

Vern: Excuse  
all the red - much of this  
is very unusual because of  
previous poorer coverage. M.

## FIELD REPORTS

Summer 1977

The species marked with an \* are on the National Audubon Blue List (Am. Birds 30:1031, 1976), the Iowa Blue List (I.B.L. 45:95, 1975) and-or on Dean Roosa's list of endangered, threatened or declining species in Iowa (I.B.L. 46:40, 1976).

General Comments. The temperature and rainfall in June were about average. July was one of the hottest on record, and precipitation over the state had a crazy-quilt pattern: not even those places with torrential downpours had enough moisture to replenish the deficit built up over the many months of the drought. The ensuing report is probably the most informative in years because of the nature of the contributions received. A recently neglected area, the Iowa Great Lakes Region, was well covered by Dr. Dinsmore and his associates. Ross Silcock, Dean Roosa and Jon Stravers conducted an in-depth survey of the bird population of Washington Township, Fremont Co. June 3-7, and highlights of their "Iowa Foray 1977" will be summarized. Joe Schaufenbuel observed some startling late departures and early arrivals in n.e. Iowa; he and Darwin Koenig also made significant observations in the course of a 1200-mile trip across Iowa in early July. A 2-day Mississippi boat trip by the Petersens in late July paid handsome dividends.

Abbreviations used. (CoR): Coralville Reservoir; (DGS): Dan Green Slough, Clay Co.; (HHP): Hickory Hill Park, Iowa City; (IGLR): Iowa Great Lakes Region (used to encompass Dickinson, Emmet, Clay and Palo Alto Counties) (RRR): Red Rock Lake, Reservoir and Refuge (WFF): Washington Twp., Fremont Co. Foray; YRF: Yellow River Forest; L.: Lake; M.: Marsh; N.W.R.: National Wildlife Refuge; S.P.: State Park.

Grebes through Bitterns. An Eared Grebe was seen at W. Okoboji July 9 (R. Storer fide MR). Pied-billed Grebes were common nesters in the IGLR, but their nesting success was poor because of low water levels (JD). They were also breeding at Cardinal M., but the breeding population in n.e. Iowa seems to be declining (JS). There were a number of \*Am. White Pelicans seen in July: 8 in the IGLR July 8-25 (MR), 13 at Sweet M. (R. Robinson fide JS), and 21 at Union Slough N.W.R.,

Kossuth Co., July 2 (DK, JS). There were these reports concerning \*Double-crested Cormorants: 8 at DGS, June 2 (JD, TN), one at Lily L., Dickinson Co. (T. Taylor and D. Padget fide DH), about 8 nests in the colony n. of Clinton, July 26 (PP), one bird at Sweet M., in the northeast, June 8, and 2 in the opposite corner of the state, at Riverton, on June 6 (RS). In June, Great Blue Herons were seen in several places, with a maximum of 12 at RRR (GB); flocking started in mid-July near the CoR and at Cone M.; Petersen saw "many" at the Sabula colony on July 26. Three Little Blue Herons occurred at Trumbull L. on July 23 (MR). A Cattle Egret observed on June 2 at Dewey's Pasture may have been the same as that seen on May 30 at DGS (JD, TN); another was encountered on June 16 in Marshall Co. (D. Van Waus fide JD). Great Egrets were sighted in the n.e. corner of the state (June 20-July 6, up to 15, DK, JB), at RRR (2 on July 2, JSt), in the IGLR (total of 9, June 3-July 25, JD, TN, MR), and near Guttenberg (12 on July 26, PP). The only Snowy Egret reported was on June 28 at W. Hottes L. in the IGLR (MR). \*Black-crowned Night Herons were found in the northeast, 2 at Cardinal M. on June 11 (DK), and 4 adults with 2 immatures, suggesting breeding, at Sweet M. on June 8 (JS), north-central area (10 at Union Slough N.W.R. on July 2, DK and JS), and, with a vengeance, in the IGLR, where 18 nests were counted on W. Hottes L. (DH), and the total number of birds there and in nearby marshes was put at over 100 (JD). There was also evidence of breeding of Yellow-crowned Night Herons in the state: 7 adults and 2 juvenals were found at Johnson's Bottom, Lucas Co., in early July (RG); singles were reported from Shimek State Forest (July 2, RD), and near the CoR (early July, HO; this may have been the same bird seen by many in April-May); 3 were seen in the n.e. corner of Iowa, near New Albin, in June (JB). Search of proper habitat revealed some Least Bitterns in the IGLR (but no nests, JD), at Riverton, June 6 (RS), and 6 at Sweet M. on June 8 (JS). A few \*Am. Bitterns were present in the IGLR (JD); apparently none were observed elsewhere.

