

Vern: This went
to IBL - ~~if necessary~~,
addenda up to 2/28 for AB
are attached.

FIELD REPORTS

WINTER 1978-79

~~to follow.~~
all the uncorroborated
rarities (if for real) are
disheartening.

The species marked with * are on the National Audubon Blue List (Am. Birds 32:1106, 1978), the Iowa Blue List (I.B.L. 45:95, 1975) and-or on Dean Roosa's list of endangered, threatened or declining species for Iowa (I.B.L. 46:40, 1976).

General Comments. The early Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) set some unexpected records because of lingering fall migrants, but in late December winter closed in with a vengeance. During January up to 2 feet of snow piled up over the state, and the temperatures averaged 15-20 F below normal. February brought no relief. This kind of weather is not even for the birds, and obviously impeded their observation severely. I therefore received relatively few and mostly short reports, and others did not reach me in time (including documentations for some outstanding rarities). This report should be read in conjunction with Dr. Ross Silcock's CBC Summary - which also hasn't reached me yet. There are thus several reasons why this synopsis of a bad winter is unsatisfactory.

Hérons through Hawks. Single Gr. Blue Herons lingered into the third week of December at Boone (fide JD), Iowa City (TK), and along the Mississippi (PP, JS). A Whistling Swan was found dead at Sweet M. in early December (JS). As in 1978, a flock of Canada Geese was spotted flying over Iowa City in early January (TS). A Gr. White-fronted Goose near Amana was a surprise on January 6 (CB). Seventy-thousand Snow Geese were counted in the s.w. corner of the state in December, along with 14,000 Mallards (RP), and 150 flew over Davenport January 2 (PP). Among the uncommon lingering ducks were a Com. Pintail and a Blue-winged Teal on December 16 (RP), and single *Canvasbacks along the upper Mississippi December 5 and 22 (JS). An Am. Black Duck, 4 Com. Pintails and a Redhead were spotted near Panorama Dam on February 10 (RC). A N. Goshawk was seen on December 2 and 9 (EF), but the documentation is not entirely diagnostic. As usual, some *Sharp-shinned Hawks stayed through the winter, one around our house being the most faithful (December 23-February 10) (NH); there were 7 in the northeast December 5-January 28 (JS). *Cooper's Hawks, in addition to those on CBCs, include one at Bays Branch, December 23 (RC) and 3 in the northeast, December 10-February 7 (JS, DK). The reports concerning Red-tailed Hawks are a mixed bag: they were numerous in some places (Iowa City, Cherokee, DB), but outnumbered by Rough-legs in others (GA). A sick female *Red-shouldered Hawk was captured on December 13 and taken to the

inadequ.
etc. etc.

rel.
high no.

Ledges S.P. Wildlife Station (JD). Rough-legged Hawks were "almost common" at Cherokee (DB), and apparently widespread in smaller numbers. A buteo repeatedly observed near the Amanas in early February was diagnosed as an immature *Ferruginous Hawk (CB, RH). Golden Eagles include one on the Davenport CBC (December 17, PP), 3 seen in the northeast (JS, DK), and one in w. Johnson Co., February 11 (MN). Twenty Bald Eagles at Saylorville in early December were surprising (WB). At Red Rock 3 immatures drowned (!) (fide GB). Commercial fishermen retrieved one. An adult near Pleasantville was seen feeding on a dead pig in late January (fide GB). The high count along the Mississippi was 450 at Keokuk on January 18 (fide PP). The Clinton to Keokuk census on January 28 yielded 302 birds (PP). *N. Harriers were apparent quite spotty in their distribution, with 12 at Badger Creek, 7 of them on January 17 (GA). A Gyr Falcon seen by Gene Burns in Guthrie Co. (fide GB) must be considered uncorroborated pending detailed documentation - after all, there has been only one previous published record from Iowa. *Am. Kestrels survived the winter in the west quite well: 18 were counted in Harrison and Pottawattamie Counties on February 6-7 (JS).

doc., but some doubt

no! doc. (would be a nd for IA)

