

FIELD REPORTS

**FIELD REPORTS
WINTER 1983/1984**

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WEATHER AND HABITAT CONDITIONS (JPSa)

1983 ended, as it had begun, with extreme weather conditions. To the record-setting wet, cold spring and hot, dry summer, was added the coldest Dec in the 111-year history of state weather records. Besides the bitter cold, snowfall during Dec was twice the normal, making this the fifth snowiest on record. The Dec temperatures, which were 16.4 degrees below normal, made this Iowa's third coldest month since 1936. Temperatures fell as low as -33 (at Atlantic on 19 Dec) and -35 (at Cresco, Oakland, Glenwood, and Sibley), while wind chills reached lows from -70 to -90 on Christmas Eve. Sustained coldness, with minimum temperatures of zero or colder, was reported on 11 to 16 consecutive days over all but the eastern counties. Snow cover (about 19.5 inches), frequent glaze, blowing snow, and fog added to the general discomfort of Iowans.

Jan and Feb were, in general, sunny and dry. Although there were temperature extremes in Jan (from -30 to +55 at Sibley and Bedford respectively), the predominance of mild weather and little snow fall was a welcome relief after the rigors of Dec. A few isolated blizzards, notably at the end of Jan and again in late Feb, produced much glazing and hazardous conditions, but the swift return to warm weather melted much of the snow cover in the state. Again this year, the state's rivers and creeks ran high as the spring months approached.

GENERAL TRENDS

Waterfowl, gulls, and other lingerers left the state early this year with the bitter Dec weather. Goshawks were widespread and 3, possibly 5, Varied Thrushes were the most ever in one winter. Crossbills were absent and there were only 2 sightings of Common Redpolls. Siskins and Purple Finches were not abundant. Evening Grosbeaks, however, were widely present. Warm weather, evident by 9 Feb, produced a widespread early waterfowl migration for the third year in a row. Killdeer, bluebirds, and blackbirds also came early.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

The best find was a Greater Prairie-Chicken. See CBC reports for Common Raven and Smith's Longspur. Casual species were Prairie Falcon, Bohemian Waxwing, and Pine

DRAFT
need starting page #
getting prints made
of Varied Thrush,
Pine Grosbeak &
Smith's Longspur
not sure if
how good they
will be yet.

Tom -
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Pete

Grosbeak. Exotics included the usual Ringed Turtle-Dove at Davenport.

SPECIES DATA (* = documented)

Horned Grebe: I overlooked a 25 Nov 1983 sighting at L. Macbride in the last report (RJH).

Double-crested Cormorant: 1 remained at Davenport until 3 Dec (GDW).

Greater White-fronted Goose: Flocks were in Fremont Co. (Don Priebe fide RP) and 20 were at Willow Sl. (BLW) on 19 Feb, a second earliest date; 5 were at Cone M. on 25 Feb (THK) and several were at Colo on 27 Feb (Ted LaGrange fide JJD).

Snow Goose: 1 was migrating in Hamilton Co. on 12 Feb (THK, CJB, TJS), and 80 were in Hardin Co. on 14 Feb (MPR fide BPR). By 17 Feb 30,000 were at Riverton A. (Erv Klaas fide JJD).

Ross' Goose: 1 was captured at Riverton A. on 17 Feb (Erv Klaas fide JJD).

Canada Goose: 20 were seen during Jan in Johnson Co. (JF) and 1 wintered at Big M. (FLM). On 9 Feb, 50 were migrating near Oxford (THK, CJB, TJS) and 200 were at Spirit L. by 15 Feb (DCH). Many others were seen in Feb.

Wood Duck: 2 were in Polk Co. by 22 Feb (Ted Eischeid fide JJD).

Green-winged Teal: 1 was at Willow Sl. by 23 Feb (BLW).

American Black Duck: 1-2 birds ^{were} at five locations as far west as Saylorville Res. during the period.

Northern Pintail: 1 was in Franklin Co. by 12 Feb (THK, CJB, TJS).

