

Iowa

FIELD REPORTS

FALL 1978

The species marked with * are on the National Audubon Blue List (Am. Birds 31:1078, 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. Whereas August, despite some late rain, was deficient in moisture, September more than made up for this, in addition to being the warmest in 27 years. Reservoirs and lakes were short on good shorebird habitat, and flooded fields provided more unusual sightings. October was cool, sunny, and close to average with respect to rain. Mid-November brought early winter to the northern half of the state, and ended in a freak snowstorm in the southeast. This transition from summer to winter occurred without any dramatic movements of air masses, and the relatively dull bird migration faithfully reflected the lack of meteorological spectaculars.

Abbreviations used. CoR-Coralville Reservoir; RRR-Red Rock Reservoir and Refuge; HHP-Hickory Hill Park, Iowa City; L.-lake; M.-marsh; S.P.-state park.

Iowa City

Loons through waterfowl. The high count of Com. Loons was recorded on the CoR (13, November 14, NH). Horned Grebes were sparse statewide. An Eared Grebe was seen on September 29 along I-29 (IG) and one on Little Clear L. on August 28 (RC). Such western reports are hardly unusual; one at Cone M. on November 5 was more east noteworthy (TSh). A *Western Grebe was present at Greenfield Reservoir (November 15-16, GB et al.), and one on L. Anita in Cass Co. on November 23 (LP). There was a good migration of *Am. White Pelicans across the w. part of the state, with the high count of 350 recorded at Rush L. September 14-28 (DB); at the same time, 235 rested at RRR (GB). Four at Cone M., September 17, were east of their usual flyway (TSh). *Double-crested Cormorants were widely encountered, from September 4 to November 19. Some of the higher counts were 30 at L. Manawa, October 19 (BP), 74 at RRR, late September (GB), 25 at the CoR on September 30 (FT et al.), and 240 flying over Rush L., October 2 (DB). Great Blue Herons formed a large flock at RRR only, where they peaked at 250 (GB). These reports of Little Blue Herons were received: an immature at Mud L., August 5 (JD), one at Cone M., August 12 (MN, RD), and up to 7 (!) at Colyn Wildlife Management Area, Lucas Co., August 11-19 (Gary Bernard fide JD). Cattle Egrets are becoming a fairly common sight,

