

FIELD REPORTS

Summer 1978

The species marked with * are on the National Audubon Blue List (Am. Birds 31:1087, 1977), 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. June was warm, with rainfall above average. July was one of the wettest on record. There was consequently much habitat for birds that breed near water, but few mudflats for shorebirds, which were sought mostly in ephemeral puddles of casual water. Relatively few reports were received (coverage was best for the west-southwest), either because the June issue, with its deadline reminder, was late, or because the summer season, anticlimactic after the exciting spring, failed to elicit enough enthusiasm in contributors.

Abbreviations used. FCF = Fremont Co. Foray, June 2-7, summarized by W. Ross Silcock; IGLR = Iowa Great Lakes Region; RRR = Red Rock Reservoir and Refuge; L. = lake; M. = marsh; S.P. = State park; Sl. = slough.

Grebes through Bitterns. Eared Grebes straggled in w. Iowa: 8 at Forneys L. on June 2 (FCF), and one still present on June 14 (RP), but no evidence of breeding was obtained (RS). Pied-billed Grebes took advantage of the wet summer: they nested at Swan L., Johnson Co. (June 3, RH) and Willow Sl., Mills Co. (BW), both of which were dry last year; on Forneys L., 18 nests were counted June 2-4 (FCF); there were 15 (mostly immatures) at Sweet M., Bremer Co., June 18 (JS). Forty-two *Am. White Pelicans at Willow Sl., June 4 (BW), were late migrants; one-10 were present all summer at Ruthven (TN). A single *Double-crested Cormorant summered at W. Swan L., Emmet Co. (TN). Aggregations of Great Blue Herons were small or moderate: 14 non-breeders at Riverton, June 3 (FCF), 15 s. of St. Charles (GA), 25 s. of Runnells (DM), in late July, and 50 by mid-July at RRR (GB). Green Herons arrived late, and small numbers were reported; they were definitely at a premium in the northeast (JS). A Little Blue Heron was at Forneys L., June 4 (FCF). There were these flocks of Cattle Egrets (but still no evidence of breeding in Iowa): 10 s.e. of Pleasantville, June 13 (GB), and 14 at Forneys L., June 4 (FCF). Great Egrets were even less

^ J.D.
(Com)

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common, with 4 at Riverton in early June (FCF, IG). No report of breeding and Black-crowned Night Herons was received, with 3 at Forneys L., June 4 (FCF) and 2 at Willow Sl., June 18 (BW), a disappointing total for the state. The usually much rarer Yellow-crowned Night Heron did better: 3 at Forneys L., June 4 (FCF), one at Dewey's ²Psture, Clay Co., June 12-14 (TN), and one at Willow Sl., June 23 (BW, RS). Least Bitterns nested at Forneys L. (5 found, FCF), and Willow Sl. (nest with eggs observed June 16-19, BW); 2 were seen on any June visit to Cardinal M. (JS). There was no report of *Am. Bitterns. *but see J.D.: ↑ in n.w.*

Waterfowl. Straggling Canada Geese were seen in early June (one in Polk Co., DM; 3 at Riverton, FCF). The number of breeders in the IGLR was believed up (TN); 47 young were counted at Rush L., Osceola Co., in mid-June (DB). A Snow Goose was observed on June 3 n. of Polk City (DM), and 15, left over from the massive spring migration, were still in Fremont Co. on June 4 (RS). The consensus is that Mallards had a good breeding season. Two Gadwalls on June 2 at Forneys L. (FCF) were nonbreeders; the species probably bred in the IGLR (TN), and a female with 7 young was found on June 30 at Willow Sl. (BW). [^] The 10 Com. Pintails on Forneys L., June 2-4 (FCF), did not breed; one was seen June 15-16 at Willow Sl. (BW); breeding was suspected in the IGLR (TN). A total of 8 Am. Green-winged Teals were at Forneys L. and Riverton, June 2-3 (FCF); 2 males at Sweet M., June 14 (JS), and one of each sex at Rush L., June 23 (DB). The 8 N. Shovelers at Forneys L. on June 4 (FCF) were non-breeders, but the species may have bred at the IGLR (TN). Several contributors commented on good breeding success of Wood Ducks. A Redhead nest yielding 6 young was observed at Willow Sl. into mid-July (BW). A nest was also found at Forneys L. on June 2 (FCF). Numbers were up at the IGLR, where this species is a regular breeder (TN). A few Ring-necked Ducks were in the IGLR (TN), and up to 3 at Willow Sl. into early July, with no evidence of breeding (RS, BW). Seven broods of *Canvasbacks were found on June 27 at Mud L. (Ron Howing fide TN). A few Lesser Scaup were reported: 2 at Forneys L., June 2 (FCF), up to 4 at Willow Sl., June 4-July 23 (BW), and one at Cardinal M., June 12 (JS). There is no good evidence that the 6 Ruddy Ducks at Forneys L. on June 2 were breeders; one was at Willow Sl. on June 4 and 18 (BW); numbers were up at the IGLR, where the species breeds (TN). On June 4, single female Hooded and Redbreasted Mergansers were seen (documented) at Willow Sl. (BW).