Northern Shoveler: 1 was at Ames by 16 Feb (Mike Brown fide JJD).

Gadwall: 1 was in Johnson Co. on 2 Feb (JF; wintering?); first migrants were at Willow Sl. (BLW) and Cone M. (THK) on 25 Feb.

American Wigeon: 1 was at Willow Sl. by 19 Feb (BLW).

Canvasback: 2 were at Saylorville Res. on 8 Jan (JJD, SD); 1 arrived at Bettendorf by 15 Feb (PCP).

Redhead: 2 remained at Saylorville Res. until 10 Dec (SD, GBro); 1 was at Willow Sl. by 23 Feb (BLW).

Ring-necked Duck: 1 was at Saylorville Res. on 8 Jan (JJD, SD); 3 were at IPL Ponds by 15 Feb (BP, LPa).

Greater Scaup: Details were given for 2 females at L. Macbride on 3 Dec (TJS, THK) and 2 males at IPL Ponds on 16 Feb (TB, BP, SK).

Lesser Scaup: 4 were at Cone M. by 25 Feb (THK).

Common Goldeneye: 500 were n. of I80 in Scott Co. on 2 Jan (THK, CJB, TJS); 5 were at Big M. by 15 Feb (BPR, MPR).

Bufflehead: 1 was at Willow Sl. by 23 Feb (BLW).

Hooded Merganser: 2 were at IPL Ponds by 19 Feb (BP, LPa); singles were in Decatur Co. (Jeff and Clark Livingston)

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- fide JDG) and at Willow Sl. (BLW) on 26 Feb.
- Common Merganser:** 400 were at Saylorville Res. on 10 Dec (SD, GBro); 5 were there by 12 Feb (SD).
- Bald Eagle:** 207 at Lock and Dam 14 were a record for that location (Kelly McKay fide PCP). Adults were seen in Palo Alto Co. on 6 Dec (VK) and Lyon Co. on 11 Dec (DCH). There were 77 (35 imm.) at Forney L. on 26 Feb (BP, LPa). Many other sightings were reported.
- Northern Harrier:** 5 sightings in Ida, Crawford, and Cherokee counties from 11 Jan to 17 Feb were considered unusual for that area (DBi, MMB); I would not consider winter sightings of this species in E Iowa unusual.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 1 was in Cherokee Co. on 27 Jan (MMB).
- Cooper's Hawk:** Singles were reported from Polk, Cherokee, Fremont, Bremer, Winneshiek, and Story counties during the period (excluding CBCs).
- Northern Goshawk:** Many were seen throughout the period, continuing this third year of an invasion cycle. All documented sightings were of adults except for 1 immature in Bremer Co. on 15 Feb (*BPr). Other county locations were Johnson (up to 4 birds seen many times, *TJS, CJB, JF), Cherokee (*DBi), Page (Don Priebe fide RP), Bremer (ad., *FLM), Butler (*FLM), Polk (*DDM), Decatur (Richard Erke fide JDG), Louisa (THK), Lucas (*MBro), and Poweshiek (2, DK). See also CBC report.
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** 5 singles: 7 Jan ^W of Davenport (Scott Clark, Don Graves fide PCP), 20 Jan in Madison Co. (*ELA), 22 Jan in Jasper Co. (*HZ), 26 Jan in Marshalltown (John King fide BPr), 1 Feb at Davenport (PCP, MLP).
- Golden Eagle:** Besides birds in the usual Allamakee Co. location (GDW, DK), 1 ad. was seen in Marshall Co. (*BPr) and 1 imm. in Jasper Co. ^{on 10 Dec} (CJB, details).
- American Kestrel:** 1 caught a sparrow at a feeder in Council Bluffs on 28 Jan (CFS); 20 were noted in N Iowa on 24 Feb (JF).
- Peregrine Falcon:** An immature bird was described at Ames (*KB); 1 was reportedly at DeSoto NWR on 23 Feb (Cathy Nelson fide TB).
- Prairie Falcon:** 1 was described in Dallas Co. on 28 Dec (*Ken Herring).
- Gray Partridge:** 2 on 23 Feb were the first for Scott Co. (PCP); 2 were in Harrison Co. on 2 Jan (TB, DB); none were seen in Jan-Feb in Cherokee Co. (MMB, DBi).
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** 1 was described in Osceola Co. by *Ron Spengler, a possible winter migrant from Minnesota. No details were given for another at DeSoto NWR (Dave Menke fide TB)--Could this be a released bird?
- Wild Turkey:** 1 was seen n. of Keokuk on 7 Jan (THK, CJB, PCP); 20 were at Geode SP on 4 Feb (DCP).
- Northern Bobwhite:** 6 were at Dorchester, Allamakee Co. on 19 Dec (DK).

