed in western Sioux Co. on May 21.
- Purple Finch: though virtually absent in winter, they migrated through in goodly numbers in April.
- American Goldfinch: everybody is commenting on the exceptionally large number of Goldfinches in our area this spring. Mr. A.J. Boersma, veteran birdwatcher and birdlover of this area, may have had something to do with this: throughout the winter he sold thistle seed and thistle feeders, urging many Sioux Center residents to "feed the birds." As a result, large flocks of Goldfinches were everywhere, and are still here, enlivening our fair city with their cheerful sounds. Thank you Mr. Boersma!

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