Waterfowl. The biggest news item should have been covered in the June issue, but it did not come to our attention until late July (Jack Musgrove fide WB): the capturing of a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck by employees of the Conservation Commission south of Clear L., Cerro Gordo Co., on May 8 (see longer note and photographs with editorial comment). This appears to be only the second record outside (of course) Texas, Louisiana, Arizona and California (one in Illinois according to Peterson's Eastern Guide). The line between the

Conservation Commission and I.B.L. is obviously far from "hot"! Up to 4 Gadwalls were seen n. of Ruthven, as late as June 23 (JD, TN, MR), and breeding was suspected; 2 at Sweet M., June 8, were probably stragglers (JS). Com. Pintails were observed regularly in small numbers near Ruthven up to at least June 10 (JD, TN, MR). Am. Green-winged Teals were present at Sweet M. through most of June; one was at Cardinal M. on July 10 (JS); 3 were encountered at Union Slough N.W.R. on July 2 (DK, JS); they occurred regularly near Ruthven up to July 9 (JD, TN, MR); 2 molting birds were at Elk L. on July 23 (JD). Three male Am. Wigeons in the IGLR on June 10 were unexpected (JD), as was a female at Sweet M. on June 28 (JS). N. Shovelers were regular up to June 10 at DGS and Mud L. (JD, TN, MR); a female was seen during the WFF (RS). Redheads were found with broods in the IGLR (JD). Two male Ring-necked Ducks tarried at Cardinal M. on June 11 (DK). Five Canvasback ducks with broods of 2-4 were discovered on Mud L., Clay Co., June 22 (DH, R. Howing). Up to 3 Lesser Scaups were found with regularity June 10-23 on Mud L. (JD, TN, MR). A female Bufflehead on the very shallow Goose L., Clinton Co., July 23 was a baffling summer first for Petersen. Ruddy Ducks bred in the IGLR; one drake was observed at Sweet M. up to June 20 (JS). A Hooded Merganser with ducklings was at YRF on June 11, and a female on June 19 at Cardinal M. (DK); one in a eclipse plumage was on Marble L., July 20 (MR). Two yearling Red-breasted Mergansers were seen at Dewey's Pasture, Clay Co., June 1 (MR).

Diurnal Raptors. Several roosts of Turkey Vultures were reported: 28 by the Raccoon River (DS), 20-30 at RRR (GB), 17 seen during the WFF (Dean Roosa fide RS), and 30-40 s. of Bellevue on July 26 (PP). Nobody seems to have seen a \*Sharp-shinned Hawk. Koenig had a corner on \*Cooper's: one at Harpers Ferry on July 8, and 2 with flying young near Marquette, July 29. There were several reports of Red-tailed Hawks from all over the state: the highest number was 9 pairs around RRR (GB). As to breeding, 2 nests failed at RRR, one succeeded (GB); 2 nests were found (DM), and a family group with 2 young was seen on July 26 between Dubuque and Guttenberg (PP). Three pairs of \*Red-shouldered Hawks with young along the Mississippi in extreme n.e. Iowa were followed (JB); there were adults with young in 3 other n.e. Iowa localities too (DK); an immature was seen in July in Guthrie Co. (DS). A total of 9 \*Broad-winged Hawks was recorded from n.e. Iowa during the period (DK, JB); one was reported from Iowa City, June 7 (RD);

3 were at Ledges S.P. on July 2, and breeding was considered possible (JD). A Bald Eagle was observed over N. Buena Vista on July 26 (PP). Small numbers of \*N. Harriers were observed; in the Iowa City area, nesting of one pair was suspected and the nest of another pair, with 3 young, was found and photographed (see longer note). When checked again on July 23, it was deserted (MN). Single \*Ospreys were seen, over Ingham L., Emmet Co., June 2 (TN), and near Camanche, July 27 (another summer first for PP). There were many reports of \*Am. Kestrels, none of them very encouraging, and several negative. They nested at Davenport (PP), but not, as in past years, in Dean Mosman's territory. Their number in the northeast was "fairly good" (JS), and of the 20 seen during the early July trip, 15 were in the northern tier of counties (DK, JS).

