

FIELD REPORTS

FALL 1977

The species marked with \* 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. August ended the long drought in Iowa, with up to a foot of rain in some places. The farmers' gain was, in some respects, the birders' loss: virtually all shorebird habitat was wiped out by the end of the first week of August. Temperatures were below average, and the migration of many passerine species (vireos and warblers) peaked before September 1. September was an average month; October and November were again wet, and on the cold side. Record-breaking cold before Thanksgiving may have cleared the state of many lingering members of half-hardy species. In pleasant contrast to last year's, this promises to be a northern finch winter (unless they, as the Evening Grosbeaks seem to have done, move quickly to even more southern destinations).

Abbreviations used. CoR: Coralville Reservoir; HHP: Hickory Hill Park, Iowa City; RRR: Red Rock Lake, Reservoir and Refuge; SR: Saylorville Reservoir; YRF: Yellow River Forest; L.: Lake; M.: Marsh; N.W.R.: National Wildlife Refuge; S.P.: State Park.

Loons through Bitterns. Com. Loons were reported in small numbers from large bodies of water, but the peak count at the CoR ( 16 on November 2, NH ) was a local record. Two small loons on L.Manawa, November 20, could have been Gavia arctica, but Silcock cautiously refused to rule out the possibility that they were small individuals of G.immer. There were no sizable flocks of Horned Grebes anywhere. Four Eared Grebes were found in Mills Co. on October 30 (RS). A \* W.Grebe first spotted on October 27 (NH) stayed for a week on the CoR, and was seen by many. On October 30, it was joined briefly by 2 more (TK). One was also present at Storm L., closer to its normal range, on October 28 (DB). \*Am. White Pelicans moved through the w. and c. parts of the state in truly impressive numbers: for example, 150 were observed on August 21 at Trumbull L. (R.Sojda fide JD), 250 in Calhoun Co. on September 24 (TN), and 1000 at Union Slough on September 13 (O.Knauth fide GB). At RRR, Carl Kurtz and Jon Stravers counted 420 from a canoe on September 29; the last bird departed on November 18 (GB). \*Double-crested Cormorants figured in numerous reports: 4 at SR on September 22 (WB) and 12 on October 14 (JD); at least 3 on the CoR October 8-22 (TK,NH),

and 7 flying across it on October 14 (RD); 12 at RRR in September (GB). But the largest number were seen by participants in the IOU fall meeting at De Soto Bend N.W.R. on October 28--more than 60 birds, about half of them immatures. The usual fall congregations of Great Blue Herons were unimpressive: 100 at RRR (GB) and a peak of short duration (50 birds) at the CoR in early September (NH). An imm. Little Blue Heron at SR was seen on October 11 (RM). Cattle Egret sightings are up, and not only because of Dr. Dinsmore's special interest in this Old World pilgrim's progress. In addition to the 18 birds reported fide JD, there were 25 more observed between August 23 and November 4, from 2 in the extreme southeast (BH) to 2 in the s.w. corner of the state (IG), 5 at SR on September 24 (WB) constituting the northern limit, and 15 near RRR September 24-30 (GB) the largest flock. Eight Great Egrets were observed along n. portions of the Mississippi up to October 15 (JSc), 7 on September 24 by the CoR (NH), and a maximum of 25 at RRR (GB). \*Black-crowned Night Herons were seen at RRR (3 on September 26) and along the Skunk River (2 on August 9) (JSt); 12 were counted by the SR on October 14 (TN). A single Least Bittern occurred at RRR on August 13 (JSt), but 4 could be flushed at Sweet M. in Bremer Co. (TSt). All \*Am. Bitterns reported were singles: one at Hendrickson M., Story Co. (TN), another at Cardinal M., Winneshiek Co., August 7 and 10 (JSc), and a third by the CoR on October 2 (TK).

43  
for the  
state

Swans through Ducks. The only report of Whistling Swans came from the northeast: 30 at Lock and Dam 9 on November 18 (DK). Waterfowl migration was short on highlights. Maxima for Canada Geese were 2000 at RRR (low, GB) and 2000+ on November 12 at Mark Twain N.W.R., (PP). There was only one mention of Gr. White-fronted Geese e. of their main flyway ( 6 at RRR on September 26, JSt ). An imm. Ross' Goose was handed, photographed and released on November 21 at De Soto Bend N.W.R. (MG,LZ). All regularly occurring species of ducks were seen this fall at RRR and the CoR, but few of them in remarkable numbers ( 80,000 Mallards and 7-8000 Green-winged Teals in the RRR area, GB ). The highest count of \*Canvasbacks reported was 60 at Mark Twain N.W.R. on November 12 (PP). Three White-winged Scoters on the CoR, October 22, were independently seen by 2 observers (TK,NH). A female Surf Scoter in Polk Co. on November 5 was documented (WB).

doc.  
doc.

