

2414 Adams Ave.  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310  
April 29, 1983

Dear Dr. Kent:

Here are a few things to report:

1. ✓ Whistling swan (is this now the tundra swan?): 1 at Bay's Branch near Panora on March 1. The Conservation Commission personnel there tell me that three whistlers arrived last fall, and this one remained all winter, in association with the Canada goose breeding project there, which has open water and feed. (One staff member insists he heard trumpeter swans there, but I find that doubtful even though the call should be distinctive.)
2. ✓ Snow goose, all color phases: A massive flock at Forney Lake March 1, and one observer said it had been there on Feb. 28 and perhaps a day or two earlier. My conservative estimate was 150,000, and I've heard since <sup>that</sup> others estimated the flock at that size. In figuring, I drove the length of the flock on the road, estimated its greatest depth, allowed for tapering at the ends of the flock, allowed one goose per square yard (and I think they were packed a lot more closely in most of the flock). A big migration came in and, after I started timing, there were masses of geese in the sky for 9 minutes plus. Also about 100 at Bay's Branch on March 1.
3. Canada goose (size about the same as snow goose): 2 at Forney; there were surely more! 3/1/83
4. White-fronted goose: 2 at Forney; again there were surely more. 3/1/83
- ✓ 5. Bald eagle: 3 at Forney, all immatures with some white plumage beginning to show on heads and tails. 3/1/83
6. Common merganser: 14 at Forney on March 1; at least 100 at ✓ Bay's Branch on the same date. Used a 20x scope for identification and saw no other mergansers.
7. Canvasback: 12 at Forney on March 1; about ✓ 50 at Bay's Branch same date. No redheads; at Bay's Branch the Commission personnel confirmed this.
8. Common goldeneye: 2 at Forney, March 1.
- ✓ 9. Bufflehead: 1 at Forney, March 1.
10. Lesser scaup: about 25 at Forney, about 25 near Glenwood on a borrow pit along I-29, and about 50 at Bay's Branch, all March 1.
11. Ring-necked duck: 8 at Forney, about 20 at Bay's Branch, 12 near Glenwood, all March 1.
12. Mallards: About 100 at Forney, about 100 at Bay's Branch, Marbh 1.

13. Ring-billed gull: About 100 at Saylorville dam on Feb. 28, and about 100 near Glenwood March 1; I was unable to confirm any other gulls.

Late February and early March were very warm, and it appeared to me that robins, meadowlarks, and red-winged blackbirds were about a week ahead of their usual migration date; Jack's records are stored so I can't get at them too well. On March 1 parts of Bay's Branch were still frozen, however, and on Feb. 28 the southern half of Saylorville Lake and Big Creek Lake also frozen, though thawing fast.

March 22 I drove west through Nebraska to visit my daughter in Colorado, taking two days in order to have time to prowl through the Platte River bottoms to look at cranes. Saw two partial albino sandhills--markings so different there was no doubt I saw two different birds. Then on March 31, returning to Iowa, I planned to do the same in the hope of stumbling onto a migrating whooping crane--but except for paved roads, the driving was very bad, roads rutted and wet, and the sky threatening so I came on home after just a few hours of looking and no luck, but maybe another year. Also saw fair numbers of eagles and buteos (mostly red-tails) and a few ducks, and heard Canada geese from a North Platte motel just at dusk but in the bad weather couldn't see them. Since my return I've been so busy I haven't been able to get out much, but the cold weather appears to have slowed down the migration to about normal dates or perhaps a little late. Reports from turkey hunting friends indicate the gobblers weren't seeking hens as much as they normally do on similar dates.

Sincerely,

Mary Musgrove

p.s. In the current Iowa Bird Life my observation of mergansers at Red Rock is correctly credited to (MM), but the name isn't in the list of observers. Don't think it's too important, though.

letter sent  
5/29/83