Quails through Shorebirds. Unlike those in Illinois, the populations of Com. Bobwhite and Ring-necked Pheasant in Iowa seemed to have come through the terrible winter unscathed, evidently because of the lack of a heavy snow cover. Five hen Wild Turkeys with at least 29 chicks were located in n.e. counties (DK, JB). The turkey population near Dubuque was up (R. Walton fide GC). Virginia Rails were calling at Sweet M. through June (JS); chicks were found in late June and July at Hottes and Marble LL. (MR). The Sora population in the IGLR was sparse (JD); Martha Whitson saw one chick in mid-July at Hottes L. (fide JD). A Com. Gallinule was seen at Smith Slough June 24-25 (TN, MR). Am. Coots nested in the IGLR (JD); one chick was also found in Fremont Co. (RS); 40 were counted n. of Dubuque on July 26 (PP). Semipalmated Plovers lingered east and west: until June 8 at Sweet M. (JS) and June 10 at DGS (JD). More Am. Woodcocks were found during this summer than in most years, including several in the northwest (JD, TN, MR). This probably was due to better exploration and more chance encounters than to population changes. Reports of \*Upland Sandpipers came from around the state, with 2 instances of documented nesting (Gene Armstrong fide WB, D. Gillaspey fide GB). The total count was about 30. The greatest density seems to have been in the n.e. counties, where 12 were seen (DK), and w. of Jamaica, where there were 4 (GeB). This summer, the period between the departure and return of migrant sandpipers was exceptionally short. Solitary Sandpipers set a record by reappearing at Meyer L. on June 26 (JS), and by July 30 46 were counted at Cone M. (MN). A Willet on July 11 at Sweet M. was also quite unusual (JS). Were the 10 Greater Yellowlegs on June 23 at Rush L., Osceola Co., and the

8 Lesser Yellowlegs on June 25 at Virgin L., Palo Alto Co. (JD, TN, MR), coming or going? The 2 Baird's at Big Creek L., Polk Co., on July 15 (WB) were obviously southbound. The 3 Least Sandpipers in n.e. counties on June 26 (JS) were way ahead of schedule. The 21 Dunlins at DGS June 2-6 (JD, TN, MR) must have been northbound stragglers. But what about the Short-billed Dowitcher at Sweet M. on June 27-28, in breeding plumage, and calling (JS)? Or the Long-billed Dowitcher, also identified by call, and in winter plumage, there on June 19-20 (JS)? Several Stilt Sandpipers at Big Creek L. on July 15 (WB) presented no such puzzle. Semipalmated Sandpipers were in no hurry to fly north: about 500 at DGS on June 2 (JD, TN), and one at Sweet M. as late as June 24 (JS). Two female Wilson's Phalaropes were last seen at DGS on June 16 (JD, TN, MR); July 22-23 sightings were one at Cone M. (NH) and 6 at Elk L., Clay Co. (MR). Twelve N. Phalaropes at DGS on June 2 (JD, TN) were remarkable as regards number, date and location.

Gulls through Owls. Ring-billed Gulls summered in the IGLR, with a high count of 37 at Silver L. on June 23 (JD, TN, MR); Mississippi sightings were at Lansing (12 on July 6, DK) and Princeton (4 on July 27, PP). Franklin's Gulls, in groups of 20-40, were common June 11-July 25 in the IGLR (JD, TN, MR). Nests of Forster's Terns with young were photographed on June 21 on W. Hottes L. (DH). The high count there was 60 birds (JD); 4 were seen at Cardinal M. on July 7 (DK), and 6 at Sweet M., where one spent all summer, on July 22; 22 were at RRR most of July (JSt). A Com. Tern was n. of Dubuque on July 26 and 2 at Bettendorf next day (PP). Six \*Little Terns were flying south n. of Sabula on July 26 (whence, whereto?) (PP). At RRR, 5 Caspian Terns occurred on July 7 (JSt). Twenty-five Black Terns spent most of July there (JSt). These were common breeders, with little nesting success because of low water levels, in the IGLR (JD). Small groups (2-4 birds) were seen in July by others too (GeB, JS, PP). Helen Peasley saw a Ringed Turtle-Dove in Des Moines, July 15-23 (fide WB). Where do these birds materialize from? The Mourning Dove, not usually mentioned in these notes, became a topic of conversation (to put it mildly) when the Conservation Commission declared an open season on it. There were numerous reports on \*Yellow-billed and \*Black-billed Cuckoos, with the former apparently having the edge. The most optimistic note came from the WFF, which prompted Silcock to label both "common breeders" in his corner of the state. The only

