

Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52246

Fall 1993 Report

Note: I was out of the state for most of the summer; I returned to Sioux Center about mid-August.

Weather for the Period:

August appears to have been cool and wet. The weather didn't look all that bad to me upon our return: some rain, some thunder-showers, but also lots of sunshine and warm temperatures, accompanied by the usual August humidity.

Early September began to feel like fall, with cooler and drier conditions settling in. In mid-September we experienced wild temperature fluctuations: on September 12 the thermometer climbed to 88 degrees, and a few days later, September 15, we set a record low of 32. On that day temperatures sank lower in surrounding areas, so that for many corn and soy bean farmers this day saw a killing frost. The remainder of September was normal, both in temperatures and precipitation.

October was mild and dry. Only very light frost occurred occasionally, allowing the trees to stay green and flowers bloom longer than normal. On October 22 and 23 the temperatures topped 70. The first heavy frost of the season occurred at the very end of October.

November was normal in both precipitation and temperatures. Temperatures did not stray much off the average. The first below zero temperatures occurred just before Thanksgiving (record low of -8 in Sioux City), along with the first major snow fall (about 6 inches) of the season.

- Pied-billed Grebe: At Hawarden on September 10.
- ✓ - Eared Grebe: Last ones observed at Doon (Lyon Co., just north of the Sioux Co. border) on October 20.
- ✓ - White Pelican: A single individual was still present at Hawarden on October 29.
- Double-crested Cormorant: Early birds (immatures) were at Hawarden on September 15.
- ✓ - Great Blue Heron: Excellent migration. On September 10 I counted about 50 individuals between Hawarden (Sioux Co.) and Akron (Plymouth Co.). Last one observed at Doon (Lyon Co.) on October 20.

- ✓ - Great Egret: A flock of 8 was at Akron (Plymouth Co.) on September 10.
- Ducks: Signs of an early migration on September 17 -- a large flock of nearly 150 unidentified ducks -- probably teal -- flying south over Sioux Co. The first migrant Lesser Scaups arrived at Rock Valley on October 27. Lesser Scaups and Redheads were still mixed with Mallards at Rock Valley on November 26. In all, geese and duck migration was less than spectacular.
- ✓ - Bald Eagle: An early migrant (adult) was over Sioux Center on September 17.
- ✓ - Sharp-shinned Hawk: The first one I saw was at Akron (along the Big Sioux River) on September 10. Again this fall they were quite conspicuous.
- Cooper's Hawk: None observed.
- Red-tailed Hawk: Very common throughout October. On October 22 I counted 10 individuals within one hour of driving in western Sioux Co.
- Rough-legged Hawk: Not yet observed.
- American Kestrel: Nothing unusual to report.
- ✓ - Merlin: One individual appeared in Sioux Center and was clearly observed and identified on November 7 and November 21.
- ✓ - Peregrine Falcon: In Sioux Center on September 16. Documentation enclosed.
- ✓ - Black-bellied Plover: A late straggler was at Doon (Lyon Co.) on October 20.
- ✓ - Lesser Golden Plover: A flock of about 50 individuals was at Akron (Plymouth Co.) on September 10.
- ✓ - Killdeer: Flocks of 200+ were at Akron on September 10. Last ones observed on October 22.
- ✓ - Lesser Yellowlegs: Last one observed at Doon on October 22.
- ✓ - Least Sandpiper: Last one observed at Doon on October 20.
- ✓ - Pectoral Sandpiper: Last one observed at Doon on October 20.
- ✓ - Snowy Owl: One was observed along Highway 75 about 14 miles north of Sioux Center, east of Doon.
- Common Nighthawk: Good migration. Visible in flocks from 5 to 35 every evening. Last ones observed on September 21.