Diurnal Raptors. This has been an exceptional fall for birds' of prey. The maximum count for Turkey Vultures was 100 in early October at the RRR (GB). An early N. Goshawk was part of a massive hawk movement over HHP on September 18 (MN). At the same time, 27 \*Sharp-shinned Hawks and 12 Accipiter sp. were observed. The news about Sharp-shinned Hawks was generally favorable: 20 seen in the Iowa City area September 2-October 27 (RD), 29 in n.e. counties September 4-November 26 (JSc), and 5 over the CoR on October 8 (TK,NH). M. Newlon's personal edition of a mini-

doc.

Hawk Mountain also included a \*Cooper's Hawk. One seen 2 days later at HHP may have been the same individual (September 20, RD). Another was at St. Lucas on September 10 (JSc). Petersen banded his first Cooper's Hawk since 1973. A large accipiter at De Soto Bend N.W.R. on October 28 (RS,PP,NH) was probably a female Cooper's. \*Red-shouldered Hawks continued to be seen until November 18 on their known n.e. breeding grounds (DK). Two were seen s. of Dubuque on November 20 (B.Herrmann fide GC), and one each at Sweet M. (an imm. on August 13, JSc) and HHP (October 1, RD). Kettles of \*Broad-winged Hawks consisted of 67 at Waucoma on September 24 (JSc), 100+ in Warren Co. on October 14 (GB), and 258 that formed the core of the HHP "happening" on September 18 (MN). Reports of \*Swainson's Hawks are never routine. This fall, we learned of the remarkable occurrence of breeding at Cedar Falls, with 4 young hatched and one surviving, last seen August 28 (TSt et al., including Iowa's raptor expert par excellence, Dean Roosa). Also, one at Ridgway on August 10 (JSc), 4 (2 on August 6, 2 on September 17) e. of Sweet M., documented (TSt et al.), and 2 in Fremont Co., October 24-26 (RS). Equally remarkable was an imm. Ferruginous Hawk documented for the vicinity of Shenandoah (October 16, RP). There were several sightings of Rough-legged Hawks, first seen on September 12 (DB), with "more than ever" in the Hamburg area (IG). Three Golden Eagles (one adult, 2 imm.) were observed on November 25-26 in Allamakee Co. (DK) (no further details). Bald Eagles moved in along the larger rivers and lakes on schedule, but one at RRR on September 24 was the earliest on record for the area (JSt). \*N.Harriers were fairly common, good counts being 12 between September 7 and November 23 in n.e. counties (DK) and 14 in Marion Co. on September 13 (JSt). \*Ospreys were seen by numerous correspondents in late September and early October, and all over the state (one to 3); "many" at Sweet M. (TSt) August 15-September 28 may be a slight hyperbole. Another candidate for top honors among the fall's rare raptors is a \*Prairie Falcon, whose critical field marks were seen on October 16 in Fremont Co. (RS). A Peregrine Falcon, judged to be an adult male (small size?) was sighted on October 2 and again on October 10, then from 40 feet, by an experienced birder (DM). An equally good look of a \*Merlin was obtained on October 17 (DB). Detailed descriptions of these falcons were not provided. Once again, the reports on \*Am. Kestrels were conflicting: very few around Iowa City, at RRR (GB) and near Hamburg (IG), but 18 banded September 11-19 (DM), 16 seen on a single <sup>day</sup> (September 13) by G.Armstrong (fide WB), and "abundant" near Cherokee (MB), where indeed 173 (!) were counted on October 1 (DB).