also June 27, Preahontas Co., J.D.

but see J.D.: 50 nests

J.D. re wigens

Diurnal Raptors through Coots. Five and 10 Turkey Vultures were seen on June 11 and July 2, respectively, in Guthrie Co. and at Ledges S.P. (HZ); as usual, over 30 roosted at RRR (GB). The nest in n. Mills Co. (see Spring Report) yielded 2 young (JG). The best news about Red-tailed Hawks came from the RRR, where Jon Stravers counted 15 nests with 25 fledglings (GB). No report of *Red-shouldered Hawks was received. [^] The nests of *Swainson's Hawks mentioned in the Spring Report were followed into the summer: no young were seen in Osceola Co. (DB), and one was observed in the Fayette Co. nest (July 15, JS). An adult was also seen in another Fayette Co. location on July 7 (JS). [^] A Rough-legged Hawk found by the Diggles on June 6, in the course of the FCF, was amazingly late. Two *Ospreys were encountered on the FCF (June 3) at Riverton; one seen by Jean Braley on June 11 in Fremont Co. raised the suspicion that breeding may have occurred (RS). Nests of *Am. Kestrels were reported from e. of Cedar Rapids (FT) and the RRR (GB); 3 individuals observed repeatedly e. of Swan L., Johnson Co. (July 7, 16, RH, NH) may have been a family group; there were 7 near Central City on July 10 (MN); the largest number seen was 5 in Polk Co., with 4 more in the air, on July 29 (HZ). The distribution of Com. Bobwhites is uneven: they were abundant in the Volga L. area, but absent from the rest of Fayette Co. (JS); there were many near Hamburg (IG); one seen on June 11 at Spencer (CS) was the first record in many years for that location. [^] A Wild Turkey with her brood was repeatedly creating a traffic hazard along the Iowa River in Johnson Co. (HO); the population at Volga L. was thriving (JS). An "obtrusive" Virginia Rail at Sweet M., June 14, was probably nesting (JS). Am. Coots profited from the wet summer: they nested on Swan L., Johnson Co. (RH), and 46 nests were counted on Forneys L. (FCF). [^] + J.D.

Shorebirds through Terns. A Semipalmated Plover was found on June 14 at Sweet M. (JS), and by the Ankeny Ponds on July 30 (HZ). Three Lesser Golden Plovers e. of Riverton (June 3, FCF) were stragglers. Com. Snipe on June 18-19 in St. Lucas and at Sweet M. seemed out of place (JS). Some 40 *Upland Sandpipers were seen this summer, between June 9 and July 29, with a total of 13 in the n.e. (JS), a brood at Kalsow Prairie (TN), 3 in the extreme southwest (RP), and a pair with 3 young near Walcott (fide PP): the picture is one of arrested decline. Summer sightings of Willetts were unusual: 5 at Willow Sl., July 1 (BW), one s. of Iowa City, July 13 (NH), and one near Des Moines, July 17-20 (DM).

^ J.D.
(nesting?
at
Ledges)

^+J.D.
(doc.)

^J.D.

+ J.D.

Colonies in n.w., J.D.