in fall as well as in spring. One to 5 were seen in widely scattered localities, with a flock of 11 near Pleasantville in early October (GB). The total for the season was 36. The highest concentration of great Egrets was 25 at RRR in September (GB). Eighteen Black-crowned Night Herons were reported, 10 of these at Saylorville, September 14 (fide WB); 3 lingered into early November in n.w. counties (RC, JV). The only *Am. Bittern recorded was one by the CoR on September 30 (FT, RD). A Plegadis ibis was seen by numerous people September 29-October 1 near Colo (HZ, JD, WB). A Mute Swan occurred at Guttenberg on October 7 (R and T-LM). Three Whistling Swans were seen at Hottes L., November 11 (Gary Wee fide DH), and at Ames, November 14 (LZ); there were 50 at Lock and Dam 9 on November 15 (DK). The goose migration was considered excellent along the Missouri, with 300,000 Snow Geese still in the three counties around Council Bluffs at the end of November (JG), but was deemed very poor a little farther east (CS). A Gr. White-fronted Goose at L. Odessa, November 13, was an unusual record for the fall (DK). The duck migration drew no superlatives. A N. Shoveler on L. Manawa, November 19 (LP), was late. *Canvasbacks were present in large numbers at Lock and Dam 9 (4500+, October 20-November 20, JS). A White-winged Scoter was documented for Nashua, October 24 (JS), and a Surf Scoter for Little Wall L., Hamilton Co., November 18 (JD). Twenty-five Hooded Mergansers on the CoR, November 11, were a personal high (TK). doc.
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Diurnal raptors through gallinules. A N. Goshawk was seen on October 22 near Hamburg (IG), and an immature banded at Lansing (date?) was released on October 23 (JS). *Sharp-shinned Hawks were widely encountered, in numbers probably above the average; for example, 31 were seen in n.e. counties September 9-November 28 (JS). The 12 *Cooper's Hawks seen in places from the Mississippi to the Missouri, September 5-November 25, are a gratifyingly high count. Single *Red-shouldered Hawks were reported from Sweet M., August 22 (JS) and Cone M., September 16 (FT). The only large kettles of *Broad-winged Hawks seen were 287 over Iowa City, September 18 (MN) and 600 over Davenport a day earlier (PP). *Swainson's Hawks were in the news: singles in Fremont Co., September 30 (IG) and over Ely, Linn Co., October 2 (WN), and an adult with 2 immatures near Waucoma, August 22 (JS) (relation to nearby nest not verified); the young at the nest in n.w. Iowa reported earlier (DB) were killed by a July storm, but the parents stayed into late September. Several contributors saw fair numbers of Rough-legged Hawks, some from mid-October on, but mostly in the second half of November. Northeast Iowa is establishing itself as a minor population center for Golden Eagles. Nine were seen, these during November (JS,DK), and convincing descriptions were furnished. One was shot at Carlisle, Warren Co. (GB), and taken to the ISU Veterinary Clinic for rehabilitation. no doc.
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 Bald Eagles were reported by many observers, wherever there were rivers or lakes. The winter count will tell whether they are more numerous or were merely more conspicuous this fall. The migration of *N. Harriers was modest everywhere except the northeast, where Schaufenbuel counted 29 vs. 20 last year. The majority of contributors mentioned *Ospreys, seen between August 5 and November 24 (both extreme dates at the CoR, MN and TK). The total for the state was at least 32 birds. The only *Peregrine Falcon mentioned was that seen on November 14 near Hamburg (IG), but reports of *Merlins were relatively numerous: one on September 2 at Kent Park, Johnson Co. (TSh), others, all singles, on September 13 near Spirit L. (DH), September 23 at Red Oak (TB, documented), September 28 in w. Sioux Co. (Gordon Brand fide JV), and netted near RRR by the Felsings on October 3 (GB). *Am. Kestrels were uneven, but rather common in places, as witnessed by the 14 seen by Tom Kent on September 16, the 8 observed on the late date of November 28 (JS), and Dr. Van Dyk's remark that the Blue List status is not justified for n.w. Iowa; however, at Elkhart only 15 were banded (DM). Opinions on the abundance of Com. Bobwhites differ, but Gray Partridges seem to be doing well in n.w. Iowa (DB, JV). A Wild Turkey with her brood of 7 was repeatedly seen n. of Iowa City, up to mid-November. Two near Inwood on August 27 may have strayed from S. Dakota (JV). There was a belated report of one King Rail with young, and a probable other pair, near Lamoni this summer (JDG). Strangely, there was no marshy habitat where they were encountered. A Virginia Rail was heard calling at Swan L., Johnson Co., September 15 (TK). Com. Gallinules are rather rare in the state nowadays, and one in a flooded field at Iowa City was doubly newsworthy because of its late occurrence (October 15, TSh)

Shorebirds through Terns. A late Upland Sandpiper was reported from Waterloo (October 15, TSt). The only White-rumped Sandpiper seen was near the CoR on August 26 (FT). A few Baird's Sandpipers were recorded, no more than 2 anywhere (CoR August 26, September 9, TK et al., Allamakee Co., September 4, JS, and Credit Island. Davenport, August 1-3, PP). Three Short-billed Dowitchers at Willow Slough, September 20 (BW), were identified by their call. A total of 28 Stilt Sandpipers was reported: at Cone M. (RD), the CoR (NH) and Sweet M. (JS), but the highest concentration (13) was at Nashua (JS); all sightings were in August. In late August, up to 2 W. Sandpiper occurred at Cone M., the CoR and Nashua (TK, MN, NH, JS). A flock of 35 at Cone M., which would be exceptional, was identified as Semipalmateds by another experienced observer, and must thus be considered problematical. In this dull shorebird season, a Marbled Godwit at Cone M. on September 16 (TK) may well be the highlight, with 6 Am. Avocets between September 18 and 22 (Mike Mahn fide JD) another choice for the honor. Ring-billed Gulls were

in Sac Co.

not as common as in an average year, but there were 100+ at Little Wall L. on November 18 (JD). Franklin's Gulls were confined to the west, with an excellent count of 1000 at L. Manawa on October 18 (TB). Bonaparte's Gulls were very scarce: one over the CoR on October 29 (NH), and 2 on the Cedar L. November 25 (FT). A Black-legged Kittiwake "in winter plumage" was reported from Waterloo (November 23, TSt). The description is indeed of an adult in winter plumage, but with a black bill, which is puzzling. An errant Ross' Gull flew to Chicago instead of Iowa; a navigational faux pas, without doubt! There were the usual sightings of Forster's Terns in early fall. Four *Little Terns, 3 of them documented, were a pleasant surprise: singles at Cone M., August 21 (TK), Willow Slough, August 2 and 5 (BW), and Waterloo, August 17 (TSt). One of the western birds was an immature. Might they be re-establishing themselves along the Missouri? The peak values for Caspian Terns (26 at the CoR on September 24, TK, 25 at RRR into October, GB) are unremarkable. No major movement of *Black Terns was observed, with a high of only 30 at Cone M. on August 8 (RD).