Gallinaceous Birds through Terns. Fifteen Ruffed Grouse were seen at YRF on November 18 (DK). Nobody commented on Com. Bobwhites. Information on their status

would be desirable because of serious declines in Illinois. Wild Turkeys were reported in small numbers from the Volga L. area (JSc), and 40-50 at Swiss Valley (R.Walton fide GC) indicated good reproductive success. Am. Coots peaked at 1500+ near Lock 13 on November 5 (PP). This was the poorest migration of shorebirds in years. Other than Killdeers, the only plovers seen were 4 Lesser Golden near RRR (October 13, GB) and 3 Black-bellied by the CoR (September 29, NH). Am. Woodcocks were regular at Pine Hill Cemetery into early November, and 2 were banded (PP). A compact flock of 25 Com. Snipe along US 218 in Johnson Co. on October 22 was unusual (NH). The only Upland Sandpiper reported was seen in Franklin Co. along I-35 (JD). Six Willets were observed by the CoR before the monsoon season started (August 6, NH,MN). The only peeps of interest were 6 Baird's Sandpipers at Cardinal M., August 13 (JSc). One-2 Stilt Sandpipers occurred at Cone M., Louisa Co., in early August (RD,NH). The season's best shorebird, a N.Phalarope, was an unexpected find in a farm puddle s. of Iowa City on September 5 (NH,TK,TSh). High counts of Herring Gulls were 9 at the CoR (TK) and 12 at RRR (GB); for Ring-billed Gulls, 120 (November 2,NH) and 200 (GB), respectively. Twenty-seven in a field s. of Ames on November 12 were noteworthy (JD). Franklin's Gulls must have moved mainly w.of Iowa: only one was seen in Iowa City (September 18, CN), and 2 at George Wyth S.P., Waterloo (October 7, TSt). A molting Bonaparte's Gull on the CoR was 2 months early on August 14 (NH); they were on a more regular schedule October 2-November 5, with a maximum of 20 on November 3 (NH); an IOU convention party saw at least 9 on L.Manawa, October 29; 2 were at RRR in early November (GB). A Forster's Tern near the Coralville Dam on October 12 was considered a bit late (NH), but then a small flight appeared near Shenandoah on November 9 (IG). Flocks of Caspian Terns reported from Sweet M., September 11 (9, JSc), George Wyth S.P. (28, TSt), RRR (15,GB) and the new SR (15 through October,WB) were easily outnumbered by the 85 seen over the Mississippi between Bettendorf and Davenport on September 13 (PP). The only place where Black Terns caught the fancy of observers was Cone M. in early August (maximum of 40+, B.and C. Knight fide MN).

Cuckoos through Flycatchers. As usual, both cuckoos had departure dates in August-early September (\*Yellow-billed: September 3, RRR, JSt; \*Black-billed, August 14, Cone M.,NH). A few \* Short-eared Owls were seen: 2 in October (12<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>) at St.Lucas (JSc) and 2 in November (6<sup>th</sup>, Story Co.,HZ; 26<sup>th</sup>, near Cherokee, DB). Three Long-eared Owls were flushed from a stand of evergreens by the CoR on November 12 (TK). Petersen banded 7 Saw-whet Owls October 6-November 6; one was found roosting near the CoR on November 26 (MN et al.). The

migration of \*Com. Nighthawks at St. Lucas was called poor (JSc), but scores flew over Iowa City in 2 waves (September 1, 18, NH); the last was seen there on October 14 (TSh), the day before the last Chimney Swift was recorded. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were much fewer in HHP this fall than in the fall of 1976; one with a stubborn death wish stayed at a Waterloo feeder until November 27, for a new Iowa record (TSt): ~~was~~ <sup>when</sup> ~~weakened by~~ <sup>set in,</sup> subzero weather, it became so weak it had to be fed from a pipette. The northeast continues to be the best area for Pileated Woodpeckers in the state: Koenig found 9 in Allamakee Co. on November 29. Several observers were struck by the massive (in many places complete) exodus of \*Red-headed Woodpeckers early this fall. A poor acorn crop was blamed, and Christmas censuses are awaited with interest. Petersen's banding records will give a sampling of the flycatcher migration: E. Phoebe, 14, August 25-November 2; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, 45, August 14-September 26; Acadian, 7, August 14-September 10; "Traill's", 26, August 14-September 6; Least, 56, August 14-September 26 (note the early start). The last E. Pewee noted was one in the Macbride Field Campus, October 2 (NH).