Lingering Baird's Sandpipers (15 at Riverton, June 3, 4 at Forneys L., June 4, FCF) set a record for late departure, as did a Least Sandpiper on June 3 at Riverton, and 4 Dunlins at Forneys L. on June 4. One-3 W. Sandpipers e. of Riverton on June 2 (Jean Braley, RP) were noteworthy. A Hudsonian Godwit at Forneys L. on June 4 was the latest ever in Iowa (FCF). Seven Franklin's Gulls at Forneys L., June 4, and 2 on June 6, were evidently late migrants along their favored corridor (FCF); the presence of 2 adults and 2 immatures at Willow Sl. on July 22 (BW) is harder to interpret; the singles by the Coralville Reservoir on June 3 and 5 miles e. of Iowa City on July 2 (RH, CB) were seasonally and geographically out of place. There were also 2 Forster's Terns at Willow Sl. on July 22 (BW), and a *Com. Tern at Prairie Rose S.P., Shelby Co., July 15-16 (TB). A Caspian Tern near Hamburg on June 2 was evidently a late migrant (RP). There were numerous reports of *Black Terns from unusual places, but none of breeders: 15 at Cardinal M., June 12 (JS), 50 at Riverton from June 3 to July 30 (RP), in mid-July at Hamburg (IG) and in Shelby Co. (TB), and June 4-July 23 at Willow Sl., with 40+ on July 9 (BW).

^ J.D. re
Little
Tern

^ J.D. re
Ring-bills
in n.w.

except n.w. Ia: see J.D.

Cuckoos through Flycatchers. Many reports of *Yellow-billed Cuckoos were received (but the birds were locally scarce, GB); *Black-billed Cuckoos were much less commonly encountered. As was suggested to Robert Arbib, the latter should be put on the Audubon Blue List (the eastern race of the Yellow-billed has been removed from it). Two Chuck-will's-widows were heard calling on June 3 n. of Waubonsie S.P. a new but plausible location for this species (RS). Removal of the Com. Nighthawk from the Blue List seems justified by reports from Fremont Co., where it is common (FCF), but not by its scarcity in the Pleasantville area (GB). The tone of news about the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird amply justifies its newly-acquired Blue List status, with the most vociferous concerns from western contributors (none found despite an extensive search, JG). It was fairly common only in the Volga L. area (JS). There were scattered reports of Belted Kingfishers: certainly, the summering population of this species in Iowa has shrunk noticeably. Even Gladys Black, whose letter contained little good news, found numerous *Red-headed Woodpeckers in her area (but fewer than in the past): others continue to call it abundant, and its Blue-listing for Iowa

is thus not supported by the information on hand. W. Kingbirds were seen at Spencer, June 3 (CS) and in Fremont Co., June 5 and July 29 (RP), but only a single pair was present near Hamburg, as a token population to be shown visitors (IG). The general silence about E. Phoebes suggests strongly that this bird belongs on the Blue List. Probably the biggest news of the summer was made by Say's Phoebe. This bird has nested with some regularity in w. Iowa, but was quite out of its range when discovered near Waubeek in n.e. Linn Co. on June 17 (FT). It was subsequently joined by a second bird, and seen by numerous observers from the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City area. The search for a nest was unsuccessful. A late migrant Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, June 2, was identified on the FCF. A few Acadian Flycatchers were on territory in Wildcat Den S.P. (June 20, NH), by Forneys L. (June 16, RP), at St. Lucas, and at Volga L., June 29, a new locality (JS). Singing Alder Flycatchers in n.-n.e. Iowa (one n. of New Hampton, June 13, 3 at Volga L., July 6, JS) emphasize the need for accurate delineation of the breeding area of this "new" species. A Least Flycatcher at Volga L. was regular into July (JS).

Swallows through Shrikes. An abundance of all resident swallow species was reported from Hamburg (IG). *Purple Martins were down in Pleasantville, but did well elsewhere, with 219 nestlings banded (DMs). A striking drop in the number of Black-capped Chickadees was an unexpected complaint from w. Iowa (JG). "Only 3 *Tufted Titmice in Fayette Co." was more in keeping with known trends (JS). Starting on July 9, Redbreasted Nuthatches appeared in the Des Moines yard of Boreal Chickadee fame; by the 17th, 3 were present (LW). Brown Creepers were found breeding on June 17 at Sweet M. (JS). The severe damage to the Carolina Wren population was reflected by their absence, for the first time in years, from the extreme southwest (IG), and, for that matter, from practically everywhere else. N. Mockingbirds seem to have deserted a formerly reliable spot in Pleasantville (GB); a fair number was present on the FCF. Am. Robins seldom are mentioned: a decline in their numbers was noted by some (GB, RS), and a paucity of young ~~mentioned~~ (WB). Singing Veeries were regular into late June at Sweet M. (JS), and one sang in the Amana Woods on July 4 (MN). The news about *E. Bluebirds is mostly bad: for example, only 4 of 45 boxes productive (9 young) (PP), 5 nests only in 200 boxes, without any success (GB),

