

Winter 1968-69

AFN - notes

IOWA

12 Apr.

Pete:

If possible, Jim Grier should be removed from the "unpaid" list. His dues were waived last year, but his check came today.

Will you add to the AFN an item * Townsend's Solitaire was seen on 13 Jan. in Margaret Brooke's yard. This was included for IBL but I overlooked it the other day.

Nurd

The weather this winter has been such that many observers have been in the field very little. The northern sections had more snow than the areas farther south, but the central part at least had a succession of freezing rains and ice storms which made travel, either by car or on foot, very difficult. One compensation has been the number of northern birds which, because of bad weather or scarcity of food, have frequented our feeders.

Loons, Herons. A Common Loon at Lock 13 on 16 November was unusual (PCP). A single Great Blue Heron was at Webster City on 22 January (RM), and Jack McLane gave an interesting description of another seen on 29 December flying with outstretched neck. Identification was made positive by following the bird until it perched.

Geese, Ducks. Although the goose-hunting season was thought poor (DH), there were 325 Canada at the Red Rock Refuge through December (GB). Two Canadas and a Snow Goose were on the river at Iowa City through January (FK). There were between one and two thousand ducks, principally Mallards, at Lake Macbride in the first week of December, but few divers and a scarcity of scaups (FK). The duck population at Red Rock about the same time amounted to "thousands" (GB), but the oxbows south of Sioux City were frozen over (DH). Credit Island had one or two Black Ducks through 5 December and also on 4 ^{through} and 22 January (PCP), and there were a number at Riverton in mid-November where Blue- and Green-winged Teal were plentiful (^{EAG}ES). Golden-eyes on the Missouri at Sioux City were estimated at 200 (DH). There were 4 White-winged Scoters seen at Lock 14 on 15 December by Elton Fawks, and a Red-breasted Merganser on the 22nd was also unusual (PCP).

Hawks. This group was thought generally down (EB, GB, EAG, KL) but Sharp-shinned were thought in good numbers while fewer than half the usual number of Red-tailed were found on the Davenport Census (PCP).

(45)

Red-shouldered seen on the Christmas Censuses totalled 25 which is ~~an~~ ^{down} ~~amazing~~ increase over the 8 or 9 ^{per year} counted in the three previous years. ~~At~~ ~~the same time~~ None was seen at Davenport; the first miss in 19 consecutive years. One was seen on 14 December at Montpelier and Fred Leshar saw one near Clinton on 28 December (PCP). Two unusual winter hawks were a Broad-winged on 11 January near Walnut Woods flushed three times and positively identified (DM), and a Swainson's on 6 December near Ames seen by Myron Swenson and Prof. Greij. Rough-legged were seen rather commonly. Bald Eagles were few until the cold in early January with only 27 on the Davenport count, but 50 were present by the end of January (PCP). Single birds were reported: an immature at Gladbrook on 2 November (RH); at Decorah on 7 December (Osgood fide RH); southeast of Des Moines on 11 December (GB); and 15 December and 1 January (FK). They were thought fewer than usual at Sioux City (DH). Marsh Hawks were in good numbers with 9 seen within minutes on the Muscatine Census (PCP).

Bobwhites, Pheasants. Reports of Bobwhites vary from very few (KL) to abundant (DG), and with none seen at one location while a ^e coy is feeding daily in another (GB). Pheasants were thought to be doing well (EB, GB, DG, JK), but very few seen (KL) and a very poor hunting season (DH).

Bob Barrett for the Conservation Commn. is quoted as reporting a considerable loss due to the weather (DH).

Killdeers and Snipe. There are the usual reports of wintering birds with a flock of 30 Snipe at Gladbrook on 2 November (RH).

Owls. Screech and Great Horned Owls have become scarce (CFW). Both Long- and Short-eared were seen by Mrs. Hewitt at Readlyn, but there are fewer owls in the area than formerly (RH). A Screech Owl in the red phase was seen at Ames on 16 November (MS). Long-eared are down and missed on the Davenport Census for the first time since 1956 (PCP), but were seen north of Ames (MS). Short-eared were thought up (PCP) and 3 were seen in December (JK).

(46)

There are a couple of Saw-whets near Ames in the area where they have been since 1963 (MS) and the first in a number of years was seen several times in Des Moines.