report on owls that was not routine was that of a \*Short-eared Owl on July 7 in Guthrie Co. (DS).

Goatsuckers through Swallows. \*Com. Nighthawks were deemed scarce (GB). They seem to be largely confined to urban areas. Numerous correspondents remarked on the scarcity or lack of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the field. The only concentrations reported were at feeders (8 on June 2 near Greenfield, GeB; 4 in Gladys Black's area). This species should be monitored! The same can be said for the Belted Kingfisher, which was quite sporadic, with one nest mentioned (DM). The Pileated Woodpecker is doing well in the northeast, with nesting observed near Dubuque (R. Walton fide GC), and 4-7 seen on day-long trips (DK). The consensus is that \*Red-headed Woodpeckers are abundant. Many immatures were seen this year. The summer stronghold of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Iowa is the northeast, where they were called "common" in early June (JB), and where 2 nests were found (near Marquette, DK); they also occur in the n.w. corner of the state (one seen in Gitchie-Manitou S.P., July 2, DK and JS). Most contributors had a hard time finding \*Hairy Woodpeckers; the 1:1.8 Hairy/Downy ratio reported by Koenig is therefore noteworthy. W. Kingbirds again made it to the center of the state: one in W. Des Moines, and 2 at Ankeny (GB, DM). They are more common than the \* in the Field Check List suggests in the western counties: 4 along a 15-mile stretch in Fremont Co., July 7 (RS); 14 in w. Monona and Harrison Counties, July 2 (DK, JS), outnumbered by a factor of no more than 2 by E. Kingbirds. Reports on E. Phoebes are not cheery, so it is a relief to see them labeled "fairly common breeders" in Fremont Co. (RS). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, identified also by call, was observed in St Lucas on June 7, rather late (JS). Acadian Flycatchers were doing well in the northeast and the southwest: 7 s.e. of St. Lucas, June 4 (JS), 10 nests found (DK), and "common" in Waubonsie S.P. (RS), with a nest found by Mrs. De Long; several territorial males were also observed in the centrally located Guthrie Co. (DS). Willow Flycatchers were heard in June in HHP (TS), "very common" in the Ruthven area (JD), and more common than last year near Davenport (PP). Alder Flycatchers on the WFF (June 4) were judged to be migrants (RS). Least Flycatchers are hardly standard summer fare in Iowa: this year, one was at Meyer L. on June 4 (JS), one sang on July 1 in Guthrie Co. (DS), 2 were in the YRF, 6 more in other n.e. Iowa areas into mid- and late June (DK, JS), and one in the yard July 20 and 22 (PP). Olive-sided Flycatchers straggled (June 3 by the Missouri, RS; June 8 in Fayette Co., JS;) or returned early (one in HHP July 25, RD). Tree Swallows, irregular nesters in Iowa, were common all summer near

Iowa City (NH et al.) and nested in Riverton (RS). The news about \*Cliff Swallows was good, with these exceptions: nesting failures were noted along the bridge at RRR (GB, JSt), and in Fremont Co. only 5-10 out of 75 nests were occupied (RS). \*Purple Martins did well in Dubuque (GC), Iowa City (NH et al.), Davenport (PP), and Elkhart (DM), but were down at RRR (GB) and absent from the Jamaica area (GeB).

