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Winter Report

Weather for the period:

Temperatures were below normal. In the latter part of December it got as cold as -24 F. January was the coldest on record. The mean temperature for the entire month was near 4 above at Sioux City, and 2.1 at Spencer, about 14 degrees below normal. Snowfall was above average, with an accumulation between 25 - 30" thus far this winter. Generally snow fell gently; major traffic-snarling blizzards missed our part of the state. February thus far has been cruelly cold, with icy arctic high pressure systems dropping the thermometer to lows of 20 below zero for days on end.

Diurnal Raptors:

- Red-tailed Hawk: as usual, most had migrated out of the area. On February 3 an extremely dark-phased bird was present near the Rock River in western Sioux County. The entire bird appeared virtually black, with tail white below and dark red above.
- Rough-legged Hawk: after mid-January this hawk, which had been quite common in early winter, became very scarce in our area. Perhaps the heavier-than-usual snow cover made it difficult for them to obtain prey, forcing them towards the west and south.
- Am. Kestrel: exceptionally common this winter, and well distributed throughout extreme n.w. Iowa.

Gallinaceous Birds:

- Common Bob-white: again, none reported. As I indicated in my last report, I suspect that their numbers are decreasing. The bad winter will not help!
- Ring-necked Pheasant: pheasants are obviously suffering this winter. They have become exceedingly bold in their search for food. Increasing numbers of dead pheasants can be found along the roads. On January 31 station KTAU-TV of Sioux City reported that the pheasant situation was deteriorating rapidly, and urged farmers to provide food for the starving birds. Officials apparently inspected a number of dead pheasants found along I-29 south of Sioux City, and determined that the birds were seriously undernourished and starving.
- Gray Partridge: they, too, are apparently having trouble. Large numbers are roaming about farms, displaying an uncommon fearlessness.

Owls and Woodpeckers

- No Snowy Owls reported this winter.

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- Long-eared Owl: my nephew Mike Van Dyk discovered one of these owls in Oak Grove State Park in western Sioux County on December 15.
- Common Flicker: unusually numerous this winter. Normally they are scarce or absent at this time of the year.
- Downy and Hairy Woodpecker: doing fine, and present in normal numbers.

Larks through Blackbirds:

- Horned Lark: although scarce in early December, these birds were present in large numbers throughout the greater part of the period.
- Am. Robins were still present by the middle of December.
- Townsend's Solitaire: one individual was present in Sheldon (extreme western O'Brien County) on February 3. I enclose documentation with this report.
- Cedar Waxwing: Mr. A.J. Boersma reports the presence of about half a dozen individuals throughout the winter.
- Northern Shrike: none seen or reported.
- W. Meadowlark: quite plentiful until the middle of January. Thereafter they became exceedingly scarce.
- Common Grackle: a few remained in the area until mid-December.

Finches and Sparrows:

- N. Cardinal: they remain present in goodly numbers in western Sioux County, in spite of the harsh winter.
- Evening Grosbeak: appeared sporadically at our feeder until January 21. Since that date we have not seen them again. Single birds only.
- Purple Finch: the only bird seen was a female which frequented our feeders for most of the second half of January. We have not seen it in February.
- Redpolls: conspicuous by their absence! I have not yet seen a single redpoll this winter.
- Rufous-sided Towhee: my nephew Mike found an individual of the western race at Oak Grove State Park on December 15.
- Dark-eyed Junco: appear to be present in above average numbers this winter.

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- Harris' Sparrow: present in above average numbers this winter.
- White-throated Sparrow: a pair is wintering by the feeders of Mr. A.J. Boersma in Sioux Center.
- Lapland Longspur: quite plentiful until the middle of January. Since then their numbers have been greatly reduced.
- Snow Bunting: quite common and present in goodly numbers. As far as north-west Iowa is concerned, Brown's designation of this species as a "rare winter resident" is inaccurate. The description of its status should be changed to uncommon or common winter resident.

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