- American Coot:** The first was at Willow Sl. on 29 Feb (BLW).
- Lesser Golden-Plover:** 3 at DeSoto NWR on 12 Nov 1983 (Erv Klaas fide JJD) were overlooked in my last report.
- Killdeer:** Earliest arrivals were on 15 Feb at Ames (Joe Schaufenbuel fide JJD) and Willow Sl. (BLW).
- Ring-billed Gull:** 1500 were still at Coralville Res. on 3 Dec (THK, TJS, CJB); most were gone by mid-Dec; 1 was at Bettendorf on 11 Jan (PCP) and 1 in Johnson Co. on 2 Feb (JF); others began to return by mid-Feb.
- Herring Gull:** 5 were still at Saylorville Res. on 10 Dec (SD, GBro).
- Glaucous Gull:** 1 imm., probably the same as seen on the CBC, was at Lock and Dam 14 on 21 Dec (PCP).
- Black Tern:** 30 previously reported at Coralville Res. on 10 Sep 1983 were really 3 (RJH).
- Ringed Turtle-Dove:** 1 at Davenport on 24 Dec probably died the next day (Mrs. Dale Moritz fide PCP).
- Common Barn-Owl:** 1 was found dead s. of Sioux Center on 4 Dec (Bill Fribley fide DCH); the farmer reported 2 in his silo during the summer.
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** 1 was seen at a suet feeder nw. of Spirit Lake on 14 Dec (Gary Wee fide DCH); 2 birds took cover in heated machine sheds in Mills Co. in late Dec (fide BLW).
- Snowy Owl:** immatures were nw. of Spirit Lake on 17 Jan (DCH) and ne. of Hull on 20 Jan (Bill Fribley fide DCH).
- Long-eared Owl:** None were reported.
- Short-eared Owl:** 1-2 birds were reported from the following counties during the period: Clayton, Muscatine, Palo Alto, Johnson, Page, Story, and Poweshiek (see also CBC).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** 1 at Davenport on 2 Jan (PCP, m.ob.); 1 at Ledges SP on 21 Jan (JJD, SD); and 2 at Big Creek SP on 3 Feb (HZ).
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Small numbers overwintered, except in Mills Co. where there were more than ever (BLW).
- American Crow:** 1 was carry nesting material at Iowa City on 28 Feb (RJH).
- Common Raven:** See CBC report.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 1-3 overwintered at many locations.
- Carolina Wren:** Singles: Davenport on 14 Dec (fide PCP); Iowa City twice in late Dec (Barbara Buckley fide THK, photo); Keokuk on 7 Jan (CJB, THK); and n. of Iowa City all winter (JF).
- Winter Wren:** Singles: 4 Dec at Grammar Grove (BPr, MPr); 17 Dec at Pine L. (Nancy Slife fide BPr); all winter n. of Iowa City (JF).
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** 1-5 with last on 19 Dec n. of Iowa City (JF; ~~no details~~).
- Eastern Bluebird:** Migrants were noted on 20 Feb in Mills Co. (BLW) and 22 Feb at Coralville Res. (TJS).
- American Robin:** A few overwintered.
- Varied Thrush:** 1 was at Fairmont Cemetery, Davenport, from