Woodpeckers. There are a few Yellow-shafted Flickers wintering as far north as Marble Rock (PK), and they are the most numerous woodpecker (JK). A Red-shafted Flicker has been at a Des Moines feeder for several weeks (EMG), and another at Hamburg (EAG). Sapsuckers are reported: late in December and another at Bettendorf since mid-December seen by Robt. Dau (PCP), with several in Des Moines (JK, MB). A pair of Pileated are coming daily to a feeder at McGregor (LJ). A Red-headed on 16 January was only his second winter record (EB) while 7 were banded on Christmas in Cedar Rapids (KL). There are a dozen or more wintering in a wooded area near Lamoni (DG).

Larks, Jays, Crows. Reports of Horned Larks ranged from "up a bit" (FK) to "about double the usual numbers" (PCP). Blue Jays were thought few (DH) but too many (KL), but both felt the number of Crows was down.

Chickadees, Nuthatches, Wrens, Creepers. Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches are way down (RH), and the latter also scarce at Pleasantville (GB). Red-breasted Nuthatches appear plentiful throughout the state. Carolina Wrens are becoming reestablished in the Davenport area (PCP), and have been noted elsewhere (EAG, DH, WHB). Brown Creepers are either missing or few (KL, DH).

Thrushes. ^{sp} ~~The~~ Brown Thrasher spent most of December in Davenport (PCP), ^{at} ~~in~~ ^{another} several weeks in December ~~in~~ Ottumwa (OTU), and one is still in Des Moines at the end of January (DM). There are several reports of single Robins but they have been seen in flocks of from 5 to 15 (DG) with 12 to 20 wintering near Swan Lake (FK). ^{A Varied Thrush was observed several times} A Hermit Thrush was seen at Bettendorf ^{at Storm Lake, see under General Notes by Mrs. E.G. Crocker} on 7 January by Pat Lonnecker (PCP), and a Townsend's Solitaire spent ^{other than the one at Cedar Falls on the Christmas County} 15 minutes in the Brookes' yard on 13 January.

Waxwings, Shrikes, Starlings. No Bohemian Waxwings are reported and only scattered Cedars are mentioned. Northern Shrikes are mentioned twice: ^{at Cedar Falls on the Christmas County}

one was seen south of Webster City on 12 January (RM), and there are these dates in the Iowa City area, 30 November, 7 and 21 December (FK) Starlings were thought down (DG), but large flocks are to be found in feed lots (KL, DH).

Icterids. Reports of meadowlarks are generally favorable: small numbers but seen regularly (DH), more numerous this winter (JK), good numbers (PCP), largest wintering population ever (EB), well-scattered with as many as a dozen, usually 1 or 2 (KL), but none at all (GB). Three Brewer's Blackbirds were seen on 19 January (EAG). Wintering Grackles are 2, evidently crippled, (GB), and 2 at Ottumwa (OTU). The only large blackbird roost mentioned is one at Nahant marsh with Red-winged Blackbirds predominating (PCP).

Finches, Sparrows: Sparrows fared badly and are rarely seen (EB).

Cardinals are spotty and seen in flocks if at all (GB). The ^{increased} number of reports of

^{Finches} is thought due to their being driven to feeders by bad weather (DH).

Evening Grosbeaks have staged a mild invasion with reports of from singles to flocks of 10 or 12 (FK, PCP, RH, CFW, M₂S, WHB). Purple Finches are reported as more numerous than usual (PCP, RH, FK, DG, DH), but none so far (JK). Redpolls were seen on seven dates (PCP) while Mrs. Hewitt saw 1 on 3 January and a flock of 150 on 19 January (RH). Pine Siskins are mentioned twice (PCP, DH). Those mentioning Goldfinches thought them down (JK, DH). A small flock of Red Crossbills was ^S seen in Ames early in November (JF), and some were in Waterworks Park in Des Moines on 28 November (MEP). Towhees are reported from three places: Cedar Falls on 26 November by Eleanor Corwin (RH), on several dates in December and January in Des Moines (IS), and 4 or 5 reports at feeders (DH). Juncos are either in smaller flocks or more scattered (KL), and more than usual (JK, DH). A Clay-colored Sparrow was seen on 30 November, 1 and 3 December (OTU). Harris' Sparrows, usually immatures, are being seen: (GB, RB, CFW, PK, DH). Longspurs were thought many (EB) and a few were seen with Horned Larks (FK) while 40 were near Garnaville on

24 December. A Snow Bunting was seen on 1 December at Lock 14 (PCP), another was present for three days early in November (DG), and from 6 to 50 were seen from 31 October through December when the area became inaccessible (FK).

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