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Winter Season. b. f. - 8/pt.

Iowa Bird Life

36: 21-24, 1961

December was warm with temperatures 10° above normal with some excess precipitation, practically all as rain. Most waters were open the greater part of the month. January was warm the first week, then becoming colder with the last week being extremely cold. The 29th was the coldest in 50 years in the central part. Little snow fell during the month.

Comments on this season should be read in conjunction with the Christmas census reports, and accompanying remarks. Some opinions: open winter and pleasant weather, but feeders report fewer birds of all kinds. Some say "No birds, not even (House) sparrows." (DH). Bird populations thin - no wintering hawks or owls, (FK). Number of species seems down in Decorah area and average in Story Co., (DP). Mild weather in November and December kept many birds from going farther south, (RK).

Herons, Geese, Ducks. A Great Blue Heron was seen on the open river on 4 January, (PK). A Canada Goose was over Iowa Falls on 2 January, (DP). Most of the reports of ducks concerned the Mallard: thousands and thousands milling around between Hamburg and Percival, late in January, (EG); 40 at Elk Creek as late as 28 December, (RK); 100-200 seen frequently until 15 December, (DG); 200 at Brown Slough, (HM). Scaups at Montrose numbered between 2-3000 on Christmas Day, (PL). As many as 100 Common Goldeneyes were on the Missouri River, and a few Common Mergansers were seen occasionally, (DH).

Hawks. All kinds very scarce, (KL); very few observed in late November due to their taking cover in brush and timber, but normal numbers could be found by searching, (DP). The Red-tailed is one of the most commonly mentioned species: few scattered reports, (DH); only a few, (FK); only one observation, (GB); seem to be down, (DK); half as many as in the past, (KL); usual number, (DG); few more than usual,

(EB); and, 1-2 almost daily, (JK). No improvement is noticed in the situation of the Red-shouldered: saw none all winter, (DK); one in the Decorah area on 29 November, (DP); one seen several times near Des Moines; despite very good habitat along the Mississippi at Clinton and near New Boston they are certainly down, (PP). Rough-legged: fewer sighted than in past years, (DH); below normal, (EB); and, none seen this winter, (DG). A ^{Bald} Golden Eagle was killed near Burlington after "attacking" a hunter, (PL). Bald Eagles: about the same as last year, (PL); immatures seem down, (PP); several observations at Arsenal Island, Princeton, Iowa, Hampton, Ill. and one at Duck Creek Park which is about a mile from the river, (NW). Marsh Hawks seem down, (PP). Sparrow Hawks: thought common in both areas, (DP); lots, (PP); but, occasional, (FK); few wintering, (EB); and, none, (GB); with one staying around the barnyard, (JK).

Bobwhite, Pheasants, Turkeys. Bobwhite were thought scarce around Sioux City with only two covies on one farm, (DH); but two good covies found after several years with almost none, (EB); and, plentiful, (KL). Pheasants; numbers down considerably, (DH); although, can be found in good numbers in certain areas, (RK); and, good stock left - 20 visible in field while typing the report, (EB). Turkeys are reported as moving up the Upper Iowa River from the Lansing area, and now are found about seven miles east of Decorah, (DP).

Shorebirds, Gulls, Doves. A King Rail was found at Goose Lake on 9 January when the temperature had been -14° a day earlier, (JF). A Killdeer and 4 Snipe were seen on 15 January, (FK); ~~with~~ the usual Killdeer but no Snipe at Decorah, (DP). Gulls stayed in some numbers until 15 January when the Mississippi froze over, (PL). A few Ring-billed were seen occasionally, probably from Gavin's Point Dam, (DH). Some Mourning Doves are wintering, but except where 25 are visiting a feeder daily, (KL), numbers are very few, (PK, DH, FK, DP).