Gallinaceous Birds through Woodpeckers. A Gr. Prairie Chicken was seen in a tree near Pisgah, Harrison Co. (February 7, JS et al.). Com. Bobwhites were reported as doing (unexpectedly) well in the northwest (DB), but were considered to be in trouble at Red Rock (GB). Flocking of Ring-necked Pheasants was observed in the Lamoni area (JDG); they too were believed to be stressed (GB). Gray Partridges, a totally unexpected find on the Iowa City CBC, December 16 (TK et al.), were prospering in more conventional geographic locations (DB). The high count of Wild Turkeys at the Amanas was 31 on December 24 (GB). A few Com. Snipe lingered into late December (fide RP, GA), and 2 as late as January 21 (JS). Mourning Doves braved the horrible winter in small numbers, and are paying with frozen feet for this mistake (GB). There were 19 reports of Snowy Owls this winter (fide GB, PP). Several Long-eared Owls were found in the s.w. corner (RP), one near Booneville (GA), another at Davenport (PP), and 7 roosts in the Lamoni area (JDG), but none in formerly reliable sites (GB). Three *Short-eared Owls were regulars at Booneville (GA); singles were seen n. of Farragut January 1 (RP) and s.e. of Pleasantville, December 24 (GB). A Saw-whet Owl at Baxter, Jasper Co., flew into a glass door and is on the mend (fide GB). Another fared the same way at Davenport, and has recovered, (PP). One was at Sweet M. December 18-21 (JS). Belted Kingfishers were reported by several people. They were remarkably numerous in the northeast, where some streams don't freeze over even in the coldest winter (JS). A "Red-shafted" Flicker occurred

doc.

2 by report. 1 by able observers

few

total: 3

at Hamburg on December 3 (IG). Com. Flickers were unusually numerous in the Red Rock area, feeding on cornborers (GB); elsewhere, they were coming to feeders. A Pileated Woodpecker in Buena Vista Co., December 1, was a welcome sight that far west (DB).

*Red-headed Woodpeckers were very scarce. On December 23, Mr. and Mrs. Jay Stravers saw a male Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker near Boyden, Sioux Co. (fide GB).

Since there is no recent record of this species in the state, documentation is eagerly awaited.

Passerines. Several correspondents remarked on the abundance of Horned Larks.

Technically a fall observation, but still noteworthy, is the presence of 2 Boreal Chickadees at an Osage feeder November 23-25 (AW). The description is convincing.

One or 2 Red-breasted Nuthatchers were seen, some of them with considerable regularity, at Iowa City (Fred Kent), Des Moines (WB, HZ) and Shenandoah (fide RP);

6 were found in the northeast (JS). Brown Thrashers frequented feeders in Bettendorf (PP) and December 29-February 3 in Tipton (fide GB). Wintering Am. Robins were

reported from Cherokee (DB), Davenport (PP), and Johnson Co. (MN). A Hermit Thrush (other than the one on the CBC) was observed in Iowa City on December 17

(RD). A Townsend's Solitaire showed up once again in Glendale Cemetery, Des Moines (December 24, DM) and was seen by several out-of-town visitors; another was documented for Sheldon, O'Brien Co., February 3 (JV). I am aware of a total of 5 Bohemian

Waxwing sightings, [Cherokee, DB; Laurens, Pocahontas Co., fide GB; Allamakee Co., January 27 (JS), and Iowa City, February 13 (CN)]. Cedar Waxwings occurred

irregularly, with flocks of over 60 at Jester Park, Des Moines (HLZ) and Cherokee (DB). They descended on downtown Iowa City on February 11 (MN), and by the 13th an estimated 500 were present (NH). For the third winter in a row, N. Shrikes were seen

by several people in different places [near Booneville, December 7, GA, s. of Red Rock L., December 26, NH et al., n. of Swan L., Johnson Co., December 30 and Williams Prairie, February 10 (TK)]. In the northeast, where they are regular winter

visitors, 20 were counted (JS, DK). *Loggerhead Shrikes were observed near Pleasantville (date? GB) and Shenandoah (February 3, RP). One was a regular at a feeder (DMs).

Meadowlarks were few, but some wintered as far northwest as Pocahontas (CS). As usual, blackbird roost of moderate size were in evidence along the Mississippi (PP).

