

12/3/79
Van Dyk

Fall 1979 Report

Note: Since I devoted my summer to research in eastern Massachusetts, I could not submit a summer report. We returned to Iowa on August 19. Naturally I could not evaluate the local bird populations present in late August in relation to their status as breeders, visitors, or migrants.

Weather for the period: Dry and mild during the first half of the period.

Heavy rainfall occurred during the latter half of October. The first week of November was cold and snowy. Then it warmed up to an Indian Summer in mid-November with temperatures in the mid-60's. There was more snow and cold around Thanksgiving time. On November 21 the major snowstorm that hit Nebraska and South Dakota skirted our area, leaving only 2" of snow on the ground (compared to 13" in Sioux Falls, S.D.). Coldest dates: October 4: first frost; November 9: 12 degrees F.; November 23: 10 degrees F.; November 30: 3 degrees F.

Grebes through Ducks:

- Pied-billed Grebe: very common in our area, with good numbers still present in mid-November.
- Double-crested Cormorant: one individual observed on August 24 (according to Brown's Annotated List, fall migration begins in early September), in western Sioux Co.
- Great Blue Heron: good numbers present in late August and September.
- Great Egret: one individual was present in western Sioux Co. on October 20.
- Whistling Swan: four individuals were present on Pahoja Lake, north-west of Inwood (Lyon Co.), in the week of November 12.
- Canada Goose & Snow Goose: average migrations in late October and early November.
- Ducks: no unusual sightings. The Mallard was easily the most common duck. A number of Gadwall were present in western Sioux Co. on August 24. Other ducks observed at various times during the latter half of October and the first half of November (in small numbers): Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck.

Hawks through Gray Partridge:

- Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk: none observed.
- Red-tailed Hawk: excellent migration throughout Sioux Co. throughout the period.
- Rough-legged Hawk: arrived in the first week of November.
- Eagle sp.: one individual observed by Mr. A.J. Boersma (of Sioux Center) in extreme western Sioux Co. He was unable to determine whether it was a Golden Eagle or an immature Bald Eagle.

- Northern Harrier: good migration in October and November through Sioux Co.
- Kestrel: their numbers appear to be down.
- Bobwhite: as I have reported previously, the Bobwhite continues to do poorly in north-west Iowa. I observed only one (on September 15) of this formerly fairly common bird.
- Gray Partridge: doing splendidly and continuing to become increasingly common in all parts of north-west Iowa.

Shorebirds through Terns:

- There was a better than usual shorebird migration through Sioux Co, where there is not all that much good shorebird habitat. In late August and early September we observed the following species: Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper (2 individuals), Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Semipalmated Sandpiper. On November 10 we observed a Killdeer and 8 Common Snipe near Rock Valley (Sioux Co.).
- Small numbers of Black Terns were present in western Sioux Co. in late August and early September.

Cuckoos through Swallows:

- The only cuckoos observed in Sioux Co. in late August and early September were Black-billed Cuckoos.
- Short-eared Owl: we observed 3 individuals just west of Sioux Center on September 22.
- Common Nighthawk: spectacular migrations in the Sioux Center area in the week of August 26 and in week of September 24.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird: quite scarce in the area with only a few observed.
- Common (Red-shafted) Flicker: one of these western Flickers observed in western Sioux County on November 10.
- Hairy Woodpecker: as I have reported on several previous occasions, this woodpecker is doing fine in north-west Iowa.
- Eastern Kingbird: very numerous in western Sioux Co. in late August and early September.
- Barn Swallow: abundant in September. Last one observed on October 7.
- Cliff Swallow: large numbers were migrating through western Sioux Co. on the weekend of August 24.
- Purple Martin: good numbers migrating through Sioux Center during the week of August 27.

Robin through Waxwings:

- Robin: many were still present in western Sioux Co. on November 10.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet: a small flock of 8 observed just south of Rock Valley on November 10.

- Water Pipit: we observed one individual in western Sioux Co. on September 15.
- Cedar Waxwing: good numbers present in various parts of Sioux Co. from mid-September through November.

Vireos and Warblers:

- Generally a ho-hum migration. Birds filtered through without any major waves. Undoubtedly the steady mild weather of early fall contributed to the dull character of the migration. No unusual species observed.

Meadowlark through Sparrows:

- Western Meadowlark: their numbers seem to be down.
- Northern Cardinal: this bird has been doing quite well in north-west Iowa during the past year or two. Apparently it is learning to withstand the brutal north-west Iowa winters.
- Dickcissel: last singing male observed on August 31, six miles west of Sioux Center.
- American Goldfinch: their numbers seemed low this fall.
- Red Crossbill: several flocks of 10-20 individuals appeared in Sioux Center on October 20, 23, and 24. We also observed a flock of 12 just south of Rock Valley on November 10.
- Sparrows: not nearly as spectacular a migration as we experienced last year in our area. No unusual species seen.
- Vesper Sparrow: their numbers were down sharply.
- Dark-eyed Junco: the first ones appeared in Sioux Center on October 7.
- Tree Sparrow: first ones observed on November 10.
- Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting: still absent. Last year at this time growing numbers of both species were already present in Sioux Co.

Note: In your fall report in IBL please indicate the precise deadline for our winter reports.

Submitted by: Dr. John Van Dyk
736 East 1st St.
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250
(Sioux Co.)

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