Owls, Kingfishers. Not many winter-visitant owls are present this year: one ~~Snowy was seen for two hours~~ on 18 December, ^(see longer note) (DG); a Long-eared was observed on 16 January, (HM); and 2 are wintering north of Ames, (MS). Short-eared were fairly numerous last year: but are few (EB) ^{one or two hunting at night with full moon near Dysart on Feb. 4 (CP)} and the only other mention is of 2 at New Hartford seen by the Barlow's, (RH). A Saw-whet is in the same area for the third year, (RK, MS). Kingfishers are said to be common at Decorah, (DP).

Woodpeckers, Larks. A male Red-shafted Flicker has been visiting several feeders, (CH). Pileated are seen regularly on Credit Island, (PP). Several Red-headed seen in late December were considered unusual, (RK), but none has been reported in Des Moines where there are frequently some. Horned Larks are evidently down: not nearly as many as last year, (DH); seem fewer than usual, (DP); and scarce around Des Moines.

Jays, Crows, Chickadees, Titmice, Nuthatches, Creepers. Blue Jays are thought up, (KL). Crows are plentiful, (KL), but only a few scattered individuals seen with no known roost, (DH). A partial albino was noticed among a hundred normally colored birds near Bettendorf, (NW). Chickadees: opinions vary from: appear fewer, (DH), to, seem more than ordinary, (JK), and, very abundant, (KL). Titmice are common in Decorah, (DP). White-breasted Nuthatches: numbers seem down, (DH), but, plentiful, (KL). Red-breasted Nuthatches are generally thought more numerous than usual with Decorah being the only point of scarcity, (DP). Brown Creepers: seem entirely absent, (KL), with very few reports, (DH), and common in Ames but scarce at Decorah, (DP).

Mimics, Thrushes, Kinglets. Only two Mockingbird items, one east of Iowa City, (FK), and another in Madison Co. just south of the Des Moines Impounding Res. by Joe Kennedy. A Brown Thrasher wintering at Sioux City may be injured, (DH). One or two Robins are reported, (PK, RH, FK, WHB), but none this winter, (KL). A few Golden-crowned Kinglets wintering, (EB), one on 10 January for the only record, (HM), and common at Ames but scarce at Decorah, (DP).

☐ Waxwings, Shrikes, Warblers. Two Bohemian Waxwings were seen several times with a small flock of Cedars, (DB). Cedars are seen regularly, another good year, (RK), but all other reports say none seen, (PK, DH, KL, JK). A Northern Shrike was seen at Grundy Center by Glenn Bloomfield, (RH), but very few Loggerhead sighted, (KL). An Orange-crowned Warbler feeding in the yard during the first three weeks in December is reported by Mrs. Leroy Hansen of Lowden, (PP).

☐ Icterids, Finches. Only one flock of meadowlarks and few singles have been seen around Sioux City, and Des Moines reports are few. Occasional Grackles have been seen, (PK, PL, RK, RH). No flocks of Evening Grosbeaks have been seen, but scattered observations, usually at feeders, at Burlington, Decorah, Des Moines and Jesup. Not many mentioned Purple Finches: two reports of 6 or 8, (DH) 1 or 2 at feeders, (FK), numerous since early winter, and still more common than usual, (HM); but probably fewer at Des Moines, although Mrs. Peasley has been feeding a flock of 40 or more. Redpolls, which have staged somewhat of an invasion have been missing at Sioux City. Pine Siskins were seen; one small flock, (DH), and several flocks in December, (RK). Red Crossbills were seen at Ames, 5 on 19 November, (DP). White-winged, first seen 23 December, (RK), and 3 on 3 December, (RH). Juncos: seem reduced or more scattered, (DH); appeared in numbers in mid-January, (EB); think up from last year, (GB). Tree Sparrows: many more than last year, (GB), and a good population in Des Moines. ^{A single white-throated sparrow was seen at Credit Island 30 January (PB).} Lapland Longspurs: only 1 seen, (EB); 2-400 until Thanksgiving, absent until 15 January, then 1-200 could be seen, (DG).

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