Crows through Shrikes. The number of crows seems to have been increasing. It is therefore surprising that Burns found them substantially reduced during his peregrinations in search of information for an IBL Site Guide in a 11-county area in w. Iowa. Not unexpectedly, in view of the severe winter, there were few reports of Carolina Wrens away from human habitation: one in Guthrie Co., early July (DS) and one at Ledges S.P., June 8 (JD). Four Veeries sang into early July near St. Lucas (JS); 9 more were found in other n.e. Iowa areas in June (DK), with a nest in Brush Creek Canyon; another bird was observed in late June in Guthrie Co. (DS). The reports on E. Bluebirds are a mixed bag: none or few found by most, but more common than last year in Guthrie Co. (DS), 14 nests successful near Wildcat Den (PP), 12-15 near Dubuque (R. Walton fide GC), and 50+ nestlings (DM). \*Loggerhead Shrikes were absent from most of the state, or very scarce at best, with these exceptions: 3 pairs s.e. of Pleasantville (GB), one pair for every 5-7 miles in the Lamoni area (D. Gillaspey fide GB), and, with only 4 in the 11-county area, a "pocket" near Jamaica (GeB).

Vireos through Warblers. Up to 3 singing White-eyed Vireos were found in HHP June 12-July 25 (RD); an adult and an immature occurred at Cone M. on June 12 (RD); a male near Pandora sang into early June (DS). Up to 3 \*Bell's Vireos in suitable habitat were reported by several contributors from widely scattered locations; the WFF revealed them to be "common" in the extreme southwest (RS). The breeding population of this species in Iowa appears to be stable. A shortage of the commoner vireos was noted in central areas (WB, DM). A surprising number of warblers that ordinarily only migrate through the state stayed on in small numbers to "enjoy" our summer. A Black - and- White Warbler was in HHP on June 12 (NH), in mid-June in Guthrie Co. (DS), at Pikes Peak on June 11 (DK), and 2 were seen in Fremont Co. June 3-4 (J. and D. Boles fide RS); on June 7, Mrs. De Long found an adult feeding a young at Waubonsie S.P. (fide RS). Seventeen

Prothonotary Warblers were counted at Rathbun L. in early July (WB, Charlotte Scott). A Worm-eating Warbler, not considered territorial, was seen in Waubonsie S.P. on June 7 (RS). Golden-winged Warblers were found on July 29, one in YRF, and another near Lock and Dam #9 (DK). Blue-winged Warblers were called "numerous" in n.e. Iowa (DK); two were seen in the Iowa City area, June 19 (MN); one was reported from Polk Co., where they are rare (W. Boller fide WB). Most reports mention a few \*Yellow Warblers, but there were 42 (21 in 1976) along a 2½-mile stretch of Bloody Run Creek, and many others in n.e. locations (DK); they were also common around Trumbull L. (JD) and on the WFF (RS). There is certainly no evidence for a further decline of the population of this warbler in Iowa. Two Cerulean Warblers were reported from the St. Lucas area in early June (JS); some apparently nested in Palisades Kepler S.P., where they were seen on June 18 (RD). A singing Blackburnian Warbler on the late date of June 5 was unusual (JS). There may be a few isolated Yellow-throated Warblers breeding in Ledges S.P., where they were reported from in recent years, and last in May; 2 males were observed there on July 4 (DK, JS). A Chestnut-sided Warbler at Pikes Peak on June 11 was unexpected (DK). Louisiana Waterthrushes were seen in n.e. and s.w. localities: 4 near St. Lucas, June 3-4, more than 10 in various other n.e. places (DK), and 2-3 pairs, one with young, on the WFF (RS). The few summering Kentucky Warblers recorded spanned the state; their number was down in n.e. Iowa (DK), where they are regular; one sang on June 15 at the Macbride Field Campus (NH), and another was found at Waubonsie S.P. on July 3 (DK, JS). Reports on \*Yellow-breasted Chats were above average: 2 in HHP June 12-July 16 (NH, RD), a nest at Dubuque (R. Walton fide GC), and 4 in various n.e. Iowa locations (DK, JS). The only Hooded Warbler recorded stayed into July at Marquette (DK). The distribution pattern of the \*Am. Redstart is evidently quite uneven: only a few in Des Moines (WB), many at Palisades Kepler S.P. and the northeast (DK), and not seen on the WFF, although known to be common at DeSoto Bend N.W.R. and in e. Nebraska. "I don't understand this bird!" (RS).