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- 3 Dec to at least 18 Feb (*GDW, *PCP, photo on file THK); 1 was at a feeder in Spencer from 1 to 21 Dec (E & L Hansen fide RJH, *MMB, *DBi, see photos); 1 was at a feeder in Wellman from 10 to 18 Jan (*Barbara Henderson, *RJH); 2 others were reported on Rick Hollis' feeder survey without details.
- Brown Thrasher:** 1 was at Coralville Res. on 3 Dec (THK, CJB, TJS); another at a feeder in Mills Co. on 16 Dec probably died (BLW).
- Bohemian Waxwing:** 1 was photographed (on file) at Bettendorf on 14 Jan (E. M. Stevieh fide PCP).
- Cedar Waxwing:** I did not compile all the sightings of this species.
- Northern Shrike:** All sightings were from N Iowa in the following counties: Cherokee (MMB, DBi), Dickinson (LaVonne Foote fide DCH), Bremer (FLM, RKM), and Winneshiek (DK).
- Loggerhead Shrike:** No details were given for 2 central Iowa sightings.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 1 was n. of Iowa City on 14 Dec (JF).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** 1 wintered at Elkhart (DDM, race not given); a western race bird wintered in W Johnson Co. (Ed Folk fide RJH).
- American Tree Sparrow:** Numbers were decreased in Cherokee Co. (DBi) with none in Jan (MMB).
- Fox Sparrow:** 1 at Davenport on 2 Jan stayed through mid-Feb (PCP).
- Song Sparrow:** 1 wintered at a feeder in Cherokee (MMB).
- White-throated Sparrow:** 1-3 at 11 locations, most from the middle of the state south, but as far north as Hardin and Cherokee counties.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** 1-4 from Page, Winneshiek, Johnson, and Muscatine counties.
- Harris' Sparrow:** 5 wintered at Elkhart in C Iowa (DDM); others were from SW Iowa. A breeding plumage bird with gray cheeks was present all winter in Mills Co. (BLW).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** An Oregon Junco was n. of Iowa City on 10 Feb (JF).
- Lapland Longspur:** 50,000 conservatively counted by Dick Bierman in the 50 miles from Cherokee to Sac City on 27 Feb is remarkable. Other concentrations included 500 n. of Shenandoah on 4 Feb (RP, MS), 200 in Story Co. on 27 Feb (JJD, TL), and 25 in Johnson Co. on 2 Jan (THK, CJB, TJS).
- Smith's Longspur:** See CBC.
- Snow Bunting:** The peak was 300 on 1 Feb at Dysart (CJB); there were many other sighting from Dec-Jan and into the first week of Feb.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** 18 were in Des Moines on 22 Jan (MZ); 68 were in Cherokee Co. on 10 Feb (MMB); and migrants were everywhere in the last half of Feb.

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Rusty Blackbird: 1 was in Marshall Co. on 22 Dec (BPr), 10 were at Waterloo on 22 Jan (FLM, RKM), 9 were in Mills Co. on 2 Feb (BLW), 35 were n. of Shenandoah on 20 Feb (RP), 1 was at Mallard on 21 Feb (VK), and 50 were at Colo on 26 Feb (JJD, SD).

Brewer's Blackbird: Details were given for 1 at Union in Dec (Phyllis Harris fide BPr).

Common Grackle Small numbers overwintered; migrants were evident in the last week of Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 30 were in NE Mills Co. on 4 Feb (BLW).

Pine Grosbeak: Robert Wylder photographed one at his feeder in Denver and it was seen by others on 11-12 Feb (*FLM, *BPr).

Purple Finch: Small numbers were reported.

Red Crossbill: No reports.

White-winged Crossbill: No reports.

Common Redpoll: The only reports were 1 at Fairfield on 8 Feb (DCP) and 3 at Swaledale on 25 Feb (LG).

Pine Siskin: 1-25 were reported from 10 locations.

