

Van Dyk

Winter Report -- John Van Dyk, Sioux Center, Sioux County

I have little to report, mostly because of too much out-of-state involvement and too little time to observe locally. I have begun to write an occasional article on local bird life in the Sioux Center News in the hope of obtaining more input from the local folks.

- Rough-legged Hawk: seems more plentiful than usual this winter (apparently in other parts of the country as well: I saw an unusually large number of them in e.g. central California and Nebraska in early January).
- As yet I have received no reports of Snowy Owls in this immediate area.
- Screech Owl: It seems that the nocturnal food supply is low: On February 1 we observed a Screech Owl capturing a Starling shortly after the noon hour on a bright and sunny day.
- Rusty Blackbird: On January 27 Mr. A.J. Boersma (whose diligent efforts to conserve Bluebirds by building and placing numerous boxes throughout western Sioux County are greatly appreciated) observed three Rusty Blackbirds, a rather scarce species at this time of the year.
- Cardinal: This species appears to be very scarce.
- Common Redpoll: Indeed common this winter.
- Dark-eyed Junco: Juncos seem rather scarce this winter, compared to other winters. On January 15 an individual of the western race (Oregon Junco) appeared on our feeder.
- Lapland Longspur: As usual, very common in this area.
- Snow Bunting: Exceptionally plentiful this winter.

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Additional Winter Report

- Pheasant: This species is doing exceptionally well in north-west Iowa. They seem to have recovered fully, in spite of the abnormal cold of this and the previous winter. On February 18 I counted 25 of them along the Sioux and Rock Rivers at Oak Grove State Park in western Sioux County. Local observers report that they, too, see large numbers of them.
- Long-eared Owl: I observed one of these uncommon owls in the afternoon of February 25. Apparently it had been roosting under an old bridge across the Sioux River at the Iowa/South Dakota border in western Sioux County, and was flushed by snowmobiles traveling on the frozen river. For most of the afternoon the owl attempted to return to its roost, only to be flushed again by regularly appearing snowmobiles. The weather was bright and sunny.

Whether this additional report is significant relative to American Birds, I'll leave to your judgment.

Sincerely,



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