Larks through Shrikes. The roads in Cherokee Co. on November 26 were overrun by 5000 Horned Larks (DB). Thousand of Tree Swallows spent much of the fall near the CoR (TK, MN); a flock of 150 over the water on November 3 was surprisingly large for the late date (NH). The usual roosts of Am. Crows which aggregate as winter approaches were not seen in the Iowa City vicinity (this is not a complaint). Only 10 \*Tufted Titmice were found during the period (RD). This has been a good fall for Red-breasted Nuthatches; they appeared early (September 3, TSh); 12 were banded September 5-November 12 (PP); they were common in the northeast (JSc); 8 were counted on October 2 (MN); and Woody Brown knew of 8 in Des Moines at the end of the period. Petersen banded 21 Brown Creepers September 21-November 3, and 10 Winter Wrens between September 21 and October 16. Single Winter Wrens were seen in Iowa City by several people around mid-October. The only report of a Bewick's Wren came from Waterloo (September 28, TSt). The cold winter of 1976/77 must have damaged the population of Carolina Wrens: most reports were negative, even from places where survivors were seen and heard into the summer. Marsh and Sedge Wrens (especially the latter) were common in Davenport (PP), but Marsh Wrens were hard to find at the CoR and at Cone M. A Sedge Wren seen on November 15 (G. Armstrong fide WB) was very late. So was a Gray Catbird on November 4, a Wood Thrush on October 24, and the last of 101 Swainson's Thrushes banded on November 6 (PP). On the other hand, a Gray-cheeked Thrush at Meyer L. on August 14 was early (JSc). Tom Kent found E. Bluebirds regular from September 16 to November 27; in early October, flocks of 12, 20 and 23,

respectively, were noted at RRR (GB); there were also good numbers in n.e. Polk Co. (DM). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, unusual in fall, were at HHP until September 11 (RD,NH,TK). All signs point to considerable mortality due to the severe winter among Golden-crowned Kinglets: only 20 banded (PP), and few seen by regulars in the field. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet on August 24 was early (PP). The only report of Water Pipits came from St.Lucas, where up to 10 were seen in the fields October 22-November 5 (JSc). Cedar Waxwings, over 100 at their peak (TK), roamed the Iowa City area September 4-November 5. A shrike sp., presumed a Northern, was seen on November 19 near Clear L.(CK); another, identified as a Northern, was early on October 25 at St.Lucas (JSc); a third was reported from LaPorte City (November 12, TSt). The news about \*Loggerhead Shrikes was skimpy: a pair nested into August at Waterloo (TSt), 3 were seen s.e. of Iowa City on August 5 (RD), and one or 2 were regular by the Little Sioux River (DB).

Vireos,Warblers. It seems that White-eyed Vireos nested successfully in HHP: 2 singing adults were in evidence, along with an immature, until September 24 (RD,NH,TK). One was seen at Sweet M. (August 6) and another at Union Grove S.P. (September 6) (TSt). The last of HHP's 4 singing \*Bell's Vireos fell silent or departed after August 28 (TK,MN). Thirty-eight Solitary Vireos banded August 24-October 12 (PP) were above average. The migration of Red-eyed Vireos ( 109 banded August 15-September 24) was heaviest in late August (PP). Philadelphia Vireos moved through early (starting August 14, PP) and in waves: 5 on September 11 at HHP (TK), and 12 between September 3 and 14, with 6 on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 4 on the 14<sup>th</sup> in Schaufenbuel's territory. A Black-and-white Warbler on August 14 was early (PP). Golden-winged Warblers, unusual in the fall, were reported: singles in HHP August 30-September 5 (RD,TK), 2 in St.Lucas, September 1 and 5 (JSc), one to 3 daily August 14-31 at George Wyth S.P. (TSt), and 4 banded August 20-27 (PP). A Tennessee Warbler at Cardinal M. on August 10 was ahead of hoi polloi; on the other hand, a Nashville Warbler near the CoR on November 6 had fallen behind (RD). A total of 5 N.Parula Warblers (August 17-September 25, RD,PP,JSc) was a good count for fall. The silence about \*Yellow Warblers is once again ominous. The migration of Magnolia Warblers peaked in August (PP). Cape May Warblers, rare in the fall, were seen at Cardinal M., August 11, and St.Lucas, September 5 (JSc); the one netted on September 28 was the first since 1972 (PP). Yellow-rumped Warblers banded were few(PP), but many were seen in the field, and some lingered at feeders into mid-November (IG,WD). A Black-throated Green banded on August 24 was early; 15 Blackburnians netted, all before August 29, were numerous (PP). Chestnut-sided

(prob)