Doves through Swallows. Because of the controversy about a season on Mourning Doves (in Nebraska, it starts on September 1), the presence of 4 nests with eggs in w. counties September 10-20 (JG) deserves attention. Many people saw some *cuckoos, but it was refreshing to read that both species were "abundant" in early fall in the west (JG). A *Barn Owl seen on October 29 in Marshall Co., and documented (GJ), was even more pleasing, since this species has not been recorded from the state for years. A few Long-eared Owls started showing up: one as early as August 31 at Waterloo (TSt), one injured on November 20 in the Hottes L. area (DH), and 2 by the CoR on November 28 (Noel Brown fide MN). The only *Short-eared Owls reported were 2 in the northeast on November 24 and 28 (JS). Petersen netted 10 Saw-whet Owls October 8-31; one was at Hartman's Reserve October 24 (TSt) and another a roadkill in Pottawattamie Co. on November 14 (BW). *Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were still scarce in most places, but 37 were counted August 11-September 16 in the northeast (JS) and 17 banded August 17-September 19 (PP). In early November, Belted Kingfishers were common in Des Moines River bottom areas (RC). Single Pileated Woodpeckers were seen around the CoR (August 30, TSh, November 5, MN), and they were said to be "common" (?) at George Wyth S.P., Waterloo (TSt). All contributors agreed that *Red-headed Woodpeckers had all but vanished by early October from n. Iowa, and by November from the rest of the state. A large number of E. Kingbirds (84) were banded at Lamoní (Mrs. WD). A W. Kingbird at Lizard L. on September 20 was photographed (RC); one at Cone M. on September 3 (TK) was a most unusual record for

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fall in e. Iowa. E. Phoebes were rather sparse in the reports, but Petersen banded 19 September 3-October 6. Two Say's Phoebes seen on August 25 near Missouri Valley (RG) were well described. As usual, 49 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers vs. only 4 Acadians were netted in August and September (PP). Three Alder Flycatchers were singing in early August at Sweet M. (JS), and the question was raised whether these had bred there. (Willow Flycatchers are regular breeders at Sweet M.). Comments on the unusually large number of Olive-sided Flycatchers were received from w. correspondents (IG, BW). An estimated 6000 Purple Martins by L. Manawa were noteworthy (BP).

Jays through Vireos. Large flocks of migrating Blue Jays drew comments from the northeast (900 birds at Yellow River Forest and along the Mississippi, DK), the CoR area (TK), and Hamburg (IG). This was an average fall for Red-breasted Nuthatches, which were reported mostly from n. and w. parts of the state (JS, JV, JG, BW). Mrs. De Long banded 5 Brown Creepers, and a House Wren on the late date of October 23. Winter Wrens, decimated by the last 2 winters, may be coming back: 8 were seen in the northeast, September 28-November 9, 4 on a single day in HHP (October 14, MN), and 12 netted September 22-October 14. Carolina Wrens are still hard to find: one was present into late November in the yard (TK), and 2 all fall at L. Odessa (DK). For the second year in a row, a Varied Thrush (the same bird?) started showing up at a Cedar Falls feeder (November 19, TSt). Petersen netted 65 Hermit Thrushes, 84 Swainson's, 12 Gray-cheeked and 29 Veeries this fall. A Swainson's on October 18 near Spirit L. (DH) was late. *E. Bluebirds made a generally indifferent showing, with Gene Armstrong's 100+ outdistancing the rest of the field. Golden-crowned Kinglets were still sparse or not seen, but a recovery may be underway: 2 were banded (GD), 20 were at Lewis and Clark S.P. on September 30 (TB), and 12 at Sheldon on November 24 (JV). The total count for Water Pipits in Schaufenbuel's territory was a good 34 (October 20-November 16). The only large flock of Cedar Waxwings reported (200 bird, October 28) was seen near Coralville (MN). N. Shrikes were found on November 16 at Highlandville (DK) and November 29 w. of Spirit L. (DB). *doc.* There were sporadic sightings of *Loggerhead Shrikes, with only one in the Cherokee area all fall (DB), and a decreased number in their stronghold around Lamoni (JDG); late records are November 25 in w. Sioux Co. (JV) and November 29 near Ottumwa (fide TJ). The White-eyed Vireos in HHP were last seen on September 12 (RD). *Bell's Vireos were reported in small numbers by several observers, into mid-September. Twelve Philadelphia Vireos on August 24 by Rush L. were an unusual concentration (DB). *Warbling Vireos were "plentiful" at Lamoni (GD).