- ✓ - Chimney Swift: Large flocks (of 50 or more) were migrating over Hawarden on September 15.
- ✓ - Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Some lingered in Sioux Center until October 20.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: They were much in evidence during the last week of September. On September 23 there were three in my yard at the same time.
- ✓ - Northern Flicker: Migrants were very conspicuous between September 17 and September 25. Small flocks of 4-6 were evident just about everywhere in Sioux Co. They became very scarce in October and November.
- ✓ - Eastern Wood-Pewee: Last one was observed on September 20.
- Empidonax: One was in my yard on September 17. At first I thought it was a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, but further -- though brief -- observation led me to think it was either a Least or a Willow Flycatcher. It wasn't around long enough or showed itself adequately to make a determination.
- Eastern Phoebe: Last one was observed on September 2.
- Purple Martin: Apparently they once again suffered tragedy in this cool wet summer. Most of the young nesting in the many martin houses on the campus of Dordt College were destroyed by gnats, black flies, and other insects. All the martins were gone before the end of July.
- Swallow Migration: Once again, very good.
- ✓ - Blue Jay: Flocks of 30+ were migrating in western Sioux Co. on October 22.
- ✓ - Red-breasted Nuthatch: Apparently a bird summered once again in Sioux Center. It was reliably reported in July (Tina Van Dyke, no relation). I myself saw it as soon as I returned to Sioux Center in mid-August. It was present all of August, September, and October. On October 22 several individuals joined the Sioux Center bird; in addition, three were present at Oak Grove Park on October 22. By October 27 a veritable invasion occurred: small flocks of 4 and 5 birds were present at several feeders through November 1. They remained through the first half of November, then thinned out noticeably.
- White-breasted Nuthatch: This bird appeared to be very scarce in Sioux Center, where normally this is the regular nuthatch. Instead, the Red-breasted Nuthatch (reported above) stole the show. No White-breasted Nuthatches were observed in town until the end of September. In October their numbers in town appeared to return to normal.

- Brown Creeper: First appeared on September 18. Small numbers remained through the remainder of the period.
- Winter Wren: One was in Sioux Center on September 3.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet: Good migration during the last week of October and early part of November. They were plentiful both in Sioux Center and in Oak Grove Park.
- Eastern Bluebird: A half dozen or so were in western Sioux Co. on October 16.
- American Robin: Flocks numbering at least 300 were in Oak Grove Park from October 22 through the end of October. A few remained until the end of the period.
- American Pipit: A flock of about 20 individuals was in western Sioux Co. on October 27.
- Northern Shrike: First observed in western Sioux Co. on November 17.
- Loggerhead Shrike: Last one observed in Sioux Co. on October 16.
- Warblers: A ho-hum season. Occasionally some waves could be observed. For example, on the weekend of September 4-5 there was a variety of warblers, vireos (and some Empidonax flycatchers) in my yard. The following merit individual attention:
 - Black+White Warbler: First observed on August 21.
 - Blackburnian Warbler: Present in town on August 20.
 - Bay-breasted Warbler: In town on October 2.
 - Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers migration was excellent. My yard was still alive with these warblers on October 19. Last yellow-rump observed on October 31.
- Blue Grosbeak: An immature was at Hawarden on August 28. On September 3 I observed a female Blue Grosbeak feeding a nearly full-grown Cowbird near Hawarden.
- Rufous-sided Towhee: Whereas last year this species seemed scarce, it was back again to its normally common status, especially during the last week of September.
- Sparrow migration: First White-throats arrived on September 17. The sparrow migration was modest: they trickled through in small numbers.
- Vesper Sparrow: Last one observed on October 16.

- ✓ Fox Sparrow: Last one was in my yard on November 3.
- White-throated Sparrow: Last one on November 7.
- Dark-eyed Junco: Arrived somewhat late, on October 1. The first "Oregon junco" appeared at my feeders on November 3. The "Oregon" subspecies were quite common this fall.
- ✓ - Lapland Longspur: Easy to find among Horned Larks along gravel roads, after the Thanksgiving snowfall. I first saw them on November 26.
- Snow Bunting: Easy to find among Horned Larks along gravel roads, after the Thanksgiving snowfall. I first saw them on November 26.
- Common Grackle: Flocks numbering at least several thousands (intermixed with Red-winged Blackbirds and Starlings) roosted in Sioux Center during the second half of October. They disappeared by November. Several individuals lingered in Sioux Center to the end of the period.
- ✓ - Purple Finch: First migrants arrived in Sioux Center on October 15. Between October 27 and November 1 about 10 of these birds visited the feeders in my yard. As November progressed, their numbers declined. By mid-November most of them had disappeared.
- Common Redpoll: Not yet observed.
- ✓ - Pine Siskin: Arrived in Sioux Center on November 2. They soon were very plentiful at all feeders in Sioux Center, and remained through the period.

Reported by John Van Dyk

736 East 1st Street
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

Ph: 712-722-1572

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