

Fall 1984
Iowa

WILSON 1
29 November 1984
Rt 1 Box 41, Hastings, Iowa

Dear Mike,

It's been a slow fall. I thought perhaps I had that impression just because I was out little, but Omaha birders were disappointed too. There were few warblers seen, + numbers of many species seemed low. This may mean they were dispersed.

Weather has been mild, gradually cooling down. No ice storms. Only one big problem; the first killing frost was about 3 weeks early, in September. Killed ^{all} ~~a lot of~~ the late-planted soybeans around here. The weather was fine after that. Then it rained for 3 weeks in October, delaying harvest. Not enough to flood or anything, just enough to keep people out of the field. There has been no significant snow or ice.

Bur Oak acorn crop is nonexistent. Hickory crop terrible too. Walnut + Red Oak acorn crops good, but the squirrels have hidden all these nuts. Few Red-headed Woodpeckers remain, + those, like the Red-bellieds + the Nuthatches, are secreting corn kernels in trees.

Some of the berry crops, including dogwood, seemed very good, but they're gone now. I haven't seen a Mourning Dove since Oct 24, + saw no Robins recently until one showed up on my census yesterday.

Despite the general slowness of the season, some ~~few~~ ^{surprising} birds made their appearance, as you shall see.

-Barb Wilson

Barbara L Wilson
Rt 1 Box 411
Hastings, Ia

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Iowa

farm = Wilson farm, NE
Mills County

	#	Date	
American Bittern	1	Sept 21	Eric Nyren found a bittern "freezing" with its bill in the air at the edge of a field near the Nishnabotna River in northeast Mills County
Great Blue Heron			
Great Blue Heron	39	August 12	Fremont County & within 1 mile of the Nebraska City Bridge Note: there was a concentration of herons here this summer. ← See documentation
Great Egret	23	"	
Little Blue Heron	5	"	
Snowy Egret	8	"	
Cattle Egret	154	"	
"	2	Sept 16	Adult + young (1 each) at the nesting site at Folsom Lake Borrow Pit, Mills County
"			In August or September, Roger Jackson was impressed when he was near Folsom Lake near dawn. He estimates at least 500 white herons (presumably Cattle Egrets) flew over him.
Black Duck	1	Nov, 17	DeSoto NWR
White-winged Scoter	1	Nov. 6	Willow Slough See documentation
"		Nov 13	"
Osprey	1	Sept 19	Missouri River near Lake Manawa
"	1	Sept 22	farm
"	1	Sept 23	farm
"	1	Sept 24	NE Mills County

Sharp-shinned Hawk 8 sightings Sept 16 - Oct 27 Mills County

That seems like a lot of Sharpies. I was surprised on 3 days to find ~~1~~ 1-2 as I drove from the farm to Omaha.

~~The~~ I felt sorry for the bird on the farm ~~on~~ Oct 27. I was watching a concentration of small birds feeding in a sheltered brush pile. They rose to the tops of branches + looked around, as a high-pitched call was repeated several times. Then they dove to cover ~~when~~ as a sharp-shin dove at them. It didn't even come close. The hawk pulled up into a tree, ~~at hand~~
A little later a Flicker landed in a neighboring tree. The hawk flew up at it - a desperate move, as the Flicker doubtless outweighed it. The Flicker dove away, + the hawk perched desolately on the tree top + gave that high-pitched call, repeatedly. I recognized it now - the call of a hungry young hawk to its parents, now perhaps a hundred miles away.

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	#	Date	
C. Loon	1	Nov 17	DeSoto NWR
Pied-billed Grebe	69	Sept. 20	Willow Slough
"	22	Sept 22	"
"	24	Sept 26	"
"	3	Oct 3	"
"	47	Oct 24	"
"	22	Oct 27	"
"	17	Nov 1	"
"	3	Nov 6	"
"	11	Nov 13	"
"	2	Nov 16	"
"	1	Nov 23	"
"	1	Nov 23 29	"
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Horned Grebe	1	Sept 20	"
"	1	Oct 7	"
"	1	Oct 20	"
"	1	Oct 24	"
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Eared Grebe	10	Sept 20	"
"	3	Oct 24	"
"	1	Oct 27	"
"	1	Nov 6	"
"	3	Nov 13	"
"	1	Nov 16	"
"	1	Nov 23	" this bird shot; I found it in the trash can there
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White Pelican	280	Sept 20	"
"	90	Sept 20 22	"
"	1	Sept 26	" One of the Pelicans present
"	90	Oct 7	" Oct 6, 8 had a red piece
"	6	Oct 24	" of red material around
"	8	Oct 27	" one wing

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NE Mills County

	#	Date		
Swainson's Hawk	1	Aug 20	DPL Settling Ponds	Adult
Golden Eagle	1	Nov. 23	NE Mills County, Near Willow Slough	

See documentation

Ring-necked Pheasant - Population on the farm doesn't seem too bad. Statewide numbers down 25% due to recent bad weather. (Little, Terry 1984 "Weather conditions can't keep game populations down", Iowa farm Bureau Spokesman, Nov 3, p. 3A)

Bobwhite - Statewide populations down 57%. Same reference. the author works for the Conservation Commission

Sandhill Crane	1	Oct 20	Willow Slough
"	1	Oct 21	farm
"	1	Oct 24	Willow Slough

See documentation. Doubtless the same individual

Least Tern	3	Aug	Missouri River, Omaha -> Sioux City
Mourning Dove		Oct 24	last seen farm
Barn Owl		Sept 5	Wearin Wearin Prairie, Mills Co.

I find 2 wings + some feathers of a Barn Owl eaten by a predator within the last few days. The ~~2~~ legs are gone so I can't tell if its one of the ones we released or not. (ie, no bands)

C. Night hawk		Sept 18	Mills County	last seen
Whip-poor-will	1	Sept 9	farm	last ^{night} day the one on the farm sings
Red-headed Woodpecker		Most left. Two remain on the farm, hiding corn kernels in the trees		

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1 Sept 17 farm immature

Olive-sided Flycatcher Aug 23-Sept 2 farm (Iowa County)

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 1 Sept 9 Salisbury Bridge Recreation Area

For a long time this Empidonax sat among leaves in trees. Looked very greenish with strong yellow eye ring + light yellow wing bars + yellow belly. Flitted about.

When it came out, it looked grayer + less yellow. I'm unsure of identification (I'd never seen ~~it~~ one before). Tom Kent + others saw it + identified it.

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	#	date	
Eastern Kingbird	35	Sept 4	NE Mills County, at an extensive patch of Gray Dogwood with berries
Barn Swallow	1	Oct 27	Willow Slough Swallow-like flight. Long, forked tail. Dark above. Throat brown, breast + belly buff. Bird almost directly over me.
House Wren	1	Oct 20	farm last seen I was surprised to see one when the there had been a Winter Wren here the day before
Winter Wren	1	Oct 19	farm
Golden-crowned Kinglet		Oct 23 - Nov 4	farm Not as many sightings as the last year or so, but not bad.
Eastern Bluebird			reproduction low in the boxes I have put up in Mills County.
Dickcissel	1	Oct 2	NE Mills County - Back Bakehouse found a bird to dead by his window. Live seen it.
Harris Sparrow	2	Sept 29	farm first I see
Dark-eyed Junco	17	Sept 20	" "
Pine Siskin	5	Oct 19	farm
"	2	Nov 2	"