only 10 nests on the trail (DMS), numbers down in the northeast (JS). The only cheerful note comes from Cherokee, where there were 33 successful broods (DB). Bluegray Gnatcatchers were rather common in Wildcat Den S.P. (June 20, NH); they nested in Ledges S.P. (HZ), and were also found in the Amana Woods (June 3, RH) and in Waubonsie S.P. (2, June 2, FCF). A total of 8 nests of *Loggerhead Shrikes, with 15 young observed, was reported from Fayette (JS), Cherokee (MB, DB), Polk (GA), Marion (GB), and Harrison (RG) Counties, with additional sightings from Pottawattamie, Mills (BW), and Johnson (MN) Counties, but the main strength of this retreating species is in s.w. Iowa, where the FCF yielded an estimate of 36 breeding pairs (RS). The dark cloud, inexorably present, has a silver lining this summer. (in Fremont Co.)

Vireos, Warblers. At least one pair of White-eyed Vireos was in Hickory Hill Park, Iowa City, June 9-July 16 (MN). It is hard to say anything conclusive about the population of *Bell's Vireo in Iowa from the reports received; a new "soft spot" may be developing in the Council Bluffs area (JG). Comments on the *Warbling Vireo were few, but enough to indicate marked unevenness in distribution, with many in the s.w. corner (IG; 43 on the FCF), and a definite decline in the w. breeding population farther north (JG). Thirteen singing Blue-winged Warblers were counted at Volga L. in June (JS). The abundance of migrant *Yellow Warblers in w. Iowa was followed by a disappointing drop in breeders (JG). A Yellow-rumped Warbler on June 17 in Mills Co. (BW) was unexpected. A few Cerulean Warblers were found in Ledges S.P. (July 2, HZ) and in Wildcat Den S.P. (PP, July 30). Chestnut-sided Warblers were found on June 14 at Sweet M.; they bred at Volga L. (JS) and the Macbride Field Campus, Johnson Co. (TS). As in recent years, small numbers of Louisiana Waterthrushes seemed to be nesting in Ledges S.P. (HZ) and at Waubonsie S.P. (FCF). Two Kentucky Warblers were heard and seen at Wildcat Den S.P., June 20 (NH). No report of *Yellow-breasted Chats received invites a pessimistic interpretation. A singing Canada Warbler on June 3 at Riverton (RS) came as a surprise.

Blackbirds through Sparrows. Bobolinks were thought scarce (GB), but there was an unusually good summer population in Mills and Pottawattamie Counties (JG, BW). The abundance of wet habitat, as noted in the Spring Report, favored the Yellow-headed Blackbird, which re-established colonies forsaken during the drought of 1976/77. The status of the Orchard Oriole across the state seems unchanged, with

1. But J.D.
 2. Levy
 3. Cronin
 4. in n.w.

small numbers of nesting birds reported from places not showing any obvious geographic pattern. Both Meadowlarks were believed reduced in numbers (PP). Waubonsie S.P. continues to be the site where Summer Tanagers can be predictably found (FCF). The only reports of Blue Grosbeaks also came from the s.w. corner. *Dickcissels were less numerous than in the past at RRR (GB) and in the Iowa City area (MN, NH), but abundant in the southwest (MS, IG) and unchanged in the Council Bluffs vicinity (JG). Nesting of Pine Siskins, without specifics, was reported for Cedar Rapids; N. Liberty and Iowa City (WN); one was seen on June 4 at Perry (DMs), and as late as July 9 in Des Moines (LW). It appears that *Grasshopper Sparrows are holding their own as long as their habitat is not disturbed: for example, over a dozen were counted n. of Amana on July 2 (RH, CB), "many" were in Booneville pastures (GA), and they were present in satisfactory numbers in the far west-southwest (RP, JG). The only *Henslow's Sparrows recorded were in early June at Volga L. (JS). The picture of the status of the *Vesper Sparrow is fragmentary. A few Lark Sparrows were seen in n.w. and s.w. counties (HZ, RP). A singing Lincoln's Sparrow on July 8 n. of Amana was quite unusual (CB).

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Reminder: Please try to have Fall reports reach me by December 5. N.H.

James Dinsmore, Ames

*+ Swamp Sparrow
Breeding in n.w.
J.D.*