Early  
Late

arrived early (August 11, JSc; August 13, PP), and peaked in late August, as did Bay-breasted (peak: August 23) (PP). The only Pine Warbler was at HHP on August 29 (NH). Prairie Warblers are very rare in Iowa: 2 seen near L.Rathbun on September 5, and well documented, may be the first fall record for the state (GW). A N.Waterthrush at Cone M. on August 6 (MN et al.) was way ahead of schedule. Three Mourning Warblers were netted (August 29-September 20, PP), and one was seen in HHP September 5 and 10 (NH et al., TK). A Yellow-breasted Chat was found there on August 11 (MN); another created some excitement in Des Moines, where it is rare, on September 19 (WB). A Wilson's Warbler in Iowa City on August 8 was surprisingly early (TSh). Canada Warblers were banded August 4-September 20, with a zenith in late August (PP).

Blackbirds through Sparrows. Seven Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen at Amana L. on August 7 (NH). The last Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting were recorded on October 2 (TSh). Gladys Black received 61 reports of Evening Grosbeaks from 39 counties, from late October through November. The largest flock was comprised of some 30 birds, and none of them settled down for more than a week. Purple Finches, apparently also on the move, first showed up on September 25 (NH). They were numerous all fall in the northeast (DK, JSc), but only one was at Petersen's feeder (November 27). Three Com.Redpolls were seen: one at the feeder on November 24 (PP), and 2 at Harpers Ferry, November 26 (DK). Pine Siskins were widespread, appearing in early October; they were numerous in the territory covered by Koenig and Schaufenbuel; 30-40 were steady at the feeder (PP); and 300-400 were seen n. of Cherokee in late November (DB). Red Crossbills made only a token appearance ( 1 at Harpers Ferry, November 26, DK; 5 at Davenport, November 27, PP), but White-winged Crossbills were widely encountered, and in fairly good numbers: on November 19, 25 in Decorah (fide GB) and 24 at Davenport (PP); 15 at Inwood, Lyon Co., on November 10 (fide GB); 8 at Waterloo, November 27 (TSt); from November 18 on, but gradually declining in numbers (JSc); 15+ at Iowa City, November 22-23 (TK, NH); and 35+ n. of Cherokee, November 26 (DB). Pine Grosbeaks, seldom seen in Iowa, occurred in the northeast (14 at YRF, 1 at Harpers Ferry, November 26, DK, JSc). Tom Kent carefully monitored the sparrow migration around Iowa City, and found a \*Grasshopper Sparrow on the new late date of October 29, 2 \*Vesper Sparrows on October 22, at least 10 Harris' Sparrows October 16-November 13, and a rather early White-throated Sparrow on September 10. Lapland Longspurs were first seen on October 2 and common later in the month; on November 24, a flock of 100 birds was found (JSc); one in Cherokee Co., on November 26, numbered 50 individuals (DB). A flock of Snow Buntings by the CoR was first seen on October 29; it grew steadily,

to a maximum of 125+ birds on November 26 (TK et al.); on October 31, 20+ were present at Lock 13 (PP); there were many flocks in the northeast (DK); and Cherokee Co. ran away with numerical honors (1000-1500 on November 26, DB). In summary, a good fall for winter finches---QED.

Erratum. The breeding Black-and-white Warbler reported for June 7, 1977 in Fremont Co. was actually seen there several years ago.

Contributors. Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Gladys Black, Pleasantville; Marion Brewer, Cherokee; Woodward Brown, Des Moines; George Crossley, Dubuque, Rich DeCoster, Iowa City; James Dinsmore, Ames; William Duval, Muscatine; Ione Getscher, Hamburg; Marlyn Glasson, Ames; Nicholas Halmi, Iowa City; Bruce Hitman, Brooklyn Park, Minn.; Rick Hollis, Iowa City; Thomas Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Decorah; Charles Krieger, Marshalltown; Richard Mooney, Des Moines; Mike and Carol Newlon, Iowa City; Thomas Nigus, Ames; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Joe Schaufenbuel, St.Lucas; Thomas Shires, Iowa City; Ross Silcock, Malvern; Tom Stone, Waterloo; Jon Stravers, Pella; Gary Wymore, Ottumwa; Hank and Linda Zaletel, Ames. N.S.HALMI, RR 6, IOWA CITY, IA 52240.

WINTER REPORTS for I.B.L. are due by February 15. Please send any significant observations for the period February 15-28, intended for publication in Am.Birds, by March 5 (their Winter Season encompasses all of February). N.H.