Evening Grosbeak: The highest numbers were 42 at Fairfield on 12 Feb (DCP) and 32 at Marshalltown (John King fide BPr); 1-14 were reported from 10 other locations.

*-1 at McCausland
15 Jan thru Feb
Gil Sandwick,
also 4 other
reports in
Dav. + LeClaire*

CONTRIBUTORS

Eloise Armstrong, Booneville; Russell P. Baldner, Calmar; Carl J. Bendorf, Iowa City; Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Kelly Bostian, Ames; Tanya Bray, Omaha NE; Marion M. Brewer, Cherokee; Mike Brown, Des Moines; James J. Dinsmore, Ames; Steve Dinsmore, Ames; James Fuller, Iowa City; Lucille Gaffney, Swaledale; J. Donald Gillaspey, Lamoni; Ronald V. Harms, Laurens; Douglas C. Harr, Larchwood; Russ Heine, Spencer; Ken Herring, Adel; Richard J. Hollis, Iowa City; Wallace E. Jardine, Pocahontas; Velma Keerbs, Mallard; Thomas H. Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Montezuma; Paul Martsching, Ames; Francis L. Moore, Waterloo; D. Dean Mosman, Elkhart; Babs Padelford, Bellevue NE; Loren Padelford, Bellevue NE; Peter C. Petersen, Davenport; Ruth Phipps, Shenandoah; Diane C. Porter, Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb; *James P. Sandwick, Iowa City*; Conrad F. Schlemmer, Council Bluffs; Ron Spengler, Sibley; Thomas J. Staudt, Iowa City; Gerald D. White, Muscatine; Barbara L. Wilson, Hastings; Hank Zaletel, Colo; and Mary Zohrer, West Des Moines;

OTHER OBSERVERS

Cathryn A. Baldner (RPB); Don Bray (TB); Gordon Brown (SD); Sandy Kovanda (TB); Ted LaGrange (JJD); Robert K. Myers (FLM); Jeannine Ouren (RP); Mary Lou Petersen (PCP); Mark Proescholdt (BPr); *and* Marie Spears (RP);

COMMENT

According to my count, the number of species seen in Iowa was down in 1983 from the previous two years. Of the 276 regular species (Sandhill Crane has been moved to regular), 5 were not reported in 1983 (Say's Phoebe, Townsend's Solitaire, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, and Common Redpoll). Please let me know if you recorded any of these species (date, location). Of 16 casual species, 9 were recorded (Surf Scoter, Prairie Falcon, Yellow Rail, King Rail, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, Prairie Warbler, and Sharp-tailed Sparrow), 1 is pending review (Ferruginous Hawk), and 6 were not recorded (Red-necked Grebe, Snowy Egret, Burrowing Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Lark Bunting, and Pine Grosbeak). Ibis species was also seen. There were 7 accidentals accepted by the Records Committee (Purple Gallinule, Whimbrel, Vermillion Flycatcher, Smith's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Great-tailed Grackle, ^{and} House Finch). Vermillion Flycatcher and Great-tailed Grackle are new to the state list. The total of 287 for 1983 is down from 297 in 1982 and 300 in 1981, ~~and equals the number for 1980.~~

In spite of the low count for 1983, we had many new contributors to the field reports. Rick Hollis' winter bird feeder survey produced over 1,500 responses, indicating a great deal of interest in Iowa birds. I would like to encourage newcomers to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union to feel free to send in field reports or to call their rare sightings in to the Iowa Birdline. Those interested in sending in reports can obtain forms from me by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelop (letter size). The Field Checklist of Iowa Birds, available for the Treasurer, gives an indication of birds that need to be documented by description or photographs. ~~More detailed information can be found in Iowa Birds (see Book Reviews).~~

Please mail your spring field reports to me on or before 29 May (the day after Memorial Day); if I don't get them compiled on the weekend of June 2-3, the report will be delayed.

Good birding for 1984!

we had several Redpolls in Danava in Dec. - only one I have details on is 28 Dec. on Forest Rd.

Jack Searles

concerning frequency and migration dates