Red-wing flocks were also seen near the Amanas in February (MN, TK). More unusual were 4 Rusty Blackbirds at feeding stations in Calhoun Co. (RC). An imm. Blackheaded

Grosbeak in early December frequented a Cedar Rapids feeder, and was said to have been seen by several experienced local birders (fide GB). That only rumors reached us a mere 27 miles to the south, and after the fact at that, illustrates how inefficient

no doc. (would be 3rd IA. record since 1924)

to 12/29

echo of an echo flight!

not doc.

late report small no. singles few

doc. (T.S.)

few

the Iowa "hot line" still is. Without documentation, this too will have to be classified as an uncorroborated report. Evening Grosbeaks were reported to Gladys Black from 15 counties (as opposed to 60 last year). Purple Finches were much more common, but only the 77 banded (RP) and the 146 in Allamakee Co. (JS, DK) are a remarkable number. A total of 8 Com. Redpolls reports (GB, PP) is in stark contrast to the 1977-78 invasion. A total of 3 were at feeders December 15-January 7 and January 26-28 (DB). Pine Siskins were sporadic, with Ruth Phipps (S.W.) reporting "many"; they were very numerous in Davenport (PP). Am. Goldfinches were common state-wide. The only crossbills mentioned were a flock of white-winged at Burlington in December (Jane Fuller fide GB). Of 9 wintering Rufous-sided Towhees reported, 7 were "spotted" (GB), as was the one at the feeder since January 15 (IG). Tree Sparrows were few in most of Iowa, but abundant at Shenandoah (RP). Field Sparrows on CBCs (Iowa City, Muscatine, RD, TK et al.) were noteworthy, as were wintering Harris's Sparrows at feeders in the northwest (CS, DB) and near Pleasantville (GB). Twenty-six White-Crowned Sparrows at the same feeder (GB) are certainly an unusual news item; so is the Lincoln's Sparrow banded at Shenandoah on January 27 (RP). Lapland Longspurs were few (JD), except at Muscatine on February 6 (PP), but heavy concentrations of Snow Buntings (up to 500+) were seen in the n.w. quadrant of the state from early December on (CS, DB, GA), especially during blizzards (GA), and in the northeast (JS).

Contributors. Gene Armstrong, Booneville; Carl Bendorf, Iowa City; Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Gladys Black, Pleasantville; Woodward Brown, Des Moines; Rich De Coster, Chicago, IL; Raymond Cummins, Pocahontas; James Dinsmore, Ames; G. Edgar Folk, Iowa City; Ione Getscher, Hamburg; J. Donald Gillaspey, Lamoine; Nicholas Halmi, Iowa City; Rick Hollis, Iowa City; Thomas Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Decorah; Dick Mooney, Des Moines; Dean Mosman (DMs), Elkhart; Mike and Carol Newlon, Iowa City; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Joe Schaufenbuel, St. Lucas; Conrad Schlemmer, Pocahontas; Tom Staudt, Iowa City; John Van Dyk, Sioux Center; Any Woolfries, Osage; Hank and Linda Zaletel, Ames. N.S. HALMI, R.#6, IOWA CITY, 52240.

Reminder: In order to be included in the spring report, communications MUST reach me by June 8. N.H.

WINTER ADDENDA 1979 (significant reports received after February 15)

and the fourth in
Fremont Co.,
February 3,
Ross Sil-
cock)

Four

~~Three~~ more *Red-shouldered Hawks were recorded for the season (one on January 1 in Des Moines, DM, another ibid. on an unspecified date, fide WB, and the third near Swan L., Johnson Co., February 25, MN et al.,TK). A second-year

loc. Glaucous Gull was present on L. Manawa, Council Bluffs, December 6-7 (R.G. Cortelyou, Barb Wilson, Tanya Bray, Sandy Kovanda, Babs Padelford). Even

loc. more remarkable was a first-year Great Black-backed Gull seen along with the Glaucous, and convincingly described (Ruth Green, Jim and Sandy Kovanda).

This is only the second sighting of this species in Iowa, and quite unexpected

loc. at the w. border of the state. A male Varied Thrush was observed from 10-15 at a feeder in Shenandoah on February 23 (RP).