Blackbirds through Sparrows. Petersen's breeding bird surveys lent substance to the suspicion (see June issue) that both meadowlarks had declined (Eastern: 11 vs. 29 in 1976; Western: 102 vs. 153). Some Yellow-headed Blackbirds were present in extreme n.e. Iowa in early June (JB); the new colony n. of Dubuque contained some 20 pairs (GC); colony desertions due to low water levels were



reported from Lakin Slough (GeB), Ankeny (DM) and Taylor L. (RS). This was a good summer for Orchard Orioles. There were 5 pairs in the Iowa City area, with one nest observed (MN et al.) and another supported by strong circumstantial evidence (HO, NH); they nested in Alburnett (LS) and at Big Creek L. (WB); a pair was seen near Pleasantville (GB); they were "numerous" in the 11-county area (GeB); Koenig and Schaufenbuel counted 10 on their July trip, and they were dubbed "common" on the basis of the WFF (RS). Scarlet Tanagers were seen in largest numbers in n.e. Iowa, where 23 territorial males were counted in June at Brush Creek Canyon (DK). The only reports of Summer Tanagers came from Waubonsie S.P. (a few singing males in early June, RS). Blue Grosbeaks are reasonably common in the far west: 5 in Plymouth and Woodbury Counties, July 2 (DK, JS) and 12 in w. Monona and Harrison Counties, July 2-3 (GeB); a nest with 2 young observed near Coon Rapids June 14-22 was more unusual (GeB), as was a sighting in early June in the Cedar Rapids area (Weir Nelson fide MN). Dickcissel numbers reflected habitat faithfully; they were few where habitat was restricted (WB), and exceptionally numerous where weeds had grown tall around receded bodies of water, as in Fremont Co. (RS), Guthrie Co. (DS) and around the CoR (NH). The same conditions also favored the breeding of Savannah Sparrows. Where there were enough hayfields, \*Grasshopper Sparrows were also plentiful, but cultivation is encroaching on them. Two \*Henslow's Sparrows were seen on June 23 near Decorah (DK); one at Cresco on July 11 (JS), and up to 6 at Hayden Prairie into mid-July (JF, JS). There is no obvious pattern to abundance of \*Vesper Sparrows, monitored carefully because of their newly acquired Blue List status: "common" in Guthrie Co. (DS, GeB), "very common" along roadsides in the IGLR (JD), but reduced in the northeast (JS), uncommon on the WFF (RS), sparse near Des Moines (WB), and not seen around Iowa City (NH). Only small numbers of Lark Sparrows were reported. An adult male Harris' Sparrow in full spring plumage was observed at Smith Slough, Clay Co., June 9-15 (JD, TN, MR), way south of its normal summer range. Swamp Sparrows bred in good numbers in northern marshes (Sweet, Cardinal, Union Slough) (DK, JS).

Contributors. Jim Bednarz, Ames; Gladys Black, Pleasantville; Woodward Brown, Des Moines; Gene Burns, Jamaica; George Crossley, Dubuque; Rich DeCoster, Iowa City; James Dinsmore, Ames; Joan Fowler, Rochester, Minn.; Ronnie George, Chariton; Nicholas Halmi, Iowa City; Douglas Harr, Lester; Darwin Koenig, Decorah; Dean Mosman, Elkhart; Mike Newlon, Iowa City; Tom Nigus, Ames; Helen Osmundson, Iowa City;

Peter Petersen, Davenport; Mark Ryan, Ames; Joe Schaufenbuel, St. Lucas; Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids; W. Ross Silcock, Malvern; Tom Shires, Iowa City; Dean Stauffer, Ames; Jon Stravers, Pella. N.S. HALMI, R#6, IOWA CITY, IA. 52240.

Field Reports editor's note to contributors. Since the June issue was published too late to be available to contributors to this report, I wish to reiterate my requests made in it. I would also like to encourage you to turn in your reports as soon after the end of the fall period (November 30) as possible. I am operating against stringent deadlines set by both IBL and Am. Birds, and if I am forced to wait for late reports, as I was this time (all may not even be in yet), the quality of the product will suffer because of the haste. Consider that the above report was written between 6 PM, August 8 and 10:30 AM, August 9!