Warblers through Blackbirds. The warbler migration was unspectacular at best. The promised documentation for a Worm-eating Warbler in Waterloo on August 31 (TSt) did not reach me in time. Golden-winged Warblers were seen at Meyer L., August 31 (JS), in the Iowa City area September 6-21 (TSh, RD, NH), and netted in Davenport (3, August 21-September 1, PP). They were reported as "common" at Waterloo (TSt). An Orange-crowned at Sioux Center, November 23 (JV) was late. The shortage of fall migrant *Yellow Warblers in the west contrasted with their good spring showing (JG). Cape May Warbler sightings were better than average: 4 at Meyer L. and Sweet M., September 3-21 (JS), and one at Waterloo on September 3 (TSt). There were also 2 Black-throated Blue Warblers at Meyer L. on September 2 and 17, (JS), respectively; one each was netted on September 5 and October 5 (PP). Six Black-burnians at Yellow River Forest on August 12 were early (JS). Bay-breasted abounded at Waterloo (TSt). There were two records of Pine Warblers: one at Sweet M., September 21 (JS), the other at HHP, September 3 (MN). An early N. Water-thrush showed up on August 13 near the CoR (TK). A Connecticut Warbler was banded on August 29 (PP) and another seen at HHP on September 8 (TK, TSh). Of several Mourning Warblers reported, the one on August 20 at Willow Slough was most interesting because of the w. location (BW). Owing to the mild weather, the exodus of black-birds from n.w. Iowa was delayed. Several people remarked, on the other hand, how hard it was to find meadowlarks in November. As one would expect, Yellow-headed Blackbirds lingered into August at nesting sites, but an adult male at Trumbull L. on November 11 was very late indeed (DB). The number of Red-winged Blackbirds in the RRR area in late September-early October was estimated at 2 million (GB), in the range of Kentucky or Tennessee winter roosts. Observers in the Iowa City area were struck by the paucity of Brown-headed Cowbirds. (Blue-listed cowbirds?? Stop dreaming, compiler!)

Tanagers through Sparrows. The only Summer Tanager reported was seen on August 8 at Waubonsie S.P. (TB) (where else?). Most observers called the sparrow migration rather poor, but at Sioux Center it was "spectacular" (JV). Recovery of Cardinal populations in n. Iowa (where the toll taken by the rough winters was evident) seemed to be in progress (JV). Small numbers of Evening Grosbeaks started appearing in mid-November, with the 10 seen in the northeast accounting for well over one-half the sightings. There is increasing evidence that if there is a single Evening Grosbeak around Iowa City, it will show up at my neighbors' feeder, as it did on November 28 (H0). Purple Finches showed up early and vanished soon at Ely (August 29-September 17, WN); in the northeast they stayed on, peaking in October (JS). This was an average fall for Pine Siskins in the northeast, where they first appeared in

late September (JS); there were a dozen in Des Moines (WB). Nobody mentioned crossbills: obviously, this was not a great season for winter finches. A Le Conte's Sparrow was seen by many at Hendrickson M. near Ames on September 24 (PP). A Vesper Sparrow by the CoR on October 27 (RD) was rather late. Harris's Sparrows were widely seen, for the first time in fall by one contributor (CS). Lapland Longspurs were first recorded on October 7 (JS, TSh); in the northeast, flocks of several hundreds were present on November 2 and 9, but none past mid-November (JS); in the northwest, a flock of 85 on November 12 was tops (DB). Snow Buntings first appeared in late October (2 at the CoR, MN); by mid-November there were flocks of moderate size in Fayette and Allamakee Counties (JS,DK), and by November 28 around Sioux Center (JV).
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Reminder: Winter reports up to February 10, for I.B.L., are due by February 15. Supplements for significant observations for the rest of February should be received as early in March as possible: these will be summarized for publication along with the spring report in I.B.L., and will be submitted to Am. Birds along with the main winter report, to cover the winter season as defined by them (December 1-February 28). N.H.