

WILSON 3

Barbara L. Wilson
 Rt 1 Box 41
 Hastings, Ia 51540

Winter - 1984
 Iowa

	#	Date	Place	
- White-fronted Goose	20	Feb 19, 1984	Willow Slough	First seen
	31	Feb 20	"	
	1	Feb 29	"	
- Canada Goose	50	Feb 15	"	first seen
"	610	Feb 19	"	
"	600	Feb 20	"	
"	310	Feb 23	"	
"	150	Feb 25	"	
"	190	Feb. 26	"	
- Green-winged Teal		Feb 23	"	first seen
- Mallard		Feb 14	"	"
- Pintail		Feb 15	"	"
- Gadwall	3	Feb 25	"	"
- Am. Wigeon		Feb 19	"	"
- Canvasback	27	Feb 23	"	"
"	32	Feb 25	"	
"	43	Feb 26	"	
"	139	Feb 29	"	
- Redhead		Feb 23	"	first seen
- Ring-necked Duck		"	"	"
- C. Goldeneye		"	"	"
- Bufflehead		"	"	"
- Hooded Merganser	1	Feb 26	"	"
- C. Merganser	1000	Feb 23	"	"
- Bald Eagle	7	Jan 7	Missouri River in Mills Co.	
- Coot	1	Feb 29	Willow Slough	

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Farm = Wilson Farm, ~~on~~ Mills
NE Mills Co., Ia

- Killdeer 1 Feb 15 Farm
- Screech Owl - see introduction for two odd ones in the cold.
- Red-headed Woodpecker - ~~many~~ more wintered here than ~~usual~~ ^{ever},
adults + young. They took corn out of corn cribs and hid
corn kernels ~~them in the~~ in trees + fence posts. Farm
- Horned Lark 34 Feb. 27 (flock of about 30, plus 2
singles + a pair. Pair formation but some one still
flocking?) Mills County
- Brown thrasher - see later
- E. Bluebird 1♂ Feb. 20 Farm
- Cedar Waxwing 16 Jan. 5 "
- " 4 Jan 6 "

Starlings - not abundant on the farm, ~~was~~ probably because
a hog-producing neighbor went out of business.

Cardinal - 21 Dec. 26 farm - my feeder. Peak #
High numbers reported ~~at the~~ by many people in
the ~~area~~ ^{area} who had feeders.

White-throated Sparrow 1 Dec 11 Farm - my feeder
- 2 Dec 15 " "

These birds wintered successfully at the feeder. I last
saw one on Feb. 29. (+ assume it's not leaving yet)

- Harris Sparrow - As usual, they wintered on the farm.
One still has its breeding plumage, with the gray sides of the
face. I caught + banded it, + have seen it many times.
Dr. DeGraw says his captive birds ~~usually~~ ^{often} do this incomplete
molt, but he's never seen a wild one with gray
cheeks in winter.

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~~Red-wings~~ Blackbirds wintered here. I had this idea that the blackbirds only wintered in mild winters, that's what always happened before! In this awful winter Red-wings stayed in ~~the~~ "Goose Lake" (a former lake, former marsh, present wide road ditch) all winter. I think Rusties wintered too, or at least they wintered nearby. I saw 9 on Feb. 2, on the farm.

- Rusty Blackbird 9 Feb 2 Farm
- Grackle 1 Feb 29 Willow Slough
- ✓ Cowbird 30 Feb 4 Farm

- Brown thrasher 1 Nov ~~30~~³⁰ - Dec 16 ~~30~~ Farm

The bird visited my feeder daily. Last seen in record cold Dec 16, sleeping at the feeder when the other birds were foraging desperately, and the thrasher should have been too. I'm sure it's dead

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It has been a slow season, as far as species go. The big event was the response of birds to the intense cold in December. The quarter inch of ice on the trees after the Thanksgiving storm never melted, though finally it broke off. So did many limbs of trees. All over are broken twigs, + big main branches, + pale scars on trees still standing. Omaha smashed its previous record of hours below zero. The new record is 210 hours. I hope this record stands a long time.

II The tremendous cold was hard on birds, but probably worse was the snow cover. Thick ice from Thanksgiving, then snow, then ice, then more packed snow. On all three Christmas counts I went on, the distribution of birds was the same, and really clear. We found birds at bird feeders, feedlots, ear corn cribs, and a grain spill. In between there was scarcely a bird. Even flocks of Horned Larks were sometimes seen in feedlots. Without such man-caused food supplies, avian mortality (or migration) would have been massive.

Large kills of Starlings + Sparrows (House, I assume) were found at the Howard Wilson farmyard. Joe Wearin reported a few dozen dead juncos in his farmyard. ~~But~~ all these dead birds were found ~~at~~ at Christmas time. I heard one other report of ~~large~~ ^{large} numbers of dead birds in December by Emerson. Despite nine barn cats, I found occasional House Sparrows lying dead.

At Christmas time, Joe Wearin reported an owl (later

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identified as Screech Owl) that sat in a ~~g~~ conifer outside his heated machine shop for a few days. Whenever he left, the owl would fly in the shop. When Joe went in, the owl would fly out, ~~also never confused to~~ confusing the windows with the door.

On Dec. 31, my husband was cleaning up ~~the~~ our open machine shed, where he was running a space heater. He picked up a coil of wire + went to hang ~~it~~ it on a peg ~~on~~ on a beam. The peg sprouted wings + flew silently away, a Screech Owl.

Owls don't usually behave like this.

There ~~seemed~~ seemed to be a lot of hawks around in November. By the end of December, there weren't.

~~Anyway~~ I have lost count of how many people exclaimed over the number of Cardinals at their feeders. I suspect all rural feeders in good habitat were supporting at least 15.

January was mild except for a very cold second week. February has been mild too. The ice is mostly off, + the frost is going out of the ground. Snow's gone.