

IOWA

Winter 1970-1971

Notes for American Birds

Black

608 Allet  
Pleasantville Iowa  
50225  
April 7, 1971

Mr. Vernon Kleen  
Carbondale Ill.

Dear Mr. Kleen: - I report for the Red Rock Lake and Refuge area 25 miles SE of Des Moines. I have little that I think you want for your winter report but I do want to learn what you want in the way of future reports - if greatly expanded.

I am enclosing several items, official state map of Ia, Refuge area, preliminary check list etc to give you a picture of this new area - much is trivia perhaps.

The change in numbers of migratory species has been spectacular since the lake filled March 1969. This is an area of heavy farming, prairie on rolling prairie and the presence of all these birds has been a surprise and a delight to all.

I will note the following and you can let me know if this is the type of report you wish.

The fall of 1969 we had our first invasion of Franklin's Gulls - never had em before - around 50 to 100,000. They surely numbered 500,000 the fall of 1970 because during the day they fanned out 20 miles in all directions. You could drive 20 miles in any direction and never be out of sight of these little Prairie Doves hauling insects over the farm land or following the plow or the combines.

The fall of '69 we had a few White Pelicans. The fall of 1970 we had one flock of 70, then 1 of 24 and later 1 of 11.

At least 44 Double Crested Cormorants fall of 1970 stayed around for weeks fished from logs or stayed near one flock of Pelicans taking advantage of the Pelican's fishing activities.

1969 - 100 Gr. Blue Herons in view from just one lookout at Refuge Headquarters - similar in 1970 (fall.) The first Gr. Blue Heron Rookery (in my 62 year memory) built in tall trees 1970, at least 14 nests, incubation well along & then peculiar actions, standing up on nest, pecking (eating?) of eggs and all nests deserted - soft shelled eggs? (Catfish already contain 535 p.p.b. in the Lake) (over)

In 1969 the Lake & the Refuge remained flooded all summer, therefore the traditional nesting site of the Cliff Swallows on Painted Rocks was submerged so they built 71 of their mud jug nests on the face of the great dam. In 1970 31 nests again on Painted Rocks cliff and the rest again used the dam nests.

There are 2 traditional Vulture Roosts within the Refuge. 1 at foot of Red Rock Bluff and 1 farther west in tall trees. (I believe there may be a 3rd one along south shore of the lake proper and this I will investigate this summer - at least 30 there one eve during 1970 fall migration.) In fall of 1969 - 200 Vultures was high count on any one evening - around 100+ was high count in 1968 also 1970.

But last summer I discovered that we have a Summer Resident Roost of Non breeders - 30 at west Wood - 38 at Bluff Roost.

Checking with persons whose ancestors entered land here at least 25 years ago, I believe these are traditional Roosts in use when pioneers arrived. I was born about 3 miles SW. of Red Rock Bluff which looms up even at a greater distance and the first Buzzards I ever saw were drifting lazily toward the Bluff. This is the only big Vulture Roost in Iowa unless some remain undiscovered (perhaps 1 at Ledges State Park, Boone) Iowa

South of us Lake Rathbun began filling in 1970 and in a couple of years Taylorville just N.W. of Des Moines should be filling. Mr. Pershing Hofstend (pers. comm.) was of the opinion that these 3 lakes would undoubtedly have quite an impact on migratory habits of many birds.

I need not mention ducks & geese - we have 'em! Yesterday I spent a delightful day watching.

Please let me know if items such as I have mentioned are of interest for American Birds & others such as Bald Eagles, Marsh Hawks, etc.)

Sincerely,  
Gladys R Black